Past Legacy

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For my prince, my husband, my life

CHAPTER ONE

The sword slashed through the air again with force and purpose. He could feel the weight of it in his hands. He pulled it along the midsection of his enemy. Blood spewed forth from the open wound. It sprayed across his face, feeling warm. He could still smell the stench of death around him. The burning embers, the charred remains. He knew the battle wasn't over.

Again the sword swung as his body turned completely around to face the threat behind him. Another man stood with a club so large it covered the man's face behind it. It swung through the air towards him. Quickly his body reacted, leaning back against the certain blow. He flipped his sword, twirling it in his hand to get the angle, and struck hard. It sent the foe back a step. The forward thrust hit into his stomach, deep through layers of flesh and bone.

A moment passed, the world seemed to stop around him. He could feel the sword taking his enemies life as it dug deeper into his insides. Finally, he retreated, pulling the sword back out the way it had slipped in. The man hovered for a moment crumbling to his knees. Then toppling over in a heap at his feet, he fell. Blood dripped from the edge of his sword. He watched the droplets fall to the ground hitting the grass and looking like red dew across the field.

Her face appeared as it had before, a beautiful angelic face holding those emerald green eyes, her sweet mouth that invited him to taste her. Her mahogany curls, falling about her slender neck, and down her back. He wanted desperately to reach out and touch her skin, to kiss her neck, to lay his head against her breasts. To be comforted by this alluring woman who made him ache for her. He could feel her presence before his eyes saw her within them. When she called to him, her voice held a gentle sadness, enveloping his very being. He needed her. He wanted her.

"Andrew...Andrew…" Her voice changed suddenly.

"Andrew," His eyes flew open.

Before him wasn't the redheaded beauty of his dreams. The softness of her touch was gone. The gentleness had turned into urgency in her voice and look. He was staring into a much different face.

She was his best friend, of three years. Her hair was a pretty chestnut brown. Her eyes were brown also, a copper tone to them normally. Right now though those big brown eyes held confusion that slowly registered within Andrew's mind.

It happened again, he thought.

"Alonna," Andrew said slowly, his voice barely above a whisper.

He was trying to wake himself up. Clear his head of the images from his never-ending dreams of the last year. Dreams that included, not the brown haired, brown eyed pretty thirty-two year old sitting on his bed in his apartment right now, but of the redheaded beauty that seemed to engulf him in body and mind.

"Yes, Andrew, it's me," Alonna said with a slight amusement in her voice. "And where have you been, Sleeping Beauty?"

She smiled standing up from his bed moving to sit on the small chair across from her. In her hand she held a coffee from the local coffee shop around the corner where she always went on her way to his place. In a small tray on the nightstand next to the bed, other cup was waiting for him as she always did when she stopped by in the mornings.

"I'm sorry I...," Andrew was still trying to bring himself back into present day. "It felt so real," he said softly.

Andrew sat up looking around at the room. It was his apartment, same as before, no change. White walls, green curtains, same bedroom, little of which seemed to hold anything, but nightmarish dreams of late. All of which was a slight disappointment to Andrew, even if they did contain the alluring woman with the green eyes that he had begun to want more than visions and images. The dreams left him wanting and filled with a desire that rushed through his body every time he awoke. That desire was slowly subsiding as he looked around

the room. With it often came sadness though. One he could not easily let go of.

There was a time Andrew could remember where waking up was a much more pleasant experience, usually at least ended in enjoying a nice breakfast and some small talk before the woman left later that morning. He would promise to call. She never thought he would and he'd always surprise them. He reasoned, if he had no intention of calling, he wouldn't have taken them to his bed the night before. That was far too cold for him. He had never been a fan of one-night stands, avoided them at all costs. He was more of the marrying kind, having a house, kids, dog, that kind of guy. Of course, the women who had been in this bed weren't the kind he wanted to marry. He was about to turn thirty-five with no prospects, nor possibilities of a wife in his near future.

Ironically, the one woman who had never spent any time in his bed now sat across from him, drinking her coffee, and shaking her head. Andrew was certain she viewed him as her very messed up friend…but a friend nonetheless.

He couldn't think upon the dream anymore as he tried to clear his head. He could still smell the vanilla on her skin, still see her beautiful face in his mind, she was still beckoning him. Andrew sat up a bit further. He caught Alonna's eyes looking at him as the sheet fell down to his waist, revealing his bare chest. He simply ignored it, as he normally did.

Finally, he decided to come back from the dream woman with the fiery hair and plunge into his modern day existence in 2005, four weeks before Christmas and his birthday.

There had been a time when he was happy. But that was before when the ritual of visiting his parents each year wasn't so painful. When they didn't seem to ask so many questions about his love life. When he hadn't begun questioning the commercialization of a holiday he used to long for. When he hadn't forgotten how to find a moment of joy, peace, or contentment. Something he hadn't seemed to achieve in too many years to count. Before his 35th birthday where he would once again look at his life, and realize that the one thing he had hoped for, finding true love didn't play a part in it for another year. Before all of that, Andrew Whiete used to be a happy person. People called him positive. He had a good outlook on life, no matter how bad it seemed.

Didn't he? He thought to himself.

Andrew used to tell himself that it just took time. But that was also before he turned thirty-two, thirty-three and thirty-four. It was before Alonna began her endless dating stream of Tommy, Greg, Victor and her most recent, Zach, the used car salesman who looked at Andrew with disdain and resentment. Not anything really new, just a tedious continuation of an age-old myth that men and women could never be friends without some sexual tension between them. Unfortunately for Zach and the

others, they had all been correct, in his and Alonna's case, at least.

Andrew wasn't unaware of Alonna's attraction to him. He knew she had been ever since they had met that first Christmas he spent in Jasper, Colorado. Andrew had moved here after the breakup with Debbie, a girlfriend who for three years liked to take the life out of him instead of living.

Andrew had discovered this much later than he would have hoped. Debbie was not only unwilling to have children, but that she didn't like them much at all. It wasn't something he had seen coming. He tried to keep telling himself that she was simply an ambitious businesswoman. Which she was.

Deborah Etton worked at a Department Store in his hometown and wanted desperately to move up the managerial ladder within the corporate world. She was smart, sassy, and could be nice, in the beginning. That however ended somewhere around their second Christmas together when sleigh rides and quiet moments in front of the fireplace at his old apartment, gave way to eating out and showing Andrew off to her endless friends that she had acquired from the store. Friends who liked sliding up to him and groping him whenever the chance arose at parties, much more than Debbie did.

About six months later, Andrew finally called it quits. Debbie wasn't happy at the time he told her. She made quite a scene at their place

accusing him of cheating on her for a year with any name that came to her head. He understood, it was a blow to her ego and she was scared that life would change for her, even if it might have been for the better, in Andrew's mind. He had learned many years before in high school not to hold onto something he didn't want. It caused much more pain than, he felt, was necessary. It was best to break up as gentle as possible. However to also make certain that it was understood the relationship was over.

Well, he had done that with Debbie and eventually she did move on. He heard a year later she was engaged. He had also heard that she had broken that off by the next year. So all in all, she felt better. Of course that was when Debbie decided to call Andrew again, trying to 'work things out.' Two weeks later, he had moved to Jasper, took a new job as a Security Guard for the Gold Building on Williams Avenue, and started over.

The Gold Building wasn't actually gold, more of a tint of gold to it. It held many offices including lawyers, doctors and consulting firms, one of which was Greenway Publishing, where Alonna worked. Andrew had met Alonna one evening, coming out of the building. He walked her to her car for safety reasons and ever since then they had built a comfortable friendship. Perhaps at times, a little overshadowed by her snappy comments and sex jokes that he knew meant no harm, but seemed to leave him with a twinge of guilt.

Alonna was always attractive to him, with her small frame that outlined curves he found alluring, if, that is, she hadn't spent so much time trying to look like the runway models on billboards and signs. Alonna's one obsession though was never gaining weight, which seemed to attract a very different sort of male. One Andrew wasn't fond of. Especially considering most of the time, they looked to be devouring her instead of dating her.

Of course, that never stopped Alonna's constant obsession with crash diets and exercise routines that neither resembled exercise nor seemed at all healthy. Her latest, a chocolate diet she had read about in one of her magazines she always had with her. Andrew was a bit fuzzy on the details of the diet. It sounded to him like eating desserts made you thinner and healthier. Which might have been true, if those desserts had anything healthy in them at all. However the desserts that Alonna ate, and he had experienced many of them at mealtimes consisted of more fat than most four-course meals at a medieval banquet. Andrew just didn't have the heart to tell her. Although, he did considering mentioning it ever since she started drinking her coffee with three shots of chocolate raspberry every morning. In the end, he often stayed away from giving her advice on dieting.

First, and most importantly, it seemed to women he was a guy and what did he know about the pains of looking perfect all the time

for men. That was entirely true and Andrew agreed with them. Second, he had been on many occasions accused of looking too good and well fit by women, including Alonna. Besides the fact that all he did was take his morning run which relaxed him and he had been doing since he was a teenager on the school track team. Andrew enjoyed walking to work each day since it was only ten blocks from his apartment and it saved on gas. At least that's why he thought he had been doing it until it was pointed out to him that he was using these methods of aloneness as a way to avoid seeing the trappings of society. Lynn, his girlfriend, provided this information to him several months after Debbie, the first of a stream of women in his life in Jasper. Lynn had studied human behavioral patterns in a night course at the local high school. The knowledge she gained was bestowed upon her boyfriend each night.

By day, Lynn worked as an assistant to Mr. Thomas Franken, the 3rd Vice President in a firm uptown. Again, Lynn had ambitions just like Debbie, wanting to move up the ladder. Andrew believed, perhaps, even take over her boss's job. It was an admirable trait, which she worked very hard at. Only after two months of dating Lynn, she wanted to move in with him. Andrew wasn't so certain about that, but he agreed. Then two months after that she wanted to get married. Andrew was definitely not ready to ask her, so he didn't. It turned out to be a good decision, considering one month later, he

found out those long nights at work had led to much more than copying, projects and reports. Lynn seemed to decide if she couldn’t move up the ladder quick enough, she would receive some help from her boss, Mr. Franken. He was married with two kids.

Andrew asked Lynn to move out when she under some notion of her earlier training thought it would be good to explain to him that she still wanted to marry him, however she had do this with Franken to further her career. After all, she had said at the time, Andrew was only a Security Guard without a college education.

Andrew didn’t tell her he had been a straight A student in college. He also didn’t provide the facts that one of his female professors continually hit on him. His rejection of her led to his dismissal for allegedly cheating on a test he never had. Andrew had fought it, but the Ivy League College Dean didn't take his side, and he was quietly asked to leave. Andrew figured that information wasn’t going to help him in the conversation with Lynn. Besides it occurred to him that he wasn’t that heartbroken over her leaving.

Alonna and he celebrated the break up with a nice quiet dinner at his apartment. Alonna spent much of the evening calling Lynn names that seemed to make her feel better. He had only wished Lynn well and hoped she accomplished her dreams someday of the corner office. He moved on. Since then, he hadn’t heard from Lynn. That was a good sign to Andrew. Too

many ex-girlfriends had seemingly returned to his life on too many occasions than he'd liked to admit.

One was Sarah from his high school senior days that he dated for a total of two dances. She always seemed be shopping in the grocery store or at the post office when he was home for the holidays. Another one, Theresa, gave him a birthday present each year even though they hadn't dated since Sophomore Year in high school.

Theresa was married to Ted, the quarterback, and had three children. Ted was a nice enough guy Andrew had always thought, but not extremely well at deductive reasoning. Theresa had been known around town to have other lovers. Andrew had tutored Ted in high school to keep him on the football team for his senior year when they were finally winning. So he knew her husband. The tutoring wasn't Andrew's idea. It had been a directive from the Principal.

Looking back, Andrew often wondered if that math he had taught Ted ever came in handy at the mechanics job where he now worked since graduation. The profession change was when Ted had received a leg injury at the final game of the season. Deep down, Andrew always thought Ted seemed happy about not being able to go onto college football. Besides Ted was always into cars and he was very good at fixing them. Andrew had experienced Ted's

talents a few times when his old car gave him trouble.

Past relationships aside, he couldn't shake the feeling that Alonna was not always honest with him about her feelings. In some ways he, too wanted their relationship to remain the same. She was a great friend and he loved being with her. There was no pressure; no future plans to lead to destruction, and no problems. Many times, he had secretly agreed with Alonna's assessment of his own relationships. She had said he caused women to lose their minds and then become obsessed with him. Although, Andrew for his part may have rather not have it said to him every time a relationship of his broke up, however he could see her point. They always started out nice, pleasant even, and then ended up in emotional turmoil and entanglements that would make a good twisting and turning mystery novel, like the ones he read by Dan Brown and John Grisham, seem tame at best.

"So are we getting up this morning or would you rather we ignored the tickets I have in my purse leading to the shores of Good Old Merry England, Andrew?" Alonna said, sarcastically.

Andrew smiled. A smile that Alonna had told him on more than one occasion, made her knees weaken. He had laughed it off, but the look on her face at that moment, made him revisit the statement. She adjusted in her seat a

bit. He stood up, walking past her in his shorts, headed for the bathroom.

"You know, Andrew, you should be arrested for looking that good in the morning," she called from his bedroom.

Andrew smiled, pulling a towel out of his closet and called back to her.

"Flattery will get you everywhere," he said coming back around the corner, holding onto the wall. His voice took on a lower tone, that Alonna called his seductive voice.

She huffed at him. He smiled, moving back to the bathroom and closed the door.

"I wish," Alonna said quieter, and drank the remainder of her Chocolate Raspberry coffee.

Alonna often tried not to think of her friend's muscles in his legs from running everyday, or of his muscles in his arms from lifting heavy cartons at his job. Something he did too often for the various businesses that resided in his Gold Building. She had told him time and again, he didn't need to help with deliveries. That it wasn't his job, but her friend was a helper, and he just couldn't abide by leaving those poor damsels in distress. Even though those same damsels happened to stand and watch him as he moved carton after carton into storerooms, breathing a sigh after each one. Or, even if those damsels weren't even damsels, but rather wimpy men who received law degrees and didn't feel manual labor was something they were required to do.

After all, she had heard them say many times when Andrew wasn't around he had the build for it. Why not let him get the exercise? Talking as if he was some peasant to wait on them, Alonna hated that most of all.

However, her moral ground sunk sometimes when she may have resorted herself to look at Andrew's body from time to time. Not only did he have a build to die for, but he also reeked of sexual desire. She was just waiting for her friend to realize she had wanted much more than friendship. That she would be very open to that possibility. When that thought crossed Alonna's mind, though, she pushed it away quickly.

'It's your own fault, Alonna.' She said to herself. 'You did it, didn't you? A year ago after Lynn, you thought he was rebounding and you missed all the signs, you fool.'

She thought back on that glorious moment on Andrew's living room floor. The room had flickered with candlelight and held a warm glow. There was no special conversation that was happening. Although, she was certain she had been complaining about her job, a past time she neither enjoyed nor ever could seem to stop. She remembered he had laughed quietly about something she had said. She had forgotten what it was. Then his eyes darkened a bit and he looked at her with an intense stare he thought he reserved for her dreams only.

The moment seemed to last forever. She could feel herself move towards him slightly. His arm had been resting on the couch cushions behind him moved to her face, gently brushing a strand of hair away from her eyes. She couldn't remember at the time if she was in a dream, or somehow had fallen asleep, but it suddenly become very real. Especially when he moved his hand to the back of her head and his other arm around her waist inside the blanket she had wrapped around herself. His touch was so warm and inviting. He had pulled her gently to him. She went willingly, wanting so desperately to keep his hands on her. He had leaned towards her and she knew he was going to kiss her…

But that's when the world exploded and not in a good way. She had pushed him away from her and stood up suddenly causing him to look back at her, confused. Then came the famous charm that had been known to make grown men run screaming from her side. She lit into him with such intensity she actually thought she would ignite flames, not of passion, but of a devastating fire that would never again emerge from the ashes. Her words were its own firestorm complete with some such nonsense of rebound relationships and her being insulted by Andrew's come-ons. None of which made any sense, but nonetheless she continued on, seemingly unable to stop the stupidity of the words that fell out of her mouth. Fear and shock

ruled them and in turn made Alonna lose her one chance with her friend.

Much to Alonna's surprise and dismay, after she had done all she could to ruin her life and her friendship with the best man she had ever known, Andrew had simply smiled. He touched her hand gently, without passion, intensity or anything but the same good 'ole Andrew, her best friend. He said he understood and the entire incident has never been mentioned again by either of them. It took Alonna several months, and many sleepless nights to move past it, if she ever truly had. While, Andrew was back to his normal that night, never giving any hope that he would touch her like that again. That was the most painful part, but well deserved, she felt.

Alonna now in his bedroom was reeling in her emotions to face another day without Andrew's soft words or touches. At least not in the way she wanted them. She stood and walked to the closed door of his bathroom, taking one final sip of her coffee. She placed it by the small table behind her.

"So what was the dream about this time? The Lady or the battle?"

She asked the question loud enough for him to hear through the door. She had heard the water turn off, indicating he was probably standing there naked drying himself off, she imagined. She pushed away the thought quickly before her imagination of the scene took over in her head.

'You have to spend two weeks in England with him, girl,' she thought. *'You had better learn to behave.'*

After all they weren't going for a pleasure trip. Even if she had been looking forward to it since they had decided to go almost three months ago. Andrew's dreams had begun right after that night, which made Alonna's life almost bearable. The night she had ruined in her anger and rage. Alonna wanted to help her friend solve these dreams he had for the past year. They were plaguing her poor friend and above all else she WAS his friend. She was determined to help him solve this mystery, and to stop these endless dreams that made him tired and worn out from just going to sleep.

They were strange dreams Alonna had thought when she first heard of them. She felt, aside from the occasional moments when her intense sexual fantasies got in the way, usually a fact proceeded by her friend's wearing of some sexy outfit, ones that didn't occur to him he should never have been allowed to wear, she had nothing on his dreams. They were very intense and very real, at least to him it seemed.

She hadn't been aware how much it affected him until she convinced Andrew to go see Dr. Ethan Thomas. He was a past life therapist who specialized in dreams of the former self. In other words, he brought his patients into a state of hypnosis to open a

pathway into the subconscious, into the realm of the human mind in its nocturnal state.

This was something Alonna was very interest in and enjoyed. Often sharing her thoughts with her friend. However, it was, at best, questionable methods of help, in her friend's mind. Andrew had been nice about it when she told him but she excepted no less from Andrew. He was always polite and nice about those things even if he didn't exactly subscribe to them. The one saving grace for Alonna and Dr. Thomas was Andrew's openness to the infinite possibilities of life. He never discounted a single one, just questioned and questioned. It led her to think he was far too smart for his own good. Alonna knew all too well that Andrew had an active imagination. A very intense imagination even, at times.

Andrew had always loved romance movies. 'Chick flicks' as her co-worker Donald referred to them, in his infinite wisdom of 'guy' hood. But Andrew really loved those old black and white movies. He was a fan of the mystery novel and watched adventure and sci-fi movies, more fascinated by the stories than anything else. However more often than not, Andrew would spend his Sundays off at the matinees of the movie theater, watching the beautiful glamorous leading ladies and dashing men from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Andrew couldn't get enough of it. Personally Alonna was more modern, but it was always nice to sit in the dark with him. It was their place and Andrew never

brought his girlfriends there. That was a strange comfort to her.

The intensity of his dreams, however, was harder to deal with then any obsession of old movies. Since that session with Dr. Thomas, Alonna, herself, was starting to buy into his logical deductive reasoning about past lives and otherworldly things. She even thought Dr. Thomas acted strange after the session. He tried to explain away what they had heard, while playing some of the recording back to them in the office. Andrew had been calm about it all, surprisingly. The event disturbed Alonna and Dr. Thomas, though.

Andrew had described places and a battle so graphically she didn't know what to think. He had been there, somehow in the past. In the 12th Century, fighting some army that he described in detail to Dr. Thomas who, after only fifteen minutes, considered bringing him out of the hypnotic state. During the session, Andrew had used his hands to slice an imaginary enemy, with an even more imaginary sword. The battle then turned gruesome. There were countless deaths and plunging of swords into human flesh.

After that, just as Dr. Thomas felt he should wake him up *she* entered into the session. Andrew was quiet for a moment as if listening to someone. Then he started responding to that person. How much he needed her and that he would find her again. He promised to do so with a sweet, longing in his voice. It convinced

Alonna that this woman he was seeing existed. Of course it was only in Andrew's mind, but the intensity of his words left a lasting impression of both of them.

Andrew called her Camille. That was all they had to go on, besides some references to a Battle of Yorkshire that he had from the recording Dr. Thomas gave him at the end of that one session. They never returned for a second. It was Andrew now, who wanted desperately to continue the research. So they did. Alonna and him researched the 12th Century, specifically the Battle of Yorkshire in 1163. They had tried libraries, and on the Internet, searching historical museums and everything on the period of time between 1150 through 1190. They even found references to a Warrior Prince who fought in the Battle of Yorkshire, among others, and was victorious, bringing much protection to his people. However, that was the best they had discovered. Lady Camille was far more difficult to trace. Eventually the research had led them to a British Museum and Library on line. It held the reputation of having the largest collection of medieval tomes and relics from the past in England. It was a place where most searched genealogy records, looking for their ancestors. Andrew had very different plans about his search.

He was convinced they would find something on Lady Camille and the Prince in those books at that library in England. Whether

either of these people existed, or even within the same time period was a complete mystery to Alonna, but her friend needed her. He wanted her to go with him to England, and that was good enough for her. Besides, she had reasoned, the dreams were getting worse over the last few months. She often wondered if Andrew got any sleep at all.

"Andrew," she coaxed, still standing at the bathroom door.

He still hadn't answered her question about the specifics of the dream he had awoken from this morning. She moved a bit closer to the door, listening. Suddenly it opened towards her, she almost fell into him. Andrew stepped out in a towel tied around his waist. His hair was wet and tossed from the shower. The look made Alonna's knees weaken. She moved a step away from him to stop them from shaking, and to stop the desire she felt running through her. It didn't work as Andrew smiled at her, quickly.

"They were the same," he said. "A battle where people died horrible deaths. I could smell it. It was so real."

He stopped for a moment looking past Alonna into the recesses of his mind, or perhaps, she thought, relieving the dream again. There was a sadness that overtook his usually pleasant green eyes at that moment. Alonna felt an urge to reach out to him, in comfort, but the look disappeared as sudden as it had come. He shrugged his shoulders at her.

"I'll tell you Alonna," he started, moving back to the bedroom, drying his hair quickly with other towel. He stopped and turned to her in the doorway.

"It's getting worse."

Andrew looked down for a moment then slowly a smile came across his face.

"The Lady Camille was there, though." His voice took on a lower tone again. "That was the good part." Andrew smiled knowingly to her, and closed the door behind him.

"The Lady Camille," Alonna said softly. She shook her head.

'That's great, Alonna, competing with some old dead girl from a dream. You've got some serious issues.' She said to herself, brushing the comments aside. She moved to the living room and turned on the television waiting for Andrew to get changed.

Distraction could be a good thing, she thought as she flopped herself down on his soft sofa.

After a few moments, Andrew had put on his pants, black socks and the red sweater Alonna had gotten for him last Christmas for his birthday. She was sweet that way, he thought, as he pulled it over his head. She always got him both a birthday and a Christmas gift. Not easy for someone's whose birthday fell on Christmas Day.

He had liked the sweater. It was comfortable, not too hot but form fitting keeping the cold Colorado winter away. He put on his

brown hiking boots pulled out his suitcase he had packed the night before, and placed his toothbrush and some toothpaste inside. He paused to look around the room for a moment thinking if there was anything else he would need for the trip. Nothing came to mind.

This trip didn't remind Andrew of the vacations he took in his youth with his parents. Those were a bit different. Niagara Falls, New York at age seven, The Grand Canyon, Arizona at eight, Yosemite National Park and Disneyland, California at nine and ten, The Black Hills of South Dakota at eleven, and Puget Sound Lighthouse, Washington at twelve.

"Now this is a vacation," His dad would always say.

They would stop for a bite to eat from his Mom's pre-packed lunches. It was always at some roadside picnic rest area, where somehow Mom managed to make a better lunch than any restaurant could serve, and where Dad always found the most amazing views. He always loved those vacations in the summers of his youth. He wouldn't give up those memories for all the Hawaii's and Aruba's in the world.

Andrew thought back to the memories of childhood of horseback riding, skiing, learning to dance, memories he had carefully stored away them for moments like this. *Reflection is so we know where we were and where we are going*, his grandfather used to say to him. His grandfather and namesake was the one who held the past tightly wrapped in old

scrapbooks to give a glimpse of a time long since gone. He would talk on and on about days and captivate his grandson in a past Andrew neither knew nor understood at times. But one that completely fascinated him. Andrew always believed family was important, it was another thing instilled from his grandfather, father and mother from a very early age.

'Family is what matters, Andrew,' his grandfather would always say. 'It's the only thing that you can return to, when the world shuts you away.'

Being an only child, Andrew had his share of loneliness and isolation. However, the link to his past made him feel like he belonged to something greater. Making his family seem much larger than the one who resided inside his home on 25 Perry Street.

Now, he was to embark on a different excursion. One of excitement but held a sense of trepidation also for him. It was possible he would return with nothing, he thought. A thought he had ever since Alonna and him had decided to go to England and keep researching. Andrew suddenly smiled to himself. Of course it was possible that it would be much more, and he would find out a stronger link to the past. That excitement stayed with him as he walked out the bedroom door into his living room.

"All set," he announced.

Alonna looked over at him. She paused for a moment, looked at his outfit, noticing the sweater she had given him, and smiled. He

returned it quickly. Then grabbed his gloves, scarf and short black wool coat from the rack by the door. He picked up her coat.

She turned off the television, walked to where he stood, and slipped on her coat he held out for her.

"Looks like snow again." She said, waited for a moment as he opened the door, and let her walk through first. "Imagine that. Snow in Colorado."

She smiled, passing him. Andrew smiled to himself, at her joke, and followed her out, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER TWO

The sword stung as it sliced his arm. He moved back a step, repositioning his footing to strike a final blow on the enemy before him. His arm swung hard crashing his sword down and slicing the man across the chest. Rich red blood spewed forth onto his tunic and across his face. He did not blink as he watched the man fall face forward before his feet.

Without another thought he raised his sword high and yelled, plunging it into the enemy's back. Muscle and bone collapsed under the weight and strength of it. He pushed it deeper into him with all his might. The man twitched under it for a moment. Satisfaction crept upon him in that moment as his enemy's life was extinguished forever.

With one movement, he pulled his sword out of the enemy's back, and replaced it in his sheath. He turned away towards his own men now. The one on the ground was no longer his concern. He had been the leader of the infidels and his death caused the remaining few of his army to run away in fear. The battle had been won.

He looked up towards the purple sky. Night had fallen on the battlefield. As far as his eyes could see men were writhing on the ground, some moving, some to never move again. He surveyed the land searching for his own men.

He breathed in the cold air, closing his eyes. Her face was now before him. Beautiful locks of auburn hair twirled around her neck and down her back. Her emerald eyes holding compassion and softness he had never felt before she entered his life.

'Soon,' he thought, 'I will be back in your arms, my dearest Camille. I will feel the warmth and softness of your skin mingled with mine. Soon, you will be mine.'

He let a small smile escape his lips as he headed back toward his men. But the smile and the thought of his beautiful lady faded quickly as he looked upon the dead being carried from the earth.

'Good men died here today,' he said to himself. 'Good men who will be remembered.' He would see to that. He would make certain they were never forgotten. Proclaimed as heroes who fought for England.

A sense of pride and disgust washed over him. He fell to his knees and cried out to the God of all men. His men in arms turned to him now. He could feel their confused stares upon him, but it mattered naught. The God of all creation would know what had transpired here on this night, and he would seek revenge for his fallen comrades. He lowered his head and closed his eyes once more.

A burning sensation ran through him. It reeked of blood lust and revenge he pushed it aside to focus on what he must do.

Again, the Lady Camille's face came closer in his mind. The bitterness and anger faded away in a moment. He looked upon her, and smiled. She smiled back, a beautiful smile of purity and innocence. 'She was truly of our one God,' he thought, sent to him to ease his suffering. For as the battle still held in his hands and was heavy upon his heart, she was there, comforting his pain. He believed in her with all his being and he would not dishonor his God by disgracing her now.

Ever since he had arrived at her manor, two fortnights ago. Before the burning flesh from the village of his people darkened his mind, she had been there. Soft words to soothe his aching heart. A burning passion erupted between them it seemed, almost from that first smile she gave him. It was not quenched until he took her to his bed. And although, he believed in doing so it would fan the flames between them. It did not, neither it seemed was she fulfilled with just one night in his arms. So it was to be, day after day, he searched for the beast and his infidels who burned the village. While night after night, he returned to her waiting arms and promises of love. Letting her engulf him in a fire he had never known and never wanted to escape from.

His eyes were closed still and he could hear the sound of his men readying their horses with the dead and the wounded upon them, he was certain. He would return to her father's house and he would marry her/

‘I will make her my wife and together we will be as one,’ he said in his mind. Never had he felt anything so strong. He had succumbed to her love, love he never believed he could. As he stood on that battlefield of death and destruction, he vowed to God and all to love her from this day forward.

“By the one true God, I shall!” He screamed into the sky. “I shall! I shall!”

“Andrew, Andrew...” The voice sounded distant to Andrew but the feeling of arms shaking him was very near.

He woke up with a start. Instantly sitting up in the plane’s small seat next to Alonna. She was looking up at him with an expression he had seen far too often over the past year.

“Andrew, you were having another dream,” she said quietly to him, giving him a small smile.

Andrew looked around him and saw the other passengers trying not to meet his eyes, indicating he had done more than just sleep.

“Did I....” he started to ask. Alonna nodded her head.

“Oh...sorry.” She nodded her head at his apologetic tone.

“Yea, well, I’m used to you acting like a crazed lunatic, but that’s no reason to inflict this knowledge on all the nice passengers, Andrew,” she said playfully. “Besides, don’t worry, you weren’t moaning or anything,” she smiled towards him. “Although that might have been

more fun," she leaned in, "I would have let you keep going."

"Thanks," he said back, sitting up straighter in the seat. He looked towards the small plane window to the left of Alonna's seat. "Where are we?"

"Umm," she started leaning towards the window. "Somewhere between America and England." She leaned back in her seat. "I don't know about you, but all the clouds look the same to me."

She smiled again, this time shrugging her shoulders at him. Andrew lowered his head to hide a small smile. He was trying to be casual about his constant dreams, at least for the flight. He needed to not fall asleep in public areas, he told himself. Another thought occurred to him at that moment and he turned towards Alonna looking at her seriously.

"How long was I asleep?" He asked, concerned. These days he knew he could be out for minutes, hours or even days.

A few months ago, Alonna had to wake him up because he wasn't at work for two days and he hadn't been aware he had even fallen asleep. After that incident, Andrew purchased a much louder alarm clock and had Alonna call him every morning. That was her idea. It worked. He always made it into work, and even though it wasn't the most exciting job, and he felt he had lost some luster for the profession itself, it did pay the rent.

“Just about two hours,” she replied back, moving her long brown hair to her left shoulder.

“Don’t worry, you didn’t miss anything. It was a bad movie anyway,” she smiled at him and winked, “no romance.”

Andrew nodded his head, giving her a quick smile. Alonna felt the usual twinge of desire run through her, and once again, pushed it aside.

No need to get involved with those feelings right now, she said to herself. *Two weeks in the same hotel room as him would be enough to get my juices flowing.*

“I did save you some peanuts,” she said, brushing past the awkward moment.

She reached into her pocket, pulled out a bag of airplane peanuts and tossed them to him. Andrew caught them and smiled back.

“Thanks. It’s the entire reason I fly.” He opened the bag with one motion, digging in and popping a few into his mouth. “Umm, honey roasted,” he said smiling again.

Alonna smiled to herself at the boyish look on his face. He never seemed to cease to amaze her, she thought. He definitely enjoyed the small things in life. A well made fire, ice skating, hot cocoa on a cold night, a good glass of wine and a bag of prepackaged honey roasted peanuts, probably sitting around for months. That was Andrew in a nutshell, Alonna thought. Looking over at him through her lashes, she

smiled, shaking her head as he popped a few more peanuts in his mouth. She knew she would never want him to change. After a few more crunching moments as he enjoyed the food and Alonna enjoyed his expression she decided to change the subject, not necessarily for the better.

"So, anything more about our Prince or Lady Camille from dreamland?" Her intentions was to be light about the conversation, considering how intense his dreams were becoming, at least to her watching from the observer's viewpoint.

Suddenly though she knew she shouldn't have asked. His expression changed from playfulness to a definite sense of wonder. His eyes brightened a bit, if that was at all possible to her, but apparently it was. He slowly smiled, sending a chill down her spine. He leaned in closer to her she could feel his breath on her neck and smell his after-shave. It engulfed her. She loved that smell. Andrew had never changed his brand since the day he had met her, and she was ever so grateful for it. The scent filled her with images of him that she would neither reveal nor succumb to. Unless of course, he asks me, she thought.

"It was romantic." He said, softly lowering his voice into a register that made women swoon, even if he wasn't aware of it.

Alonna took a moment, released the images swirling again in her head, smiled at him, and punched him lightly on the arm.

“Yea, yea. You’re full of it,” she replied.

He smiled at her and was going to nod when he remembered the feeling he woke up with. The smile faded into something else on his face now. Alonna saw it. Andrew felt it. It was a definite expression of love, intense love. But just as quickly as it came the feeling and the expression were gone. His eyes moved away from Alonna’s as he recalled another image from the dream, one much more frightening.

“Mostly it was the battle again,” he said, quickly, trying to dismiss it. “But there was this moment where I felt like...where he felt like,” Andrew corrected himself. It was something he had been doing for a while now and it made Alonna afraid in a way she couldn’t explain.

“Like what?” She asked, cautiously.

Andrew looked at her, his green eyes showing an expression of thinking and feeling at the same time. The look told Alonna maybe she didn’t want the answer to her question.

“Happy,” he finally said. “He was happy.”

Andrew wanted to say love, but the expression that was etched on Alonna’s face said he should refrain. She seemed afraid of what the answer was.

“Happy,” she said, shaking her head at him. “After a battle. Nice guy, real chivalrous and all.” Alonna moved sideways in her seat to face Andrew. “You know, Andrew, it’s possible

that this guy you've been dreaming about wasn't you at all in a former life, but just some sick guy who liked to massacre and butcher people."

She threw him a sideways glance, "unless there's something you're not telling me about your dark past, lover boy."

Andrew lowered his head looking at her with seductive eyes and smiled. A simple expression to accentuate her joke, but the moment stayed with Alonna far longer than her friend who moved past it quickly. Andrew turned away, looking past the passengers across from him to their small window and to the white clouds passing by trying to let go of the images of the dream. In his mind rationally he knew what he thought was happening could not be. It was impossible.

Hadn't he told himself time and again after one of the dreams that felt so real he could touch, smell, and taste everything as if it existed alongside him?

He felt Alonna's hand on his arm, comfortingly.

"Listen, Andrew, we will find something." She smiled up at him. "I promise."

Alonna was trying to offer comfort, Andrew knew that, and he so desperately wanted to receive it. In the past, ex-girlfriends or other trouble times of his life, Alonna had always been there to offer the same comfort. He just couldn't bring himself to be comforted any longer. He had to know about the Prince and, if not more so, about Lady Camille, the woman

who touched his heart and soul without a word. He had always felt an overwhelming sadness when she appeared in his dreams, but there was a small glint of hope in her eyes that moved him. More than any other person ever had, even his best friend sitting next to him.

‘ I want...no,’ he thought, ‘*I need to help Lady Camille.*’

What help was required, or even if it were possible any help would be received, was unknown but he would try. A connection had happened between Lady Camille in the 12th Century and him in 2005 and he wasn’t about to break it, not for anything in his or her world. Somehow he knew, deep down inside him, that he needed her. And she needed him.

At 11:30 PM, London Time, 6:30 PM Colorado Time after nine hours and ten minutes exactly the plane stopped taxing and landed on the shores of England. The British Airways Crew and Captain out of the Denver International Airport welcomed everyone to the London-Heathrow Airport and hoped they would enjoy their stay in the United Kingdom. Within moments the inside of the plane’s aisle way had begun to fill up with people, collecting their overhead bin luggage, coats, hats, scarves and anything else they had stored away during the flight.

