



# HARLEY AUSTIN

BOOK FIVE

# PRIMAL

AWAKENED CHRONICLES

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HARLEY AUSTIN

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AWAKENED CHRONICLES

# PRIMAL

HARLEY AUSTIN

HARLEY AUSTIN PUBLISHING

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*For my beautiful angel;  
the love of my life and the very best friend  
anyone could ever hope to have.*

*And for Chris;  
the best brother anyone could ever hope to have  
and my number one fan.*





PRIMAL





# PROLOGUE

**T**onight's top story—another body has been found, this time in Ronan. Authorities have not officially released the name of this latest victim, only that she is female and in her early-twenties. This latest discovery now brings the count of the mysterious deaths to nine in as many weeks in what is being called the Missoula Murders.

"KPAX-8's own investigative reporter, Jasmine Lightfoot, has been following this story since we first broke it to you nearly two months ago. Jasmine, what do we know about this latest find?"

"Kurt, as you can see, I'm still at the scene of this latest discovery here in Ronan. The Sheriff's office, however, is being very tight lipped about what they've found. What we do know so far is that all of the victims have been female, in their early twenties, and all of them college students."

"At the same university, Jasmine?"

"Exactly, Kurt. All of the victims are students attending the University of Montana."

"So it sounds like these female students are being targeted specifically."

"The police detectives aren't calling it that yet, but yes, it would appear that is the case."

"What is the University doing to help keeps the students safe?"

"They assure us that they are doing all they can on their various campuses, but unfortunately all of the bodies have been found off-campus, like this latest one in Ronan. Without knowing the name of this latest victim, it's unclear if she was a resident of the town attending college in Missoula or if she may have been visiting. So far, all of the victims have been residents of the Missoula area, but this latest victim is the furthest out and away from the university that authorities have discovered."

"Do we know if she'd been sexually assaulted?"

"The police aren't giving us any details about this latest find, Kurt, but if the MO follows all of the others, yes. It's likely she was ..."

Sheriff Harris glared across the parking lot of the Starlite into the bank parking lot across the street. Camera vans were already parked and broadcasting before he'd even arrived. The last thing he needed was the Lightfoot bitch hounding him for more details at the tiny motel. Of all places to find another body.

He climbed the outside stairs in the crisp fall morning air, moved past other deputies and into the small upper floor room, closing the door.

"This her?" Harris pointed, looking at the dead girl sprawled face-down on the cheap mattress, her finely curved ass still half in the air. It was a rhetorical question.

"Yea." Eaglefeather met eyes with the sheriff. "Only she's not dead."

Harris' eyes widened. "Huh?"

"Looks like she's in a coma, but she's not dead. Not yet anyway."

"Any signs of trauma?"

"No. She's just like all the others. Probably out for a tryst. Then fucked senseless from behind and left for dead. Only this one didn't die."

"I want this bastard found, Sky."

"You and me both."

"We don't have the blood-trade problem like they do in the cities but I don't need some sex-crazed demon fucking every co-ed into oblivion and leaving them for dead."

"They're not demons."

"Matter of opinion," Harris scowled at him. "By the way, speaking of demons, your favorite ex-wife is already outside spilling the story."

"I saw her. And she's an ex-girlfriend, not my wife."

"You live with a woman for five years, she's your wife. Same difference." Harris reached down and pulled up the sheet to cover the young woman sleeping peacefully.

"What are you going to do?" Sky put away his stethoscope and a few other detective tools.

"Keep it quiet."

"Good luck with that. It's a small town."

"Yea. I figured. Wrap her up like she's dead. Take her back to Missoula. Put her in a hospital room somewhere."

"You want her to wake up—" Sky nodded at the sheriff.

"Damn straight I do. She's my only link to nailing this bastard. How long will she be out?"

"Four, five, six weeks maybe."

The sheriff sighed. "I gotta put up with five or six more of these?" Harris scowled at the girl. The question was again rhetorical.

"Unless he knocks one up with good genes like this girl apparently has."

"I don't consider demon genes to be good, Detective."

"We've had this conversation before, Mike," Sky glared at him.

"Yea, and we'll probably have it again too."

"They're not evil."

"Oh no?" the sheriff pointed at the sleeping girl. "Tell that to the other eight families who had to bury their daughters."

Detective Eaglefeather watched the big man scowl and then leave the room.