Andrew handed Alonna her coat, her scarf and what she called her ‘stylish London red hat’ she had picked up especially for the trip. He pulled down his black wool coat, his own

scarf and gloves, not so stylish, but more practical, from the overhead, and carried them over his arm. Their bags, against Alonna's better judgment, were placed below in the cargo hold. Two minutes after their flight landed she had already started her panic that they wouldn't be there as they arrived at baggage claim. Andrew assured her they would.

A half-hour later, Andrew was proven correct, as her, again, stylish black suitcase and carrying bag appeared on the turnstile. It took a few more moments for Andrew's older black suitcase without the trappings of wheels or secret compartments all over to arrive.

With their bags in hand, they headed towards the airport taxi service and jumped on a bus towards the London bus transit. Their destination was the Atlantic Paddington Hotel, which for only sixty-eight dollars a night, American guests were promised 'comfort and satisfaction'. For many tourists, the hotel was in the heart of the action of London, close to Kensington Gardens, Soho and shopping on Oxford Street. The hotel offered private baths, which was a plus for Alonna, who complained often that the Motel 6 equivalent in London seemed to be bunk beds and shared bathrooms known as *Hostels*.

However as Andrew had pointed out at the time 'they were just sleeping there.' At which time Alonna pointed out about his sleeping habits and inability to control outbursts and ramblings on in his sleep. After that, it was

agreed by both that a private room and bath might be the best way to go for a few dollars more.

Traveling through London was a new experience for the American tourist, and especially to the two from Colorado in the taxi at that moment. Driving on the wrong side of the road was one of the experiences they would never forget. However it wasn't just the new scenery that caught Andrew's eye as they rounded a corner and came upon the hotel, he felt like something had begun. Excitement and hope stirred inside him and for the first time in a long time, he was starting to come alive again.

After arriving at the hotel and placing their things in the room they decided to get something to eat and some sleep, much to Alonna's disappointment, to get an early start in the morning. Her first night in England and he was tired. It wasn't surprising he needed sleep. On the flight after waking up from a short nap, he seemed exhausted in a way Alonna hadn't seen Andrew. Usually he was bounding with energy never having time for sleep, but the nightmares were getting to him and she knew it.

The hotel room was simple enough and had a charm to it for London. Two twin size beds were in the room, not that she expected different, but she had hoped, a small table in between the beds and a chair near a window. There was a dresser on the opposite wall of the beds and a television set with a remote. After grabbing a bite to eat around the corner from the

hotel at a place one of the attendants said was good food, apparently he knew the owner, because Andrew and her didn't agree on that point, they settled in for the night.

"I'm sure we're find something," Alonna said to him as he climbed into bed.

Andrew was about to answer and decided against it. "Goodnight, Alonna," he replied and turned out the small light.

As uneventful as the night was they were up at the crack of dawn heading towards breakfast in the hotel's lobby, consisting for Alonna some coffee and a Danish and Andrew just coffee and a piece of fruit they went out onto the London streets. Their destination was the Museum and Library that they had found on the Internet in Colorado.

It took a while to marvel at the expansiveness of the collection and the museum itself once they opened, a few hours later than when they had arrived, before they settled down and began researching for Andrew's surname of Whiete and his family's crest. The good part was the name always had the unique spelling even when his ancestors came over from Ireland years earlier. They had never changed it. This made it possible to track and not more than 30 minutes later they had found it.

"Hey, I've got it," Alonna said excited, looking up from a large book on family crests, symbols and nobility from the 10th to 12th century. She turned the book towards Andrew, seated across from her.

“There it is.” She was pointing to the picture of the Whiete Family Crest on the page and smiled in victory at him.

Andrew leaned over to see the page more clearly. The crest’s symbol was an eagle in flight with a boar holding a three-pointed staff. It looked to be taken as a picture from an old tapestry painting. The colors were gold and maroon and the heraldry lines were embattled, resembling the look of a castle tower or the top of a rook piece from a game of Chess.

The book held meanings to the animals, colors and heraldry lines. Alonna read as Andrew listened.

“The boar represented bravery in battle and the eagle signified a person of noble nature, strength, bravery and alertness,” Alonna said. “Because the eagle’s wings are spread it signified protection in that house.”

“Protection?” Andrew questioned.

“Knight probably or something like that,” Alonna replied and continued, “the color gold was the mark of generosity and elevation of the mind. The color maroon or sanguine means patient in battle and victorious. That explains your dreams. Lots of battle,” she said quickly.

“And victorious,” Andrew said, causing Alonna to look at him for a moment. Andrew stayed focused on the page before them. He had moved to sit next to her when she had begun reading.

“The shield has a fur design which means it is generally thought of as weasel fur, which represents dignity or…” she stopped.

“Noble birth,” Andrew concluded.

Alonna looked at him. He caught her eye but turned back to the crest on the page.

“All in all, I’d say it’s encouraging,” Alonna said. “We know that your families royalty or at least of noble birth.” She said. “Why does that not surprise me, Andrew?” A smile crossed her face.

“I want to find out something about this Prince. Something that will help me discover why, if he is my ancestor, do I keep dreaming of his battles?” Andrew said, taking a breath and looking away for a moment, ignoring her earlier comment.

“And about her,” Alonna replied, trying to sound casual about the Lady Camille. Alonna’ knew her emotions were tightly wound these days. “That’s the real reason we’re here, isn’t it, Andrew?”

Andrew looked up at her, sharply, and shook his head, sighing.

“Maybe she isn’t anyone, just a figment of my imagination.”

He moved back to his seat across from her. He turned back to the book before him. It contained people of royalty, names, houses, and titles. He flipped the pages casually. For a moment, Alonna took pity on her friend. His face showed his defeat as he kept flipping the book’s pages, not really expecting to find

anything. She was about to apologize for her remark, when she suddenly heard him take in a gasp of air.

"What is it?" She said.

"It's her," he said almost in a whisper.

Andrew's eyes stayed focused on the page before him. Alonna stood up and walked to him, leaning over to look.

"She...is...beautiful," Andrew gasped through breaths. Alonna looked down at the page that had caught her friend's attention.

It held a portrait that had been impeccably created by the artist with a striking attention to detail. The woman, dressed as a noblewoman of a rich nature, wore a beautiful green gown that dropped upon her curves with an exquisiteness that did not miss the attention of at least two of the eyes peering down at her at that moment. Her hands were small and delicate. They held three rings, one, an emerald stone that was very detailed in the picture, another was a ruby and the third was a gold wedding band. Her hair flowed around her shoulders, not typical at all of old medieval pictures where the women usually pulled their hair up and back, Andrew thought as he remembered back to his medieval art class in his only year at college. It was common in those days for women to wear their hair up to avoid lice.

The woman's hair was a radiant auburn color captured again by the artist's attention to the details. Her head was covered in small

ringlet curls that accentuated her emerald green eyes, small nose and slightly parted lips. Her hair hung down her bare pale shoulders where the dress fell from her arms and tightened around her slim waist and beautiful hips. She was standing in the portrait and she seemed for all her beauty, small and unassuming in her stature.

Behind her hung a tapestry of the most exquisite gold with a maroon accent. There was some design on it that was not meaningful to the artist who paid far more attention to the woman than the wall decoration. Her expression was one of an excitement, not smiling, but she looked as if she did smile a lot and laugh. Her eyes were looking directly at the artist, and now at Alonna and Andrew, causing both to stare for a long moment.

Slowly, the enchantment of the red-haired beauty faded, at least for Alonna. She moved beside Andrew, leaning on the table and looking to the caption under the portrait. She read it out loud.

'A portrait of Lady Camille of Wilshire, wife of Prince Andrew of the Royal British Crown, knight of the King's Realm of England. Artist unknown. Circa 1170s.'

"Good artist." Alonna replied, sitting down in her chair across the table.

Andrew continued to stare at the portrait of the woman of his dreams. A few moments passed before Alonna tried again.

“Andrew...” Reluctantly, he looked up at her. She could tell he was still lost deep in thought about the Lady Camille.

“At least we know they were married, right?” She attempted to bring him back to her, but he blinked his eyes and nodded.

“Yes,” he said, absently. His eyes went back to the page before him.

After a moment, he began reading out loud this time.

“Hey, listen to this,” he started.

“Lady Camille of Wilshire was the daughter of a wealthy lord and landowner, Lord Thomas Moore of Wilshire, who gained his lands through service to the crown as a tax collector and become a regent of the King.”

“What does that mean?” Alonna asked. “I thought a regent was a person who held the throne for someone who was too young to take over.”

“Usually, but that wasn’t until later on, somewhere in the 13th century,” he said, quoting from the memory of a book he had read when he studied medieval times.

Andrew had always been fascinated with the customs, cultures and ways of that long ago time. Of course, he usually picked and chose what he read, and he was aware that he, too often, romanticized the idea of chivalry. That it was more likely people back then were harsh and hard, not soft or poets. It was just something Andrew rarely wanted to think about. Rather, he liked the direct purpose, the

understanding and direction that their lives took. The essence of the people interested him far more than anything. Most people believed that you had only one path during those centuries of history. Noblemen were rich and remained rich. Commoners were poor peasants who worked hard and never received even so much as a 'thank you' from the Lords or Kings.

However in his research, Andrew had discovered that was far from the truth. Commoners, during the crusades and other wars the British Crown fought were enlisted into battle often. Some were even knighted for their bravery, courage and honor in serving the Crown, by the King himself. Some received lands and titles while others received great respect in their villages. Of course that didn't change the fact that the ruling class still ruled, but hope was there, if you didn't die in the battles that is. More often than not they probably did, but a poor peasant could rise within the system, it just took courage, bravery and as Andrew often thought, the ability to stay alive.

"Regents could also be men who fought for the crown of England, and were rewarded with lands and a title," Andrew said explaining. "They were also regents, ones acting as a ruler or a governor. Lord Moore was most likely one of those. He ruled Wilshire for the King. This title would make his daughter a lady and help elevate their status within the royalty of the day."

“To the point of marrying a prince?” Alonna questioned.

She looked at Andrew, doubting his explanation of Lady Camille. Andrew didn’t look up, but rather kept his eyes focused on the portrait.

“I don’t know about that,” he said, quietly. He was thinking as he spoke, Alonna could tell.

“You know,” he said, quickly looking up at Alonna, “it is possible that the Moores had some royalty lineage already. It doesn’t say anything about that.”

“Maybe they had to get married,” Alonna smiled a bit. Andrew cocked his head at her and shook it.

“Not everyone had that problem back then. Most ladies were virgins before their wedding night,” Andrew replied.

“Yea, maybe,” Alonna started, “but think about it, Andrew. Some battle weary prince sees that Lady,” she pointed to Lady Camille’s portrait, “and you really think the laws of chivalry or whatever are going tell him what to do?” Alonna nodded her head to emphasize her point.

“Maybe,” he replied. Alonna knew she had lost him again in thought.

“Besides weren’t they always taking women back then against their will, you know what we call, rape and all today?” Alonna shook

her head. “She probably got raped all the time,” she said under her breath. “Poor girl.”

“Not if her family was respected, Alonna. She was most likely cloistered until marriage,” Andrew countered.

“Even better,” Alonna said. “Come on, it was a man’s world, Andrew. They ruled it and he was a Prince.” She looked to him.

He was still staring down at the portrait. Alonna sighed a bit. After another long moment, she leaned closer across the table and smiled at Andrew.

“Maybe Camille wasn’t a good girl,” she said amusingly.

Andrew looked up sharply towards her. There was a flash of anger that ran through his green eyes, it made Alonna move back slightly in her seat.

“Maybe not,” she said to herself quietly.

Andrew’s expression did not falter as he looked at her for several long moments. The look made Alonna uncomfortable for the first time around her friend. Then it passed, and he returned to the page, focusing yet again, on the beautiful Lady Camille. Alonna let out a breath she didn’t know she had been holding, and looked down at the book before her about medieval pageantry. She flipped through a few pages coming back to herself after a moment. She closed the book, piled it on top of the countless others sitting next to her, and looked up at Andrew again. This time he looked

confused at whatever he was reading, his fingers were slowly scanning the words.

"You know," she said suddenly, causing Andrew to stop and look at her.

The expression told her he had been concentrating far too hard, and it took a moment for him to register her, and the fact that she was speaking to him. She smiled quickly to afford another sharp look from him.

"I think you're getting too much into this, Andrew. Let's take a break."

"Yea, you go on ahead," he said, with his usual friendly voice, and sparkling eyes. He gave her a quick smile. "I'm just going to keep reading and see if I can find out anything else."

Alonna was about to say something about being in another country, and that she didn't want to go out alone, but he had already closed the book before me changing his concentration completely.

"You're right, Alonna. We should take a break," he pushed the book aside, and smiled at her. "How about some food? You hungry?"

"Food would be good," Alonna smiled back.

He was her friend again, the man whom she knew and trusted. She knew he wouldn't leave her alone.

"Let's see if they will keep a few of these books for us when we come back," he said, cheerfully.

Andrew reached over, picking up her stack of books, as well as his. They stood up and

proceeded towards the desk at the center of the library.

"Chivalry isn't dead," she said, joking.

He smiled back at her, as he walked ahead. The smile made Alonna push down another feeling she wasn't ready to admit to him. The librarian, Mrs. Shackles, who introduced herself only by the fact she had a nametag on the front of the desk where she sat overlooking the section on genealogy research, looked at Andrew as he approached her.

"Did you find what you were looking for?" She asked pleasantly in her British accent, proper and pointed.

"Some. Thank you." Andrew answered. She smiled at him as he laid down the books on the large desk before him.

Alonna tried not to laugh. Even here in England, thousands of miles away from America women old enough to be his mother or grandmother, were taken with him. It was fascinating.

"Could we reserve a few of these volumes to look at later today?" He asked politely back.

"Of course, my dear, which ones?" Mrs. Shackles said, pleasantly.

Andrew indicated the books, four of them to her. She nodded and put cards in them that said 'reserved'.

"All set," she replied, looking at Andrew to Alonna.

“I will make certain these will be available for you when you both return. However, I cannot guarantee them past five o clock today, you understand?”

“Yes, thank you very much. We will be back,” Andrew smiled at her. She returned the smile, and went back to her work.

“All right, let’s get something to eat.” He said to Alonna as they walked towards the door. “There looked like a good deli around the corner. I saw it on the way here from the hotel.”

“Sounds good,” Alonna agreed.

They exited the large library doors and walked back onto the street. The afternoon winds were brisk and Alonna pulled her scarf around her neck to keep out the chill. For a few moments they walked in silence.

“Andrew,” Alonna started carefully

He looked over at her, as he always did. It was one of the numerous traits Alonna always liked him for...his attentiveness. But that was before the dreams began. As of late, his attentiveness was replaced by lack of sleep, confusion and generally being lost in another world. This moment had become rare and she took some time in speaking her next thought.

“What makes the dreams so real?” She finally asked.

He stayed focused on her, as they walked. Then his eyes shifted to the road ahead. Shops passed by, a shoe store, several clothing stores. In the distance there was the corner deli they had passed this morning.

“It’s hard to explain,” he said slowly, not looking over at her.

“I know it’s a dream, that I couldn’t possibly be there…but it feels like I’m living it. Not like it’s my life,” he looked at her briefly, “it’s not my life.” He walked a few more moments focused on the streets. “I can feel the wind on my face, smell the earth at my feet.” He stopped turning to Alonna, she watched him intently.

“I’m not there, Alonna, I couldn’t be. But somehow it feels right. At first, I was afraid of the dreams. They were vivid and disturbing, especially all the fighting. I could feel the pain in my arm from a wound and taste blood in my mouth from another. Then *she* came into the dreams,” he paused and looked down, “and it seems right.”

Alonna didn’t miss the way he said ‘she’ and a little hope in her died. He was looking at her with another expression that she had never seen from her friend. It was sadness and pain, yet hope and relief all at the same time.

“She comforts the pain....” he said, quietly, almost willing himself to feel that comfort.

There was a long pause before he looked back at Alonna and shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know maybe I’m just going crazy.”

His voice took on a more casual and dismissive tone. He tried to brush away the feelings he had. Feelings that ran so deep, Andrew could feel Camille still reaching out to him.

"I don't think so." Alonna reached out and touched his arm, smiling at him. He smiled back and took her hand in his. A warm sensation ran through both of them.

"Thanks."

Still holding hands, they walked into the deli. Content, it seemed, at leaving the conversation outside.

CHAPTER THREE

It had been hours since Andrew and Alonna left the deli and had returned to the Library. Still trying to find out any information about the Prince and his wife, the Lady Camille, from the portrait. The search, which continued on for days, was in vain. The only thing they discovered was that the Battle of Yorkshire in 1163 killed many knights and commoners, and it was in fact led by Prince Andrew to stop a group of French soldiers from invading the area. The battle was described as one of a vicious nature, cutting off heads and such. No reference to the details in Andrew's dreams at all, it was all very discouraging to say the least.

Tracing Andrew's lineage from the Whiete Family Crest proved fruitless as well. With only a handful of Whiete's to track over the 900 years, the only reference to their titles or wealth was one Lord in the 15th century that was declared a bastard, and lost his money in gambling. That footnote was barely noticeable in one of the volumes and overlooked quickly by the author. As to tracing the lineage of the Prince the only clue seemed to be in the colors of gold and maroon that he carried into battle. At least those had matched Andrew's family crest colors, however further research proved that even that was questionable since the colors were common and could have been used for many different families at the time. Gold was commonplace for all royalty and maroon for

lineage to the King. Also, the fact they uncovered that during the Renaissance period it was often commonplace to design family crests and colors to make a family more prominent than they actually were did not bode well for the two Americans at the Library.

The only clues seemed to be within Andrew's dreams. Many of which were growing more intense as the days continued. Just three days after their initial arrival in London, Andrew talking in his sleep awaked Alonna. The words were harsh unlike Andrew's subtle, soft tone of voice, and more disturbingly, were all in Latin.

After waking him up carefully, she had read all about waking up people from a deep sleep and how it could kill them, she tried to find out what the dream had been about. Unfortunately, Andrew was exhausted from it all and fell asleep again after a few moments. This time he slept more comfortably. All in all the trip to London with only one week left to go was becoming pointless with no more real information that helped uncover her friend's endless journeys at night.

Alonna, however, was sensing a change in Andrew. He was more open to the dreams writing them down in a journal he had picked up at a local store. He wasn't discussing all the facts with her but she felt at least he was getting it out somewhere. It seemed to be working. He was becoming more focused.

It was the Lady Camille Portrait that most disturbed her now, though. He had made a copy that first day and kept it with him all the time. She would often find him in the hotel room staring at it for long periods of time. The intensity with which he did this made her question how deeply he was affected by this dead woman from the 12th Century. The slight moments Alonna and he used to have, a touch, holding hands, a soft word, were being replaced by a pointed seriousness that Andrew never seemed to possess before.

Knowing this should have prepared Alonna for several events that occurred after, but they only seemed to confuse her more. The mystery of Andrew's dreams was nothing in comparison to the mystery of her friend's behavior. He contemplated instead of talked. He focused instead of lightening the conservation through a joke. He was starting to look forward to the dreams, when he used to be scared of sleeping. He even found sweet pleasures in grave markers and graveyards they visited across the countryside to try and find tombs of past family members. Something that really surprised Alonna, considering Andrew never really even liked going to graveyards before. Things were definitely changing for her friend and she felt like she was losing him somehow. To what she hadn't a clue but she wasn't going to give up easily or without a fight.

She looked over at him as the bus pulled away from its fifth stop so far this morning. Andrew had decided it was time to go to the site of the Battlefield in Yorkshire. They had found a map of battlefields just two days earlier and they had made reservations for this bus trip that took you to the famous sites. Andrew didn't seem excited about it. It was more an intense focus. That focus was causing him to stare out the window deep in thought since the bus had left two hours ago.

Alonna thought about interrupting his thoughts several times, especially when several people dressed in all black with purple and blue hair got on the bus a few stops ago, but decided against it. It was England, probably not that surprising to most natives here, but the bus was filled with tourists, upon whom the new arrivals made quite an impression on.

At this current stop it was just a small child, who looked about 5 or 6, who entered with his mother. The child was dressed warmly, where a little head was peeking out from the mother's Eskimo style coat and scarf. It had been cold this morning and Alonna in her warm coat was looking in envy a bit at the little boy who sat in the vacant seats in front of her and Andrew. Again, Alonna thought of making a comment to Andrew, but decided against it when she looked over at him still staring out the window.

Alonna did smile briefly at the little boy and his mother. The latter smiled back and looked from Alonna to Andrew in the seat next to her. Alonna ignored the look on the mother's face who was expressing she took a liking to Andrew's handsome look and body covered still by his black wool coat and maroon and black scarf.

You should have seen him this morning when he woke up without a shirt, Alonna thought and almost smiled again. The frustration she had always felt around him and her losing the opportunity that night a year ago didn't hamper her ability to take opportunities that presented themselves since they had been staying in the hotel room together. Even if this morning things became almost awkward.

They had made hotel reservations that first day they learned of where the battle site was located in Yorkshire. It was this morning when they had packed up their belongings and suitcases to take with them on their next stop and they hit into each other accidentally while crisscrossing the small room. Alonna had hit him dead on, slamming into his chest. He barely faltered and reached his arms around to steady her. The only thing between them was a sweater she held in her arms and was crushed against him after the hit. He had only smiled at her and asked if she was all right, which she nodded to, before taking his warm, strong arms away from her body and going back to his packing.

Within moments they were leaving the hotel and the memory of the encounter behind.

Her thoughts were interrupted not by her speaking to Andrew but by the little boy in front of them speaking to him.

"Psst...." the little boy said in a small English accent, "psst...."

Andrew looked over at him and smiled the friendly smile he reserved just for occasions like this. Andrew loved kids, always had ever since Alonna had known him. One of the lawyers in the office building had a small girl, Lily, who was precarious and out of control. Her mother never disciplined her when she came to visit during 'take your daughter to work' day. She was nine when it started and for the past several years, it was Andrew who spent time with her on his lunch break. Now, three years later, Lily often stopped by to visit Andrew. They were fast friends. Something Andrew always seemed to be with kids.

"Hi," Andrew said to the little boy who had been trying to get his attention.

"Hello," the little boy said back, and smiled with a grin that was missing his two front teeth.

"I hope you got something good from the tooth fairy for those teeth," Andrew said, smiling back.

The little boy nodded enthusiastically at him.

“Five dollars,” he said, smiling. “Of course, that was just from Mommy’s tooth fairy, Daddy’s tooth fairy was sleeping.”

Andrew smiled at him and nodded in understanding.

“She has to sleep sometimes, I suppose,” he replied to the little boy who showed another glowing smile at him.

“Yes,” the little boy agreed.

“I’m Timmy,” he announced putting out his hand to shake Andrew’s.

Andrew shook it and smiled at the grown up quality the boy had, maybe too much for a child of his age.

“My name’s Andrew. This is my friend, Alonna,” he said looking over at her.

“Hi, Timmy,” Alonna replied and shook the boy’s hand also. At this point the mother turned around.

“Timmy, sit down,” she said in her proper English accent.

“They’re nice,” Timmy said to his mother, smiling.

“Sorry about that,” the mother turned to Andrew and smiled briefly apologizing for what she felt was her son being a bother to them.

“No problem. Timmy and I were just discussing his recent loss of teeth,” Andrew said, and smiled at the woman.

“See, he is nice, Mummy,” Timmy interjected and turned back around to face Andrew again.

"He knows all about the tooth fairy."

"That's nice, Timmy," she said and looked back at Andrew.

"Are you on vacation?" She asked. Alonna almost sighed.

Here we go, she thought to herself. It never took long for any woman to take an opportunity to speak with her illustrious, handsome friend, even abroad. She almost laughed about her earlier thought with Mrs. Shackles at the library. Apparently he was desirable on all shores, it seemed.

"Yes," Andrew answered simply, which to Alonna meant something completely different than to the brunette, semi-pretty woman, who was wearing far too much makeup to look younger than she was.

Alonna knew the short answer was in an effort not to keep the conservation going, but to end it in hopes it wouldn't turn into what it always did, where Andrew felt like a butterfly held under a microscope for observation or rather for collecting. It was an awful curse, even if her friend was always pleasant about it. Women took to him, always did, probably always would. She could recall about a thousand times when they would be out somewhere and women would just walk up to him and begin conservation about anything they could think of. The woman sitting in front of them who had turned slightly in her seat to face him was no different, even if she was from another country.

“That is nice,” she said and smiled at him. “I’m Melanie and I guess you met my son, Timmy.”

“Yes, we go way back,” Andrew said smiling at the little boy who was looking at him the entire time.

“He is Andrew,” Timmy announced proudly that he remembered Andrew’s name. Andrew smiled at him.

“And this is my friend, Alonna,” Andrew replied to Melanie. Melanie smiled towards Alonna pleasantly.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Melanie said focusing her attention back on Andrew. Alonna wasn’t surprised. Nonetheless, she still did something she could have never imagined she would have done if she hadn’t have been sitting there listening to herself do it.

“Andrew’s been having dreams about possibly his ancestor who was a Prince in England during the 12th Century,” Alonna began, causing Andrew to look over at her. But once she started there was no going back.

“He’s been having dreams about a battle that took place in Yorkshire in 1163. We are going there to see if we can find out anything before the dreams get worse,” she finished.

Immediately after, Alonna wished she could have taken it all back. Not only because of the look on Andrew’s face expressing surprise and a disappointment at betraying a confidence between friends, that was now directed at her,

but also from the sudden overwhelming urge she felt to melt into the seat and be gone forever.

"That is so fascinating," Melanie said staying completely focused back on Andrew. "Have you followed your lineage back to the 12th Century all by yourself?"

The question had no intention of being answered, Alonna knew that and so did Andrew. It was just asked to sound interested in anything about the handsome face before her, but because that face happened to belong to her friend, Alonna knew he would answer it out of politeness if nothing more.

"Alonna and I have been researching for a week in London at the British Museum and Royal Library," he said, politely.

"Did you have to fight with swords?" Little Timmy asked Andrew suddenly, as if just understanding what they had said.

"No," Andrew said. "It was just a dream," he explained as if Timmy were far older than his six years.

Andrew always did that with children. That's probably why they took to him so fast, Alonna had thought. He never treated them like kids. Sure, he played games and all, but he enjoyed them as much as the kids and that made the kids feel like they were older or gave them hope that as adults they would still be able to play games. She wasn't certain about that, but it always worked. Timmy was no exception.

"I've had bad dreams," he said, as if understanding Andrew's turmoil. "Monsters

with horns," Timmy explained softly. "I don't like them."

"Me, either," Andrew said sympathizing with the little boy. Timmy nodded his head.

"You must have children of your own," Melanie said changing the conservation back to a mature one.

"No, I haven't been fortunate enough yet," Andrew said. There was a tone of disappointment in his voice, one Alonna had heard enough times to know that Andrew was beyond ready to settle down and have children, as to whom that would be with was another story.

Her friend was a believer in true love, which made these encounters rather terrifying and comfortable at the same time. On the one hand, any woman who opened conservation was a potential true love for Andrew. He was always ready for that possibility and said it often to her. However, the fact that Andrew was trying to have more of conservation with her son than with Melanie said quickly that he wasn't interested in her. *Sorry, Melanie,* she felt like saying as to stop the embarrassment she knew the woman would cause for herself in a matter of moments.

"That is a shame, you would make a great father," she said, smiling at him. He smiled back out of genuine kindness.

"Thank you. I hope someday."

"So there isn't anyone special?" Melanie replied quickly, ignoring completely

the fact that Alonna was sitting right there next to him.

That fact didn't escape Andrew's thoughts either. He looked at Alonna, brushed her hand resting on his armrest and smiled at her.

"I'm sorry," Melanie said, quickly after she saw the exchange.

Within a few moments, Melanie said goodbye and wished Alonna and Andrew a good trip. She then quickly moved, taking her son with her almost to the back of the bus, as far as she could move away from her own embarrassment. However, it was Timmy that didn't like the idea at all and made it known.

"Mummy, why can't we sit here? I like Andrew, he's nice and he understands about the monsters," he said, seriously looking at his mother.

"We should let them enjoy their vacation," Timmy's mother said as they walked down the aisle.

"Goodbye, Andrew," Timmy said as his mother pulled his hand.

"Goodbye, Timmy, it was nice to meet you," Andrew replied. Timmy smiled and complained to his mother all the way back.

After a few moments, they were gone.

"Nice kid," was the only thing Andrew said about the exchange and smiled once more at Alonna, keeping his hand in hers.

Alonna understood. It had happened so many times when they were out together that it become old hat to both of them and a matter that hadn't been discussed for a few years between them. The slight embarrassment that Melanie expressed was no more or less than most women they had encountered over the years. Alonna had suggested a more aggressive tactic to be used after the first several interruptions of their conservation at restaurants and such, but Andrew never did like that suggestion, stating that saying or showing they were together in a romantic way would be untruthful and he didn't lie.

However, a look towards her, a slight touch or even so much as a statement to the more aggressive women who pursued him of 'I'm with my friend," usually accomplished the same task. Unfortunately, for Alonna, she would have liked the lying at least her fantasies would have been fulfilled for one moment, even if those fantasies were only hollow and empty ones. A girl could dream, she had thought many times. But she had chosen to fall in love with a man who never lied, never distorted the truth and never implied anything but what was the truth.

After all, Andrew had called her special many times and Melanie did ask, 'if there was anyone special?' Andrew had known what she meant, but he did consider Alonna special and therefore it wasn't a lie, at least not to him. Alonna had often debated him on this, stating it

was still misleading, but she liked that he considered her special so had dropped the subject a while back. Lately, though, she had been questioning more and more in her mind of his actions than she thought. Perhaps she would breach the topic at some later date. Looking at him now staring back out the window, might not be the best time.

Andrew could feel the weight of little Timmy's words long after he got off the bus a few stops later. *"Monsters with horns. I don't like them,"* Timmy had said. Andrew felt he could relate too much to the little boy's fears over the past several months. His monsters had swords and helmets instead of horns, but that made them no less frightening to him, even more so, he thought, as he watched the English countryside pass by through the small window of the bus.

Monsters can be fought, he reasoned, but when you feel like you are one of them, the fight isn't so easy or understandable. He never told Alonna about the pain he felt at times when he awoke or the bruises he had received from his 'so called' dreams. He was only pleased none of that had happened since they had been in England. He was somewhat worried being closer to the source would make it worse, but it was the opposite that occurred. The closer they got to some truth he was getting different dreams, more about *her*, less about the battle. He was starting to believe *she* was the reason for the dreams and not the warrior Prince, who

fought and killed with precision and strength, without thought to the enemy he murdered or of his own life.

Lady Camille beckoned to him now and just last night he could feel her lips upon his. He knew it was her. He couldn't explain how, he didn't see her or hear her in the dream, he just knew. He knew what she felt like, what she tasted like, the smell of her skin. It was like he had always known. It wasn't a strange sensation or a foreign one. She felt comfortable, familiar.

Andrew knew that explaining this to Alonna would only make her feel isolated from him and it wasn't his intention at all. He wanted to share this experience with her. He had since the beginning of the dreams. He held back some of the gore and the fact that he had physical pain from the dreams but that was only....his thoughts stopped suddenly and shifted.

Why did I hold back? He thought. I never have before. I've told her far more about relationships I've been in then about these dreams. The thought was dancing around in his head until another thought passed by…about that night a year ago.

That awful, bitter, cold night, he had tried not to think upon it, it wasn't like him to dredge that up, but lately he had thought about it far more than he wanted to admit. He had wanted her before that night and had never stopped wanting her since that night. There was an attraction he had always felt to Alonna. It wasn't a conscious decision that caused them to

be friends only. It was more of a necessity at the time they had met. It seemed right for both of them. They had bad relationships, they didn't want more pain or heartache and they got along well and had fun. It seemed harmless enough to keep it that way.

Andrew knew all the reasons why she hadn't continued with his kiss that night and all the reasons why he had dropped it. Neither wanted to get hurt. Alonna believed he wasn't over his last girlfriend and she was his rebound, but Andrew knew better. He had been over his girlfriend before they had broken up and Alonna could never be a rebound, she meant far too much to him. She always had. He had respect and admiration for her. If he believed he was rebounding he would never have kissed her that night. He had wanted to several other times when it would have been a rebound situation, and resisted. He could have again.

But that night was different. There was something in her eyes, there was something that pulled at his heart and there was something in the moment together that caused him to kiss her. He would have continued if she hadn't gotten so upset at him. He wanted so much to love her that night. To take her in his arms and make love to her. To wake up the next morning with her at his side and see her smiling face looking up at him. The thought had plagued him for weeks after the incident and it was almost

unbearable to see her, wanting her as much as he did.

Then everything changed direction and got back to normal, safe, careful and the friendship that they always had was rekindled. It was probably a laugh or a playful mocking of 'his need for a fix', as she tended to refer to his love of romantic movies. Whatever it was, it made the environment more comfortable again between them, and although the encounter this morning in the hotel brought back some of those feelings, or more accurately brought them to the surface again, Andrew knew those feelings hadn't ever left, and mostly he could keep those emotions in check. The problem was he never liked doing that. He hated it in fact. He had always felt 'you should follow your heart', no matter what. Of course, that mantra had gotten him in more trouble than he liked to admit at times. But it didn't mean it was wrong.

The problem now remained of his feelings for the Lady Camille, the princess of his dreams. He was no fool for love, he may enjoy romantic films, stories and the like, but he knew the difference between reality and fantasy. He may have even wanted the fantasy part for a long time growing up, half expecting a real princess to show up in the flesh if not the title, but that didn't mean he really thought she would. It was that damned feeling he got whenever he dreamed of *her*, or even thought of *her* that made him lose his senses. A feeling he

was not accustomed to. It seemed to build inside him like a raging flame that he couldn't quench no matter how many buckets of water he had, and of course, he never had any around to try out the theory anyway.

The Lady Camille with her long locks of red hair and emerald green eyes captured his heart the moment he saw her. Though he knew her to be a dream in his head, now that she was real in the portrait, he couldn't get the images out of his heart. She pulled at him with such intensity that he thought he would burst open at times, when he wasn't feeling like he was going to die on the battlefield, that is. Both the Prince and the Lady Camille pulled at him in much different ways, but still pulled. He felt trapped within her eyes and caught within his heart. She made him feel alive, and during the battles he felt like he had lived. It was a strange sensation at times, between his heart bleeding out in the battles and his soul reaching out to her, Andrew had never experienced such emotions and even if he wanted to, he couldn't stop them. The dreams kept coming and the feelings never ceased. He wanted her, he loved her, when he woke up, he'd let go, he'd return to his own life and then the cycle would start again the next night. When he was awake he was trying to hold onto his reality, when he slept he was trying to hold onto her. It was an endless battle, both in reality and in the dreams. A battle of wills. Andrew stopped the thought for a moment, an

instant split fraction of a moment, but something hit him.

A battle of wills, he said again in his mind. That made sense...but why? He asked himself. *Why would that make sense?* Somehow he just did. He started to ponder on it further when the bus hit something in the road and it jostled everyone's seat, causing him to come out of his thoughts. He looked towards Alonna who had been reading a magazine, but stopped as soon as the motion happened.

"Good roads, huh?" Andrew said, smiling over at her.

Alonna smiled back and put away the magazine. She was looking for an excuse to make him come out of his deep thoughts and she wasn't missing another opportunity.

"You know, the English countryside starts to look all the same after a while," she began, "I'm been trying to imagine how those dark ages people used to know what town or village they were in."

Andrew leaned over to her. She took in another scent of his cologne, "they probably asked the villagers." He smiled at her resisting an urge to kiss her. He sat back, quickly but casually.

"Very funny," she replied back.

"So all done with your deep thoughts?" She asked after a slight moment.

"Yea, it was starting to hurt my head."

“I’m sure it was,” she countered back, “I was surprised I didn’t see smoke.”

He turned to her and smiled, shaking his head. Again there was an urge to lean over, but he didn’t.

“So read anything interesting?” He said referring to the magazine she had replaced in the pocket in front of her.

“Yea, Prince William isn’t into polo matches,” she said, seriously. He knew it was just some set up for the punchline she was ultimately going to deliver.

“He feels they take away from his rugged, handsome, ‘I’m a prince and I ain’t going do what my dad did, attitude’, he has cultivated since he’s been a favored press target,” she smiled up at Andrew. “You have got to appreciate that boy’s respect for the crown.”

“Oh come on, it has to be hard growing up with that kind of pressure,” Andrew said rebutting her assessment of Prince William. “And with their mother’s tragic death, it hasn’t been easy. Those two men have a lot to deal with.”

“Yea, I know. I just can’t help but think it’s a little easier when you’re young, rich and heir to the Throne of England,” Alonna said.

“Not always,” Andrew said seriously.

Alonna looked at him for a moment and tried to figure out the expression on his face. The seriousness seemed to creep in unexpectedly.

“You’re right,” she said, quickly, trying not to lose him to the blackness of deep thoughts again. “I’m sure it’s been hard for them.”

Andrew turned and smiled at her.

“Of course, being young, rich and heir to the throne probably creates self-centeredness in everyone,” he said, taking her side from before.

“You’re a jerk,” she hit him on the arm.

“Oww....” He covered the pseudo bruise with his hand.

“Poor baby,” she said, leaning into him, intending on rubbing the place on his upper arm where she hit him. Her hand touching his, before she realized it was there stopped her.

There was a moment that flashed in Andrew’s eyes. Alonna recognized it from that awful and wonderful night. It was the same alluring look that nearly melted her then. After a moment, he held her hand, removed it from his arm, smiled and kissed the top of it like a knight in the days of old.

“It is forgiven, my lady,” he said in a British accent that was both sweet and seductive.

A skill he had acquired long before Alonna knew him and was still very much effective.

“Andrew,” she said retrieving her hand from his grasp and placing it in her lap, “do you really want to know about all this?”

The question was one he hadn't considered. In all the conversations about his dreams and the nightmares it hadn't occurred to him not to pursue it. Within the first week, it was Alonna who had suggested on line information that could be helpful and seemed excited about all of it. So it wasn't just that he hadn't thought why he wouldn't go after the information, now he was thinking why did she ask the question, since she always seemed very interested in it, even more than him at times. In the beginning, he just wanted the dreams to cease and get back to a normal life. She had talked of past lives, past ancestors and things. It didn't occur to him that the dreams were of anything but strangeness.

"Why do you ask?" He said doing what Alonna had done on a number of occasions and was often annoying. Answering a question with a question.

"I don't know, it just seems that maybe, it's just a dream and if you don't think about it so much it would just go away," she said.

Andrew turned in his seat to face her. There was a tone in her voice that upset him. One of sadness, not true sadness, but a touch of it was very apparent. He wanted to believe it was there because she saw how the dreams affected him. It wasn't a selfishness that caused him to think that way, rather just a hope that she was trying to protect him. The sadness wasn't like that though, and Andrew knew it was more

introspective to his ears. Perhaps the Lady Camille dreams were too much for her. It wasn't as if he hadn't realized that Alonna's enthusiasm in helping him discover about what the dreams meant weaned a bit when *she* entered them, he was well aware of her change in attitude. There was a distance he felt from Alonna ever since then. She took a sarcastic playful tone, but that had always been her way of coping. Every date he had gone on, every girlfriend he had, was talked about in the same fashion.

Andrew hadn't contributed it to jealousy on her behalf until the Lynn situation happened last year. Things changed after that. After he broke up with Lynn Alonna wanted to celebrate. Alonna wanted to have wine, a quiet dinner at his home and it was Alonna who had dressed up in that beautiful red dress that showed off her curves. He had been well aware of those curves even when she wore jeans. He just thought she wasn't interested in him in that way. That night changed his opinion on the topic and he simply did what any man in his position would do, take a chance. He cared for Alonna. He had thought about kissing her lips. He had thought about being close to her in that way. However, the way the night turned out made him believe he had done the wrong thing completely, and he tried not to make the same mistake again.

"Alonna," Andrew said, leaning closer to her, "if you want to go somewhere else, I would understand. We are in England and there

are lots of sights to see that don't involve battlefields and fighting."

Alonna looked up at him. His eyes held truth and she knew he meant what he said. He would be perfectly content with her running off to see the sights of England without him. That made her heart ache a bit, but she knew he would be. It didn't at all surprise her.

"No, Andrew, it's not that," she said, slowly, "it's just the dreams seem to be getting worse and we don't have any more answers than when we started."

"Actually, I believe they are getting better," he said, smiling a bit. "I'm starting to see more of this man's life, not just the battles, but his life."

"With Lady Camille?" She said, trying to act casual, but Andrew heard that same sad tone in her voice she was attempting to conceal from him.

Andrew touched her hand, gently and held it in his. Alonna felt a wave of desire wash through her but she didn't move from his clasp.

"Alonna, I know I don't have any answers, I'm not even sure what the questions should be, but I know that I need to do this. There is some reason I'm having these dreams and there is a reason that it led me here," he moved in a bit still holding her hand.

"It's like I was there, but I wasn't. I can smell the rain and taste the blood, but I've never seen any of it before. Something is trying to get

through. Something I can't explain, but I can feel it in every part of me," he paused and looked past her for a moment in thought.

Turning back, his eyes held an intensity that made Alonna believe every word that came forth from his mouth.

"I need to find out what that is. I need to know who he was and I need to know what she meant to him. I wanted to know about my family before I came, I wanted to find out something about the Prince and Lady Camille's past before I came, but it's different now. I need to find out. They...." his pause told Alonna that he was searching for the right words, "I need to find the truth."

"What truth, Andrew?" She asked, completely enthralled with him and at the same time, he was making her feel uncomfortable. He was going someplace in his dreams that she couldn't go with him.

"Her truth," he said, softer. "But I believe it's coming from him."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because I.....he loved her," he said, correcting himself once again.

This time Alonna didn't brush it off quickly. This time the pause had been too long. This time it was different, and he knew Alonna heard it in his voice.

"Yorkshire County, all stops," the overhead speaker system said in a pleasant male voice.

Alonna and Andrew both moved back in their seats, separating their hands and their thoughts.

They followed in silence out the door of the bus and onto the paved roadside.

It had started to rain while they were on the bus, now it was down pouring. Alonna and Andrew ran towards the hotel in the distance along with many of the other passengers. Using coats, newspapers, magazines and some umbrellas brought by conscientious travelers. Andrew tried to help an older passenger by offering his coat. No one offered them their own umbrella. Unfortunately it slowed him down considerably and he was drenched by the time he reached Alonna at the entrance to the large hotel.

"Thank you so much," the woman said to Andrew as he let her pass through the double doors ahead of him and Alonna.

"My pleasure, Ma'am," Andrew said.

"That will teach you to help out a stranger," Alonna said smiling over at him, referring to his drenched clothing. Andrew smiled and followed her into the hotel lobby.

"All set," the concierge with a nametag that read Nathan, said at the desk after Andrew gave him the information.

Nathan passed Andrew two room keys and the information he had requested with a guided map to the battle sites.

“For research or pleasure?” Nathan asked them.

“Pleasure,” Alonna said, smiling at him, picking up her bag.

“Enjoy your stay, ma’am,” Nathan smiled back at her.

“England, you’ve got to love the hospitality,” Alonna replied quieter to Andrew as they took the elevator to their fifth floor room.

“Of course,” she remarked while in the elevator, “they could be axe murderers and they would still be nice about it. Think about it, it could be just like Hotel California. The bugs check in but they don’t check out.”

Andrew laughed next to her, “That would be the roach motel, Alonna.”

“Same difference,” she said, casually, flipping her hair to the side and shifting her hanging bag to the other hand.

“Oh come on, one was a commercial, the other a classic song. Not comparable,” Andrew said reaching over to where the bag hung on her shoulder. He removed it from her hand flinging it over his shoulder instead.

“What were those lyrics from Hotel California?” She said as they walked out of the elevator and down the hall to the room.

Andrew put down one of the bags on the beige and white striped carpet and pulled out the room key while Alonna tried to sing the song to remember the lyrics.

“I hate that, it’s so annoying,” she stammered. “You know that song is going to stick in my head with the wrong lyrics all day.”

Andrew opened the door. Alonna went through it, still humming the song from the 70s Rock Group, The Eagles. He picked up the bag and threw it on one of the beds, while Alonna opened the green curtains for a view. From behind her, Andrew walked up, softly.

“You can check out anytime you like,” he sang into her right ear, she felt a shiver go down her spine. He leaned over to open the window. Before straightening up, he turned to her and smiled, “but you can never leave,” he finished.

His smile grew larger, which he held for a moment longer than was comfortable. Then as quickly as the moment came it passed and he was mimicking the guitar riff with his voice and an air guitar as he headed for the bathroom. The song didn’t stop because of the closed door. Behind it, Andrew was still singing and exaggerating the vocals, even with his normally good voice, it was funny and despite herself Alonna laughed.

“You’re crazy,” she said as she passed by the door picking up the bag he left hanging in the closet for her.

The door suddenly opened and she screamed, hitting him on the arm, harder than usual.

He stood there for a long moment looking at her. She was about to say something, when…

"Welcome to the Hotel California, what a nice surprise…" She hid a smile as she turned away to unpack.

CHAPTER FOUR

The green grass of the original battlefield in Yorkshire was covered early that morning by a downfall of snow. The air was chilly and wind whipped through the tall trees that surrounded the empty open area that once held the blood and spirit of English and French soldiers.

Andrew felt a wisp of cold air under his scarf. He shivered a bit and pulled his arms up, crossing them to keep the bitter cold away. Alonna had done the same thing standing next to him. They had gotten up far earlier today than most days since they've been in England. Mostly to explore the battlefield, but the fact that the dreams keep Andrew in and out sleep all night he was grateful to be doing something except staring out the window of their hotel room. His tiredness left him as soon as they stepped off the bus onto the snowy ground. It wasn't the excitement of seeing the battlefield of his dreams that caused him to awaken on this bleak morning. He hadn't at all been looking forward to being here at this field, where all his dreams began every night. It wasn't because he felt it would bring him closer to answers either. The answers were within his dreams he knew that. After last night, he was certain of it. His alertness was a result of a feeling within him that moved him forward since they had arrived here. He walked directly to the place he knew was there. In his mind it was the exact spot that

the leader of the infidels died. He could see it again as clear as in any of his dreams.

The beast had fallen. He always would. He would see to it. The unspeakable horrors that this beast had done to his people would be avenged. He had searched for his group for days, tracked their movements and caught up with them on the edge of the lake. He had chased them into this clearing knowing it would end here and knowing the revenge would be his and his alone. His own men would get their share of fighting with the beast's horde of men, but he would take down the leader himself. It was his right, for his people who were burned to death in their own homes without thought or hope of survival. The smoke and the smell of burnt flesh still clung in the air over the village when he had traveled there a fortnight ago. Men, women, and children went to sleep and never awoke because of this beast, and for no other reason than they were people of England. He would die as many times as he could manage it. Ripping into his flesh with his sword was more than just a victory over them it filled him with a blood lust he had never felt before. He took a final blow when it wasn't needed, but the satisfaction of his bones crushing under his sword within his hands was filling him with a sense of power. He ruled this day and he would never forget...never.

“Andrew, are you all right?” Alonna said beside him.

Andrew turned to her with a face of stone holding no expression on it. His eyes were dark and foreboding. There was no sparkle of life in them anywhere. Alonna looked at him for a long moment. Slowly he turned and pointed to the ground and when he spoke his voice was far from her friend’s. It held a dark tone that she remembered from the dream he was in several nights ago. It had the same harshness to it, maybe even more so, at this moment. She took a step backwards from him.

“This is where he fell,” he said as he continued to point to the spot. “I can still see his blood pour out.”

Andrew leaned down to inspect the ground and reached down with his gloved hand picking up a handful of snow, letting it melt in his hand, and fall back to the earth.

“His blood will remain forever here, as I shall,” he spoke in a darker tone and to Alonna’s surprise with a perfect English accent. “We are joined in this forever.”

After a moment where Alonna swallowed hard, she bent down and touched her friend’s back attempting to comfort him, but Andrew wished for no comfort and stood up quickly nearly toppling her over in the process.

“I will find him,” he said, the dark voice becoming less human as he ran to the far edges

of the battlefield. Alonna followed in complete confusion and worry.

"He will not show himself. He is afraid, I can smell his fear." Andrew turned slowly around looking out beyond the trees and battlefield.

He was hunting, watching, careful in movement and stance.

"He should be afraid," he said. "I will rip through his flesh and send him to the pits of hell where he will suffer with the other beasts by the Devil himself." He moved carefully along the circle of the field.

"He will not survive my sword. He will pay for every scream that went into the night. For every flame that burned through the eyes of a child, for every moment of torment he inflicted upon my people."

In the snow, Andrew's movements were expanse. Turning in slow circles keeping his head high and searching. His hand was fisted as if holding something Alonna couldn't see. His other hand was apart from his body in a cautious movement, ready for an attack.

"He is a coward, hiding in the shadows of night," he said quietly, but the harsh tone of anger kept with him in every step and word.

"Come out and face me, beast."

Alonna was very worried now and moved to where Andrew had stopped and stared into nothing.

“Andrew, you have to stop this,” she said. Her voice now holding panic as he continued moving slowly, front to back. She followed him cautiously and took a breath.

It must be a waking dream, she thought. He isn’t aware. She was careful when she moved closer to him. Waking people from these dreams is very dangerous. A shock to the nervous system could be highly dangerous to their heart. She had read all about the problems of sleepwalking, nightmares, waking dreams and night terrors. It seemed her friend was experiencing all of them and as frightening as it was for her to watch, she couldn’t imagine the terror he was feeling.

“Andrew,” she began in a soothing tone being careful to keep calmness to her voice. She was about to try and get closer when he collapsed right before her.

“Andrew!” She said, louder, falling to her knees beside him in the cold snow. She should have felt the cold on her legs, but she wasn’t concerned about that.

“Andrew,” she held his head up and checked the back of his head to make certain he hadn’t hurt himself on the hard ground when he fell. Luckily, he hadn’t.

“Alonna,” Andrew said barely audible for her to hear.

“Andrew, you fell. Be careful, don’t move,” she said suddenly worrying about a

concussion or something being broken that she couldn't see.

Andrew didn't seem as concerned as he pulled himself up to a sitting position. She kept her hand on his back helping carefully.

"Does anything feel broken, Andrew?" She asked as he attempted to stand.

"No, I'm fine, Alonna, really," his voice had returned to him. No more harshness or strange tones resided there. Just Andrew's softer, pleasant voice again.

"You could have a concussion," she said, quickly. "You should sit for a minute."

"It's too cold," he said, standing. He leaned over and helped her up.

"Andrew you don't know if you hit your head or...." she said as he started to walk.

"I'm fine," he replied, casually turning to her. "Don't worry."

"I do worry, you just collapsed in front of me and ..." Alonna had panic rising in her voice, she knew it, but she couldn't help it. It had scared her.

Andrew moved closer to her, and touched her hand, gently.

"I am fine, thanks," he said, sweetly. He smiled at her to reassure, but Alonna wasn't taking any chances.

"Maybe you should sit down," she said. "You were acting like..."

"I know," he said again with a gentle tone. "I know."

"What?"

“Come on, let’s get out of here and somewhere warm. It’s freezing.” He continued to hold her hand as they walked off the battlefield and back onto the roadway.

Once there, he looked around for a moment and saw smoke coming out of a small restaurant that was situated on the lake. During the summer months, it had a deck where people could overlook the water, but now it was all closed off without tables or chairs present. Inside it looked cozy and warm, he headed towards it.

“How about some hot tea?” He said, smiling at her. “That’s very British, right?” Alonna looked at him strangely as they walked hand in hand towards the restaurant.

“I don’t know maybe you should stay away from things that are British,” she said. He turned to her and smiled pleasantly at her, indicating he was just fine.

Alonna gave up on trying to take care of him. Why she thought it would be any different than any other day. He never seemed to need someone to take care of him. After they received a small table by the fire and two cups of steaming hot English tea, Andrew leaned over and took Alonna’s hand in his, both had taken off their coats, scarves and gloves once the warmth of the fire went through their chilled bodies.

“I understand,” Andrew started.

“Great,” she replied and then quietly leaned over the table to him. “About what?”

“The battle.” He said, calmly, too calmly for Alonna.

One moment, he was hunting an imaginary foe and speaking strangely, the next he was on the ground unconscious and the next he’s having a cup of tea.

“It was very strange, Andrew, you were very different.”

“It wasn’t a bunch of French soldiers who fought that day,” he said, quickly, leaning back in his chair and letting go of her hand.

“There were barbarians, fighters from another land who didn’t have our language. They wanted to destroy us...”

“You mean them?” He looked at her for a moment. “You mean they wanted to destroy the English army, Andrew,” She clarified.

“Yes,” he replied quickly. “You see the fighters came in at night and destroyed villages, burning everything and everyone. These were my....his people,” he said, correcting himself just barely, and continuing with passion as he spoke quicker.

“They had burned them in their beds while they slept. There was no escape, no way to get out. By the time anyone knew what had happened the screams had started and mayhem was all over. There was no time to save them.” He leaned again, his eyes held a gentle softness and sadness within them. It pulled at her heart.

“There were children, Alonna, so many children. Burned to death, screaming for their

fathers, mothers, crying and screaming in the night."

Alonna watched him as his eyes held tears now, he released their hands and looked down for a moment.

"That's terrible," she said reaching back out, taking his hand. He leaned back slipping his hand from hers and looked up.

"Not terrible...unbearable. I could smell the burning flesh. I could see the smoke still clinging in the air. I could see..." he looked away, this time to the fire behind Alonna.

"I saw the bodies," he said, quietly. The silence that followed was consuming as his eyes teared up again.

"Men, women...." a small tear fell down his cheek, "children. Small children charred and burned still lying in their soot filled blankets, holding onto each other in fear."

Alonna reached out again, but he was lost in his sadness. She wanted to comfort him. She wanted to hold him and tell him he would be all right that it was a dream, but as she looked at her friend, she knew it wasn't. To him, it was real.

After a moment he picked up his tea and drank the entire cup, placing it back down on the saucer, a little harder than he may have intended. It made a loud enough noise to make a few people not far away from them look over for a moment.

"It's not over," he said, softly. Alonna almost didn't hear him.

“What do you mean?” She asked leaning over.

“The leader died, but the fear didn’t,” he said, looking straight into her eyes. They held anger in them.

“It was a long time ago,” she said, trying to keep herself grounded. “That battle happened hundreds of years ago, Andrew.”

“No, it’s happening now,” he said, causing Alonna to look at him with wide eyes. A feeling in the pit of her stomach made her uneasy. She picked up her cup and took a few sips of the tea to calm down.

“He knew that,” he said simply. “The Prince always hated that battle,” looking at her through an intense stare that gave Alonna chills.

“He knew.”

“Who?” Alonna finally asked after moving away from his eyes.

Andrew’s eyes took on a dark tone, darker than Alonna had even seen it on the battlefield. There was a long pause.

“Sebastian.”

CHAPTER FIVE

'You must not do this,' the Prince said as he looked to his son, Sebastian. He had passed his seventeenth year of birth and was more than adequate as a knight in the king's realm. His father, standing across from him, knew that.

He possessed strength in battle, but not in the true faith, nor in the care of his people. His ability to slaughter was not balanced by a compassion or sense of loyalty for the crown or even his house. He had been born of a Spanish lady, Lady Victoria. Striking she was in her beauty, even to turn a prince's head when he was a lad of fifteen, but not enough to ensnare him into the marital bed. He knew the night they were together, only one, was a mistake. It wasn't that her favors weren't appreciated nor her scent not intoxicating. He had been completely taken with her when he lay with her that evening, seventeen years earlier. The boy presented to him several years later as a lad of six still possessed his mother's rich amber tones and her blackened curls of hair atop his head. The eyes, nose and chin were of himself and easily recognizable to him when he appeared by Spanish escort that crisp autumn morning. He carried a letter of his mother's and a fur of exquisite beauty as an offering to his father.

He had been overwhelmed at having sired a son, and such a sturdy young lad he was. He began archery that next year and learned

when he grew taller, which was only three years later, how to hold a full bow. At 10, he went into the knighthood as a squire to his friend, Sir Gregory a fine knight. His grandfather, the King, knighted him at fourteen years old, and entered into his first battle with his father that same year. He proved himself agile and smart, if not too clever at times with his enemies. All in all, he had been proud of his son, and always proud to have him ride with him into battles for the King's throne. As of late, though, he had discovered disturbing information about his son's need for trophies from battle. It wasn't something new to knighthood or soldiers. Trophies were almost expected but in spoils such as furs and goodly objects of worth for the King.

These trophies his son possessed from the battle were neither spoils of war nor honorable to present to any King.

"An ear, nose or eyes are not suitable for a knight of the King's Realm to have in their possessions," he said to the man before him he loved more than his own life at times.

"They are simply treasures of victory, father, nothing more nor less," Sebastian said in his husky male voice, developed in the last few years.

"No, son. You have dishonored the King and his knights with such treasures," he rebutted trying to have the young man see reason.

"Very well, father," he stood up and smiled at his father.

He bowed rather dramatically, even for the handsome knight who had more than enough women to keep him warm at night, and most likely sired many children within the villages as well as some ladies of unfortunate circumstances whom took to his looks.

"You will cease collecting these treasures and keep to your tasks at hand, is that understood?" The Prince said firmly standing still two inches over his eldest son.

Sebastian stood up and nodded his head.

"Yes, father, of course." He strode out of the room without waiting for permission from his father, his Prince.

The Prince let the action go unpunished as he had too many times before. It was more of a battle his son fought silently with himself, than with him at that moment. He sighed and sat down in the large chair by the fire, letting the warmth feel good against his skin.

He closed his eyes and felt the weariness creep into his muscles that still ached from the battle. He knew he was not as young as he once was and battle took a much harder toll on him than he would like to admit. He was getting older and his body wasn't forgiving.

He could smell her before she moved one step inside the open door to his chambers. He could always hear her small footfalls, no

matter how quiet she tried to be at her demure height and build far smaller than his. He held out his hand from behind the chair. She grasped it in her tiny one, softly kissing the back of it with her warm lips. He closed his eyes and let the feeling of her warm caress wash away his aches and pains. She kissed his hand several more times bringing it to her face letting the roughness slide along her soft skin.

When he stood, he turned toward her, pulling her into him with one swift motion. She didn't resist, crushing against his chest. He heard her gasp as his hands went to her bodice pushing it down over to reveal her breasts. He cupped one in his hand slowly caressing it. She took in another gasp of air, leaning back her head exposing her neck to him. He lowered his head taking the invitation, kissing her neck and moving down to her breasts now swollen with desire. He moved his hands to the lacing on the bodice untying it. He could untie it blind if needed, but he watched himself as he did it. She breathed and let out a soft moan as his lips touched her....

"Andrew, Andrew, it's late, come on," Alonna's voice came in clearer as she continued. "We have to go."

Alonna sat on the end of the bed, shaking his feet that were still beneath the blankets.

"Andrew," she pleaded.

Slowly Andrew opened his eyes, then closed them again from the bright light that had come into the room from the opened curtain to side of him.

"It's way past time. We'll be late and miss the bus," she shook him again to get him moving.

"Okay, okay, I'm up," he said, groggily.

Alonna watched him for a moment trying to determine if he would fall back asleep if she moved away. His soft blond hair was tussled, which just made him look more handsome. He had been sweating, beads of it remained on his forehead, making him look like...she stopped her thoughts, licked her lips from the dryness on them. She had been staring for far too long and he was staring back at her now with a look that told her she needed to move right now.

"God, you're a pain to wake up," she said, trying to sound casual and push down the images she was having in her mind of things she needed not to continue.

"Another dream of our good 'ole princess," she said, standing up with her hands on her hips before him. "She's really getting on my nerves. She's going to make us miss the plane."

Andrew was about to reach out to her, take her in his arms and be done with this careful conversation they were always having. It hadn't been the first time in the last week. He

had the urge more and more these days and he was about to act on it when she moved away to her suitcase and then the closet.

"Let's take a later flight," he finally said.

"No we stayed an extra day all ready and I have to get back, so do you, before we both don't have jobs," she said with a firm tone back to him.

Andrew watched her closely as she moved to the other side of her bed as far as she could be away from him in the room. She pushed down her suitcase hard and zipped it.

"Get up now," she demanded.

"Alonna, we could..."

"No, enough is enough, Andrew," she said demanding. She turned looking at him. "Look, we found out about his sons, all three of them, and we found out about the battles and the Castle Edinburgh, where he and....they lived," her pause was to stop herself from using a derogatory term towards the Prince's wife, Lady Camille.

She seemed to be having more of those moments in the last few days and nights after the research, visiting battle sites and memorials. She was starting to hate both of them. The Prince who captured Andrew's attention all day and she was certain, the Princess who came into his dreams every night. He had stopped talking in his sleep but what replaced it was worse. She would hear his slight moaning and moving

about either in torment from the dream, or she feared, ecstasy of it. The other night she woke up to find him moving back and forth in a way that made her have to turn away and put the pillow over her head.

The dreams were far more than just battles and of Princes these past several nights and waking him up from them was becoming nearly impossible. Her jokes and sarcasm weren't even helping. She wanted out of England and away from this entire nightmare.

There was no ability to fight his dreams and there was no way that finding out more was helping. Granted he didn't have any more episodes like the one on the battlefield when they had first arrived in this damned county, but it was almost worse now.

Andrew wasn't himself at all. For one thing he flirted with her more than usual, and took opportunities to dance with her at dinners pulling her into him until she had to move away and catch her breath. It was like he had no sense of reason or ability to control himself. She would have felt better if he would deal with strange behavior and occurrences like every other normal person...drink. But he wouldn't have any more than a glass of wine at dinner. She on the other hand, was starting to become far too familiar with English spirits.

She couldn't take it anymore. She wanted him, she hated him, she despised the woman she never met, and she wanted him

again. Mostly she just wanted to go back home and get back to normal, even if that meant them not being together. She could deal with him better that way. He was melting her defenses and she knew it wasn't real. It couldn't be. There was something that was controlling him. It was *her* she knew it. It had to be.

He never had been so forward, so demanding, so....sexy...she stopped her thinking and went back to gathering her things. 'I hate her, I hate her, I hate her,' she said to herself in some twisted attempt to not hate him.

"Listen, Andrew, we are leaving on a flight out of London today and that is that," Alonna said, picking up her suitcase and placing it on the floor at the front of her bed.

"I'm not going," the statement was simple, but it caused her to stop zipping her hanging bag lying on her bed and look at him in shock.

He stood up wearing his loose fitting pajama pants she had bought him last Christmas. They were maroon and had a slight design on them that were gold in a Florentine style if you got close enough to see, which she had no intention of doing. He was bare-chested, as usual. She resisted looking at his chest. She peered directly into his eyes. That made it worse.

"What?" It seemed to be the only response she could come up with.

"I'm staying. I can't go back yet. I haven't found out the truth," he said, walking a

few steps toward her. She had an urge to move away, but held her ground.

"You can't stay, Andrew," she reasoned, "your job, your life..."

"I hate my job, Alonna, you know that and what life," he looked at her with sadness in his green eyes. She understood what he was saying, but she couldn't just let him stay. It wasn't right.

"Look, I know this means a lot to you, Andrew, and I understand," she paused, "all right, maybe I don't understand all of it, but you can't stay here. This isn't your world, this isn't going to help, and you do have a life, Andrew, back in Colorado." She wanted to say 'with me' but the words didn't come out.

"What kind of a life? Day by day," he paused. "Come on, Alonna, what's back there? A dead end job and a social life that only exists when I become the next guy to be shown off at a party for some woman who doesn't care about me. Who am I kidding? I'll never find what I'm looking for there. I won't do it again," he looked away from her, "I can't do it again."

"Andrew, don't say that," she said, taking his hand in hers. "You matter to me." She hoped he would realize how much he meant to her. "Let's just go home. We'll work this out."

She started to think of all the things she could say. Maybe go see another doctor, a real doctor, or a dream therapist, or whatever they are called, but he interrupted her thoughts and

grabbed onto her hand, caressing it in his for a moment. When she looked up, he was looking into her eyes with the softest expression she had seen.

"Let's stay here, Alonna, just you and me," he said gently, using that tone that made her feel weak and helpless.

"You know what we're feeling," his voice took on a dreamy tone. "I want you to stay with me," the words caused the chill that went up Alonna's spine to tingle.

She had wanted to hear this for so long, why was she hesitating? She should be happy, rush into his arms and end all this uncertainty and pain. His eyes held truth in them she could see it. He wanted her to stay with him. He wanted her. As exciting as that realization was and for how long she had waited to hear those words from him something inside her told her it wasn't right. She backed away from his gaze. He tried to hold onto her hand but she jerked it away.

"No, I can't. I need to go back," she was saying the words, but her heart was breaking. "I do have a life. It may not be Castles and Princes and ladies at court, but it's my life and I like it," she said, looking away.

"Alonna, it's not about that," he started. "It's just since we've been here I..."

"No, Andrew," she said quickly, cutting his speech short. "No, I can't live in your fantasies and you won't live in my reality." She

picked up her hanging bag, placed his ticket on the table to the side of her.

"I'm going to the airport. I am leaving England," she paused, looking at the hope dying in his eyes. "I hope you come. I really do, Andrew," she said, softly, and turned her back to him pulling the handle from her suitcase and rolling it to the door. At the door she paused for a moment.

"Alonna, I..." He said seeing her pause.

"It isn't real, Andrew. It never was." Her words were firm and she didn't face him.

Alonna opened the door and walked out. She didn't look back at the face she knew he was holding. It was disappointment and sadness and she couldn't bear to think about it as she walked towards the elevator.

She didn't turn back as the bus came, and she got on it. She didn't think about what he would say as she boarded the plane several hours later alone. She couldn't think, she could barely speak, she just cried as the plane took off down the runway and left behind the rolling hills of England, the foggy mist, and her best friend.

Alonna didn't stop crying for the nine-hour trip back to Colorado. She had lost him to a dream, to some fantasy that went on in his head night after night, lost him to...Lady Camille and her long locks of red hair and emerald green eyes.

She had lost her best friend and that pain was worse than anything she had ever felt before.

Andrew…was her last thought as she flung herself onto her own bed and hoped sleep would come. Maybe she would never have to wake up again. If she had to wake up to a world with him, she didn't want to.

CHAPTER SIX

Andrew sat on the ledge of the window at the same hotel Alonna and he had checked into over a week earlier in North Yorkshire. He had been in that spot since very early this morning. He was staring out the window overlooking a beautiful countryside that could only be provided by England's rolling green hills in the distant and the expansiveness of its land. Snow had covered the hills creating a soft, fur of white as far as the eye could see. Fog hung in the air making the mist swirl and shape into images of real and imagined kinds. It would have been breathtaking to a dreamer, revealing to a painter, awe-inspiring to a musician, enchanting to a writer or a bit mesmerizing to even a casual person not at all impressed with landscapes.

However, Andrew was none of those people at this moment. Neither inspiration nor revelations were held within the confines of his mind as he looked toward that English countryside. It had all once been inhabited by knights carrying banners of colors, riding over those hilltops into another victorious battle. Once upon a time romanticized by those artists who had the unclouded mind to see beyond the reality and the courage to be brought into a dream world of Princes who fell in love with fair maidens. That world in all its grandness and glory was spread out before Andrew. He had once been a dreamer of those fairytales and

times long ago. He had once marveled at far less beautiful sights than these, and he had once been inspired by far less intriguing settings. What he saw before him should have moved him, to dream, inspired him to hope, and opened up the possibilities of a thousand lifetimes. It should have done all those things and more, but the innate beauty of it was completely lost on the man who no longer held any dreams for it.

He had only one thought that had consumed his every moment, only one thought that never ceased. It plagued him, intrigued him and kept him from everything else that he had ever done, was doing or was to do. He hadn't picked up a single book, read a map, researched a gravesite, visited a marker, and walked through the streets or onto battlefields of old since he had done so with Alonna, four days earlier. Andrew hadn't done anything at all, but think about *her*...the petite redheaded princess of his dark, alluring dreams. She was the one whose emerald eyes, soft hands, and sweet kisses that comforted him in his pain, the one whose small voice whispered sweet words of love and passion to him as he slept.

The dreams had become beyond comprehension to the nearly thirty-five year old man standing before that window on that winter morning. Andrew was no longer trying to comprehend them. It was pointless and proved useless even, not to mention that any thought upon them left him with less sense of an

understanding and a deeper feeling of remorse and loss. He didn't know where it came from.

Sometimes he felt it at night when he held the Lady Camille in his arms. Sometimes he felt it during his dream of the battlefield after killing once again, the beast with the fur covered clothing that had no name, and sometimes, as in this moment, he felt it from his own soul. A deepening feeling that weighed upon him with such burden he could actually cry silent tears that only reminded him...of everything he had lost.

Since Alonna had left him, Andrew had wanted to follow her, to meet her at the airport, to take the trip home with her, but something kept stopping him from leaving. He had wanted to tell her that cold morning when she walked out of the room that he wanted her to stay with him, that he was scared. He had wanted to tell her she could help stop these endless dreams. She could stop the sadness, the pain, the torment he felt all the time now. He had wanted to tell her how he was consumed by this brave, vicious, courageous prince he had never known, and yet knew all too well. If only he had told her that the dreams made his head ache, that he had lost all need for anything but the Lady Camille, who continually and constantly seduced him into her will, and that he felt powerless against her. *If only Alonna knew…*

Last night until early this morning Camille had beckoned him in soft tones that

filled his head and made his body ache for her in a way he couldn't explain, and didn't know if he ever would. It was in a desperate need for her, a longing of ages. She was alluring and innocent, seductive and sweet, passionate and gentle. She didn't frighten him within the dreams or make him uncomfortable, it was just that when she entered she consumed him, and it was difficult for him to think about Alonna any more.

When Alonna had been with him each morning, his own thoughts always returned. She had kept him with her in reality, and he needed her now more than ever, but he knew she was thousands of miles away across the ocean and she wasn't coming back. He knew he had pushed her out of his life with his obsession of the dreams, of *her*. Andrew tried to hold Alonna close when the darkness came, but she faded far beyond his grasp, and he was simply lost within Camille's eyes and the Prince's emotions.

Andrew let out a sigh, it sounded loud in the small, empty room, even though if anyone had been there besides him it would have been barely noticeable. He moved his hand to the window and placed it palm down on the pane. An instant coldness should have struck him from the harshness of the English winter outside, but he felt nothing but a slight tingling in his hand.

Lady Camille was pulling him again, he could feel her and he felt helpless against her. His hand suddenly grew warmer as if another

had touched his skin. Andrew jerked his hand away from the window and moved to the center of the room staring towards the wall. His eyes closed. He could smell *her* next to him and he felt a desire to turn and see her beauty. He pushed it down, almost in anger. His body shivered a bit. He tried to believe it was from the light shirt he wore, but he knew better by now. She was touching his back, her small fingers twirling as they lightly moved towards his neck. For a moment he drank in her scent, felt her touch on him, and then moved away quickly as if from a scorching flame.

Reaching down to the chair before him, he grabbed his red sweater and pulled it on. It clung to his body and made his muscles show more across his chest and arms. His hair was still a bit damp from the shower earlier. Andrew wasn't certain how long ago he had taken that shower. Time was becoming more unnecessary to him. The experience of it flooded his thoughts again and he returned to the window.

He had awoken with a start as usual. For the past four days he had been pulled into sleep with such force it caused him to worry about wandering out of the room, and then like some unwanted element within the cave of a creature, he was tossed back into the cold reality of the hotel room. Of England, and the fact that Alonna wasn't beside him. This time had been the same.

The thought of warm water and a relaxing shower comforted him as he stood up

from the bed. It would bring him back to his senses. Even knowing his eyes were registering the hotel room before him, he could still clearly hear Camille's soft breathing next to him. He listened for a few moments taking in her rhythmic tone. Then he just wanted it all to stop. He just wanted to be him again. He was fighting for control and he was losing.

He had turned the shower on with one motion to hot and stripped off his pajama pants, soaked in sweat from his latest dream encounter. He just let the hot water run over him, nearly burning his skin. He wanted to feel it, to know he was awake, to know he could feel something other than the intensity with which he felt for her. After a few moments, the heat worked its charm and became unbearable. He had to turn it down to a less intense temperature. He had smiled to himself at that moment, feeling he gained some small victory over something. Her breathing and her scent left him. It was only the water he heard. The sound of it hitting the bathtub, and the feel of the warm soothing drops on his skin. He closed his eyes breathing in the steam. Grateful for his own senses and sounds. He didn't know how long he had been in there when something jolted him suddenly out of the precious moment.

His eyes flew open. He moved backward against the wall, the water spraying on him and distorting his vision. The steam in front of him took on an odd shape, swirling and

twirling into something. He moved a step closer. The water fell down his back leaving his eyes clear again. A few endless moments passed as the steam continued to shape and reform and then distort again. He was moving slightly forward, not a conscious movement at all.

The steam shifted again and he made out a shape, a female shape, he knew all too well. The steam took on more definition as Camille's face came into view. She was smiling, her perfect smile. He was nearly upon her when she seemed to grow taller to reach his face. A wisp of a hand reached out, softly caressing his cheek, barely touching him. He closed his eyes and could feel her come closer to him. The touch of her lips on him was soft and sweet, without passion, without harshness, without anything but an undeniable comfort that engulfed him completely. When he opened his eyes, she was gone, hidden somewhere within the steam.

He had quickly retreated from the shower, turned off the water, and dried himself off. He slipped on a pair of pants and pulled a t-shirt over his head that was neither warm nor stylish. Andrew had tried to remain in the room, but everything in him wanted out. For all the comfort she brought, there was a fear to her moment in his reality. He wasn't certain he could handle the two realms meeting.

He had left, went into the elevator, and traveled down to the lobby, where he hoped there would be people. He desperately needed to

be around people. Real people. To the right of the entrance, which only contained a few early risers looking for a quick checkout and a few who were just coming in from a long night looking for coffee, he saw the table set up with food for the morning breakfast provided by the hotel to its guest. His stomach met his eyes and he went towards it. He didn't realize how hungry he was. He hadn't remembered the last time he ate. He was certain it must have been yesterday, but it couldn't recall it at this moment. The smell of freshly perked coffee and buttery rolls and pastries caught his senses and he didn't care anymore about the moment in the shower or of his dreams.

Andrew reached for a cup of coffee and waited while a man who was filling his own cup was finished. The man looked at him before giving him a curt but pleasant hello. Andrew said hello back and realized he hadn't worn socks or shoes when he had dashed out of the room. He smiled at the man quickly and went to the task of filling up his coffee cup.

"Can I help you?" A pleasant female voice said to him in a cockney accent, indicating she might be a native of these parts.

He looked up into the face of a waitress who must have been attending the food and patrons that morning. He had seen the girl earlier when he was waiting for the coffee urn to be free but then she seemed far more interested in standing and moving back and forth on her heels than helping people.

“There are some rather good Danishes,” she said, looking at him, smiling. “You might want to try the raspberry.” Her smile never faltered and Andrew was starting to believe her job had taken on a whole new meaning with his presence. He brushed the thought aside and smiled back.

Andrew still had no shoes, no socks and his hair was wet and only dried hastily by a towel, making his natural curls dark colored and damp, not at all like his normally dirty blond waves. He never worried much about his looks, however, he did think maybe she was being polite, so she could tell him he would have to go back to his room and return when he had straightened himself up. He wouldn’t have even blamed her for the comment.

Instead, she proceeded to offer him everything or anything that was on the table before them, making comments about what she liked and didn’t. That was how he ended up with the raspberry Danish. However after only one bite, he realized he never really liked Raspberry, and silently wondered why he had taken it. It seemed his will power for what he wanted or didn’t was becoming non-existent. He had simply nodded his head and took her suggestion. Fortunately after his look from biting into it, the waitress who introduced herself as Jenny earlier in the conversation quickly removed it from his plate and tossed it in the garbage can to her right.

After that, Jenny stopped suggesting food and he picked up an orange from a bowl of fruit. He asked Jenny if there was a knife, with which she promptly returned, smiling up at him. He briefly returned the smile out of courtesy. He looked up at her again noticing her more this time.

Jenny was petite, probably no older than twenty-one or twenty-two with short hair that had red streaks on one side mixed with blond highlights all around. It might have seemed odd looking, but it fit her somehow. Her makeup was dark he noticed, especially for so early in the morning, it couldn't have been much past five. Andrew didn't have much to say on the topic of makeup, but he wasn't really fond of heavy make up on any woman. He always thought it took away from their natural beauty. However, he was open enough to the possibilities of what makeup seemed to do for some women. It brought out beautiful eyes, or cheekbones, or for others just gave them a flawless look like an old movie star from the 1940s MGM glamour time. A time he loved to watch on the silver screen. He had to admit that look did allure him, there was a softness, an innocence to their faces that made him want to reach out and touch them. None of these techniques however, were working at the moment for the young girl in front of him. He appreciated beauty, always had, but that never made him understand what women always seemed to see in him. Jenny seemed to be no

exception. She was talking in a long stream while he cut his orange and listened.

He always had thought he had an average face, two eyes, a nose, a mouth, and two ears. He even thought he was maybe handsome to some, but he never tried to enhance anything about it. He sometimes wouldn't shave everyday unless it was for his job, and he didn't worry about what he wore. Sure, he loved a good shirt or comfortable pants, and even a nice dressed up outfit for a party or the holidays that may have caught his attention, but he didn't necessarily think about how it looked on him. He barely looked in a mirror and never worried about which colors went with his hair or eyes, and he wouldn't know which ones they were, even if he had thought about it.

Most of the women he was around all his life were far more helpful in that arena. They never hesitated in telling him, so he took their word for it. Alonna was always very opinionated when it came to his choices of clothing. He simply trusted she was telling him the truth, and as long as she liked it he didn't really care what others thought about it. He did have to admit it made him feel good when Alonna would compliment him on one of those choices though, especially a few years ago, when they had attended a friend's wedding together. It was formal and he had worn a tuxedo he had rented and she wore a beautiful strapless black dress that hugged her curves with such precision he took her out on the dance floor far too many

times to count. She even joked to him about how frustrating it was to have a male friend who looked better than her. He rebutted the remark, a little too quickly, and she had looked at him strangely then laughed it off like she usually did. Of course, whether he had tried or not to look better, or to entice women, it never seemed to stop them from approaching him.

"Have a good day, Andrew," Jenny said smiling, as he handed her back the knife and thanked her for her help.

"You, too, Jenny," he called walking back to the elevator with his coffee.

Getting back into the elevator he was starting to think he should have taken a moment to put on socks and shoes, especially when an older couple got in after him and the woman eyed him strangely for a moment, looking him up and down.

"Did you forget something, honey?" she said, politely in her proper accent, taking another opportunity to look at his bare feet.

"Needed coffee," he said a little apologetically. She only smiled and nodded as they left at the next floor.

Alonna would have made some joke about 'us crazy Americans' if she were here he thought, and then dismissed it as her last words came back to him again.

"It's not real, Andrew, it never was," she had said.

It was a statement that he had heard in his mind, time and again since her departure.

But that was all hours ago and now the sun had risen high in the sky, indicating to Andrew he had been at that window far too long. He felt the warmth of the sweater and reached for his coat. It was time to get out of his thoughts and away from the Lady Camille. He had to find out more information and time was running out. Somehow he could feel it.

He left the room, closed the door and slipped the room key into his coat pocket, heading back to the elevator and hopefully to some knowledge. The truth may be hidden in his dreams, but the knowledge was on that battlefield and as much as he didn't want to admit it, he had to return.

He stepped off the elevator, feeling better this time, he had worn both shoes and socks as well as a warmer outfit. The cold air from outside swept into the hotel lobby as people were coming and going. Much more activity than earlier, he liked that. He had always been comfortable around people. Crowds never bothered him. That's why the isolation of the past few days left him with an empty sense of needing to talk to someone.

He passed by the large reception desk where Nathan was still working diligently checking people in and out of their rooms and sending people to help with their luggage. It was a nice hotel, a bit more upscale than the Atlantic Paddington in London. The lobby was larger

and held some elegance of England, including dark and lightwood that blended beautifully along the desk and a white and gold tiled floor that was cleaned often, he thought, looking down for a moment.

"Yes, that's right, the Castle Edinburgh, ma'am," Nathan was heard behind Andrew saying. "It's just ruins though, ma'am. Not anything exciting. Now the Castle Granger not far from here is a site, I must say."

The conversation ended with the guest finding out what she wanted to know and moving onto her daily excursion route, but Andrew was shocked to hear the Castle Edinburgh mentioned, and didn't hesitate to stand behind the woman and wait for Nathan to be free to tell him.

"Hello, Mr. Whiete, and how are you today?" Nathan said, pleasantly as he always did. Andrew had asked him to call him by his first name, but it seemed Nathan didn't believe in being so familiar.

"Good morning, Nathan," Andrew started. "I'm fine, but I was wondering do you have any information about the Castle Edinburgh? I overheard you telling the woman before me that it was in ruins?"

Andrew tried to sound casual, simply asking about another site for tourists to visit, but Andrew could tell Nathan had sensed the urgency in his question, and he proceeded to look at him for moment as if thinking about it.

“It’s just I didn’t know that there were castle ruins in this area,” Andrew quickly added.

“Actually, they are not here, Mr. Whiete,” Nathan replied and pulled out a map of Castle sites. He opened the tri-fold brochure with pictures of beautiful stately castles and manor homes. He pointed to the bottom right corner.

“The Castle Edinburgh is in East Riding, about three hours from here, Mr. Whiete,” he said. “They are one of the oldest ruins in the area. I’m not certain why they have remained.”

“I wasn’t aware the Castle Edinburgh had survived at all,” Andrew said.

“Yes, I know, it is misquoted in many books that the Castle Edinburgh is gone. Well, I suppose in a way it is, but the ruins still remain. A rather mysterious donor who is said to belong to the old Order of Raylen owns the land. Just a bit of nonsense, I’m sure. The Order of Raylen has been dead and gone for centuries. But the Castle’s history is fascinating,” he finished and looked at Andrew.

“If you are interested the local library in the center of the town has some information. I could call ahead and ask them to reserve a few books for you about Castle Edinburgh,” he said, always helpful and polite. That was Nathan, and Andrew, on that morning, was very grateful for it.

“Yes, please, and perhaps anything on this Order of Raylen,” Andrew said, quickly. “Sounds interesting.”

“Yes, I’m sure,” Nathan said, indicating he was far less interested. “Mr. Whiete, I should warn you that much of England’s history is steeped in the dark arts and magicks from centuries of tales. Everyone had a secret society, or belonged to one, or began one, I assure you. No Castle is without its dark tales of sorcery within its stone walls,” Nathan said, giving him a small smile.

“Thanks, I appreciate your help,” Andrew replied and smiled back.

“You can have the brochure, Mr. Whiete,” Nathan folded up the brochure with its glossy photos and small narratives handing it to Andrew.

“Thank you again. You do a fine job, Nathan,” Andrew answered taking the paper and smiling again.

“It is my pleasure, Mr. Whiete. Enjoy your day.”

With that, Nathan was through with him and onto the next tourist who was looking for sites to see and places to visit. Of course to the American tourist standing to the side of the desk now, reading the brochure Nathan had been invaluable in a way he would never understand.

“Castle Edinburgh Ruins.” Andrew read to himself.

He took a minute to look at the small photo picturing a staircase of stone steps leading nowhere and a half wall on one side that had crumbled at an odd angle leaving it looking isolated from the rest of the ruins. The picture didn't show anything else except green grass and a few tourists mulling about. The fact that they were dwarfed in comparison to the wall showed how big this castle must have been in full scale.

The small narrative read the same as any narrative about castles read, and he had read many in search of this exact Castle.

'Situated near East Riding in Yorkshire England, the Castle Edinburgh was the famous home of Charles Edinburgh, the Swiss painter from the 16th century known mostly for his English landscape paintings, 'The Moors', 'The Lake at the Rising of Dawn' and 'Serenity Roars.' The castle dates back to the fourth century. Little is known of Castle Edinburgh, other than during the 12th Century, an English Prince victorious from battle did bring his new bride, a woman of exquisite beauty, to live here as to keep noblemen and others at the court in Camden away from his prize. They were reputed to have been many attempts on his life from men who wished him dead in hopes of gaining favor with her in marriage. The ruins are all that is left of this magnificent Castle and Keep. In its day, it could house up to 250 servants, 2,000 cattle, 500 horses and carried 10 hen houses

and over 75 falcons and 50 hunting dogs. The drawbridge and outline of the moat still remain where it is said that many noble knights, kings, princesses and royalty walked the halls of Edinburgh. The original name of this Castle is unknown. Charles Edinburgh painted the Castle in his not so well known painting, 'Love at Sunset.'

Andrew stared at the small picture again. If the Castle Edinburgh was still around there was hope, he thought. He knew the Lady Camille had been pulling him, but to where, he hadn't been certain. Now as he stared at the ruins he knew. He had to go there. The feeling was overwhelming, and for the first time in days he felt like he was on the right path. Andrew put the brochure in his coat pocket and headed towards the bus area.

Looking around at the different buses lined up for their morning run. He looked down at his watch, another present from Alonna. He realized he had missed the first run at eight in the morning. Disappointed he walked back into the hotel and sat on one of the couches in the lobby. It would be another hour before they returned. He had been staring out the large window to his right that covered much of the wall, and didn't notice the man walking up to him. He wasn't certain how long he had been trying to get his attention.

“Excuse me, sir,” the man said a little louder.

Andrew turned to him. The man was around the same age as himself. He was an American that was obvious from his voice. He held an accent but Andrew wasn’t certain where it was from, possibly California, judging from the man’s semi tan on his face. He certainly wasn’t getting that from the winter and fog that accompanied every day here in England.

“Yes,” Andrew replied.

“Sorry to bother you, but I was wondering,” the man moved in a step and then looked like he was debating with himself for a moment.

“My name is Allen Redden,” he sat down next to Andrew on the couch. Andrew moved forward a bit, while Allen teetered on the edge of it and leaned over.

He was shorter than Andrew but only by a few inches. His face looked to be unshaven for the past few days. Andrew didn’t look at himself this morning in the mirror, but he was probably had just as much growth on his face too. Andrew quickly and silently reminded himself to go back to his room and shave before he took the trip to East Riding. He looked at the man before him and about to introduce himself, when Allen continued.

“I’m a photographer from a magazine called ‘Motion’, it’s out of California, San Diego,” Allen said.

“We,” he looked past Andrew to a group of people who were mulling about with photography equipment, lighting and such standing in the hotel lobby. Andrew hadn’t noticed them there before, “are taking pictures for our February Issue of England. You know for Valentine’s Day, lovers tryst, hiking trails, romantic old castles and all.” Allen smiled at Andrew.

“That’s nice,” Andrew said, not really understanding why this man was telling him all of this.

“Listen, you’ve got a great look,” Allen started quickly. “I don’t mean to be rude, but would you pose for a few pictures?” Andrew was about to hold back a laugh when Allen jumped in.

“Just seeing some sites that we’ve chosen, nothing big, they’re probably ones you were going to anyway, the Castle Granger, Lover’s Walk, St. Thomas Gardens. They aren’t far from here. We could be done in a few hours,” he stopped and waited for Andrew’s answer.

“Oh, if you’re with someone, you probably are, your wife,” he interjected before Andrew had a chance to talk. Andrew saw Allen look down at his hand to look for a wedding band.

“Girlfriend,” he said correcting himself, “it’s no problem, she can come along.” This time, he took a breath and smiled at Andrew trying to be polite.

“Thank you, it’s a nice compliment, but I....” Andrew started to decline, but Allen continued talking over him.

“Look, we’ve been here since yesterday and we’ve been taking photos of flowers, castles, trails, you know, but nothing is working. The photos need composition, people. To be frank, they need you. You look like maybe you were a model…are a model,” he added.

This time Andrew did laugh, Allen’s expression changed and he quickly moved away from the last statement.

“Sorry, it’s just…do you know anything about photography?” Allen stammered.

“I like looking at pictures,” Andrew replied, smiling.

“It’s not just about finding a landscape or a subject and taking a picture. It’s about the light, the feel, the moment that is captured through the lens. It’s about what the picture doesn’t say as much as what it shows. We need someone who has a look about them that speaks to the observer of the picture,” as he spoke Andrew could see he was seeing something in his head, “pictures of England are everywhere, but the essence of the countryside, the small moments, days of long ago, the mystery and magic of its places and haunts, that’s what I’m looking for,” Allen leaned forward a bit more.

“I want the people who look at these pictures to see something that isn’t there, to

picture themselves within the moment and want to come here," he said. "You can do that. It's not just that you're good looking, or that you have a look about you. You can make people come here, right here, to where we are. You can make them dream of a place far away from them. You are one of them. You're a dreamer. It was so there, from the minute I saw you in the hotel yesterday."

"Yesterday?" Andrew asked looking at him, trying to think if he remembered seeing this man. He didn't recall him, but then again, he didn't know if he had eaten either.

"Yes, you were eating at the restaurant," he said, pointing to the hotel restaurant behind Andrew and to the left. Andrew looked back at it.

The memory came back to Andrew as he turned back to Allen, not of where he saw him, he hadn't, but of eating at the restaurant. He had eaten yesterday, that was a slight relief that he remembered after this morning's events.

"You weren't with anyone then, so I thought," Allen began, but stopped, "sorry I didn't mean that...." he stammered again.

"I'm alone," Andrew said and the words held a weight to them he hadn't intended. "I mean you were correct," now it was Andrew who stammered to get away from his own words.

"So what do you say, huh?" Allen asked, smiling at him.

“Thanks again, but I really can’t. I have to go on a trip today. I’m just waiting for the bus to return,” Andrew stood up. Allen followed.

“I know it’s sounds crazy, but we have identifications, we’re not some kind of psychos luring unsuspecting tourists into traps,” Allen said.

An expression crossed his face a moment later that made Andrew think Allen would have liked to take back that last statement due to how crazy it actually sounded.

“I’m really flattered, honestly, and if I wasn’t busy, I might consider it. It sounds interesting,” Andrew said, politely.

He wasn’t lying to the man. He would have in another time and place before the dreams had begun taken Allen up on his offer. It might have been interesting, but he had to get to that castle as soon as possible.

“Thanks again,” Andrew said, “I hope you get your pictures,” he added. “I’m sorry I do have to go.”

“Listen, if you change your mind, here’s my card,” Allen said, disappointment was in his voice, but he smiled at Andrew. “Honestly, you’ve got a great look, you should consider using it.”

Allen began to walk back to his group of people. Andrew saw him shake his head no at them indicating what they were already aware of from their expressions.

“Allen,” Andrew said, causing the man to turn around. His eyes held a touch of

excitement that perhaps his subject would change his mind. Andrew walked a few steps to him.

"I don't know if it helps, but there's this great restaurant, a tea house by the lake not far from here, about ten minutes. There was a battle between English soldiers and," he paused about to quote the history book Alonna and him had found about the French, but decided against it, "a group of barbarians.

They had burned the Village of Easton to the ground. Everyone in the village died, men, women and children. The sight was unbearable to the English Prince who rode into the village weeks later. The smell of death still clings in the air there and you can almost hear the screams of the poor people who were killed."

Andrew ceased and realized it had been getting far too emotional about it. He looked towards Allen.

"Go on," Allen said, an intrigue in his voice.

"It's just a...." Andrew was about to say 'story' and that he had no real facts to back it up, but he continued instead caught up in something beyond him.

"You see, it wasn't enough for the prince to just chase the barbarians away, he had to send a message that the people of England were protected by their crown. He had to avenge the deaths of those innocent people. He had to kill their leader and let his blood spill before his

men." Andrew moved a step closer to Allen as he continued.

"The Prince tracked the barbarians to the lake and then he cornered him in the open field, a battle ensued, a bloody battle of strength and anger. Finally the Prince came upon the leader, he struck blow after blow, crushing and hard, but the beast kept coming. In the end, it was the Prince's sword that sent him down and the beast's blood spilled forth. The barbarians retreated and England had won," Andrew's words were intense and drawing in the group standing with Allen.

"The battle was over, but the fear remained. It still does there on that battlefield today," Andrew finished lost in another dream, only this time people were there, he was standing in the lobby of the hotel. Quickly he looked at Allen standing before him. He held an expression of shock and uncertainty on his face. Then he smiled.

"Good story," Allen said, slapping Andrew on the shoulder. "I like it. What was the name of the battle? I think we should go there. Sounds like it could be a good picture."

"The battle of Yorkshire, 1163, it's on the map," Andrew said, a bit less enthusiastic.

He was trying to be helpful, feeling like he had disappointed Allen by not being in his pictures, but telling the story only brought him back to it, and the anger and bitterness returned to him in that moment.

“Are you a teacher? History buff? Something like that?” Allen asked, genuinely, “Cause you’re good at it. Very real.” Allen smiled and walked a few steps away.

“Hey,” he stopped and turned back to Andrew, “are you certain you don’t want to come with us?”

“No thanks, I’ve already been there,” Andrew said, walking away from the group.

“So what do you do?” Allen said, waiting.

“Security Guard,” Andrew answered back as he walked to the elevator.

He heard Allen laugh behind him. The group joined in. Andrew didn’t mind he must have sounded like a medieval nutcase describing the battle as if he has been in. *He had, hadn’t he?* The thought came into his head and he dismissed it, heading back to his room.

After ten minutes or so, he was clean-shaven and leaving the room yet again. He went into the lobby and found Nathan at the desk. He asked him exactly what time the bus was leaving for the East Riding Area and decided he should set up a few more nights at the hotel while he had Nathan’s attention. He wasn’t certain how late he would be returning from East Riding, but Nathan said that last bus returning was at 9:00 PM. A brief moment of reality came for Andrew as he handed Nathan his credit card, and laughed to himself about his bills that would be sky high when he returned to Colorado. Something he had never done before.

He had always been conscientious about his spending. He only had the two credit cards, and mostly those were for emergencies. He didn't really use them. He had a debit card for his bank account, and luckily he had saved some money over the years, that had gotten him through this extended trip so far. He was very grateful at this moment for those credit cards though, he wasn't certain he would feel that way when he returned home.

As he waited for the bus he thought about calling Alonna, but decided against it, better to leave it alone for right now. She needed some space and maybe he did, too. He resigned that he would call after he went to the castle ruins, maybe he would feel better and maybe he would finish all of this and tell her he was coming home. Maybe she would even be happy he was returning. He hoped she would.

A few hours later he was on the bus to East Riding, a little more presentable than earlier when he met with Allen Redden of 'Motion' Magazine. When he had returned to the lobby to board the bus they had been gone. It didn't surprise him. Andrew figured they had to go take their pictures. Maybe Allen would go to the Battlefield he thought, as he looked out of the window of the bus. He might even find out how to obtain that magazine when he returned to Colorado.

Surprisingly, he had been calm without much incident the entire bus ride to East Riding,

thinking about normal things, mostly of his encounter with Allen and what Alonna would have said about it. She would have wanted him to go, he knew that, she was always the risk taker. Not him. He used to be one when he was younger, but several relationships and jobs changed that somehow without him being aware. He used to love taking risks. It excited him. Then no one could have considered him careful, cautious, or any of those things. In the last week with Alonna it had felt good to not worrying about if it was right to compliment her as many times as he did, or to take her hand at dinner, or to lean in too close for comfort, or even to think about kissing her again. He had felt better than he had in years. She on the other hand thought he was going crazy, not exactly encouraging. Unfortunately for all the risks he wanted to take, he still held back.

A decision came to him on that bus ride. He wasn't going to hold back anymore. He was sick and tired of careful, fed up with comfortable, and downright annoyed with controlled. What good did any of it do anyway? He was happy when he wasn't any of those things. He was happiest when he had done what he felt, when he had followed his heart. To hell with the rest, he thought. Another decision made. He was going to let the Lady Camille have what she wanted. If she wanted him to follow her, he would. If she wanted his soul, she could have it. The fighting was exhausting and what was he fighting for anyway. He didn't win.

He would never win. The Prince and Camille had far too hard of a hold on him, and he needed to see this through, no matter how frightened he became.

This thought remained with him as the bus continued on the road to East Riding and closer to the castle. Andrew felt much better and more relaxed by the time it came to its destination. He had even had a nice conversation with a pretty woman who sat next to him most of the way.

She was meeting her husband in East Riding and they were having a long weekend at the Falcon Manor, a posh hotel there. Her husband was an accountant with a firm up north she had said, where they lived. She worked as a manager for a clothing store. They had saved their money for the trip and she was very excited to be going. They hadn't taken time together since their honeymoon, five years ago. A few trips she said, here and there, but nothing so expensive.

Andrew enjoyed listening to her dreams and their life together. The woman, named Lorialyn, a beautiful name that Andrew remarked on, was charming and very pleasant to talk with. The nicest part, there was no possibility of her moving the conversation into a romantic one since Andrew could tell she loved her husband, Robert, very much. It was a comforting thought and it occurred to him that it had been far too long since he had engaged in a conversation like this. She did comment on his

lack of companionship for the trip in a polite way and he explained he was doing research on his family lineage without the added comments like Alonna had made on an earlier bus trip with Melanie and her son, Timmy. Lorialyn didn't prolong the topic of his being alone and seemed genuinely happy to have someone to talk to on the long trip.

At the East Riding stop they said their good byes and Andrew saw her run to her husband, waiting against a car to pick her up. He watched them for a few moments exchange a kiss and smile at each other. He smiled and turned away to find out about getting to the Castle Edinburgh ruins before the sun started its decent. It was about one in the afternoon now, and he knew how quickly it got dark in England in the wintertime.

"Hello," Andrew said to the young woman behind a desk at the information area.

It wasn't like America, where brochures were everywhere in a large building. It was just one woman sitting inside a small booth, looking as if she was very cold. She opened the window, which was more like a door. She had to move out of the way as she did.

"Can I 'elp ya?" She said, looking at Andrew in a much more interested way than Lorialyn had.

He smiled at her. She smiled back and seemed to forget she was cold.

“Hi, I’m looking for a way to get to the Ruins of Castle Edinburgh,” he replied and smiled again, hoping she would have the information he was looking for.

“No problem,” she said in her cockney accent, “there are trips up there, but it’s off season so it’s going to be about an ‘our before the bus comes back.”

“How far is it?” Andrew asked.

“Oh, about two miles or so down that way,” she said, pointing to Andrew’s right.

“Maybe, I’ll just walk,” he answered back.

“It’s freezing out ‘ere,” she said, quickly. “Listen, ya can take a cab, if ya’d like, it’s a bit more money, but you’ll get ‘ere. Then ya can take the bus back when ya’re done,” she offered.

“That would be great. Thanks,” he smiled again towards her.

“No problem.” She said. “So what’s a ‘andsome guy like you doing all alone?” She added quickly, smiling pleasantly at him.

“Solving a mystery,” he replied casually.

Her eyes lit up for a moment, and smiled invitingly at him.

“Really? That sounds interesting. Do that often, do ya?” She said, smiling still.

“Not usually,” Andrew conceded. “My life’s pretty boring. Just a security guard by day,” he said and smiled back. It was not

intending on keeping the conversation going, but she was nice and he had relaxed during the bus trip so he kept it light.

"And a mystery solver by night," she said with an intrigue to her voice.

"Yea, I guess so," he smiled. "Thanks for your help."

"My pleasure."

Andrew turned away from the window to look for a cab. After a few moments, the information girl's voice was heard from behind him.

"It's the red ones, just ask one of 'em," she said. Andrew turned to face her. "They're all bored today."

He nodded his head and offered his thanks again. She smiled.

"Good luck with that mystery, security guard," she called to him. He turned and waved smiling.

After retaining a cab it took only a few minutes to arrive at the ruins. They were deserted. The cab driver asked him if he was certain he wanted to be here. He paid the man and thanked him before getting out into the cold brisk air again. The driver had also told him on the short trip where he could pick up the next bus in about three hours at the end of the pathway from the castle. He couldn't miss it, he said.

Andrew shivered a bit against the air that was becoming colder as the sun was already

lowering in the sky. The day had been dismal even for England, he thought. It wasn't raining anymore but the sun had barely peeked out from behind the clouds and the air was chilly and went through his wool coat to his bones. He crossed his arms as he had done at the battlefield to fight against the cold. The wind was calmer today, though and he was grateful for that as he approached the first section of the ruins it whipped around him, and he pulled his arms tighter around his chest. He was also grateful for the Alonna's gift of the heavy sweater he now wore.

The ruins were large and sprawling. It's no wonder the picture in his brochure, still in his pocket, was only of a few things. The Castle stones expanded almost all the large area of land from east to west, not covered completely in snow, but only where in a few sections it hadn't melted away yet. He walked first to the set of stones in a half square that might have formed a room at one point. He leaned down to touch one of the stones. It was more instinctual than anything. He didn't feel anything, just the bitter cold around him. Maybe he had been wrong, he thought, as he moved to the large half-crumbled wall in front of him. The wind whipped his face as he approached, but calmed when he went behind the stone structure. Strangely, it not only calmed the wind, it seemed to get warmer back here, he thought. Andrew was not complaining, still he didn't feel anything out of the ordinary.

He tried to imagine what the castle might have looked like in its glory days. He could see from his place behind the wall where the moat had been, the ground was impressed with a long oval shape and although there were probably flowers there during the summer months, it was dismal and dead now. The place where a drawbridge would have been contained two large pillars for structure and an old chain that was badly rusted. Andrew was actually surprised the chain would remain at all. Maybe it was just for the tourists. As he walked closer, he got his answer. The chain wasn't that old and still had small amounts of the silver from its original finish. It definitely wasn't from either the 12th or the 16th century.

The wind whipped around him again and he went back to the comfort of the large stonewall where the wind was calm and the cold was blocked out. He wasn't exactly certain why it would be. The wall blocked one side but was completely open on the other. He attributed it to the direction the wind was coming from and didn't think about it anymore. He didn't really care why it was warmer, it was and that was good enough for him. He walked slowly along the wall, again reaching out and running his hands along the stone. He walked it several more times and decided it was getting too late and calm winds or not, it was going to get colder and eventually it would reach even behind this huge wall. He turned for one more trip back along the wall, when he caught something in the

corner of his eye. He could have sworn he saw something move in front of him. He stood staring in that direction for a long moment, searching with his eyes. The coldness, wind and weather conditions left his head. He focused.

In his mind he began to think about something else. *What was she like?* He said to himself. The thought seemed to come out of his heart, not his mind. He hadn't asked himself that before. He had felt her in his dreams, saw her in his mind, touched her soft skin, felt her lips upon his, her body in his arms. No, he said in his mind, not in my arms in his arms. They weren't his when he was with her. He thought like himself, but he felt like *him*, like that embittered, angry Prince who plagued him on the battlefield every night.

Now, he looked down and began to think about her. *What conversations did she have? What if she never could leave this castle? What would it be like to have men want you so much to kill your own husband? Was she scared? Did she know he brought her here to keep her locked up? Did she feel like a prisoner? Did she love me...him?* He corrected himself.

Did she love her son, Jonathon? Did she die of a broken heart? What happened to her after her husband died in battle? What happened to their son? How did she feel about Sebastian or his other son from a noble lady in his youth Elrich, the poet? Wasn't he? Isn't that what he knew? Why did he know that? Was he

helping the Prince or Camille? Was he helping anyone or was he just going crazy?

The last thought lingered in Andrew's mind. He felt a sudden warmness caress the back of his neck and send a warm sensation through him for a moment. He closed his eyes. He could smell her. She was here. He knew it. He could feel her close to him.

"Andrew," her voice sounded distant and soft, but he heard her as clear as if she were with him. His eyes opened and he turned slowly.

The sight before him made him gasp. There she stood, in all of her beauty, just like he saw in the portrait. She was in the same green dress, her red hair flowing about her shoulders. She moved slowly towards him, holding that same look from the painting, not a smile but sad eyes and a slight parting of her lips. He gasped in another breath of cold air and let it hit his lungs. He felt unable to move at all.

The vision of Camille came closer with each of his short breaths until she was upon him. He wanted to close his eyes, shake his head, and tell himself this could not be happening. She could not be real. She was covered behind a sort of mist he could see but didn't feel as she approached him. She was more beautiful than he remembered from his dreams or the portrait. Her eyes were enchanting and stared at him with an intensity that drew him to her. Without moving, he felt her soft gentle touch on his cheek, he had felt so many times before but it was different

now, closer. He felt an overwhelming sadness touch his heart, as her hand brushed his cheek.

"Andrew," she said again in her soft tones, an accent of perfection, sweet, savoring that only seemed to add to her beauty. "You are here."

She stood before him now looking directly at him. Her eyes held more than sadness as he looked into them. He didn't know if his mouth was open the entire time but he closed it as soon as he was aware. His staring at her he could not control, his eyes never moved from hers.

In those eyes Andrew saw them change to confusion as she continued to look at his face then down his frame and back up again. When she met his eyes, she smiled at him. It was a lovely smile that turned up the corners of her mouth and created slight dimples in them. She was young, she had been happy, he thought. She wasn't anymore. The sadness returned to her eyes and she looked away.

"You are not my husband," she said, disappointment registered in those eyes now. She turned her body out to the land. Her red hair picked up a slight breeze that he didn't feel and moved it slightly, causing Andrew to find her more beautiful.

"I searched and searched," she said, still staring out in the distance, "he never comes. We wait for him, yet he does not come."

The sadness that he felt from her in the dreams and waking nightmares was not as intense as in this moment. She lowered her head slightly, and Andrew thought he heard her sobbing. A quiet weeping that tore at his heart. He started to find his legs again and had begun to move forward to comfort her, but his hand, which he placed on her arm passed through it, causing him to take a step back at the realization he was staring at a…ghost.

It occurred to him of course, as she materialized before him a few minutes earlier, but the fact confirmed, and the actual feeling of passing through her, was too much for Andrew. He felt dizzy for a moment. She had turned to him as he passed through her. Her eyes glistened with recent tears that were streaming down her cheeks. His own eyes began to feel tears in them. He could feel her pain, her sadness, her torment and it became his own.

"He has been gone far too long," she said sweetly but a harsh reality played in her voice that told Andrew she was thinking as she spoke.

"You are the Lady Camille," was all Andrew could muster to say. Considering the circumstances he was surprised he had even spoken.

If Andrew had thought about it he would have phrased it different or maybe not asked such an obvious question, but there was no rulebook on how to interact with ghosts of the past. So he just went with his feelings

instead and tried not to think about engaging a ghost in conversation.

"Who are you?" She asked, the tears subsiding causing him to breath better, the sadness now being replaced with curiosity.

"You have my husband's eyes and his chin, but you are far smaller than him, are you sickly?" She said, as if she would ask this question of anyone.

"My name is Andrew," he said, but something in the back of his mind keep saying 'wake up. "I'm from America," he continued, something else in his mind said 'don't.' The most important thing Andrew thought about though was to calm down and stop acting like a crazy person.

I'm talking to a ghost at the ruins of a castle in England, how am I not crazy? He asked himself as he continued to stare at her afraid she was going away if he even blinked.

"What is Amer-i-ca?" She asked, carefully trying to sound out the word.

It suddenly occurred to Andrew standing there that he shouldn't have said that. Maybe ghosts aren't supposed to know about things that don't exist in their time. He went through a thousand stories he had read about ghosts. He had been fascinated with the topic when he was younger, along with banshees, mind readers, psychics and the like.

What did they say about encountering a ghost?

“It doesn’t matter,” he said and surprisingly she didn’t ask him again. She simply nodded her head and lowered her eyes in a way that excited him.

“Of course, sir,” she replied. “Perhaps then, sir, you may help me understand why I dream of you?” Shocking the American standing only one foot from her.

“Dream of me?” He questioned.

“Yes, sir. You enter my dreams. Are you of the Order of Raylen?” She said cautiously. “For if you are, my husband shall destroy you.” The last part was said very firmly taking on a serious tone of definite intent.

“No, I’m not,” he replied quickly “I’m just Andrew.” He paused, “I have been dreaming of you...and the Prince.” He was more careful now with his words.

The effect she was having on him was making conversation a bit difficult. He could feel her in his head and her emotions were overwhelming. He tried to concentrate on what he was saying.

“Where is my husband, sir?” Lady Camille asked moving closer to him. She was inches from his face. “I have no time for formality,” she added, confusing Andrew as to what that meant.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“I know I must show respect to you, sir, and I wish that I were able. I am certain your ancestors were great men and it makes thee one. Do understand I am neither insolent nor wish to

have a punishment placed upon my head for my strange behavior, however I need to find my husband. I must speak with him of…Sebastian." She said the last word in a whisper, leaning closer to Andrew, and rising up on her toes to reach his ear.

After taking a moment to understand her words of respect and such, he nodded his head at her. Of course, he thought, she would think she had to lower her eyes and show him respect. It was a man's world to her, as Alonna had told him. She was simply following the customs.

"It is fine," Andrew said. She looked at him, confused. "It is well," he corrected himself. "You may speak freely with me," he added to put her at ease.

Andrew almost found it amusing, what with the intimate encounters they already had, that she felt she had to be formal with him at all.

"I want to be your friend," he told her, looking at her.

She looked up at him and smiled. Then her eyes lowered again and she moved a step away.

"No, no, sir, my husband would not be welcome to a friendship with you," she said softly. "He protects me and it would be unwise to disrespect him. I must not enter into friendship with you. I will not disrespect my husband." She moved another step away from Andrew.

"We won't be friends," he said to her, but was disappointed in the statement.

She looked back at him with another smile and nodded her head once, letting out a breath.

"Good, very good, sir. Thank you," she replied.

He was having the strangest day. Not only encountering a ghost, but one that was pleased he would not be her friend. It had never happened to him before. He wasn't certain how to behave as not a friend to anyone. But he was determined to try.

"You said that you had to tell your husband," she looked at him with a disapproval in her eyes, "I mean, the Prince," she nodded to him in agreement, "about Sebastian. What about Sebastian?" He knew he had better learn quickly how to communicate correctly with this woman. She was very specific.

"Do you know Sebastian?" She asked looking at him carefully.

Andrew thought about it for a moment unsure of how to answer. He had the dream of Sebastian when he spoke to him, when the Prince, he corrected, spoke to him of his strange trophies from the recent battle. But did he know Sebastian? He decided to be as truthful to her as he could.

"I know Sebastian is the Prince's son from a Spanish lady, Victoria who sent the boy to him when he was only six. I have not met him formally," he concluded and then added, "I do know that the Prince loves his son, my lady."

Hoping the last formality would make her feel he was not attempting to be too comfortable with her, thus not becoming her friend.

"Sir, you presume much without knowledge," she said, an annoyed tone to her voice.

Andrew searched again in his head for the reason of her anger with him. It came to him and he thanked all those damned books he had read about chivalry and such.

"Yes, my lady, I offer my apologies," he said quickly. "I should not have spoken of the prince in such a familiar tone," he said, trying his best to get phrasing correct as not to have her ask more questions about his strange speech. It had been a valiant effort, he thought, but the look on her face told him it unfortunately hadn't worked.

"You speak strangely," she said, looking at him. "Are you touched in some way?" She asked, genuinely feeling sorry for him from the tone in her voice.

"Sometimes I think so," he said, quietly. She looked at him again with an expression of confusion. He looked back at her and smiled.

"No, my lady. I do not come from here," he said.

He decided the less talking he did the better. He was confusing the beautiful ghost and spending far too much time on explaining himself when he needed answers.

“Please excuse my lack of education, my lady,” he started and she nodded at him, letting him know that explained enough to her of his strange speech.

“I need to know what you were going to discuss with your....with the Prince,” he said, catching himself on the phrasing again. “About Sebastian.”

“I must speak with my husband, only,” she answered.

Andrew sighed to himself. Great, he had a ghost that needed help from another ghost that he had no idea about. Things were not looking better.

“I don’t know where the Prince is?” He said, defeated somewhat.

“Wait a minute,” he said to himself more than her, and again she looked at him strangely as to his use of words, but Andrew ignored her for the moment.

He moved in a step closer, looking down at her, and directly into those gorgeous emerald green eyes. There were mesmerizing.

“I think I do know where he is, my lady,” he said softly, taken in by her beauty, and impressed by the knowledge he actually possessed.

Lady Camille smiled up at him, warm and comforting. Andrew smiled back.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"Where is he, sir?"

Lady Camille asked Andrew, holding his eyes in a manner that was far more familiar than she would have been accustomed to for an English lady, who was married to a Prince. Andrew let the thought go, as he continued to look into her green eyes, and tried to stop his heart from racing within his chest. Normally, he would say it was because she was before him in all her beauty and grace. However, at this moment, it had much more to do with the whereabouts of her husband, the Prince, than with her, and the fact that Andrew knew what she was about to ask of him.

"At the battlefield," Andrew replied softly. Lady Camille's eyes grew wide as she comprehended what he meant.

"That cannot be, sir," she said in a voice that held shock and amazement, if not a little of an appalling nature to it as well.

"You must be mistaken, he would never…he could never..." her breath seemed to leave her as she swayed on her feet. Andrew thought she looked like she would faint right there.

Not thinking about the fact she was a ghost, Andrew reached out to catch her from falling. His arms moved through her as she staggered a bit to the stone step a few feet away, and sat down. Her head lowered. He thought, perhaps she was crying again.

“Are you all right, my lady?” Andrew asked, carefully, moving only one step closer.

Camille looked up at him, her eyes clear of tears, her face holding a serious expression far beyond her young years. Before he knew what was happening, her clothes looked different. He wasn’t certain if he had been mistaken of her original clothing or if she simply changed in front of his eyes that saw nothing. They had never left her as she moved from standing to sitting, but somehow the clothing was discerningly, and to Andrew a bit disturbingly, different.

Now, instead of the beautiful green gown that captured his heart from the portrait in the library, she wore a dress that may once have held beauty in it but was tattered and torn. Flakes fell all around, as if a hot flame had charred it. Her hair once a radiant red that he wanted so desperately to touch, now was tangled and dusted with blackness that looked like soot. Her face too, had changed from a pale seemingly flawless skin tone to patches of black soot on her cheeks, her neck and forehead. Her emerald eyes still shone brightly and her beautiful features were still present, but she looked tired around those eyes and worn within that face. She still looked to be young. Andrew’s mind was trying to comprehend what was happening.

Was she showing him her death? Why wasn’t she older than? He thought.

She still sat there looking up at him in the dirtied and tattered dress with an expression he couldn't quite understand. It wasn't the sadness he had grown accustomed to. Neither was she confused by his words, or even annoyed at his inability to understand her customs. Those were expressions he knew by now. This was much different. It was darker and had a harder look to it, almost...anger. Yes, Andrew thought, that was it, anger. She was angry, beyond angry, he thought as he stared into her eyes. She was very angry, and it was building inside of her as he watched.

She stood up completely able to stand without a weakness at all in her small body. She seemed to gain strength, also as she moved slowly towards him. She stopped a few inches from him and kept his eyes within hers.

"You will retrieve him and bring him to me," she said. A demanding and most definite anger in her voice, it was unmistakable.

"My lady, I..." Andrew started trying to calm her down, if not himself.

He may have known he had to go back to that battlefield, but to invoke the spirit of this Prince of hers was not something he had expected. He had been hoping for something a little easier as a way to solve this problem of Lady Camille's. Mostly he had hoped the answer lied within her...not with him.

"You will tell him exactly what I am about to tell you. You will not falter in your

telling of it," she said cutting off his words, uncharacteristic for a lady.

However all custom seemed to have fallen away somehow within her look. She was no longer concerned with that, it seemed. She remained too close and kept his eyes the entire time.

"Do you understand, Sir Andrew?" She asked.

"Yes," was all Andrew could reply.

He had never seen such venom in a woman before. Her eyes remained dark, her expression hard and her words unbelievable as she told him everything he had been drawn there to hear.

The words poured over him and filled him with sadness, anger, and then rage. It was with that rage that he left the Lady Camille, the Castle ruins and East Riding. He carried the rage with him as he took the trip back.

His look deterred any interested women from talking to him on the bus, something that had never happened before. His look even deterred Nathan from asking how his day had been when he arrived back at the hotel, three hours later.

He ordered room service with a deadened tone in his voice that caused the person on the other end to call him sir the entire time. After he had eaten, he lay down in his bed and closed his eyes, he knew exactly what had to do tomorrow and he was ready for it. He

would not let anything stop him, not even his dreams. He understood now.

Unfortunately, Andrew wasn't prepared for the dream he had that night. She didn't prepare him. Perhaps she had no intention of doing so. Andrew's rage that he took to sleep was softened by his waking up in strange surroundings lying next to her curled up in his arms. They were both unmistakably…naked.

He felt her warm body pressed against his. She was softly breathing. He looked down to their naked bodies underneath the warm fur blanket. The fire had died within the fireplace at the foot of their large bed, covered by a heavy cloth as a canopy. The room itself, as he looked was very big, not at all like the hotel room. She moved slightly indicating she too had awoken. The sun was peeking through the heavy tapestries of gold and maroon on the wall opposite them. There were six that he could see covering large windows that had no other way to keep out the cold.

"Andrew," she murmured partly in sleep, partly awake.

He looked down at her. He couldn't see her face as she was lying with her back to him, her head a few inches slightly below his chin. He turned her slightly in his arms to place her on her back under him.

"I am awake," he announced, his voice sounding distant and lower than normal, but still part of him.

She smiled up at him and her eyes took on an alluring tone to them that he greeted with a kiss. She pulled him in by placing her hand on the back of his neck. She hungrily kissed him again, teasingly biting his lower lip. She parted her lips under his and he forced his tongue inside her mouth. She let out a gasp and met his desire with hers.

The moment built in both intensity and passion. His hand went around her back and pulled her to him forcefully. He felt a sense of power within him grow. He pushed harder down on her body, not to hurt her, but to claim what was his. He felt such hot desire wash over him that he didn't think anymore where he was or what was happening to him. He just let the feelings within him take over. They held such power. Desire, lust, wanting. She let out another gasp as they found each other.

He entered her slowly, drinking in her scents. Kissing her neck, cupping her breast in his hand. He desired to have all of her, every inch, every curve, every sweet taste and scent of her. Slowly the motion gained momentum. His breath was heavier with each thrust he made into her. She rose to him, arching her back to meet him. His desire took control and he knew he would not be fulfilled until he made her his, and his alone. Until he felt his own release, until she shuddered beneath him in ecstasy.

When the moment did come upon them, he fell on the bed next to her rolling over on his back. His breathing was still heavy, he felt the sweat on his body tingling and exciting. He was exhausted in body and mind. He couldn't think, barely move as his body sent him into waves of desire that still flooded through him after he had separated from her.

He felt her roll over onto his chest. Her body was still hot from their lovemaking. Her hair damp as she laid her head on him. Her small leg intertwined between his, the other pressed against him in an effort to remain close to him. He placed his arm around hers, a small enough movement, though his arm felt heavy and tired. He rested it on her waist slightly pulling her closer with the little strength he had left.

His eyes closed. He drifted into sleep. His last thought was of her sweet voice saying his name.

He woke up with a start his body ached. His head had a pounding in it that didn't cease, like a hundred daggers cutting into him. He sat straight up in the bed and clutched at his stomach, a pain shot through him that caused him to moan in agony.

"What is it, my love?" Camille said, next to him.

He was still in their bed. The memory of making love to her was still present in his mind. Another shooting pain came upon him. This time

he cried out a bit. He bit his lower lip from doing it again.

"Andrew," she said, concern in her voice. "Andrew, my love,"

His eyes had been closed since the first pain but he felt her leave the bed and walk away quickly.

"Come," he heard her say. She was soft in her speaking.

"Fetch the healer, the Prince has fallen ill," her voice took on a more demanding tone he had remembered from the ruins just yesterday, when he stood and talked with her ghost. With her. His mind was swimming in images that had no rhyme nor reason to them.

The ruins at the Castle Edinburgh, Lady Camille's ghost, he had still remembered every word she had told him, yet none of what was happening was making any sense. He was still in their bed, still in a dream, wasn't he? The thought left him as another pain hit his stomach, and caused him to lean over further trying to stop it.

"My Prince, I have sent for the healer," she said, moving closer to him. She sat on the bed placing her hand on his back softly.

"No!" He heard himself say and grabbed her hand from behind him.

"I do not need the healer," the words were harsh, and he knew he had said them though he couldn't understand why. Whatever a

healer was, Andrew thought, he was in dire need of it.

"My love..." she began in soothing tone.

"Send him away!" He yelled at her. She stood up and backed away a bit from the bed.

"Yes, my Prince," she said quickly and left the room.

"I do not need a healer," he said quieter. "She should know better."

The pain so intense a moment before ceased in his stomach, and he breathed better.

He pulled back the covers and proceeded to stand, determined he would. It didn't matter that he was naked still or that the cold floor made his head hurt more. He continued. He would stand. He would prove he was not in need of a healer. He was the Prince. He said in his head.

He held onto the large bedpost to his right with one hand and pushed himself up with his other. His legs felt weak and sickly. He despised that feeling and shut out the pain, as it rushed back to him. His head swam, his vision blurred ahead of him. He still pushed onward, he would stand he told himself. Stand! Stand! he said, forcing his body to listen to the words. Willing his weak legs to push him up. Finally he did. A feeling of victory overtake him, and he was about to smile when another pain hit him and it forced him to fall back on the bed, sitting. This time the pain came with bile in his throat. He could feel it moving up and he knew he was

going to vomit from the taste. He tried to push it down, but he couldn't. He bent over the bed and gave in to the pain, the bile and the sickness he knew he was not able to fight any longer.

He woke up again in their bed, again in this chamber, again with the fur covering him. He didn't know how long it had been there, how long he had slept or where Camille was. Again he was gripped with stomach pains and again he leaned over the bed, throwing up nothing, since nothing ever stayed down. In a distant voice, he heard himself curse the world.

"You will be strong again, my love," he heard her soft voice next to him, willing him to get better.

It was all in vain. He knew that. He could feel his body losing its battle to stay alive. He was tired, worn out and he could barely move any longer. His legs and arms were heavy and fatigued. His eyes could not remain open to look at her. His stomach was being eaten from the inside, as if he was attacked by a wild boar, the teeth digging into his flesh yet leaving no mark of the intruder. He could feel himself slipping away. Far away, and he was welcoming the peace he knew would come with it.

He opened his eyes once more, taking all the strength he had left to look upon her. His vision was blurry and all he could see was her red locks of hair. His eyes closed. He was done. He would not fight any longer. He would let the peace come. He would lose this battle. His last thought was regretting leaving her behind.

In his mind, he heard his voice say a name but it wasn't the one he thought it would be.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Alonna," Andrew said as he awoke, breathing heavy. His heart was racing, such pounding he heard in his chest. He thought he was dying. As the thought came so did the feeling he had experienced.

"Alonna," he said again out loud in an effort to tell himself he wasn't dead or at least try to convince himself.

Andrew sat up, his eyes slowly looking about the room. It was the hotel room, not the bedchamber of the Prince and Lady Camille. Not the castle, but the hotel room. He jumped up quickly from the bed, standing. He was standing. He was walking. He was alive. He said to himself. He walked around the room several times, amazed at his legs moving and his own breathing.

He was alive. He hadn't died. He hadn't died.

He stopped suddenly at the edge of the bed on his second turn across the room. A thought passed by him quickly and without warning. It was strong, it was real, and it pained him deeply. Not in his stomach, nor pounded in his head, but in his heart. It grew within him and it consumed him completely. He was certain of it. Beyond certain. He knew it all along...he smiled to himself. After a moment the victory of the thought faded and a darker thought replaced it. A much darker and more revealing thought.

Why?

Was all the thought was but it deepened in hatred and frightened him with the intensity that it took within his mind.

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

After Andrew had awoken and realized he was very much alive, the whole day took on a different meaning. Even the thoughts that had come to him of the Prince and Lady Camille, one that brought him a sense of understanding, the other a sense of dread, it was the feeling of living that continued to fill his senses. Desires, hopes and even the possibility of dreams again, not of princesses or princes of a long ago time, these dreams were much closer to his heart.

It was those thoughts that he carried with him on this day. From showering to changing to eating a large meal at the restaurant, the thoughts remained intact. From thanking Nathan for the information about Castle Edinburgh and finding out that he had lost an entire day to the dreams, still didn't deter him. He just smiled and went on his bus back to the battlefield, a place that no longer filled him with fear. He was ready now for whatever lies ahead.

Standing at the exact place he had stood one week earlier, he didn't notice the cold around him or the fact that the entire place was deserted. He was the only one standing there as snow began to fall. He didn't know how long this would take so he had prepared for anything. He had put on an extra layer of clothing including boots and warm gloves that covered

him while his scarf was tucked underneath his coat for added warmth. However long it took, he was ready to wait and ready to face this Prince. It all started quickly.

A feeling of bitterness gripped him suddenly and he had to catch his breath from the intensity that ran through him.

"Who are you?" A low dark male voice said behind him. He felt a coldness touch his back and neck. Even his warm scarf couldn't keep it out.

"I tell you now, stranger, that this dagger will pierce your neck and bring death faster than you can yell to your friends that hide," he said.

The tone was threatening, and if Andrew didn't recognize the familiar voice after a moment, he may have been inclined to feel the fear the man was trying to invoke.

"I have already died once, Prince, and I am still here," Andrew started. "Try and kill me, trust me, it'll do you no good."

He felt a cold wind go through him as he turned around. The Prince standing before him held a dagger that had a vicious edge to it with jagged teeth. He knew he had made the motion of slicing his throat and now the Prince held an annoyed look on his weathered face.

"Damn," he said, walking a few steps away shaking his head.

Andrew took a good look at him as he turned profile. He had long hair that fell a few inches below his shoulders and was most likely

had been far lighter shade than it looked now, dirtied and not washed in days, centuries, Andrew thought. The hair flowed about his face while some still remained clasped in a tie at the base of his neck. That face held Andrew's own eyes, green, she had been correct about that. However Andrew couldn't tell if their chins were the same since the prince's was covered in a beard that also was a dirtier tone than perhaps originally. The rest of the face was worn or tired, Andrew wasn't certain at that moment, the Price stood just an inch or so shorter than Andrew's six foot two inch frame.

He must have been a giant in his day and age, where most men stood only five feet, six or seven inches tall, Andrew thought as he continued to study this man before him that left him with no doubt this was an ancestor of his hundreds of years earlier. The Prince's build was large with muscles that bulged from his arms to his chest and legs. He wore a faded red tunic that was battle worn now. There were several slices in it over both arms and a large rip in it below his neck where it opened into a flap revealing some of his chest. Several old wounds and scars on that chest as well as the exposed part of his arms and his legs spoke to this man's days of battle. Andrew knew where some of those wounds were inflicted. The tunic covered him below the waist. A rope of heavy leather was wrapped around his large frame, and he carried a looming broadsword worn on his right side, indicating that the Prince was left handed,

just as Andrew was. The final part of his attire was his shoes that laced tightly about his ankles and up his calves to his knees. They were leather with open toes, which would have been very cold to the man standing in front of him, but he didn't seem interested at all in the weather. He was more grappling with himself about something.

"I have no strength left to even dispatch a poor, sickly one such as you," he said in a tone that was both annoyed and disappointed.

"I'm sorry, Prince, but...." Andrew stopped himself and realized what he was saying. He was apologizing to this man for not being able to kill him. Andrew moved past the thought quickly.

"I believe to be one of your descendents, Prince," Andrew began.

"Do you not bow to your Prince, stranger?" He said in another tone of anger.

Andrew nodded his head at him and then stood up straight again.

"I don't have a lot of time for formalities," Andrew began again, hoping he would somehow understand from his look and his ways that he wasn't from their land.

"You will bow before your Prince," he commanded waiting for Andrew to oblige.

"Or what?" Andrew said, gaining confidence in both his voice and his control over this situation.

The prince looked at him for a long moment. The stare was piercing and Andrew

could imagine that in his full strength, namely when he was alive, this guy could demand anything he wanted and there wasn't anyone who wouldn't have disobeyed.

"I'm sorry, Prince, but you've been dead for a long time. You no longer rule this world," Andrew said.

He had confidence in his voice still, but Andrew felt sorry for this man before him. *Did he not know that he had died over eight hundred years ago?* Andrew was worried that it might be too much of a shock even for this hulking mass before him. No one, he thought, would take to finding out they were dead easily, he could certainly understand that after his more recent dream.

"I'm sorry," he repeated, and moved a few steps closer.

"I do know that I no longer exist within my world," the Prince said quieter, giving Andrew the impression he had some sensitivity to him, perhaps, that was what his wife saw.

It certainly had to be something other than the fighter Andrew had come to know him as. Or for that matter, even more than the stubborn man who refused help on his deathbed.

"All the signs surround me," he continued, walking away a few steps and turning into the cold winds that would have frozen Andrew if he were wearing the Prince's outfit.

That fact didn't seem to bother him in the slightest at that moment. His face held an

expression of disappointment and an annoyance at his own death.

"I have fought this battle too many times," he began. "Over and over again I kill the beast who burned my people. Yet again he comes, just as before. I cannot cease the torments."

He paused, looking at Andrew for a moment. The expression Andrew had seen before of a strong prince melted away. The expression he held now revealed a man who was neither strong nor stubborn, only tired. A man caught inside an endless battle with no hope for escape or peace. Andrew felt a kinship to this man of the past, a connection to his pain. No matter neither how harsh his world was nor how harsh he had to be to survive in it, he understood this man. Trapped, performing an endless repetition of the same thing, without reason, without a sense of existence. Andrew knew the feeling all too well. He felt it each day at his job, each day when he went home, each day that he awoke and knew today would hold no mystery, no change, no difference than the day before.

"I came here to tell you about your wife and son, Jonathon," Andrew said, deciding it was time to get to the point.

The pained expression on the Prince's face left Andrew with an unexpected longing to end this torment on both of them.

"Camille," he said almost in a whisper. "My dearest Camille."

Again the Prince's expression changed first to softness in his harsh features and then to a sudden urge that moved him closer to Andrew.

"Where is she? What have you done with her?" He asked, threat and accusation in his tone now.

"Nothing. I mean," Andrew said and tried to stop from stammering. He would stand up to this man. He was dead and a ghost, he told himself.

Even though the dagger in his boot and the sword that hung on his side could not hurt him, Andrew felt slight fear as he approached him with his intensity and demands. There was no doubt in his mind that the Prince was a leader and all those who surrounded him, including his sweet, gentle wife, followed him.

"Speak!" He demanded of Andrew, standing very close to him.

"Look, I'm having a series of very bad days making this year just as bad," Andrew started and before he knew it said words he had never spoken out loud to anyone. "First, I was dumped by my girlfriend who would rather climb the ladder than be with me, then my best friend rejects me, then I start these endless dreams that led me here to England, where I never thought I would come. Sure, for a vacation maybe, one day, but not like this." He looked at the Prince as he continued.

"This is no vacation believe me, prince. I am not having a good time. This is painful and tormenting and I can't stop these dreams no

matter what I do. Then, my best friend who I would really like to have more with, leaves me all alone, because these dreams are consuming me and I don't have any time for her. Not to mention that I don't even know if I'm awake, or asleep, or even alive sometimes. Then I go to your castle ruins where I meet a ghost, your wife, who tells me a story that is unbelievable. Then demands that I find you and tell you."

Andrew was advancing on the prince without knowing as he spoke louder and with more passion. The Prince backed up a few steps.

"Then to top it all, I finally come here to summon you or whatever and tell you what I promised Camille I would, and you start throwing accusations at me!"

Andrew took in a breath and let it out for a moment. He turned away and tried to calm himself down, but he was far past that now. He turned back to the Prince who looked at him with a confused expression, placing his hand on his sword in a defensive stance against what he considered, Andrew was sure, some crazed lunatic touched by evil forces. But Andrew didn't care what this arrogant, brute of a man thought of him. This was his world still, and prince or ghost he wasn't following any more orders or commands from him, from anyone. This was still his life damn it, and he would take some control of it back! He had enough! With that thought, he looked down at the prince and continued.

"Listen, I didn't ask for any of this to happen. I didn't want to be pulled into your life, Prince. But you're stuck with me and I'm stuck with you, so be it. I seem to be your only hope these days," he advanced one more step causing the prince to back up also.

"If you want to see your wife again, then I suggest you shut up and listen for once!" Andrew demanded.

He stared down the Prince for a moment and then walked a few steps away, letting out a breath. He was annoyed and angry and feeling better than he had in all the days he had spent in this God forsaken freezing country. His blood was boiling hot and he no longer felt the cold around him. He was determined to end this, and he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt in his mind that this Prince wasn't going to boss him around any longer. He had never spoken so harshly to anyone in his life, not even those girlfriends who deserved some of his anger. All his life he had been nice and pleasant, had manners, behaved well, while person after person came into his life and took things from him. He never fought them, never raised his voice like he just had to the Prince. Andrew's senses were clearer than he ever had been before. He had taken it from the women. He had taken it even from those who called him friend, when they never truly were. He had taken it all his life because he wanted to be true to himself, to remain calm, to understand not yell, to have sympathy, not anger. Looking still at this Prince,

Andrew began to think about the battles this man had put him through night after night. He thought about the pain in his limbs that this stranger had inflicted on him. He thought about what the dreams made him do, how they made him feel, and he thought about Alonna. If it hadn't been for these unending, tormenting dreams he could be with her right now. Lying in her arms, maybe even, at least he could see her again.

"Yes, my liege," the Prince said behind him. It was a meeker tone. It took Andrew a moment to register it.

Did he just show him respect? He thought, surprised and pleased at the same time.

"Good," Andrew replied taking another breath. "We do this my way now."

The feeling Andrew had couldn't be expressed in any more words than those he was speaking to a Prince from the 12th century, standing before him on the cold battlefield.

"I am in agreement with you, sir," the Prince said, staying a distance from Andrew of a few feet.

"Your wife is very sad," Andrew began, and was about to go into the entire story that Lady Camille had told him two days ago at the castle ruins when the Prince interrupted.

"I would ask that you refrain from your familiar tone in reference to my lady," he said in a voice that was demanding, but respectful. Andrew had heard that.

“Sorry, we don’t do that where I come from. I keep forgetting,” Andrew lowered his head a bit thinking unfortunately he spoke the words as well.

“You would think I should have all ready learned that by now.”

“Yes,” the Prince said, agreeing to the stranger before him. Andrew looked at him and shook his head, smiling a bit.

“I’m working on it, Prince.”

“Continue. I wish to hear of my lady,” Anticipation was in his voice and Andrew silently wondered how long it had been for him since he had seen her in his mind.

“Lady Camille is searching for you. She has…” he paused for a moment, “died.” Andrew said the word flatly as to not express an emotion about it, even though inside he felt that rage again from when he had left her standing at the ruins.

“You hold anger for my lady’s death?” The Prince questioned him, scrutinizing Andrew with his eyes.

“You have spoken with my lady alone, speak of her with a familiar air and you hold anger for her death. What deception have you towards my lady?” He asked.

It didn’t hold the same accusation from earlier though and Andrew understood the reason for the question.

“She informed me out of respect for you, Prince, that she and myself would not be

friends." That statement seemed to ease his mind and he nodded at Andrew.

"Prince, there are some things you need to know about the Lady Camille's death and the death of your son, Jonathon."

With one nod of his head in understanding, Andrew continued.

"And of your own death, Prince," he added and watched the Prince's expression grow cautious and curious at the same time.

"First, you did not die on this battle field, Prince. This is not where you should be," Andrew began.

"You think me not to know this, sir," the Prince suddenly said, causing Andrew to stop speaking. "I died in my bed, in my castle," he said without emotion towards his death at all.

"Yes."

"Go on, sir," the Prince urged.

Andrew took a few steps in front of the Prince and then turned back to him.

"Lady Camille and Jonathon were not so fortunate." There was a pause as Andrew moved a step closer to him. There was no easy way to say what he must.

"They were burned to death on a Pyre outside the castle, two days after you were buried, Prince."

His head lowered and Andrew almost reached out to touch his shoulder, but remembered he was a ghost and there could be no comfort for him any longer, at least not

comfort from someone eight hundred years in the future.

"I am sorry," Andrew finally said.

"There was no reason," he said, looking at Andrew.

The pained expression on his face, told Andrew he had been a man of flesh and bone, regardless of power, title or money. His wife and eight-year-old son were killed in the one manner that would bring torment and anger to this Prince. They suffered scorching flames and agonizing deaths that he had seen the result of that had led him to this battlefield all those years ago. He had protected his villages and his people from what he could not protect his own family from. The pain was overwhelming to him Andrew could see it in the man's eyes. He did not cry, though, he took a breath and told Andrew to continue, trying to fight his own emotions by distracting them. A technique Andrew knew he had used often in times of strife in his life. It made him even more sympathetic towards him. He knew this man. He was born into his title without recourse for any other profession. He was born into fighting and forced into customs and a culture that looked down on emotions as a sign of weakness.

Andrew chastised himself a bit for insulting that custom and culture, one he could not possibly understand. A world he could not possibly be a part of. He had no right to judge this man before him. He never had to fight for his life, or the life of his family, he never had to

hide his feelings, he may have at times, but it wasn't because he had to or because the entire social world he existed within required it. No, he did not understand this man ways anymore than the Prince could understand his own. They may have been common in some things, looks, feeling trapped, but the essence of their worlds were too different to make them understandable to each other. He had lived where men ruled and expectations of manhood included killing, fighting and living to fight again. Where there was no room for mistakes or emotions that left you helpless and lost, where your life could be taken from you in a matter of an instant because some one else wanted to take your place.

A real sense of defeat washed over Andrew. This man was no more or less a man, no more or less without emotions, no more or less everything he was, but his world simply and harshly did not allow such luxuries. He had to adapt to it somehow. He had to be what he was. Demanding, commanding and harsh, for any sign of weakness would lead to defeat, death, and the taking of everything he had loved.

"Prince," Andrew began, carefully, "I wish I didn't have to tell you but you are mistaken about your death also." The Prince looked at him with interest.

"You were poisoned."

"To what purpose?" The Prince asked, suddenly.

Andrew had expected questions after that statement, however, not the one he asked. He thought maybe he would ask who had poisoned him, but he asked the exact same question Andrew had when he had thought upon it, w*hy?* It was the question he wanted an answer to as well.

"I don't know, but I will find out," Andrew said with determination. Andrew looked at him in sympathy for a moment.

"How?" The Prince questioned.

"It comes to me...." he paused trying to sound like he wasn't crazy even to the 12th century Prince, "in my dreams. When I go to sleep I see things. Things I couldn't possibly understand. I see your battles, I'm in your battles...I am you."

Andrew breathed and realized how good it felt to just say it. All this time he had been holding it inside. Even when he spoke to Alonna he was always holding back. This time he didn't. Not one word of it. Things he had long since forgotten from his own youth, or maybe tried to forget. Things he never spoke of to anyone. He tried to block it all out of his head. He wasn't always interested in the 12th Century because he wanted to learn about it, he had been trying to understand the dreams he had, always had ever since he could remember. The memories, images, everything he had forgotten until this moment, flooded his senses. It was deafening and it revealed for the first time why

he was standing here, and why they had called to him. I was the only one who ever listened, he thought.

"I've had these dreams ever since I could remember," he told the Prince, "it didn't start just this year, I used to dream about castles," he looked at the Prince, "about your castle. It was always the same one. I was walking down a hallway, the same hallway, running away, I didn't know why and I never found the end. It never ended.

Then the burning would start, it would be slow at first, just warmth and I always woke up before it hit my body, I knew it would," Andrew moved closer to the Prince, thinking as he walked.

"I wasn't just running, I was being chased," Andrew said quickly, "chased by someone I could never see. I would look back but nothing was there. Emptiness and a never-ending darkness were in front of me, but I knew someone was there. I knew that he hated me. It was a terrible hatred from deep inside. I knew I would never get away but I would always run. I knew it would get me, but I wouldn't stop running, until I woke up."

Andrew stopped and took a breath, the Prince was staring at him completely confused, but Andrew didn't cease the memory or try to explain. It all hit him like never before. It all made sense and he knew why he had those dreams all those years ago. Dreams he never told his parents, dreams he never spoke of,

dreams he never thought of again after they finally stopped when he was 10, when someone he had found a way to against them. He kept fighting them, kept from running, kept the dreams from coming. He had fought the monsters away, but they never truly left. Andrew took another breath and looked directly at the Prince.

"I wasn't you in those dreams, I wasn't even her," he said, quickly and with complete knowledge as never before in his life.

"I was Jonathon."

"My son?" The Prince questioned now, confusion still in his eyes.

"Yes, don't you see, Prince, it was your son Jonathon who found me that first time. I was only seven or eight when the dreams started, but it wasn't me in those dreams, I figured that out somehow that's why I fought them. It wasn't me. It was Jonathon. He was the one being chased down the hallway. He was running for his life. He tried to show me. I didn't understand." Andrew's thoughts of those early dreams came back to him, clearer and clearer.

"Show you what?" The Prince asked, moving closer. "What did Jonathon try to show you?"

"The truth," Andrew said, a serious look crossed his face. "I could feel the warmth of the flames around me while I ran, but I never thought...." Andrew looked down, then back to the Prince another revelation revealed.

“Jonathon knows the truth,” Andrew continued. “He tried to tell me, but he couldn’t do it. I fought the blackness. I fought the dreams. I fought him. I grew up but he never shall. He will always be running down that hallway away from the monsters, and away from the nightmares. He will never fight them and he will never be released...unless I help him.”

Andrew turned away and tried to take all of this in. Jonathon tried and failed when Andrew was a child. As he grew up, those dreams were in his head somewhere still and the truth that Jonathon tried to show him was there somewhere. These new dreams are just trying to tell him the same truth that Jonathon had begun when he was a child, but telling him in a way he could understand as an adult. Seeing things not through the eyes of a child but through the eyes of an adult, the only adult Jonathon trusted…his father.

“I have to find him. I have to go,” Andrew said, passing by the Prince.

“Wait.” Andrew turned back to face him.

“Tell my son that....” he paused and looked down, grappling with himself again. Andrew waited, walking a step closer.

“I will be coming home soon,” he finally said, abandoning the original thought Andrew knew he had for his son, but understanding what he meant completely.

“I will,” Andrew said and moved one step closer to the Prince. “I will tell him.”

He looked at the Prince and the Prince nodded in understanding. Andrew nodded back.

He left the battlefield never turning back. He knew the ghost of the prince would not be there any longer but right now he had more important things to do than to watch ghosts disappear. He needed to find the right one to appear, the one that hadn't made an appearance anywhere in his life and dreams since he was a little boy.

CHAPTER NINE

"I need to know about medieval games," Andrew said to the woman at the local library.

He had decided to take matters into his own hands and went directly to the library from the battlefield and his conversation with the Prince. He had to relate to Jonathon somehow, and he hadn't been a child for a long time. He knew about children, always liked them, but he needed to reawaken a very frightened child who fought monsters that couldn't be seen or stopped.

"Monsters with horns, I don't like them," Little Timmy had said on the bus with his mother when Alonna and him had ridden to Yorkshire over two weeks ago. It went through Andrew's mind many times since the encounter. There was something in the child's eyes…

"I am sorry, but we do not seem to have anything about that, sir," the woman at the desk said, bringing Andrew out of his thoughts.

"Thanks for your help," he replied as he left the library without the books or anything he had requested.

He had to find a way to get to Jonathon, he thought as he walked back to his hotel. He knew he could, if only he could think…another thought came to him, quicker and clearer than any that had come before.

I have a way, he said to himself. He had just forgotten.

"All right, Jonathon, let's go," Andrew said out loud to no one in his hotel room.

He laid down on his bed after pulling the curtains to keep out the light. It was only mid afternoon, but the darkness outside was all ready starting to creep in. He knew it wouldn't be long before night would come, and this time he had to control those dreams to see what Jonathon had been trying to make him see for all these years.

"Come on," he said urging himself to sleep, urging Jonathon's spirit to find him. "Come on, buddy, I know you're there."

Andrew's eyes felt tired. The running around today and the feelings from his last day of dreams had left him exhausted. He knew sleep would find him, but would he find Jonathon? It was the last thought he had as his eyes closed.

Andrew awoke inside a chamber, not like the bedchamber of the Prince. This was different somehow. Sun was streaming through a small window and hitting the bed he now lay in. He could feel the warmth of the sun on his body and for a moment, maybe longer, he closed his eyes to it. Slowly he let his body relax, being healed almost from the sun's rays.

He heard voices suddenly. His eyes flew open. The voices were quiet and not ones he recognized as the Prince or Lady Camille. He got up and placed his feet on the cold stone.

Instantly it seemed, the light left the room and it was dark. He moved his feet back from its coldness. It remained dark. He lit a candle he had spotted near the bed and carried it with him. Slowly he placed his feet down again and stood up.

Was this Jonathon's chamber? He thought, and then quickly another thought came into his mind, but from where he was uncertain.

Was he Jonathon?

The thoughts swam in his head as he moved towards the voices. He opened the large door to the chamber quietly, carefully. He tried to look down the hallway but all he saw were lighted torches along the wall, casting an orange glow down it. The voices became louder as he stepped further out. He walked towards a room at the end of the hall. He didn't think anymore, only felt. Those feelings were leading him here.

When he came upon the room the door was slightly open, just a crack, but he could peer inside. There was light emanating forth and spilling a bit through the opening he had created. He leaned closer to hear what the voices were saying but they were still too distant. Slowly he reached out his hand, the door seemed so large and he had to stretch to reach it. He opened it a bit more. He was grateful it hadn't creaked. Quickly as if by instinct, he blew out the candle and placed it on the ground to the side of the door. He slipped through the small opening and into the room,

hiding behind a large desk directly to the side of the door. The voices were louder here. He could hear them now.

"Yes, mi lord," a young woman's voice said. She spoke softly with a cockney accent.

"It will begin soon," a male voice said in a more formal accent, turning away from the female.

He could see them both now. She was kneeling at his feet. She was dressed in a black cloak of some kind, hiding her face. He was dressed in the same kind of cloak. His face was hidden as well, but his voice sounded familiar.

"You will do as I say, girl, without question," the male voice said.

Then the man pulled out a small bottle of something. It looked odd shaped with a narrow top and a wide bottom. It wasn't big, just fitting in the palm of the man's hand.

"Give him two drops of this liquid in his mead," the male voice continued, turning to the girl before him and handing her the bottle.

She took it. Andrew could tell her hand was shaking as she did so. The man grabbed her hand and grasped both her hands and the bottle within his.

"Do not falter," he commanded to her.

"If anyone is to find out, I will give you up to the hanging rope, girl, make no mistake," he said firmly.

He saw her nod her head at him and lower the bottle, concealing it under her cloak.

"Good. Two drops, no more. Each afternoon and each evening. One glass of mead only. Do you understand? Any more and the pain will be too fast." He explained calmly.

The man turned again away from her and towards Andrew. He quickly ducked his head down behind the desk before him. From the side, he peeked out to see.

"I want him to suffer. To suffer pains until his last breath," the man said with darkness in his voice Andrew knew he had heard before, but couldn't recall.

"You have been a good servant. If you do this, I will release you from your servitude to me," he concluded, turning to her and brushing his hand across her face to remove a strand of hair.

Quickly, he went on his knees and grabbed a handful of that same hair and jerked her head back harshly. Her cloak fell to reveal Maria, Lady Camille's handmaiden.

Had he met her before? Andrew thought.

He knew her to be Maria. He knew she was the lady's handmaiden. He must have seen her or heard her speak to Camille, but the exact recollection he couldn't place at this moment. He brushed the thought aside as the man leaned down and kissed Maria hard on the mouth, placing his hand underneath her cloak. She tried to call out but the pressure on her mouth from his stopped any hope of that. After a moment, he retreated and stood up.

"Go and do as you're told, girl," he said, roughly.

"Yes, mi lord," she replied, removing her cloak and handing it to him. He took it and waved his hand in dismissal.

She was dressed in familiar clothes to Andrew. He had seen her before. She was Maria, Lady Camille's handmaiden. She wore her same outfit she always wore. But how did he know these things? They made no sense in his mind.

Maria curtsied to the man quickly and went towards the door. Andrew ducked down behind the desk as she passed him. Suddenly he thought of the candle outside the door he had left, but after he heard Maria's quiet footsteps down the hallway, he knew she hadn't seen it.

Now Andrew turned towards the man and saw him about to move towards the door too, towards him. He moved back but the man didn't pass by. Andrew peered back from his hiding place. He had stopped close to the desk, Andrew couldn't see his face anymore, but he heard every word he spoke.

"I will see you die like a lame animal, twisting and turning your insides," he said in a low dark tone. "Father," he spat at no one.

The stranger's voice slowly took on recognition in Andrew's mind as he continued.

"You never should have brought her here. You never should have married her. I hate your whore and I hate her little brat." The

words were even and toned but held deep anger in them.

"He will never take what is mine. I will see you dead and buried and their bodies burned before I lose what is mine. What has always been mine...father." He spoke the last word again with disgust.

Andrew waited but no more words came from the man. He saw him finally pass by and out the large door. Again the candle came into Andrew's thought, but again it wasn't detected. He let out a breath and stood up.

"Sebastian," he said quietly to himself. "It was you."

A sudden fear gripped him and he almost fell over from the intense emotion. He leaned against the wall to his right and tried to breath.

"Where is he?!" He heard the voice very close. Andrew looked around the room for shelter and ducked back down behind the desk.

The door swung open again, this time he knew the voice, it was the Prince. He moved into the room with force in his words and actions. The feeling of fear left him.

"Sebastian! I have had enough," he yelled.

Andrew peered over to him. The Prince's wild hair of the battlefield was gone. It was not dirtied or worn but flowed about him making him look taller than he was, and more commanding. Again, Andrew felt no fear. The Prince reached up and pushed some of the blond

strands away from his face. A few were a lighter almost white color.

Andrew studied him. He wore a long robe of maroon, detailed in gold around the collar and cuffs. A long gold rope hung from it that moved back and forth as he moved about the room, searching.

"Sebastian, you will not cause such upsets in my castle!" He yelled, "I will not stand for it!"

The Prince turned back towards the door and Andrew ducked again behind the desk to keep from detection. It seemed an easy move to accomplish. He would have thought about that more, but the Sebastian spoke.

"Father," Sebastian said, entering back into the room, devoid of the black robe and any anger in his voice this time.

"Sebastian," his father turned looking at his son. "We shall end this now." Anger was in the Prince's green eyes. Andrew could see it.

"Father, I only wanted to teach the boy about being a knight. Surely you could not think I wanted him to be hurt," Sebastian said in a childlike tone that annoyed Andrew peeking out from behind the desk at him.

He was lying, and from the look that softened on his father's face, it seemed, the Prince never suspected the deception.

"Father," Sebastian said moving closer and placing a hand on his arm.

"I worry for the boy as well. He is weak. Perhaps he will not be able to be a knight. I was hoping that it would not be so. I thought if I taught him how to fight, he would become stronger and follow in your footsteps as a knight of the king's realm."

Sebastian's words were dripping with ill intent and lies that did not escape Andrew listening to every one of them. The intent though, seemed lost on the man standing in front of him.

Didn't the Prince hear his lies? He thought. Didn't he know his son was trying to kill Jonathon? He knew.

Why did he know?

That thought entered his mind and he pondered for a moment on it. In the next, Andrew was refocused on the conversation before him between the Prince and this treacherous liar whom he called son.

"The boy is too young, yet, Sebastian. He will grow stronger when he is older," the Prince said. There was calmness in his voice now. "You have frightened his mother with your intentions, no matter how good they were."

"She treats him as a girl," Sebastian said, not holding back his disgust of the Lady Camille.

The Prince slapped Sebastian across the face, and Andrew cringed from it for a moment. It was a hard blow but Sebastian stood.

"You will not speak upon her treatment of our son again," the Prince said with a firm

resolve Andrew had remembered from their encounter on the battlefield.

The intent of the Prince's statement was not missed by Sebastian who nodded in his head in respect to his father.

"Yes, father, of course, I am sorry," he replied, trying to sound genuine.

"I will punish my wife if she does as you say. It is my right to do so, not yours," the Prince said again firmness held strong in his voice.

"Yes, father," Sebastian replied and bowed to his father as he passed him.

Satisfied with the answer the Prince walked to towards the door. He paused a moment at it and Andrew saw him look down to his right directly at the candle he had left there. Andrew's heart went into his throat. He had seen it.

The Prince bent down and picked it up with a curious look on his face. His eyes slowly moved to his right, to where Andrew was hiding. He was helpless but to look up at him, his eyes met Andrew's. A long moment passed between them, neither one moving.

"Go tend to your horse left outside the gates, Sebastian," the prince said with his back to his eldest son. "It is getting late."

After the statement his eyes left Andrew's. He carried the candle with him as he exited the chamber. The Prince's heavy footfalls were heard down the hallway. Andrew was afraid to look towards Sebastian, afraid he, too,

would discover him. A few moments later Sebastian walked past him without a glance, leaving him hidden and the chamber empty.

Andrew stood up and a sigh of relief escaped from him. There was trepidation in him now and again he wasn't certain where it came from. He stepped forward, carefully around the desk. He saw the remainder of the room for the first time, or maybe, not the first time. Something inside him said he had seen it all before. The slain heads of animals that Sebastian had hunted, and put up as trophies of his kills, he was always a collector of trophies as Andrew recalled from that first conversation with his father, he remembered having. He looked to his right for no apparent reason he could find within him and saw a piece of cloth not completely concealed underneath an ornate chair in the corner.

Andrew went towards it, and reached down feeling a hard object under the cloth. He tried to grab onto it but the cloth pulled away, revealing a box of ornate design. There were woodcarvings on it but he couldn't see what it was, it could only feel them as his hand traced over the designs. He thought about pulling it out, and then about Sebastian returning and decided against it at the moment. He quickly replaced the cloth, walked back to the door and started to run out of the room. He didn't look up as he exited into the hallway. Suddenly he was stopped by something hard hitting into him.

"Should you not be sleeping, my son?" The Prince's voice said, looking down at him. He looked up into the prince's face. He seemed to be far taller than him by almost two feet.

My son, Andrew thought as the words of the Prince registered in his mind, and then for the first time noticed his own hands and his bare feet. They were small. He was Jonathon or rather he was in Jonathon's thoughts, memories and now the Prince standing above him, believed him to be Jonathon.

Andrew stood not speaking for a few moments, not certain of what to say. The prince shook his head concealing a smile, and handed him back the candlestick.

"No wandering, Jonathon," the Prince said. "It is not polite to spy on others. Remain to yourself and do not worry about your brother," he said comfortingly. "Your brother would not find it as amusing as I, is that understand, my son?"

Andrew nodded up at him. The Prince smiled, reaching down and tousling his hair.

"Go on then, get back to sleep before your mother finds you awake," he said, giving him a little push towards the hallway.

Andrew ran back down the hallway, entered the room that he had arrived in, and returned to the bed. He placed the candle carefully on the table and laid down. He didn't think he would be able to sleep but somehow he had to wake up to his own time. He had to.

Wake up, he told himself.
Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

Andrew awoke with a start. This time he wasn't disoriented or even needed a moment to calm down. He had a focus that didn't waiver. He was early into the next morning. The clock near his bed read 4:37 AM. Breakfast in the hotel did not start service for another thirty minutes or so, he headed toward the shower, thought about calling Alonna again, but decided against it. He would call her after breakfast, he thought.

This time he took a shower in peace. There were no ghostly images that attacked his mind. The pull to continue on his journey was just as strong, maybe stronger, now, but he didn't feel the need to lose himself in their reality. The Prince, Lady Camille and even, Jonathon were far from his senses and emotions as he let the warm water run over him. He was thinking about a certain woman who he would like to see in that red dress of hers again. He closed his eyes and thought of Alonna. Her soft chestnut brown hair, her warm eyes that held a thousand expressions in an instant. Those thoughts were the only ones that consumed him, and he didn't fight against it.

He ate breakfast, not at small cart he had done days earlier. He enjoyed a hearty meal of eggs, bacon and toast at the hotel's restaurant. He downed two cups of coffee and one glass of orange juice before heading out, passing the

reception area on his way. He saw Nathan getting ready for his morning behind the desk.

"Good morning, Nathan," he said, cheerfully to him. "Don't you ever get a day off?"

Nathan looked at him strangely.

"I had one three days ago, Mr. Whiete," he said.

"Right, my mistake. I must have been sleeping," Andrew said, smiling and nodded his head towards Nathan.

"Have a good day."

"You, also, sir," he replied as Andrew walked out the door.

He felt brighter this morning, more spring in his step, more air in his lungs, more of everything, he thought, as he boarded the bus once again headed to East Riding. He knew that at the Castle Ruins he would find an answer, the final answer, and he sat down with this knowledge as the bus pulled away from the hotel. He would solve the mystery and reunite the Prince, Lady Camille and their son before lunch. Then he could go to the airport and get the first flight out and back to Colorado. He smiled at the thought.

"You must have a special delight," an English woman in her mid twenties said.

"You don't mind, do you?" She asked Andrew, smiling and indicating she wanted to sit in the seat next to him.

"Not at all," Andrew replied and smiled back to her.

“Where are you headed?” She asked, after a few moments of silence passed between them.

Andrew looked over at her for a moment. He noticed her pretty outfit, a flowing type of dark brown skirt with pleats and a cream colored blouse that fit her nicely. She held over her arm a long black coat that she had placed in her lap when she sat down. She didn’t wear too much make up, just enough to bring out her brown hair and brown eyes. She had a pretty face, but Andrew was thinking about someone else still in his mind from his shower this morning. This woman may have been someone he had gotten to know in the past, but not now.

“My name is Stephanie,” she said, extending her hand to him.

He smiled and shook it politely, “Andrew,” he said and added, “American.” She laughed, her laugh was pleasant, not too much, but enough to say she could enjoy herself. Andrew barely noticed it.

“I could tell,” she said, still smiling.

“So are you visiting?” She asked. “Do you have relatives or perhaps friends here in England?”

“Relatives,” He stated, he was telling the truth. They were related somehow to him. “Old relatives,” he added, agreeing with himself that they were old about eight hundred and thirty-five years old.

“That’s nice, I’m from Cambridge, but I’m visiting my grandmother in East Riding,”

she offered. “She’s all alone since Grandfather passed away two years ago. I try to come visit as much as I can. No one should be alone. Don’t you think so, Andrew?”

Stephanie looked over at him, smiling and waiting for an answer. She was a nice woman, he could tell from the tone of her voice. There was no real intent behind those brown eyes and the fact that she had stayed on her side of the seat was a good sign, he thought.

“Yes. I don’t think anyone should be alone,” he answered, smiling back at her.

Another few moments of silence passed and she turned looking at him.

“So, what do you do for work, Andrew?”

“I’m a Security Guard,” he answered.

“I work for an office building in Cambridge, just a glorified secretary actually, but it does have some potential,” she said, smiling a bit. “I do wish I had received my college degree sometimes, though.”

“I never received mine either,” Andrew answered. “I tried, but there was a professor who made that impossible.” She looked at him waiting. “It’s a long story.”

“Sorry,” she said, sympathizing.

“Oh, thanks, it’s no big deal, just a new direction that’s all,” he said, casually. “Besides, I think I’m good at my job.”

“So you like it?” She said, perking up her voice a bit. He would have liked her casual

speech and big brown eyes, if Andrew was looking for a date, but he wasn't.

"No, not particularly. I wanted out of it so bad, I forgot who I was and that led me here to research my family," the tone was casual still from Andrew. All of it was absolutely true.

"So you're on a soul searching mission then," she said, smiling at him. "Sounds exciting."

"It can be," he sounded less enthusiastic about it being at all exciting. Frustrating, terrifying at times even, but the excitement he had once felt was replaced by determination now.

"Sometimes we find out things that we don't want to about our families' past," Stephanie said, thoughtfully, indicating she may have experienced that before. "Sometimes it's better to leave things buried there," she added and looked over at him with an interesting expression.

Andrew tried to interpret it, but it was like a warning in her eyes that he hadn't seen there before. He turned in his seat to face her.

"Sometimes it's important to uncover things that need to be set free," he replied seriously, causing her to smile at him.

"I'm sure," she looked in front of her, "however, digging too much into the past can only bring heartache and lost hopes, Andrew." There was something in her voice now that gave

Andrew a less pleasant feeling about the conversation.

"You know when you think about it," she continued, turning back to him. "Is it not nice to think of things as you did when you were a child? When you did not know the real stories behind them?" She looked deep into his eyes for a moment. Andrew felt the weight of her words. Then she laughed.

"Of course, each to their own, I always say. People need to find out how dangerous their paths can be," she said, standing up.

Andrew reached up and touched her arm, not grabbing her, but being a little forceful. She looked down at his hand, and back to his eyes. Andrew saw darkness overtook her suddenly and those brown eyes held more in them than before. A warning that he was to follow.

"Who are you?" He said in a quieter tone but a firm one, looking up at her.

"The real question is," she began, leaning down to him, their faces barely inches apart.

"Who are you, Andrew Whiete?"

There was a long pause between them where Andrew could feel her probing his mind. A chill went through him, he let go of her arm. She stood up straighter and smiled pleasantly at him once more. The darkness seemed to leave her.

The bus stopped and Andrew looked towards the window on his right.

"Well, this is my stop," she said, looking to him for the last time. "It was enlightening speaking with you, Andrew."

Andrew turned back to her as she smiled once more and proceeded to the aisle way, walking off the bus. He wanted to follow her but he didn't. Something told him to stay where he was, something from deep inside him. He listened to it.

As Stephanie walked by the bus window she was still smiling. He watched her walk away from him, pulling up the hood of her black cape she had put on. Andrew stood up as the bus doors closed and drove away from the stop. His eyes watched her walk for as long as he could see her, the bus turned the corner and she was gone. He sat back down. Realization and fear crept into him again.

"The Order of Raylen?" he questioned quietly to himself.

"I'm sorry, did you say something?" A man said standing at the seat Stephanie had just vacated. He was looking towards Andrew.

"No," Andrew said.

"May I sit here?" He said.

"Yea," Andrew answered, distantly.

The man smiled, sat down and pulled out a newspaper. He continued to read for the remainder of trip, which made Andrew grateful. His encounter with Stephanie made him feel

uneasy and the quick ending to this journey seemed to get longer. Since the first time he had awoken today he didn't think he would be in Colorado by tonight.

The bus stopped at East Riding at the same spot as last time. The information booth was there but there was no attendant inside this time. The sign read closed on Sundays. Well, he knew today was Sunday, he thought, that was something. He headed towards the one cab that was parked across the street.

"Hi," Andrew said tapping on the window. A man in his forties, rolled down the window.

"Yea," he said in his native cockney accent.

"Can I get a ride to the Castle Edinburgh ruins?" Andrew asked.

"Why would ya want to go 'ere?" He questioned. "It's freezing out and 'ere ain't nothing to see at that place."

"I need to go," Andrew insisted.

"Fine, alright," he said, quickly and got out of the cab. "But ain't no buses going up 'ere today. Ya want me to wait?" He asked, but Andrew knew he didn't want to wait for some tourist to look at old ruins all day.

"Would you?" Andrew asked. In his mind, he was busy calculated how many pounds he had on him. "How much would it be?" He added.

The man told him how much he got for thirty minutes. It seemed reasonable enough to Andrew so he nodded and got inside his warm cab. The driver sat back in his seat, closing his door, as he took off down the road.

"Strange time to visit the ruins," the cab driver said, looking at Andrew in his rearview mirror.

"I need to see some..." he was about to say 'someone', then stopped, "something."

"Must be an very important some'ing," the man replied back.

"Very important," Andrew agreed and looked away from the man's eyes to the landscape passing by the window.

"Ya know Sundays, a bad day to visit those old ruins," the man started up again. Andrew looked back at him.

"Why's that?"

"Why, ain't ya 'eard?" The man paused, glancing at Andrew, " 'ere are ghosts up there, ya know."

"Yea, I know," Andrew replied without hesitation. It caused the man to look at him again, this time strangely.

Andrew knew what the man must have been thinking, he was expecting to tell some old ghost legend, good for the tourist but Andrew wasn't feeling like a tourist anymore. Regardless, the man continued.

“Well, the fact is on Sundays that’s when ya ‘ear the screams,” he said in a softer voice.

Andrew looked interested back at the man.

“The screams?”

“The screams of all the victims of the Prince ya know,” he raised his eyebrows at the end of the statement to emphasize his meaning.

“What Prince?” Andrew asked.

“Why Prince Andrew, of course. Ya ain’t ‘eard of ‘im, ‘ave ya?” The man said smiling into the mirror and towards Andrew.

Andrew laughed out loud.

“Ah, ya don’t believe me, a skeptic, I see,” the cab driver said, “I tell ya it’s true. Many people ‘ave ‘eard ‘em. I heard him mi’self. All the Prince’s victims just a-screaming about up ‘ere, it ain’t a pretty sound.”

“The Prince didn’t kill anyone at the Castle,” Andrew injected, his voice defensive about his long ago ancestor. “He wanted to have a quiet life away from court and all that,” Andrew seat back in his seat. “He wasn’t like that.”

“Oh, know ‘im did ya?” The driver said, laughing a bit towards Andrew.

“Yea, you could say that,” Andrew answered but this just caused the driver to laugh even harder.

“I guess ya don’t be needing the story then, sir.”

After a few more moments Andrew could see the ruins come into view. The driver stopped his cab and parked a few feet from them. Andrew got out and thanked the driver.

"Eh?" The man said. Andrew turned back to face him. "If ya are such good friends with the Prince, tell 'im thank ya for keepin' up the good work for the tourists." He chuckled to himself, and Andrew shook his head, walking away.

He approached the ruins for a second time. There was a mist that hung over them now. He could feel the coldness from the wind that whipped around him. He stepped a few feet inside the barrier of the stones and the wind suddenly stopped. He looked towards the large wall. Last time it had been here only behind the wall had he felt the calm, where he had met Lady Camille's ghost. Now the calmness seemed to engulf him more than the structures. Andrew looked back to where the cab and its driver were parked, but he couldn't see anything past the mist. He thought, he should have been taken back by that fact but he knew he wasn't in danger. He could feel the calmness stronger than just the absence of the winter winds. Somehow he knew he wasn't alone.

They were here. One watching. One waiting.

"I have a message for Jonathon," he said out loud. He didn't concern himself that the cab driver, if he could see him was probably thinking he was some crazy American that had

seen too many movies. He listened and waited. There was no response from inside the stones. He tried again.

"I have a message from our father," he said into the mist. He paused again, listening, watching everything around him.

Nothing.

Andrew sighed a bit and walked around. His eyes searched the mist but concentrated on the structure now laid out for him to see. The mist closed off the structure inside keeping it contained within it and it made sense to him. He looked around for the drawbridge, and something came to his mind.

He knew this castle. He knew these hallways, these rooms, the small hiding places and alcoves. Hadn't he run past all of them, time and again, in his dreams as a child? Yes, he was certain of it. He needed to just see it in his head. See what he had once seen.

Andrew closed his eyes and began to think about the stonewalls, the lighted torches hanging in the heavy structures on those walls, the texture, the detail of each stone, of each torch. Detail after detail came to his senses. He could smell the fires from the large fireplaces in each room that burned during the night. He could hear the sounds around him. He could feel the stone on either side of him. He knew it was the Castle. He knew he was inside it.

Slowly Andrew opened his eyes. Before him stood the entranceway, the large doors behind him. He moved one step and then

another. The large doors closed suddenly like from a gust of wind that whipped behind them. The noise of it was overwhelmingly loud, but he didn't cause him to jump. He knew the sound would be there. He had heard it before.

He turned to his left and walked along a large corridor. Tapestries of paintings and shapes lined the stoned walls, section after section. He had seen those tapestries before. Some held animals and some battles of great strength from ancestors long since dead. Others depicted landscapes and places he had never been. He looked up at them and realized the tapestries were too large, too looming for him, and he was far too short. He stopped at the end of the corridor where it turned left to the stone steps going upward. The steps were large across and many of them. He started to climb and saw how short his legs were. He stopped at the fourth step, turning around. He spoke to no one who was there but Andrew knew he was with him.

"No, Jonathon," he said. His voice was small and stonewalls deadened the sound of it. "I need to be me."

He waited.

"I am to help you, Jonathon," Andrew said softly. "I understand. You don't have to protect me anymore." His words were precise. "I'm not a child."

Andrew knew Jonathon had heard them, he felt him all around. Suddenly another feeling

passed through him he couldn't describe. It felt cold and warm at the same time, comforting and fearful. Finally it settled outside of himself somewhere and Andrew turned back to the steps ahead of him. He knew Jonathon had listened and he knew he was with him.

"Do not go up there," a small voice said from behind him. Andrew stopped on the steps and turned to the voice.

Jonathon stood before him. He looked familiar. He had his father's blond hair, but his eyes were blue, not green like his parents. His hair had waves in it that made his small face seem friendly and inviting. That face held an expression of curiosity as any young child would have. He had seen that expression before, Andrew thought as he continued to look upon this boy. Jonathon's small frame stood about two feet shorter than Andrew and accounted for why everything had looked so large to him. He wore an outfit that was fit for playing, not ruling or fighting. The colors were dark on the steps. The pants were knickers that came up to his knees. There were no tights to cover his legs and he had bare feet. His shirt ornate in detail indicating his status seemed comfortable. He wore the shirt not tucked and over his pants without thought.

Andrew looked for a long moment and knew where he had seen that face before, the blond hair, that curious look. Then as if out of a dream itself, it came to him. This was Timmy,

little Timmy who spoke of his two missing teeth and monsters with horns on a bus to Yorkshire.

It hadn't been a random meeting, Andrew thought, everything that had happened here in England was just another clue to get him where he needed to be. However as he continued to look Andrew noticed there were slight changes between Timmy and Jonathon. First of all, the boy Andrew looked at now, who smiled at him as if he understood that Andrew knew it was really him on that bus days ago, his smile did not reveal two missing teeth, but two teeth that had already grown back in. Little Timmy must have been a younger Jonathon, a happier child who still held the hopes and dreams of a child, he thought.

"You were with me on that bus," Andrew finally said to the boy.

"I have always been with you," Jonathon replied in his small accent and voice, which didn't seem so small now.

"Why did you choose me, Jonathon?"

It was a question Andrew hadn't wanted to ask until now. It was a question he had always considered especially before he came to England when the dreams were something he didn't want to deal with, but it wasn't until now that he wanted to know the answer.

The little boy looked up him, studying Andrew as much as Andrew was studying him.

“You are my friend,” Jonathon said, reaching up his hand to Andrew, a gesture that was kind and touched Andrew’s heart.

Then knowing what would happen if he took the boy’s hand, Andrew looked down and away from Jonathon. Andrew shook his head at the boy, he knew it would simply pass through and it didn’t want to disappoint Jonathon.

“I can’t,” Andrew said, softly and moved one step down to meet him. “I’m not of your time.” He leaned down and smiled at him. “I wish I could be.”

Jonathon looked down for a moment considering what he had said and then nodded quickly, looking back up to Andrew. He smiled at him in understanding. Andrew smiled back. Their bond was reconnected and Andrew knew he had to help this little boy. He couldn’t when he was young, but now it was different. Overwhelmed with love for this boy.

“I won’t leave you, Jonathon,” Andrew said, looking directly at the boy and coming down to his height. “I promise you.”

Jonathon smiled again and Andrew thought he had his smile.

“You look like father,” Jonathon said.

Andrew put his head down and smiled to himself.

“I know, so do you.” He told the little boy. That made him smile bigger.

Then the smile faded, and he ran up the stairs, past Andrew. Andrew followed quickly

behind him, much easier now with his own long legs. At the top, Jonathon rounded a corner to his left and went down another hallway. Andrew saw him duck inside a small alcove. Jonathon was motion with his hand for Andrew to follow him in. He did. The alcove was small and Andrew had to crouch down to fit inside with Jonathon. The boy was the perfect height his head barely touching the top of it.

"What is it?" Andrew asked.

"Father says the walls can see..." he said, quietly, "and hear."

"The Order of Raylen?" Andrew questioned. The little boys eyes grew wide at Andrew.

"The dark ones are here," Jonathon said, in a hushed tone. "They were not to come. Father sent them away but they have returned."

"What do you mean, Jonathon?" Andrew asked looking into the boy's eyes that held fear.

"Father always sends them away. They are afraid of Father." He said, proudly.

"The dark ones are afraid of the Prince?" Andrew questioned. Jonathon nodded his head.

"Father makes them disappear."

Andrew looked at the boy for a moment trying to understand a child's perception of his own world. Disappear, he thought. *How?* Then it came to him, not disappear, Andrew said to himself, looking at Jonathon.

“The Prince makes them go away?” He asked.

“They always go away when father is home,” Jonathon answered with a serious Andrew had never seen in a child before. “They did not obey, they have come back.”

“Because your father isn’t here to make them go away, to make them disappear,” Andrew said correcting himself. Jonathon nodded his head.

“Where is father? Did you find him? Mother says he will be coming home soon, but he never returns. I look every day for him over the hills.” The change in the boy’s voice saddened Andrew.

He looked at him with sympathy. He was trying to be strong and not cry, but Andrew could tell he wasn’t winning that fight the way his father did. He was just a little boy and he missed his father.

“I won’t tell,” Andrew said to the boy wanting to comfort him, but unable to do so other than words.

Jonathon’s head lowered. He started to cry, but he brushed away the tears, digging his fist into his closed eyes to stop them. He looked back at Andrew.

“I will not cry,” Jonathon said trying to fight against them.

“Father said never cry. Father said I must be strong. I am a Prince. I must not dishonor my family. I will not cry, father would

be upset," as he spoke, a single tear escaped and slid down his cheek not agreeing it seemed to his father's wishes and causing the boy to hold a brave expression even in the midst of it. Jonathon wiped away the tear quickly.

"Father would not like this," he said. He looked up at Andrew. "Mother cries all the time and I can not stop her. I have to protect her like father said." He reached out to Andrew's hand, but it just passed through, Andrew was trying to hold back his own tears as he continued.

"I cannot protect Mother. I do not know how to fight. I do not know how to protect her. Father would be upset with me." His head lowered in a last effort to win his battle.

Andrew wanted so desperately to reach out to this child, to comfort him somehow. To tell him he wasn't alone. He thought about hundreds of words he could say but they all be meaningless to this boy, who only wanted his father to hold him and to tell him he would be safe again. The only words he could think of were something he never thought he would say, or do. Tell a lie.

"Your father told me to tell you…he loves you, Jonathon. He would be so proud of how brave you are."

Andrew reasoned with himself in that moment. Partly it was true that his father loved him, Andrew had seen that on the battlefield when he had struggled in saying it, fought against what he had considered to be his own weakness, his son. Andrew had thought about

telling the boy what he had actually said, what good would it do? That was what his mother kept telling him, and it wasn't comforting him. *And why should it?*

When he was told the nightmares would go away, it didn't comfort him as a little boy. When his parents would say they weren't real and that he imagined all the pain he felt, it did nothing to stop them. Andrew knew how Jonathon felt. He was just a little boy who wants his father to love him, who wanted to make him proud. Lie or not Andrew didn't care. He wanted to help Jonathon. He always had. That's what he had felt all his life, that's why he stopped for every child who seemed lost or upset, or even just wanted someone to play with. He couldn't stop thinking that Jonathon had been all of them in his own way. That he had been looking, searching for this little boy who was scared and alone. That he had always wanted to help him out of his nightmare.

Andrew smiled at Jonathon and tried in that smile to give him comfort, if it were possible. He knew how it felt to grow up too fast, to lose your childhood too quickly.

Hadn't he?

All the nights he wondered upon things that couldn't possibly be. That he was told couldn't exist. After a time, all that was left of those childish dreams of great worlds of imagination and fantasy were movies in dark theaters. He hadn't continued as a normal child after the nightmares that caused his parent to

always look at him in confusion. He wanted his parents to love him just as much as Jonathon did. He wanted them to proud of him. The nightmares only made him feel like they weren't happy with him. He made them stop. He knew that, he willed them to stop and in turn, pushed Jonathon, the one who needed him most, the one who crossed space and time to come to him, away. The sadness he had felt in his nightmares was Jonathon's sadness. The tears he had cried were his tears. And now, it must all end, for both of them.

"I'm here now, Jonathon, I will stay until your father returns. I won't leave again," Andrew said with conviction. "I understand now, Jonathon."

Jonathon nodded his head and stood up straight.

"They will be coming soon. We must go," he said quickly, running out of the alcove and beckoning Andrew to follow him. He did.

Jonathon stopped at another hiding place a few feet down the hallway. Andrew followed.

"You have to bring Father here to make the dark ones disappear. I'll show you," he said, and started running down the hallway.

Andrew followed him into his chambers. He closed the door behind them and looked at Jonathon running to the far side of the room.

“Jonathon,” Andrew said as they entered the room, “your father cannot come home yet. He is....” Andrew stopped and thought about his next statement, “…trapped.”

Jonathon beckoned for Andrew to come closer to him as if not hearing his words. After another moment, Andrew walked to the boy.

“They did it,” Jonathon said in a whisper.

“They did what, Jonathon?” Andrew asked, crouching down to his level.

“They were with him when he was sick. Mother could not see them…” Jonathon’s voice was soft and Andrew leaned in to hear him better, ‘ but I could.”

“The dark ones with the black hoods?” Andrew asked and Jonathon looked up at him sharply. Andrew figured it was right from the boy’s expression.

“I know about them. I know why they were with your father, Jonathon, and I know who made him sick.”

Andrew was about to tell him of Sebastian. He was about to tell him that he been correct all along. He didn’t want Jonathon to feel alone any more, but as the word began to slip out, Jonathon put up his hand to Andrew’s mouth not touching it, but Andrew understood to remain silent.

“Do not say his name,” Jonathon said. “Never say his name.”

Jonathon moved closer, fear took over the little boy's eyes and he looked to his left like he heard something. Slowly he looked back at Andrew.

"They come when you speak his name," he said whispering in Andrew's ear. He leaned back and looked at him, Andrew nodded his head.

"Mother does not understand," he said now a little louder, but not much.

Andrew knew what the boy spoke of. "She tells her handmaiden of it." It was not meant to be a question but a statement. Jonathon nodded at him.

"I know. You showed me," he said, nodding at the boy. The boy nodded back.

"Jonathon, why did the dark ones chase you?" Andrew asked.

He had thought it was to lock up his mother and himself after the Prince passed, but there was something in Jonathon's eyes a moment earlier that told Andrew there was more to this story than what he had seen. Andrew didn't know why he thought it, but it didn't go away when he tried to dismiss it before. There was something else, and Jonathon wanted him to follow him here for a reason.

Jonathon, as if reading his thoughts, moved around Andrew and went behind him. Andrew turned to see. He kneeled on the floor and pulled out one of the loose stones there. He looked around cautiously for a moment and then pulled it the rest of the way out. Andrew got up

and moved towards him as he pulled a bit on something that he couldn't seem to move easily. He tugged at it again and Andrew saw the outer edge of the box he had seen before in Sebastian's room. Jonathon gave one more tug, this time Andrew pulling with him. Surprisingly Andrew could feel the box, touch it and it was as real as the stones or anything he had ever felt.

As the box pulled out further its detail came into view. It had an etching on it that was strange and yet somehow familiar to Andrew. It held a circle inside a triangle with three lines going through it. Above the circle was another smaller circle with three lines and below the circle was a smaller triangle with three lines. He moved away from the box for a moment and thought.

Where had he seen this symbol before? Had he seen it on the box when he was in Sebastian's room? Had Jonathon shown him this when he was younger? The thoughts went on in his head as he looked down.

"Jonathon, what is inside the box?" He asked, looking back at the boy.

"I do not know. I have never opened it. I never could," Jonathon looked down at the box and pointed to the front where there was a keyhole that was very small.

Andrew nodded at him.

"I found it here after Father left," the boy said. Andrew looked at him and stood up. "I know it is his," Jonathon started to continue then

he looked to his left quickly and back up to Andrew. Fear was in the boy's eyes again.

Quickly he reached down and pushed the box back into the hole and replaced the heavy stone, pushing it back into place with all his might. Andrew watched him stand up turn to his left again and back up against the wall.

"He is coming," Jonathon said, fear overtaking the boy's eyes. He hit into the wall behind him.

Andrew moved towards him, but the hand he offered went through him and he could do nothing but helplessly watch the events he knew were coming. There were the same ones he could remember from his younger dreams. They had frightened him then, now he watched with much different eyes and a much different emotion. Anger.

The door swung open with great force. Sebastian dressed in the ceremonial black robe entered. With great strides he came towards the small child who was on the ground holding his face in between his hands. His head was curled up to his knees.

"Come here, brat!" Sebastian said in a bellowing voice that possessed all the strength of a man. His large hand reached down and pulled his arm, standing him up, holding onto his arm with force.

"You will never take my place!" Sebastian yelled at him. "Do you hear me, boy?"

“No!” Andrew heard Lady Camille’s voice as she entered into the room.

She ran forward trying to protect her child, but Sebastian’s hand came flying down on her face, causing her to fall to the floor.

“Mother!” Jonathon yelled and stepped on Sebastian’s foot hard.

He cringed back for a moment, letting the hand slip on Jonathon’s arm. Jonathon squirmed away and grabbed a poker from the fireplace behind Sebastian holding it up to him. The stand off was valiant for the small boy, however Sebastian just laughed at him.

“What are you going to do with that, boy?” He said, moving towards him.

Camille looked up from her place on the floor. The hit had knocked her down, but she had regained consciousness. Now she stood up next to her son. She reached over and took the poker from his hand.

“It is what I shall do with it, that should be your worry, Sebastian,” she said in a dark tone. She pushed Jonathon behind her as they backed away from Sebastian.

“I will kill you,” she said, threateningly.

“You, a woman?” He laughed. “You may have the strength for my father in his bed, whore, but you have none against me.”

Sebastian reached out to grab the poker and instead was met with a hard hit of it against his stomach. It may have pierced the skin, but the cloak was thick and her strength only caused

a minor wound. The pain of it caused Sebastian to look down, it was enough for Camille to take one more strike to his head. Again the blow was strong enough to knock him off his feet but not to kill him.

Camille and Jonathon backed out of the room. She still held the poker in her hand. Andrew moved past Sebastian who was now holding his head from the blow Camille had inflicted on him, and followed Jonathon and her out of the room.

"Run, Jonathon, run to the stables," she said, holding Jonathon's arm. "Get a horse and ride to the east, you know how to watch the sun," she said, smiling at her son, quickly.

They were standing in the hallway now, several doors down from Jonathon's room.

"Your father taught you well. I know you can do this, my son. I will find Elrich and tell him what has happened."

"Mother..." Jonathon started.

"Do not disobey me," she said, commanding him to listen. "You will ride to the King's Castle and tell them what has happened to your father. Tell them the Prince is dead. Tell the King that he was deceived by Sebastian," she said, quickly and kissed Jonathon on the forehead hugging him for a moment.

"Now go and don't look back," She pushed him away from her, "go!"

"Mother!" Jonathon said as she turned away and started to run in the opposite direction.

"Go!" She yelled.

He nodded at her and turned away running down the hallway.

"Run, my son, run as fast as you can," Her tone softened as she stared after him. "I know you will make your father proud," she said to herself, but Andrew heard her as he stood next to her.

He wanted to follow Jonathon, but he knew the ending to that story. He had lived it with Jonathon so many nights as a child.

Jonathon would make it to the stables, he would get a horse, and he would start to ride away. But he would only get to the bridge. Soldiers of Sebastian found him there and dragged him kicking and screaming back to the castle. After that, Sebastian would tie him to the pyre and make him wait until they had captured his mother. Make him think about upon his death that was soon to come. Make him cry out to his father who could not rescue him. Make him cry. Then the wood would be lit and together they would die, a hideous and horrible death that took hours to complete.

He had seen it all happen, time and again, night after night in his nightmares. He had tried to explain to his parents that he had to save him, that he had to find him, but again it would come. Each time hearing the screams, feeling the flames, feeling himself die, just like Jonathon. He brought his thoughts back to him and heard Sebastian yelling in the distance.

Camille turned towards him, but did not see him. She ran through him to the hallway behind her. He turned around to follow her and she disappeared from Andrew's sight. As did the castle tapestries, the lighted torches on the wall, and then the walls themselves started to crumble around him. Fading into the distance before his eyes.

The past was fading into dust and mist and ruins.

He stood now in the same place as he had been in the castle outside Jonathon's room, but there was no more structure, just stone pieces left around him. It had ended. The mist was gone, too, from around it, and the coldness of the air came upon him, as he continued to stand there unable to move for a long moment.

Then quickly he looked to his right and into the room that was once Jonathon's, the room he had been standing in with the boy not moments before. He walked to the edge where the wall at been, past the place where his bed laid, past the large wardrobe he had remembered against the wall, past the fireplace that no longer stood but a few stones from its base. He stopped when he hit a stone in front of him.

Andrew looked down at the small stonewall that stood there, the only thing remaining of Jonathon's bed chambers. He bent down and pulled out the stone he had been shown by the boy. It slid out easily. More so than he had remembered when Jonathon had

done it. He placed his hand in the opening and felt the piece of cloth. Andrew quickly leaned down on his knees, pulling out the ornate box from his dream. He knew it would be there. He wasn't certain it made him feel good or worried. He decided not to think upon it at that moment. He just looked down at the box in his hand. It was heavy. Thick wood encased it. The hiding place of Jonathon's had kept it intact. Then he looked down at the symbol on the box again and still couldn't place it in his mind. What Andrew did notice was that the box wasn't dirty or anything but completely perfect looking just like that Jonathon had shown him in his room. It hadn't changed at all. It had been well preserved, Andrew thought, too well preserved.

The box still had the same keyhole and Andrew still had no way of retrieving what was inside without breaking the box or finding a key. Those options seemed unlikely, since the box was most likely hard to break, and he had no idea where there would be a key to it or even where to begin looking for it.

"You should have let me take those pictures, Andrew," a voice said in front of him.

He looked up from his kneeling position into the face of Allen Redden, the photographer from 'Motion' Magazine.

He was wearing jeans. A heavy sweater and a long black coat that Andrew was certain had a hood on it. Andrew clutched tighter to the box and stood up. All of a sudden Andrew knew where he had seen that symbol on the box

before and he realized it was too late. It had been on Allen Redden's business card he had given him several days earlier.

"You don't even know what that box is, do you, Andrew? You don't have a clue about us?" Allen smiled and laughed a bit.

"That damn family," he said, walking around a few stones and closing the gap between Andrew and him.

Andrew looked around him quickly, nothing there to help, no fireplace poker, and no weapon of any kind. He began to worry if he would use it on him anyway even if he could find one. He wasn't exactly a violent person. Allen took another few steps towards him. Andrew decided as he looked at Allen's eyes, he would use it. This guy would certainly use it on him, he thought.

"So the little kid finally got you to the box," he said, stopping a few feet away from Andrew. "Persistent kid, I gotta say."

"You're American?" Andrew said, more questioning than anything.

"Yea, born and raised in East LA, by my very drunk mother and my crazy grandfather," he said, flippantly. "Problem was, Andrew, he wasn't so crazy, after all." Allen smiled.

Andrew was still debating running in his mind, maybe to the cab and taking off away from him, but he stood his ground. He wanted to know why and it seemed Allen was about to tell him.

“You see my grandfather was always talking about ghosts and the past and all. The Order of Raylen, some crazy secret black cult from the dark ages,” he said, letting out a laugh.

“He said that our family belonged to it, now come on anyone would think he was insane. Just some old guy who lost it, right?”

“But you didn’t,” Andrew replied seriously, staying focused on him the entire time.

Allen looked at Andrew and smiled. The smile turned up the corners of his mouth and Andrew knew where he had seen that smile before.

“Funny thing is, I never thought you’d be the problem,” he started, pointing at Andrew. “It was easy to find you, though. Come on, you look just like my grandfather said, just like him, that damn Prince who ruined our fortune.” Allen’s eyes took on a dark shade to them. He moved one step closer. Andrew took a step back.

“Of course, you aren’t him, now are you, Andrew? There’s no fight in you, just some mystery you needed to solve. I tell you that kid is persistent,” he shook his head, and laughed.

Then he looked up quickly, seriousness took over his eyes again with a threat in them that made Andrew angry, “just like you.”

Allen continued to stare at Andrew with a haunting look. Andrew held it.

“You gotta admit, Andrew, it’s a hell of a story. Not one I’d necessarily tell my

children." He paused, "oh wait…Yes, I would." He smiled. "Granddad told me we had to keep the curse on that damn Prince or he would destroy us."

Andrew watched him carefully as Allen paced a few steps to his right and faced him again.

"Then our power would be gone forever. Poof! No more Order of Raylen, you know," he emphasized with his hands. "When you think about it, it's an awful lot of trouble to go to for just one guy." He looked at Andrew annoyed.

"Frankly I'm sick of watching you. Your life is...." he paused looking for the words, he turned back to Andrew, "excruciatingly boring. I mean come on, Andrew, let's face it, you have no life. You work for a company that probably doesn't even know your name, and you're a security guard. What is that? To think what you could have been if....oh, well." Allen put up his hands.

"You made it so I got kicked out of college." Andrew said as Allen's words started to seep in. "Somehow you did,"

"Power," he said, holding up his hands to the sky. He smiled back at Andrew. "What can I say, I guess it just went to my head.

You see I had to keep you at bay. No degree, no good job, no success equals...loser. It was much easier really, when you think about it. How were you going to help anyone if you

couldn't…even…help…yourself?" He moved back and forth, mocking Andrew as he spoke.

"You know when I was told about you and the power you had, I didn't believe it. You! A security guard who couldn't keep a girlfriend from cheating on you? I really didn't believe you were the one from the scrolls." Allen continued, but Andrew interrupted him.

"The scrolls?" Andrew questioned.

"You really don't know anything, do you?" He sounded agitated now.

"For centuries, our order searched for the one of the Prince's blood who would come to destroy us, and" he put up a finger to Andrew emphasizing, "release the Prince from his torments. And on and on it goes," he said moving his hand in a small circle in front of him towards Andrew.

"Look I'm not big into Prophecies," Allen stopped and cocked his head. "Well, all right, I belong to a dark secret cult intent on keeping the dark gifts to ourselves, but a prophecy of someone who would come and destroy us? That's just taking these too far. Come on, everyone is too interested in themselves these days than helping anyone and certainly not some eight hundred year old prince that lives in torment."

"You were wrong," Andrew said, looking at him with confidence. "You didn't count on Jonathon."

“Jonathon,” Allen said, shaking his head. “What a little pain in the ass that kid has been. Every time I think he’s faded away…up he comes again, like some kind of bad seed.” He laughed a bit, looking back at Andrew.

“Of course the real problem was you, Andrew. You weren’t exactly what we expected, you know. I got to admit you caught us by surprise, especially when you took off for England here.” He moved about as he spoke, Andrew watched him closely.

“Hey, I didn’t expect you to do anything about those dreams of yours, you had already left them in the past once, remember,” Allen paused, “but we could never truly be certain you wouldn’t drudge it all up again. Which apparently, we were right. But come on, traveling to England, how could I have known? I mean,” he looked at Andrew now annoyed.

“You never stood up for yourself before, not as a kid, not as an adult, and certainly not to that Dean at the college. You just always accepted things and tried to make your life meaningful in some way,” he moved a step closer to Andrew and then moved back with more intent.

“That positive outlook on life was annoying,” he smiled at him, “glad you lost that quality...finally.”

Allen stopped looking at him for a moment, and then he added. “Of course, I have to admit, you did made my job easier…nothing to really fight against. But here you are here at

this godforsaken wreck," his voice got louder. "Unbelievable. You know, I wouldn't have believe it if I didn't see it myself, Andrew. Honestly, bravo?"

He clapped his hands as he stared at Andrew. Andrew's expression was stone, not moving from his place still holding the box in his hands.

"Do you know how much trouble you have become? Really you were so much better off before you met that girl of yours. What an annoying bitch she turned out to be?"

Andrew took a step towards him. "Leave her alone," he said in a voice that was much lower and darker than before. Allen stopped walking and looked towards him, smiling.

"Oh come on you never would have come here without her support, your denied your power, or anything that could have really helped you," Allen said, causing Andrew to look at him again for meaning.

"Yes, Andrew, you have power inside of you," he said, smiling at him, luring him in. "Didn't you know that's how the kid got inside your head that first time?" Allen shook his head. "You see, I knew it would only be a matter of time before you would end up here once she got involved, demanding things about those ancestors of yours. She's just as persistent as that kid and the prince's wife for that matter." He paused for a moment, thinking. "Never gave up, those two," he shook his head.

“Don’t get that. It’s been eight hundred years, you think they could give it a rest.” He shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe it’s a ghost thing.”

There was another pause, this time Andrew didn’t let it slide.

“They love each other,” Andrew said, moving in one step to Allen. “They are a family. That doesn’t end because they died.”

“Yea, I guess so,” he shook at his at Andrew. “Your side of the family was always more into that than mine.” Allen mocked an ‘aw, shucks’ attitude with his foot.

“Sebastian,” Andrew said. Allen smiled at him.

“The last living descendent actually,” he bowed before Andrew. “You see our side of the family was just never into that whole love thing. You know marriage, children… never much liked children.”

“You are sick,” Andrew replied with disgust.

“Yea.....” he said, pausing for a moment before taking a step closer to Andrew.

“What can I say? I have a dark side,” he smiled, “but then again,” he pulled out a small dark object from his pocket and held it up for Andrew to see.

“I’m the one that has the key.”

CHAPTER TEN

Allen stood looking at Andrew, holding the small bronze key dangling from a chain. Andrew knew it opened the box and he knew he couldn't let Allen get the box. He looked down at it again, and for a moment there was a dead silence around them, each contemplating the others' actions.

Much as they would have done eight hundred years ago, if the Prince and Sebastian were at a standstill. That was impossible though, Andrew thought, since it was father and son and the Prince never believed his son of any ill intent. Now, eight hundred years later, the two people standing across from each other in the ruins of the Prince's castle were having the fight they never could. One, Allen Redden, from the lineage of Sebastian's. While, the other, Andrew from...

Andrew's thoughts were interrupted. In the midst of all of this the thought hadn't occurred to him before.

He couldn't be of Jonathan's lineage directly. Jonathon died at eight years old with his mother on a Pyre set by Sebastian. The Prince could have had more children, Andrew thought, maybe someone he didn't know of, but Allen had been too specific when he mentioned it. 'Your side of the family,' he had said. The thoughts swirled around in Andrew's head picking up speed as he continued. Then suddenly…

“Elrich,” Andrew said. “It was Elrich who tried to stop you and that’s who I come from.”

“Good ole Elrich,” Allen said smiling. “Now he was a big time loser. Wanted to be a poet, did you know that? He never fought, never took up arms, never defended his own family and never, ever gave up on finding out the truth.”

Allen walked away again as he talked.

“Sebastian could make the Prince disappear, and his wife, and Jonathon, but Elrich…” he turned back to Andrew, “that was a whole different story. You see he didn’t claim any titles. He didn’t want the life at court. He was far ahead in terms of understanding, that is, than that whore and the Prince.” Andrew wanted to defend the Lady Camille, but thought better as he still considered how to get the key and stop Allen.

“Elrich had seen it all and when she went to him that night. She told him everything he already knew. He loved his father...”

“And he wanted to try and protect them,” Andrew said finishing Allen’s statement. “But he didn’t fight so he couldn’t challenge Sebastian to a battle.”

“Yea,” Allen jumped in with, annoyed Andrew had cut him off. “So Elrich rode to the King that night. The king’s guards came to the castle by order of the King himself, his own

grandfather, to seek revenge for the Prince's, Lady Camille's and Jonathan's deaths."

"And the King would never give Sebastian the throne," Andrew interrupted again, "so Sebastian had to flee the castle and leave the box behind."

"I'm telling the story, Whiete, so shut up!" Allen said, moving closer to him. Andrew could see Sebastian in the man's eyes. Allen breathed and let it out, continuing.

"As the knowledge of the true history was passed down to his Sebastian's family…my family, it was up to us to reclaim our glory and get what we deserved. Ancestor after ancestor of mine passed down in name and titles these ruins that should have been ours." The anger returned to Allen as he spoke.

"The Order of Raylen advised Kings! We were gods and that sniffling little poet made us hide!" He yelled in frustration. Then he turned to face Andrew and smiled wickedly.

"Sebastian did finally make Elrich pay for what he had done. Elrich had traveled the countryside, coward that he was, trying to elude Sebastian but he found him years later at a monastery." He paused with dramatic intent. "There was nothing left of his body to bury."

Andrew winced at the thought of it.

"But you didn't know Elrich had fathered a son," Andrew said as another thought came to him, fitting the pieces of together in his mind. He smiled towards the ancestor he had never known.

Allen shrugged him off. “Sebastian had found him living in a monastery. He was a damned poet, what did he know of women?” Allen said, annoyed and frustrated. He sighed, “apparently he had a wife and three children, two were sons. Sebastian never knew about them.”

“He protected his family,” Andrew concluded.

“Yea, well, he wrote hundreds of volumes of text too while he was breeding those kids,” Allen said, annoyance in his voice again. “Books of the great Prince and his battles, page after page of glories. Not once mentioning Sebastian’s battles, only mentioning Sebastian as the bastard child of the Prince who never received a title or a place within the England Court. That little poet had rewritten history with that prose of his, and how the Prince died in a great battle, victorious and beloved by all. The Prince, his whore wife and their son, the only true heir to the throne, he changed it all… Just because he loved his father.” Allen looked away, “God, I hate that man.”

“I guess the pen is mightier than the sword, Allen,” Andrew said.

“Yea, well, now it’s time for the final ancestor of Elrich to pay and to reclaim what is ours,” Allen said refocusing on the man before him.

“Give me the box, Andrew,” he said stepping towards him.

“You want the box, Allen?” He paused. “Fine, go ahead and take it.”

Andrew stretched out his arms, holding the box in his hands, towards Allen. Allen moved closer within inches of him. He smiled down at the box and reached out. Andrew slammed the box into him, hitting Allen in the chin and knocking him down.

Andrew saw the key drop on the ground as Allen fell. Andrew picked it up and started running towards the cab driver, not knowing what he was going to do when he did get in the cab or where he would go, but he knew he had to get away from Allen...

“Come on, Andrew” he heard Jonathon calling from the side of him. Andrew looked over and saw him standing and waving towards him. Andrew stood not moving for a moment.

“Now!” The little boy called.

That’s all it took, Andrew didn’t take any more time to think about it, he bolted towards Jonathon.

“This way,” he said urgently.

Together they ran towards a different part of the ruins, ones Andrew had never been to before. It was around the moat on the other side. As they did, the castle came back into its full glory again, hiding Andrew behind the mist he didn’t see. But to Allen getting up inside the ruins, Andrew seemed to disappear before his very eyes.

“God damn him!” Allen yelled falling to his knees, banging on the ground beneath him.

Snow started to fall from the late afternoon sky as Allen stood up, regaining his composure. He ran towards the cab driver he had knocked unconscious when he had arrived her. Allen passed him without a glance and continued to his car around the bend in the road. He opened the trunk, pulling out some items. He ran back to the castle ruins.

Once there, he set up several candles into a circle, sprinkled some herbs from a small black bag he had retrieved, and fell into the middle on his knees. He pulled his hood up over his head and called out.

“Raylen, god of might and vengeance,” he said into the sky. “Let me see into the night, behind the world that only you see. Let me be within the world of my ancestors. Let me walk with them.”

A purple smoke rose from the candles around him, creating a mist about him. Allen called out again. “Raylen, god of might and vengeance, I call upon you…now!”

The smoke thickened.

“Where are we?” Andrew asked as they turned another corner within the castle.

It was darker here. No torches were on the wall. A cold breeze passed by Andrew quickly as he ran following Jonathon. But something made Andrew stop quickly and look towards one of the doors for a moment. Jonathon stopped ahead of him.

“No, don’t go in there,” Jonathon warned.

“What is in this room, Jonathon?” He asked in a firm voice.

“That is where they reside,” Jonathon said, quieter and trying to urge Andrew to keep going.

Andrew thought about entering for a moment and then decided against it, continued to follow Jonathon to the far corridor. They ended within Jonathon’s room again.

Jonathon stopped in the bedchamber and closed the door, locking it.

“Jonathon,” Andrew said, catching his breath, “how did you get me here?”

“It is you who comes here, not I who brings you,” Jonathon said, simply.

Andrew crouched down the boy before him, “how did I get here?” He asked earnestly.

“Because you are of our blood, Sir Andrew,” Lady Camille said, entering through a wall and into the chamber. Andrew stood up, taking a step back as he looked at her.

“You have always been with us and us with you. Ever since you were a little boy,” she said, comfortingly towards Andrew.

“Jonathon did not find you, Sir Andrew, you found him.”

“What do you mean?”

“Sebastian and his kin have always needed the magic of old to see the visions, to feel their people. The Order of Raylen brings them that. You, Sir Andrew, need none of these

dark arts to feel us. We are here," she reached out and placed her hand towards his heart.

Her hand slipped through him and came out again, causing a sensation of warmth to run through Andrew.

"You have always held your family in your heart," she said, smiling at him. "My husband did the same."

Andrew understood now, nodding his head at her. She lowered her green eyes in respect. He stepped closer to her. She looked up to him.

"I will bring him home," Andrew said. Jonathon smiled up at him and went to their side.

Andrew smiled at the boy and walked to the bed, holding the box still within his hands. Jonathan and Camille looked on curiously.

"Where did you get that, Sir Andrew?" Camille asked as he held up the small key, slipping it into the lock on the box.

"It's a long story," he said, saying no more.

They all looked at the box now as Andrew slowly turned it. It clicked open. He lifted the lid up and let it fall over on the bed. All three peered inside. Andrew pulled out the odd shaped bottle of poison he had remembered from Jonathon's dream. He placed it aside, along with a few other items of bottles and potions.

“These are of Sebastian,” Camille whispered beside him. “We should not disturb them.”

Andrew looked up at her, “I’m sorry, my lady, but it is time these things were brought to the light.”

Underneath the potions and bottles was parchment paper scrolls rolled up neatly, three across the bottom, very carefully preserved inside small tubes. Andrew pulled one out carefully and unrolled it on the bed. Whether he was in the 12th Century or not, he knew these scrolls were very old and brittle. The writings on them were in Latin. He tried to read them, remembering some from his Latin class he had taken in college. But the words before him were different and the writing was strange. He tried again, not looking at the two leaning over to watch him.

“Can you read, sir?” Camille said, softly.

Andrew looked up at her, apologetically, “I’m not certain I have this correct.” She smiled at him and then lowered her head.

“Go ahead, Andrew,” Jonathon urged below him. He nodded towards the boy.

Andrew had figured out enough of the text to understand it was an enchantment of some kind, most definitely of the Order of Raylen, since Raylen, apparently the god of might and vengeance as the text read was what

they worshiped. Andrew had never heard of the god Raylen, not in any of the pagan writings of gods and goddesses over the years, that he had read.

"What does it say?" Jonathon asked.

"That is not polite, Jonathon, it is not yours," Camille interjected.

"It was in my room, Mother," Jonathon countered. Andrew smiled at the boy, thinking that was same tone he would use when he would argue a point with his own mother.

"I need to ask you both something," Andrew said, looking down at the second scroll he had opened and begun reading. He wanted to make certain he had the name correct.

"Yes," Camille said, focusing her attention back on him.

Suddenly Camille disappeared before Andrew's eyes, but it was Jonathon's quick breathing that caught his attention.

"They are coming," the boy said, backing up against the wall.

"Not now," Andrew said, quickly rolling up the scrolls and replacing them in their canisters.

Andrew started to place everything back in the box as best as he could and hoped it would good enough. He heard Sebastian come into the room just as before, and he heard the event he knew too well, start all over again.

"You will not take what is mine!" Sebastian yelled.

Andrew closed the box, turned the key locking it, and placing it tightly in the pocket of his jeans. As Sebastian grabbed Jonathon's arm and pulled him up, Andrew almost stopped himself, but decided against it, there wasn't anything he could do for Jonathon right now. He knew he had to continue on the path. He had to get this information to someone who could help.

But who? Another thought came to Andrew. *And would Allen Redden be waiting for him?*

Andrew went out the door and stopped in the hallway, just as Camille took her final swing at Sebastian with the fireplace poker and he hit the ground. Of course, he thought as he saw Camille exit with Jonathon and run into the hallway, the most important thing to deal with right now was…*how did he get out of their world?*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Andrew began back down the hallway as he had before with Jonathon. He knew most of his way around this area of the castle, if there was a possibility that anyone could know his or her way around a large castle like this. The hallways narrowed a bit and he knew he was approaching the area Jonathon had led him down on this recent trip. He didn't know if any of this would work, but he figured it was his only chance. He would get out the same way he gotten in.

The only thought that crossed Andrew's mind, though as he continued, was about those three scrolls and the words on them. The little he had figured out did not sound good at all. Somehow he knew he had to reverse the curse, placed by Sebastian and his Order of Raylen, on the Prince and his family. There was the Prince, Camille and Jonathon. He was certain those three scrolls pertained to each of them and what curse they had inflicted.

However for Andrew, the thought of reversing a curse sent him into a state of terror and disbelief. It wasn't exciting or something he had ever looked forward to doing in his life. He was just a security guard.

What did he know of curses of ancient old sects that spent their entire existence on deciphering enchantments and performing magic?

His closest thing to a magic experience had been a magician at his 6th birthday party, and Andrew didn't exactly believe that balloon animals and slight of hand was going to be helpful in this particular situation. He rounded another corner and tried to think if there was anyone he knew who could reverse curses, and even if he did, what good would it do? He would have to most likely find this thing it mentioned in the scrolls. The piece of the puzzle he was about to ask Lady Camille and Jonathon of but didn't have the time.

Something called 'a Tutela amulet'.

He knew what an amulet was, a protection stone of some kind, at least that's what he thought they always were. Now standing inside the Prince's Castle even that, he was starting to doubt. Was it to protect against the curse? Or to protect against the god, Raylen? Or maybe, to provide protection against the cult itself? Which was it?

Not to mention that the word 'tutela' meant protection in Latin, so that seemed redundant to Andrew, unless…he thought, one was the noun and one was the verb. He wished he had taken more years of Latin. He wished for a lot of things in this moment, more than he had ever wished for himself before. Allen had told him he had watched and waited for him, that he had been responsible for the situation at college, *how was that possible?* Andrew thought.

How far does this power of his reach? Into people's minds, or was the Dean a member of this cult. It all seemed too far-fetched, even for Andrew who believed in miracles and the unknown long before he saw ghosts, secret orders and castles of the past rise up before him. He was starting to doubt even the things that had happened in the past as coincidences, or happenstances.

Had they all been planned?

The night he went camping with the boy scouts, for instance. He had been asked by his father to join after his parents thought he had become too withdrawn. He couldn't tell them at the time it was because of his dreams of Sebastian, the monster he couldn't name. He agreed to attend a Boy Scout survival outing in the woods. It had been late in the night when he heard the noises, strange noises that kept him awake, that made him wander from the group while they were sleeping, while he was sleeping, he thought back on the experience. He must have been sleepwalking. He couldn't remember how he ended up in the middle of those woods, and it took far more survival skills than that outing taught him to find his way back to the group and campsite the following morning, just as they were eating breakfast. No one, including the kids, seemed to even notice he had been gone. Another event he didn't speak of to his parents or his friends. These times in his life were now all being put into question.

What about the dark man he used to see at the playground with his mother when he was five?

What about the moment he sent away the salesman who came to his door when he was nine yelling at him to leave his parents alone and not to return.

His parents had explained that he was selling a vacuum cleaner and they made some joke about salespeople and maybe their son had the right idea. Of course, he still was told never to yell at his elders. He never did it again, but every time any stranger came to his door, he was never comfortable about it.

Were they all childhood fears? Or did they have deeper meanings? Had he been aware someone was watching him? When he left his hometown and moved to Colorado, was it just the feeling every child gets when they move away or was it something else? Something he couldn't put his finger on, something that made him feel scared and lost?

Maybe, it was what Lady Camille had said, he was a part of them, and they were of him all his life. Part of that connected him to the past and to Sebastian and to the Order of Raylen, more than he liked to admit. *Hadn't he always been fearful of magic?* When the magician had come to his house for his party, hadn't he sat in the back of the room and watched him with a far more careful eye than any six year old would have, certainly any of the ones in the room, that smiled and laughed with

him? He was polite, as he had always been taught to be, but was he ever comfortable with anyone who performed magic?

The answer was a quick and decisive *no*. He must have known deep down inside somewhere about the ill effects of magic, of dark magic. Of course, he reasoned he didn't live his life in fear. He watched the Wizard of Oz and didn't cringe at the Wicked Witch. He had watched movies with wizards, sorcerers and magic users. He didn't react any different than any other kid he was around. He liked it, found the worlds exciting and fascinating. When he was growing up he used to play Dungeons and Dragons with his friends. Of course, he was always the cleric or the healer, not the fighter. But he reasoned he never liked to engage in battles unless in protection of another. It was a good reason why he had stopped playing the game. It seemed the game worked better if you wanted to fight and not just go through the journey, trying to solve the mystery. Not to mention his friends always wanted him to be the Dungeon Master, controller of the game story, and he wanted to just play a part in it.

I guess my storytelling skills were handy then, too, he thought to himself.

Andrew had stopped walking and realized as he looked around, he was in a different part of the castle now, one he had never seen before. It wasn't dark or extremely well lit, but sunlight was streaming through a window far ahead of him that made the hallway

brighter, more welcoming. He was considering all of these, when he heard footsteps behind him.

They were large footsteps, probably a man's, that were coming towards him. Andrew turned around to see which event he had stepped into now, knowing enough that he couldn't participate as himself nor could stop any of the events that were to transpire.

But before he was given a chance to see the person or know anything about what was happening, he felt a hard object come crashing down on his head. He hit the castle floor and his world went black.

Andrew woke up in a strange room, not like any he had seen before in the castle. It was covered in drapes with a few tapestries for the windows, but those weren't hanging up. The sun streamed through in all directions, it was warm on his face and seemed to slow down the slight headache he was feeling from whatever and whoever had hit him in the hallway.

"Are you feeling better, Andrew?" A voice said. He spoke in a proper English accent and for a moment, Andrew was left in confusion as to the owner of the voice.

"Yea," he answered and began to sit up.

Andrew's eyes went to the room. It was filled with parchment paper. Some on a large desk that sat against a window, some on another table to his right in the main area of the room,

still more were strewn across a sofa towards a back corner. Paper was stuffed into leather bound covers and backs, tied together by a circular binding of more leather strips. This room had a pleasant air about it, as did its occupant. The voice was softer spoken than the Prince's and less harsh than Sebastian but it was of a male. Andrew sat up completely now and looked towards the voice.

"Good day, Andrew, I am Elrich, the Prince's second child, as you may have supposed," Elrich said, smiling a bit. His smile was pleasant.

Andrew smiled back. A moment ago he was confused by the events before him, now completely comfortable with the man, more comfortable than he had been in several weeks, maybe even months. Andrew knew Elrich meant him no harm and he certainly wasn't the one who had hit him.

"Am I..." Andrew was about to ask in a dream, but Elrich it seemed was far ahead of him.

"No, not a dream, Andrew…a vision," he answered. Then he laughed a bit. It was pleasant.

"You encounter spirits who still walk the earth," he continued keeping eye contact with Andrew. Eyes that held flecks of green in them, "within there own confines, within their own magic. I am not of that realm." He smiled. "I have never had a reason to stay within these walls or any walls.

"I am not cursed, you see." Elrich stood up and went towards a place in the room Andrew hadn't seen before.

The place materialized before Andrew's eyes and suddenly the room was much larger. Elrich pulled out three scrolls from a small chest on the floor. The same three scrolls Andrew had been reading from not long before. He walked to Andrew holding the scrolls. Elrich stood tall, reaching Andrew's height. He sat down in a chair that again materialized behind him. He never looked towards it, nor wondered if it was there, Andrew thought since his eyes never wavered from him. Again, a pleasant smile crossed his face, a face that Andrew could see within his own.

It was not his chin that he possessed or even his subdued green eyes, but in the features of his cheekbones and shape. Elrich was far handsomer than Sebastian or even the Prince had been. He had perfectly sculptured bones. His body was neither muscular nor stocky. He was tall and thin. What the Prince and Lady Camille referred to as 'sickly' in Andrew's dreams. He held himself with a congenial nature that was both pleasant and soft. A quiet confidence in his eyes and voice.

"It is not necessary for you to understand this encounter, Andrew, only know that while we are here you will not be subject to what is transpiring outside your mind," Elrich said, causing Andrew to be relax.

"These scrolls are not what you need," he told Andrew. "These are simply writings of men who thought themselves to be Gods and in doing so, were blessed by those same gods with greed and a lust for power. Power, which they could not control."

Andrew listened to every word carefully wanting to know all of this man's knowledge. He was his ancestor, directly born of his lineage and the impression he gave Andrew was, he was a kind man with a good heart and soul. Andrew felt drawn to this man.

"Am I here to learn of this, Elrich?" Andrew asked sitting across from him.

Elrich smiled again comfortingly, placing any questions of Andrew's aside. He reached out and took Andrew's hand, a warm sensation of love ran through him and caused Andrew to smile.

"Andrew," he said, softly, smiling at him "You are dying."

Andrew pulled back from Elrich's grasp quickly and stood up. His head swam and he almost fell back to the bed, but he fought the urge. He paced around the room away from Elrich in anger.

"What?! How can that be? Nothing here can affect me physically," Andrew said and then suddenly realized he had touched Elrich hand.

"What did you do?!" Panic in his voice. He looked at his ancestor with much different eyes now.

Elrich stood up, walking to him. He placed his arm around Andrew's shoulder and led him back to his seat on the bed.

"Do not worry, you will not feel it," Elrich soothed, sitting Andrew down. Elrich returned to his own seat in the chair and resumed his conversation, again with a pleasant smile to comfort his guest.

"You have done well, Andrew," Elrich said. "All will be set right."

"What of the Prince and Lady Camille?" Andrew asked unable to stand up again. "What of Jonathon? Will they...."

"Calm yourself, Andrew, there is nothing to be done now. You have done all you could," he said. This time his smile did not comfort Andrew.

"Elrich, why are you saying these things to me? I am of your flesh and blood. I was in the scrolls. I was to end this torment, this curse that has been placed upon your...our family," Andrew started, trying to stand again. "It cannot be over. I haven't finished what I set out to do."

"What shall you do, Andrew? Fight," Elrich shook his head at Andrew, "you are not a fighter. You are as I was. The lust for battle does not lure us. We are not moved by death, nor fulfilled by it. We mourn and feel sympathy towards those who die. We do not cause their deaths. We do not live in that world. We never had, Andrew."

Elrich reached out with his hand to Andrew, touching his arm with comfort.

"We see the beauty in life, the fulfillment of dreams, and pray for a better existence upon this earth."

Andrew looked at him for a long moment. He could feel himself getting tired and leaned back to calm his thoughts.

"You are tired, Andrew," Elrich said, smiling at him.

"It is time for you to enter into my realm where you are free from all of this. Where you will be haunted no longer. Where you are what you always knew you could be." He paused and leaned closer to Andrew. "The pain, torment, dreams, hope of all that ever was, and all that never will be will be at rest in your mind and your body. Put yourself at ease, Andrew." Elrich took Andrew's hand and laid his head, comfortably on the pillow beneath him.

"Let the rest come and fight no more," he said, leaning down to the side of the bed. "There is nothing left to fight for."

Andrew closed his eyes. He felt tired and defeated now. He had fought. He had done everything they had asked and still he couldn't help them. He had followed his heart and still he could not release them from their curse. What more was there left? He thought. What more was there left to fight for? Elrich was correct.

Just as he felt sleep begin to take him, though, Andrew bolted upright with a sense of complete anger and disgust towards this man

before him. A look of surprise of crossed Elrich's face quickly.

"Love," Andrew said, firmly as he backed away from him and stood up, looking at Elrich as if for the first time.

"Love. That is what is left to fight for." Andrew said. He paused for a long moment looking about the strange room and turned his eyes back to Elrich, who now stood not pleased with him.

"This is wrong. All of this is wrong," Andrew advanced on him, backing him up to the far wall. "You are not Elrich. You could never be him." Elrich did not move as Andrew looked to his left and spoke his next words with conviction.

"Stop this game, Allen."

A stillness set in the room, neither man moved. Around them the room began to break apart, slowly. Walls crumbled without sound. Papers flew about. Still they did not move.

"I see through your tricks and your magicks. You have nothing left but games." Andrew began as more and more of the room disappeared before his eyes. "I have much more than that, Allen, and that is what you really hate about our family, isn't it? That's what Sebastian hated and that's what all of his family was taught to hate. Weakness."

Inside the room more items broke. The bed shook and began to dissipate. The desk that had held the works of Elrich fell away. Andrew continued.

"Taught to despise emotions, to kill everything in your path. You can't kill me, Allen, not inside a spell, not with your magic." Andrew took a step to his left talking to no one, but he knew that he heard him. Heard every word and it was destroying him.

"You will have to stand and fight me, Allen. Something your ancestors never had the courage to give to mine." Andrew walked one more step as the last remnants of the room and Elrich himself completely disappeared.

"Stand and face me, you coward!"

Andrew was standing in a circle suddenly on the grounds of the ruins placed back in his time. He saw Allen kneeling next to him wavering from the magic being broken and trying to keep Andrew within his world. Andrew looked down at him. He saw the box next to him and took it, feeling for the key in his pocket. It was still there tightly hidden away.

Allen moaned slightly, the last of the magic gone. Slowly he opened his eyes. As he did so, Andrew's fist came crashing down on his face, causing blood to trickle down from Allen's jaw.

"How dare you?" Andrew said louder and punched him again. This time, Allen fell backwards on his back.

Andrew stood over the man and was about to throw another punch when he caught a glint of something hanging around Allen's neck. He reached down and grabbed it, harshly,

breaking the tie that held it. Allen's head jerked from the force of Andrew's pull.

Andrew held it up to see. A large stone hung from the broken tie. It gleamed an amber color against the candles in the circle. Slowly it changed to green, bright and brilliant, creating a light effect all around Andrew. He continued to look at it as it changed again to a blood red tone and shined down towards Allen. Allen below him was looking in horror up at Andrew. He caught the red light in his eyes. He screamed and shrieked back.

"Stop it! Stop it!" He yelled at Andrew, backing up on the ground away from him and shielded his eyes from the light.

Andrew looked down at Allen as he held the jewel firmly in his hand.

"I think I found the Tutela Amulet, Allen," Andrew said knowing exactly what it was now. "The Prince's amulet, the one that made the dark ones disappear."

Andrew smiled to himself and looked away for a moment. "Thank you, Jonathon," he said softly, under his breath.

Andrew looked down at the amulet the tie was no longer broken and now it was held by a leather cord that fit perfectly around Andrew's neck. He placed it over his head and let it hang. Allen stood up, trying to clear his thoughts. The harsh red tone glowed from within the stone and Allen almost fell backwards as he tried to regain his position.

“Not so fast, Allen,” Andrew said, walking a few steps closer to Allen. Allen shrieked back shielding his eyes again from the gleam of the amulet.

Andrew stayed at a distance, slowly the stone ceased its glow, and Allen looked at him confused and defeated. Andrew’s next words were casual.

“I have a request.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

"I won't do it," Allen said backing away from Andrew. The amulet cast a red glow that blinded Allen for a moment. He turned away.

They were no longer at the Castle ruins. They were now standing on the battlefield back in North Yorkshire. Andrew held the Tutela Amulet, the protection against the Order of Raylen from centuries ago, and when he left the castle, Allen was powerless to do anything but follow him. The amulet had a hold over Allen that Andrew was starting to understand. He had realized that the power of the amulet was his to control as it had been his ancestors and by placing it away from Allen's sights it would not hurt him, but showing it to him would cause severe pain to any member of the Order of Raylen.

He walked behind Allen as he replaced the amulet under his shirt, keeping a careful eye on him. Andrew also had taken with them the box that Jonathon had once taken from Sebastian's room, and the key he held in his pocket. He pushed Allen a bit ahead as they walked to the exact place where Andrew had first met the Prince's ghost a few days earlier. Allen turned to him.

"I suggest you do exactly what I say, Allen," Andrew threatened, starting to reach for the amulet under his shirt.

Allen had all ready tried to blindside him once on the way here, and it would have

worked if the amulet hadn't glowed red and stopped him on its own. It was a handy little jewel, Andrew thought, the Order of Raylen couldn't fight it and thus, couldn't fight him. He had thought about dragging Allen with him to the battlefield, but it wasn't necessary. The amulet kept him close and protected Andrew all at the same time. Like or not, they were both stuck in this together. One was fighting to keep power, the other fighting to protect his family. Different goals perhaps, but neither one intended on backing down.

"Or what, Andrew?" Allen said backing up a step. "You'll keep throwing that," he pointed to the amulet, "around. You don't know its power, you can't use it."

"That may be true, little man…however I do." the Prince materializing next to Andrew and smiled at Allen. Allen took a step back and fell to the cold ground, "and I assure you I will use it."

"You're a....." Allen stammered not believing his eyes. The Prince casually walked to him, leaning down close to Allen's ear, "a ghost."

Allen backed away scurrying like a rat to get on his feet. He finally accomplished his task as a look of terror and disbelief were in his eyes, looking towards The Prince standing across from him.

"Look, I didn't start this," Allen began, moving away from the Prince and towards Andrew behind him. Andrew reached for the

amulet. Quickly, Allen repositioned himself in the center between them both.

"I think it's time we finish this," Andrew said, putting the box on the ground and taking out the key.

The Prince in turn, closed in on Allen. Darkness overcame his green eyes as he set them upon this man. Allen tried to run, but the Prince countered every movement faster than Allen. Andrew looked up for a moment from opening the box and watched the two.

If Allen only knew, Andrew thought, the prince can't do anything to him, but he wasn't going to tell Allen that.

"You should be ripped apart limb by limb," the Prince started circling his prey. "Your blood should spill until your last breath. You have cursed me to relive this battle."

The Prince's voice was rising in anguish and anger as he continued. Allen saw it and tried to get past him. Andrew heard it and took out the scrolls, unfolding them carefully not looking towards the two on the battlefield any longer.

"Look, Prince, I didn't start this," Allen countered. "I swear."

"Do not speak!" The Prince bellowed. Allen quieted instantly. Andrew smiled to himself.

Well, he is a prince who has been kept away from his family for eight hundred years and he finally has an enemy to fight, Andrew thought. He couldn't really blame him for being demanding...or even a little grouchy. Andrew

slowed down his search a bit to give the Prince some time to work out his frustrations. It was least he could do, he said to himself.

"You have caused torment, anguish, pain for centuries. You and your kind," the Prince spat at Allen. "The Order of Raylen is nothing, men who worship their pagan god. Men who are not men, but mice, hiding in shadows, using potions on the weak minded, raising themselves upon pedestals above kings. Above all!" He yelled, Allen tried to get away, but the Prince left him no one to go but through him.

"I will see to your destruction. You and all of your kin!"

"The Order of Raylen will strike you down if you destroy...." Allen said finding some courage in him, but he didn't finish his thought. The Prince moved closer, an inch from Allen's face. Sweat formed on Allen's forehead and he lowered himself down a bit in fear.

"You know nothing, weakling!" The Prince bellowed.

Andrew looked up at Allen for a moment and realized being called 'sickly' or 'touched' wasn't that bad in comparison to what the Prince thought of Allen.

"You are a little man with nothing but potions and magicks that you believe make you great, greater than gods," the Prince leaned down over Allen, "but nothing will ever make you great." His voice taking on a dark tone that Andrew had heard before.

“You will never be a god.” He finished and removed his dagger, holding it ready as Allen grimaced, tripping and falling on the ground before him. His eyes stayed focused on the dagger more than the Prince at that moment.

“But you shall forever live in the shadow of one!” The prince yelled and lifted the dagger over his head, ready to plunge into Allen’s heart.

Allen covered his face and head with his hands cowering before the larger man.

“Stop!” Andrew yelled holding a scroll in his hand and a bottle as he stood up.

The Prince ceased his lunge. Allen, after a moment, sheepishly, looked out from beneath his hands.

“This one shall die!” The Prince yelled towards Andrew.

“No, Prince, he will break the spell. Please…trust me,” Andrew said, trying not to reveal to Allen that the Prince couldn’t hurt him with the dagger or any weapon.

The Prince and Andrew stared at each other for a long moment causing more fear on Allen. Slowly the Prince put the dagger away, while Allen let go of the breath he had been holding. However, just to be certain Allen kept the Prince in their sights. The Prince did the same.

The moment ended, Andrew walked towards Allen quickly.

“Thank you,” Allen said, breathing another sigh of relief.

“I wouldn’t thank me just yet, Allen,” Andrew handed him the scroll.

“What do you want me to do?” Allen asked regaining some of his confidence and opening the scroll. He looked down at it and shoved it back in Andrew’s hand, “I don’t know Latin.”

Andrew looked at Allen, shaking his head. He turned to the Prince.

“My liege,” Andrew said and the Prince met his eyes. “Perhaps this subject needs some persuasion.” Allen looked at Andrew and then to Prince realizing what the two had in mind.

“I would be pleased to provide it, sir,” The Prince moved one step to Allen. That was all he needed.

“Fine!” Allen said grabbing back the scroll out of Andrew’s hand and looked at it. “Just tell medieval Rambo to back off!” He said to Andrew. Andrew nodded towards the Prince. He nodded back and moved away a step.

“The spell can only be cast by one of you. By a member of Order of Raylen,” Andrew explained, adding, “and if you want him…” he jerked his head slightly towards the Prince, “…to calm down, I suggest you read it, Allen.”

Allen glanced once more at the Prince who held a steely glare on him. Allen looked back to Andrew and breathed. Allen turned

away from them and looked down at the scroll again.

"If you try anything," Andrew started, coming up behind him, holding the amulet under his shirt ready to reveal it. He knew Allen could already feel the intense heat of it burning him.

"All right, back off, prophecy boy," Allen said and moved away a step. "I need to concentrate."

The Prince paced back and forth like a bull ready to charge, his motion making the entire moment far more intense than Andrew would have liked, but he didn't stop him.

"I'm not certain it will work," Allen said, turning around slightly to speak to Andrew. Andrew had put away the amulet beneath his sweater, still holding the potion in his hand.

"Why?" He asked Allen.

"We need a circle of Raylen and I don't have the things I need for it," Allen said. "I need to go to my car."

"Tell me what you need and I will get it," Andrew said, taking back the scroll and looking at him.

"I'm not certain I have it all," Allen moved a step closer to Andrew.

Andrew turned around thinking and suddenly turned back punching Allen. He landed on the ground at Andrew's feet. The Prince smiled.

“Hey! I’m trying to help here,” Allen said, annoyed and holding his jaw. “Since when did you get so violent anyway?”

“He is of my blood,” the Prince offered keeping his stare on Allen again. When Allen looked up at the Prince, the two man’s expressions were exactly the same. He shook his head at them.

“All right, fine,” he stood up. The Prince and Andrew moved in one step. Allen looked only towards Andrew.

“I need the candles and some herbs in a small bag,” Allen finally said. “They are in the truck.” Andrew moved a step in and reached out his hand towards Allen. Allen looked confused.

“Keys, Allen.” Andrew said, annoyed.

Allen reached into his pocket and threw the keys to Andrew. He caught them in one hand and turned towards the Prince.

“I ask you to watch him, my liege, but don’t attack him.” he said, his gaze fell upon Allen, but he still spoke towards the Prince. “Unless he tries to run.”

“It will be my pleasure, sir,” the Prince said, pulling out his dagger again and holding it out towards Allen. Allen sighed. The Prince continued to looked at him with angry, hate filled eyes as Andrew walked to the car.

“Go on, weakling...” the prince said moving closer, “I wish for you to run.”

“You’re insane.”

“I have been on this battlefield for a very long time,” he said, firmly.

Allen did not move and tried to remember to breath, staring at the Prince who looked menacing. Andrew finally returned and the moment was broken.

“Here,” Andrew said, shoving the things into Allen’s hands.

Allen moved a bit away from them and proceeded to place the candles in a circle. The snow that had been falling since they left the castle ruins was getting heavier. Allen looked up into it for a moment.

“Keep going,” Andrew said moving towards him.

“You’re not a prince, Andrew…” Allen began. Looking at him. “So stop commanding me already!” He yelled, annoyed, but he returned to his task at hand and lit the candles creating a circle of light. When it was completed he reached out his hand for the scroll, Andrew gave it to him.

“This had better work,” the Prince said looking down at Allen who was kneeling in the middle.

Andrew stood on the outside, the Prince close to him, somewhat cautiously away from Allen.

“I do not like magics,” the Prince muttered. Andrew looked to him.

“If this works, Prince, you will never have to deal with them again,” Andrew said.

“Yes,” he answered almost to himself. He turned towards Andrew, looking at him for a moment. Andrew got his eye. “You would have made a good fighter. You have instincts in battle.”

Andrew did not know if he should be flattered or disturbed by that statement. He decided it was a compliment, so he just thanked him.

“Everyone quiet,” Allen demanded, causing the Prince to move a step towards him.

“How dare you tell me...” he began, but Andrew shook his head no and he retreated.

Allen looked away from the Prince and back to the scroll in Allen’s hands.

“Great God, I call upon your power and your might....” Allen was interrupted by a kick in the ribs.

“Ow!” He looked back to see Andrew looking down at him.

“That’s not the text, Allen,” he said, looking annoyed, “I do know some Latin.”

“Let me dispatch him for you,” the Prince said moving forward with eagerness in his eyes.

“Okay, okay, I’ll do it.” Allen said quickly. The Prince stayed where he was. Allen turned back to the scroll before him and began reading the words.

“Let he who remains without rest,

He who has put his skill and soul to the test,

From the serpent's eye to the dragon's tail,

Let him see the truth beyond his veil."

The Prince looked at Allen, curiously and then annoyed. Andrew looked at the Prince in confusion.

"I will kill him!" The Prince lunged forward so quickly that Andrew could not stop him.

Luckily, Andrew thought, Allen dodged out of the way, and was still unaware the Prince was no true threat to him. He stood up and backed away towards Andrew quickly. The Prince in his own vengeance of years of suffering advanced on him, trying to strike another blow. But Allen hit into Andrew directly behind him with such force, he toppled them both over and away from the Prince's dagger. The potion Andrew held in his hand came crashing to the ground.

A large flash of blinding white light emanated from the inside of the circle where the Prince now stood. Allen and Andrew had to look away and shield their eyes. After a few moments, Andrew looked back. The light was gone, as was the Prince. Only purple smoke was left where he stood. It rose up and dissipated into the atmosphere.

As Andrew started to smile, knowing it had worked and the curse had finally been lifted, Allen stood up and began to run away. No more than a second of thought took Andrew charging after him and knocked him to the ground,

lunging forward. He pinned him and held the amulet up to his eyes. Allen tried to shield himself, but it was too close.

"Get off me!" Allen yelled, shrieking in pain.

Andrew retreated and stood up, placing the amulet back inside his sweater, the glow stopped.

"You're just like him, you know," Allen said, brushing himself off. "It's no wonder you're from the same family."

"I want them all released, Allen." Andrew said, grabbing his shirt and pushing him forward as he spoke, "and by the way, we are from the same family. Sebastian and Elrich shared the same father. Your ancestors are still related to mine."

"Lucky for me," Allen said, annoyed. Andrew pushed him back to the circle to clean up before taking the ride back to East Riding and the castle.

"You know, Andrew," Allen said as they approached the ruins in Allen's car, "with your power and my control over the magicks, we could be a good team."

"Get out of the car, Allen," Andrew was still holding the box with the last two scrolls and two more potion bottles inside.

Now, that he knew the potion had to be destroyed to make the spell work, Andrew had placed them carefully back in the box, hoping they would be safe for the trip.

A few minutes later the circle was recreated as night started to descend upon the ruins. The moon was casting a blue glow across the stones. Snow kept falling as the wind whipped around, causing it to become bitter cold. Andrew pulled his coat around him, holding the box and looked towards Allen.

"It's freezing," Allen complained.

"Keep going."

After a few more minutes and Allen's endless complaints the candles were set up and ready. Allen placed himself in the middle again and began to repeat the chant holding the scroll, while Andrew was ready to throw the bottle down on the stone before him. Andrew looked around for a sign of the Lady Camille, Jonathon or the Prince. He saw no one. Allen finished the first spell and waited for Andrew to drop the bottle, but he stood still.

"Andrew," Allen finally said, looking up at him, confused. "Look, I don't want to save this family either, so if you're not going to do it, I'm leaving," Allen started to get up.

Andrew stood in front of him.

"They have to be in the circle like the Prince," Andrew said, looking down at him. Allen looked around and sighed, sitting back down on the cold snow.

"Great, now we have to wait for some ghosts to show up. They are going to find our bodies out here frozen and dead." He continued, annoyed and frustrated talking to himself. "They probably won't find us right away either. Do

you know what it is like to die of hypothermia, Andrew?" He looked up at Andrew, but he concentrating looking around for the ghosts, so he looked away to the snow on the ground in front of him instead. "It's awful, painful, and then you just get tired and go to sleep."

The moon was still casting an eerie blue over the ruins and the snow, causing everything to seem illuminated under its touch. Andrew kept an eye on Allen in the circle as he tried to scan the ruins with his eyes and think of a reason why they wouldn't come out now.

If the first spell had worked, Andrew thought, shouldn't the Prince be here? Shouldn't he have told his family that they needed to be present for the curse to be lifted? Maybe not, he said to himself. Maybe once the curse is broken, they can't remember. That would be at least compassionate, Andrew thought. But he wasn't certain it would work that way. The wind turned cold again, passing by Andrew causing a chill on him.

"Where is she?!" The Prince's loud voice bellowed from the other side of Andrew suddenly causing Allen to jump backwards on his knees inside the circle.

"She is not here!" he yelled, advancing towards Allen. "Where is my wife?! My child?! You will show them to me now!"

The Prince started to move inside the circle and then stopped, thinking against involving himself in any magicks again.

“He will hurt you again,” The Prince said pointing at Andrew, “If you do not tell me.”

Andrew looked at the Prince and almost laughed. *Now, he was protecting the prince.* There’s a change, he thought.

“They are here, Prince,” Andrew moved closer to him. “We have to wait.”

“I’m thinking, patience is not one of his virtues,” Allen said, under his breath. Andrew shot him a look.

The Prince huffed and started to pace around the circle, like a hunter around his prey. The prey in the center was becoming very nervous as the Prince stopped every few minutes and stared at Allen.

“This is all your doing,” The Prince finally said, looking at him.

Andrew was starting to think the silent treatment was better. The Prince had a look in his eyes that told Andrew, Allen was correct about the Prince’s lack of patience.

“I will destroy your kind,” he continued.

“The Order of Raylen has survived far longer than you, Prince,” Allen said. The voice was a little timid, but he held his ground. Andrew figured Allen was more annoyed now than anything and sick of the Prince encircling him. He was relentless with it, Andrew thought.

“You are traitors to the Crown and liars of your people,” the Prince spat at him turning and circling again.

“It’s all because of you that your family had this problem in the first place,” Allen

countered gaining confidence. The Prince stopped and looked at him.

"Me? How dare you?! I tried to destroy all of you. I wanted no part of your ways. My rule would have seen you all destroyed, running in fear and tracked down like the dogs that you are!" The Prince moved closer to Allen as he spoke. His tone dark and low again, but building in a rage he had kept inside for a long time.

"When I ruled, there would be no advisers of traitors, liars and cowards, who put fear into men and hide behind black cloaks and ancient magic."

"That is why they had to get rid of you, Prince," Allen said, shaking his head.

"Rid of me? Have you rid yourself of me yet, dark one?" He said, staring down at him.

"We did," Allen replied back, annoyed. The Prince looked like he was about to jump on his prey when Allen stood up.

"Look, Prince, it was your son who wanted to see you dead. He hated you, despised you for taking in that wife of yours and making her child the only heir to the throne."

The Prince took a long moment and turned away from Allen's words. Andrew watched the exchange closely.

"That's right, Sebastian your own son wanted you dead, Prince. You denounced the Order of Raylen. You told the King you would never cease until our order was completely wiped out. You really made a lot of people anger with that, Prince." Allen continued.

Andrew watched as the Prince turned back to face him. His eyes registering what Allen was saying.

"Ones with power."

The Prince huffed towards Allen at the statement.

"Power," Allen repeated. "Power enough to destroy you in life and in death. You and your family."

"They have no power," the Prince countered. "They hide behind shields of magic and cowered before me."

"They weren't fighters, they were visionaries."

"Allen that's enough," Andrew said from the other side of him, trying to calm the situation before him. There was no need to do this to the Prince, he thought, it would break his already weakened heart. The Order of Raylen had caused enough pain for him and Andrew would not allow this.

"Sebastian was seduced to your ways," the Prince finally said, he turned away in disgust and sadness. Andrew knew it had to continue now, the truth no matter how painful needed to be revealed, if only to set his soul to rest.

"You think that, Prince? You want to think that, you would like to think that, wouldn't you? It would make it all easier," Allen said, moving a step towards the Prince now.

Andrew moved in another step.

"Allen..." Andrew again tried to stop him. Allen turned to him.

“No, Andrew, it’s time this oafish, overbearing Prince got what was coming to him. You’re a believer in the truth, Andrew. So let’s tell the truth.”

“Allen...” Andrew warned. “It’s not his…”

“No, the Prince wants to know the truth about Sebastian and he’s going to hear it. Once and for all.”

Andrew was worried as Allen took another step towards the Prince. Knowing his son had betrayed him was one thing. Hearing how it was done was something different. He survived enough, Andrew thought. He was just a man, not a god, not all knowing, just a man who believed in his son and had loved him. Now, it would be know that it was his undoing and the undoing of his entire family. What sort of man is able to accept that? Andrew thought.

What person would be able to reconcile himself with that kind of knowledge? But as he did so, he knew nothing was going to stop the words from coming forth and the Prince hearing what Allen was about to say. Andrew braced himself.

“The order hated you for denouncing them, for using the amulet against them, but it was Sebastian who devised your death, your imprisonment and the deaths of your wife and your child. He always hated you, long before Lady Camille and Jonathan existed.” The Prince turned to him.

“That’s right, Prince, Sebastian came into your house hating you, sent by his mother, sent with the dark gifts all ready intact.”

“Victoria?” The Prince questioned.

“Lady Victoria of the Spanish Court, cousin to the Queen of Spain, and believer in the dark arts,” Allen continued. “She ensnared you into her bed that night when she visited your father’s castle. You were caught in a love spell, Prince. How’s that for irony? The great Prince and fighter ensnared by a woman? It’s almost poetic,” Allen smiled, “Elrich would have been pleased.”

Allen encircled the Prince now, keeping his ground.

“She was a woman....” The Prince began.

“Yes, she was, and she was beautiful. She knew you wouldn’t resist her when she came to the court. She intended on marry you and creating an alliance of the two Orders of Raylen from across the ocean, but you denied her, not once, but several times. Denied her bed, denied her everything.

Finally in her last night at the castle, she crept into your bedchambers and placed a spell on you, through the help of her advisor, a member of the Order of Raylen. Together they ensnared your mind and she lay with you. She believed you would marry her, but again you refused, even under the potion you were immune to its effects, to her effects and she

couldn't keep you. She returned to Spain and knew you would never follow our ways."

Andrew listened to the story as much as the Prince. The one man that could have controlled of England had rejected the Order. Andrew was beginning to understand their motives for the curse and endless torment they inflicted upon the Prince and his family.

"A plan among the Order started, a plan against you, Prince," Allen said. "It began with your son, Sebastian. They raised Sebastian in the ways, raised him to hate you, raised him to know the magic."

"So he was entrapped by the Order? He was just a child," the Prince said. "I will not believe my own son would...."

"But he did," Allen smiled. "He did willingly." Allen paused as if deciding that he didn't want to continue.

"He was my son," the Prince said in earnest, refusing to believe still that Sebastian could have such deception within him. Andrew looked at the Prince with sympathy.

"Yes, yes!" Allen yelled. "He was your son!" Annoyance was in his voice and Andrew knew Allen did not like the next part of the story.

"Once he arrived in England, he was your son," Allen started calming down a bit. "He stopped writing his letters home. He started to worship you, he started to know his father. He

did what Lady Victoria feared he would...love you." Allen turned away now he was disgusted.

Andrew was watching the Prince during the entire story. He was in turmoil, he could tell of days long past and memories buried deep within him. Things he knew and things he had never known.

"Then you fell in love..." Allen said, mockingly, "with the beautiful Lady Camille. She used no potions or charms to entranced you when you visited her father's house to dispatch the barbarians who burned your villages. Burned them in their beds." Allen moved a step closer, saying each word clearly so the Prince would not be mistaken.

"It was the Order, Prince, not the barbarians who did that. There were no barbarians. There never were. It was magic that killed those people, our magic...and you never stopped searching until you came upon them. Not the ones who did you wrong, but just those unfortunate souls you murdered. Killed them all, massacred and butchered people who had never done any wrong to any people of England." Allen smiled at him. This part he was enjoying much more and it left Andrew feeling sick.

The Prince turned his eyes to Allen, hate, anger and realization apparent within them.

"Ironically, the Order no longer had to watch you after you brought home your new wife, your only wife, pregnant, carrying true heir to the throne inside her...Jonathon." He took a breath and continued.

“Sebastian knew he would never receive the throne after you married the Lady Camille. After she gave birth to your child. That is exactly what you told him, Prince.” Allen pointed at him. “It was him who plotted against you after that. It was Sebastian who turned on you within your own house, against you, your wife and your son. But he wanted far more than just deception…” Allen looked directly at the Prince as if encompassing all of Sebastian’s hatred in him now.

“He wanted you dead.”

“I would have given him anything,” the Prince said, looking away.

“But he only wanted one thing. The one thing you would never give him...the throne. His rightful place.” Allen held onto to the Prince’s eyes again.

“It was never his place nor his right.” The Prince countered. “He knew that. He always knew that.”

“He was your eldest son.”

“He was a bastard,” the Prince said, defeated.

“He was a ruler, meant to take your place, meant for the throne of England. You took all that away!” Allen moved towards the Prince.

“Don’t you see, Prince? You were your own undoing. Sebastian knew he couldn’t kill Jonathon without destroying you first. But he didn’t just want a quick death in battle where

you could be remembered as the Prince who protected his people. He wanted something far more…"

"He wanted me to die slowly," the Prince interjected. His voice was softer now and Andrew heard the regret in it.

"Not just slowly, Prince...painfully. He devised the poison and he instructed the Lady Camille's handmaiden, Maria, another of the Order's servants, to give it to you. Sebastian knew it would eat away at your insides and cause pain, much pain. That it would leave you unable to stand, unable to fight, unable to be a man. He wanted you to wither away, Prince. To become weak as a child, the way you always made him feel." Allen spat at him. Finally he stopped for a moment. Allen's eyes looked at the Prince with vengeance.

Andrew was about to stop this madness when Allen started again.

"Sebastian wanted more though. He wanted to see that whore and her son burnt to a crisp, screaming and crying. To see Jonathon crying for a father who would never come."

"Allen, stop this," Andrew said moving towards him, but Allen continued on.

"At his last moments, Jonathon knew, Prince. He knew his father had deserted him and it was in that when Sebastian took his ultimate revenge. It wasn't enough to destroy all of you in life. He wanted you to be destroyed in death. You would never be with them instead you would forever live out the one battle that was a

lie. That one battle that you despised. You would forever hear the screams and smell the burning flesh of all those people you never saved. You would forever live in torment inside a world of death, without hope that your precious Camille would provide you comfort, like she had done the first time. You would forever long to be with her, but that day would never come for you. Never again."

Andrew could see the Prince's eyes, though they were turned away from Allen. A tear trickled down his cheek. Andrew tried to hold back his own tears for him. His own son had deceived the Prince, his own flesh and blood. He had been powerless against him only because he loved him. Because he chose not to live by the world's standards, and chose to love. The pain was overwhelming as they stood there, together again, the Prince and his two sons, Sebastian through Allen, and Jonathon through himself. At odds with each other, continuing the battle still.

"You shall..." the Prince began, pulling his sword out with his voice rising in rage, "die!"

The Prince lunged for Allen, who was helpless against the blow, being so close to him with no ability to run. The sword came down across his chest, slicing it, and Allen held fear in his eyes as he watched the sword. It passed through him without harm.

For a long moment, no one moved. No one seemed to even breathe.

“You can’t hurt me,” Allen finally said, and laughed.

The Prince turned away, catching Andrew’s eye as he passed. He held for a moment.

“You have no power at all, you’re a ghost. You can’t touch my world,” Allen said, gaining confidence and laughing at the Prince.

Allen continued mocking the Prince as Andrew moved a step closer to Allen, directly behind him. He knew now what he had to do. Maybe, somewhere he had known all along.

“No, Allen, he can’t,” Andrew said calmly, causing Allen to turn towards him. “But I can.”

Andrew held the amulet in his hand before Allen. He smiled at him for a moment and then recognition was in Allen’s eyes on what Andrew was about to do. Andrew sent the amulet flying down to the ground, hard against the stones.

“No!!!” Allen yelled, trying to reach for it. But it was too late.

The amulet crashed into a million small pieces across the stones. Allen screamed as the purple smoke rose within the circle creating a heavy mist, encircling Allen within it. His screams continued as he was pulled back inside the circle from his feet.

“No!!!” Was the last thing Andrew heard of Allen again.

There was a blinding white flash. Andrew shielded his eyes, but the Prince

watched. Within moments, only a small puff of purple smoke remained where Allen had once been. Andrew looked at the Prince. Their eyes met and slowly a smile came upon the Prince's face.

"Father!" Andrew heard Jonathon call from behind him.

The Prince turned from Andrew to his son. He smiled at the boy and went towards him, quickly picking him up in his arms and laughing as he twirled him about. Lady Camille entered and walked to where her family was, smiling behind Jonathon and her husband. Andrew watched as the Prince hugged his son in genuine love and longing.

"Father, I knew you would make them disappear, I knew you would," the little boy said as he threw his arms around his father again.

"It was not I, my son," the Prince said, looking at the boy.

Jonathon picked up his head and looked up at his father questioning. The Prince turned Jonathon to Andrew who had not moved from his place further away from them.

"It was Andrew who released us," the Prince replied, smiling at him. "He is more powerful than any of the dark ones."

"Yes, father," Jonathon said, softly, "I knew that."

The Prince let out a laugh. Not a bitter one, nor an angry one, but a hearty laugh, that made Andrew smile. After a moment, he placed

his son on the ground and tousled his hair like he had done in the castle's hallway.

"I am very proud of you, Jonathon," he said. The little boy looked up at his father and a large smile crossed his face. The Prince smiled back.

"You have been gone very long, my husband," Camille said approaching the Prince.

"Yes, my wife, however now," he replied. "I am home."

The smile changed and a softer expression took over his face as he grabbed her about the waist and picked her up in his arms, laughing again, and twirling her around, his laughter was joined by hers. A sweet sound that rang through that beautiful snow filled night to Andrew's ears. The Prince pushed back a strand of her beautiful hair and placed her back on the ground.

"I love you, my dearest Camille," the Prince said, softly.

"I love you, husband," she replied. He smiled and touched her face gently, then swept her up in his arms, and kissed her.

Andrew saw that lady Camille and Jonathan's clothes had changed. They were no longer the tattered, torn garments he had seen, the burns and soot had left them, as had the worn tunic on the Prince. Camille stood facing her husband in all the glory they she had ever had in life. The exact dress and look from the portrait in the London Library Andrew had seen.

She was even lovelier as the snow fell down around them and they rejoined in their reunion, stealing kisses long overdue, Andrew thought as he turned away from the sight, feeling the tears in his eyes.

Andrew smiled to himself still lost in the moment. Suddenly, he felt someone standing there. He turned around and looked down into Jonathon's eyes staring up at him. He hadn't notice the boy ran past his parents towards him.

"Thank you, Andrew," Jonathon said, sincerely, smiling at Andrew, "You are a good friend."

"I have never had a better one, Jonathon, than you," Andrew said, smiling down at the boy.

Andrew's eyes were filled with tears and the little boy's expression changed.

"You will leave us?" He said, no longer tried to hold back his own tears. Andrew smiled, leaning down on his legs, looking into Jonathon's eyes.

"No, Jonathon, we are family. Family never leaves each other," Andrew placed his hand over his heart and smiled at him. "You will always be here." The gesture made the boy smile and he nodded towards Andrew.

"Yes," Jonathon agreed. "Always."

"Jonathon," the Prince called. Jonathon turned to his father for a moment and then looked back at Andrew.

“Father is calling. I must go.” Andrew nodded and the little boy smiled once more, reaching out and hugging Andrew. This time he was solid and Andrew could feel the little boy’s arms around him. He wrapped his own around Jonathon and held tightly, closing his eyes.

“You will be safe,” Andrew whispered.

After a long moment where Andrew felt happier than he ever had, Jonathon let go and turned, running into his father’s awaiting arms. Andrew watched as Jonathon laughed and smiled back at him. Lady Camille looked over at Andrew as they all started to walk away. He saw her nod her head at him with respect and smile. The Prince watched the exchange also, placing his son on the ground and giving him to his mother. Andrew watched him take long strides towards him. A sudden thought occurred and Andrew silently wished the Prince wasn’t going to chastise him for looking at his wife. After a quick moment, The Prince stood before him.

Now he could see everything that the Prince truly was. Strong, vibrant, full of life in his eyes and love in his heart, Andrew thought as he looked at him, what a glorious king he would have made.

“You have saved my family,” The Prince said, slowly, “I cannot repay you for what you have given me.”

Andrew smiled at him.

“You already have, Prince.” He said. The Prince looked at him, curiously. “I know

who I am, and where I come from." The Prince nodded and smiled at him.

"Your world is strange, Andrew, I do not understand much of it, mostly the absence of your Kings. But you are a great Knight...and a wise man," the Prince said and started to turn, but he looked back at him adding, "of course, you are of my blood." He smiled.

"Yes, my Prince," Andrew smiled back at him. "And I am very proud that I am."

The Prince nodded at Andrew, Andrew nodded back. Then he turned and walked back to his awaiting family.

"Prince," Andrew said, quickly. The prince turned back for a moment.

"I was wondering...where did you get that amulet?" Andrew asked.

The Prince looked at Andrew and a smile came across his face.

"From a white wizard who had no need for it anymore," the Prince answered.

"I thought you didn't like magic?"

"There are some who have learned to temper power with compassion," he simply replied.

Andrew nodded at him and turned away from the Prince, Lady Camille, Jonathon, the Castle ruins, and all his dreams of the past. As the Prince walked back to that world, Andrew continued on into his own. He walked back along the road. Slowly the darkness was replaced by morning. The night had ended and

with it the magic and mystery of the ruins and ghosts and spells and old ancient sects of the past. The newly fallen snow created a white blanket all around him. Andrew smiled, deciding not to take Allen's car with him, he wanted to walk the two miles back to the East Riding bus stop. The sun made the trip warmer than it had been all his days in England and Andrew wanted to enjoy each glorious moment of it. He smiled to himself as he rounded the corner leaving it all behind.

Only one thought crossed Andrew's mind on that sunny morning walk. The thought wasn't of ghosts, dark castles, or even of beautiful red haired ladies. The thought that touched his heart and made him walk faster wasn't of old ancestors and lifting curses. By the time he reached the bus stop he was running, passing by the young attendant at the information booth, smiling, and jumping quickly onto the awaiting bus. The thought kept in his mind as he took the trip back to the hotel, while he packed, and while he awaited the plane ride home. The thought never ceased and for Andrew, it was the best thought he had ever had.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Andrew walked off the plane at the Denver International Airport. It was mid-afternoon the next day, and the sun was high in the sky covering the recent snow with light, creating a winter wonderland to come home to. He looked out the window of the cab and watched as soon the familiar streets of Jasper came into view.

Throughout his entire journey from England to Colorado the same thought had been on his mind since yesterday morning.

He wanted to see her.

He had thought about calling her from the hotel or the plane, or the airport, but decided it was best not to do any of those things. So he waited. Finally Andrew was dropped off at his apartment building. He figured he ought to at least shower, change and be more presentable, maybe even think about his what he would wear to see her. He knew she could be stubborn, he had experienced it over the years over friendship with her, but that didn't matter as he headed into the elevator. Stubborn or not, there was a change that had happened in him, or more accurately he had returned to his former self. Before he had left his hometown, before his college days, before he had even met her. When life still held fascination and wonder in it and Andrew had reveled in that. He walked to his apartment door and could feel how much he had missed that, and how felt great to him to be back.

Andrew opened the door, still feeling charged with energy and excitement. He didn't rehearse a single word, didn't think about a single moment, he just knew he would follow his heart and somehow it would work out. He passed his living room, not noticing the coat that lay there. He passed the bathroom and headed into his bedroom before he stopped suddenly in his thoughts and motions.

"Andrew," Alonna said, surprise and shock held in her eyes. She had jumped a bit at his entrance. She was sitting on his bed looking up at him. "What are you doing here?"

"Um…I live here," he said and then leaned in, "I do still live here, right?"

Alonna laughed a bit nervously, and stood up, pulling together some photos lying on the bed and stuffing them in a box next to her. Replacing the lid, she walked to him, throwing it all on the chair next to him.

"Yea, of course," she said, with a nervous laugh, looking about. "I was just getting your mail, you know in case you wanted it." She looked around avoiding his eyes.

"I left it the kitchen table," she said, trying to walk passed him.

Andrew reached out and pulled her into him in one movement, dipping her. Her eyes widened. He leaned down and placed a kiss on her lips, long and passionate, not at all friend like. She remained in his arms as he parted their lips and looked at her.

“Hi,” he said, softly, smiling down at her.

“Hi,” she replied back. A smile crossed her face

“Thought I would come home,” he said leaning down, looking in her eyes, “to you,” he added.

She was about to say something when he placed another kiss on her lips, silencing her. No words were needed at this moment, he thought, there would be time for all the words he wanted to say to her. To tell her how much he needed her, how much he cared for her, how much he loved her. There would be more than enough time, but now as he continued to kiss her and felt her kiss him back, he no longer was lost in dream worlds of the past. He was ready to begin live again. It was time for them both to start living another dream…theirs. Right here in the modern day, right here in Colorado, right here in each other’s arms.

Maybe, Andrew thought as he looked at the women in his arms, he should consider going back to college. Maybe try his hand at teaching. He had always liked kids. He still wanted to have a few of his own.

After all, he had a great story to pass down of their ancestors.

THE END

About the Author

Allyson Diana wrote her first short story in the 8th Grade, An American Dream, a dramatization of the story of her real life great-grandfather who emigrated from England to America as a cabin boy on a ship. Since that moment on, she yearned to put her own original plays on the stage and words to the page creating novels and short stories. Allyson is also a theater director, playwright and actress who has worked on and off stage in many productions, including her own. She created Downstairs Production Company (DPC), an all-original theater group. Her most precious moments though are with her family; her composer/musician husband, and their daughter. She loves listening to music (her husband's and others), watching romantic movies and reading medieval/historical romances, mysteries, and historical/biography novels.