# 1

**Y**outh Group had let out late again. People in heavy jackets and some with hats had already made their way to their cars in the frosty night air of the church parking lot that was all but empty now.

Faith zipped her white ski jacket all the way up, her breath visible in the frosty air. Only a couple of empty cars were in the parking lot. As youth leader she was always one of the last to leave the building and lock up. For some reason she felt a little nervous looking around the empty lot. She said a little prayer asking Jesus to send his angels to protect her. She pressed the little button on her key fob and heard her car chirp open and the headlights come on. She moved with a quickened pace toward the sporty red Honda Civic.

Her fingers had barely touched the handle to open the door when her world suddenly went into a kind of spin. She

tried to scream but there was something already in her mouth, like a big ball of some kind, held in place by a strap that pulled against the back of her neck. She screamed again but all that came out were muffled breaths and the quiet vibrations of her throat. She felt her arms pulled behind her back and metal cinching down around her wrists as she struggled in vain against someone who was much bigger and stronger than she was. Then the parking lot seemed to move like a blur as whomever lifted her off the pavement like she weighed nothing and whisked her into the nearby woods.

Faith struggled in vain against her restraints. She could see they were nearing a parked black SUV with the motor quietly running. Her assailant tossed her into the back of the vehicle onto a bench seat, then entered closing the expensive vehicle's door.

"You've had this coming for a while now, bitch—" the broad-shouldered man growled. Her wide eyes scanned him. He was a big, not burly, but broad shouldered and heavily muscled. She struggled as his fingers unzipped her jacket, opening it wide and then went for the front of her jeans.

He made not a sound moving through the dark night foliage of the Montana timber. His breath in the near frozen air was all that was visible as he slipped through the forested areas keeping well away from the lights of the city. He'd move to the very edge, watching, waiting. Often seeing people, here and there. Groups were no good. He needed to find someone who'd be alone.

Like a tiger on the prowl, he'd found only a few over the past several weeks. Then he'd move in and—what? The sound of a motor in the near distance caught his attention. He'd been by here several times watching the parking lot of the new church. There were a lot of young women that

frequented the place. But no vehicles ever drove this far out into woods. A barely perceptible maintenance road along power lines above led away from the parking lot. He couldn't see the vehicle yet through the dense underbrush, but the sound of the engine drew him.

Faith's jeans were around her calves; her layered shirts ripped open and her bra cut away revealing her full pink-nippled breasts. She tried to call out watching the big-muscular guy pull open his black denim and push them down to his knees revealing a tall magnum spire. Faith's eyes drew wide as he pulled off his shirt to show off his thick-cut pectorals that seemed to defy gravity above a perfect washboard of abdominals. He hovered over her taking in her sight before slowly lowering himself over her while she struggled beneath him.

Through half-steamed windows he lurked outside, sensing the fear and muffled screams from within the vehicle. He moved around it as it rocked slightly with the struggle of the two people he sensed inside.

With her hands now free of the metal cuffs, and the ball out of her mouth, she wrestled with the big muscled man to no avail. Taking hold of her once confined wrists, she was no match for the strength of his thick arms and mouth that was covering hers. She tried to scream feeling his huge member enter her, sinking deeply into her body. She writhed trying to move him out and away from her, but his weight kept her pinned beneath him as he drove his tall hard shaft as fully as he could into her.

The door of the SUV opened suddenly. The big young man looked quickly over his shoulder at something huge! A thick and hairy claw reached into the dimly lit cabin of the vehicle taking his ankle, ripping the big man like a rag doll off the seat and out of the car.

Faith scrambled to a sitting position away from the open door, quickly pulling on her panties and jeans.

“AAAHHH!” she heard him scream outside.

Grabbing her purse she pulled the 9mm from it and bolted out the open car door into the cold night air.

Something growled like an animal in the shadows not far from the SUV.

“GET AWAY!” she heard him yell.

Then she saw it. At least the outline of it in the faint light of the church’s parking lot lights not far from where they were.

Five loud cracks of her pistol rang out as something unworldly roared in pain—just before it fell to the ground with a sickening thud.

“Jesus! Faith!” she heard him scramble in the starlit darkness to her, her weapon still out. Still shirtless with his jeans around his ankles, he quickly pulled his briefs and pants back up to zip them.

“Ahhh!” he shouted in pain.

“You’re hurt.”

“I think it bit me.” He shivered in the cold. “Let me have that.” He went for her gun.

“Get your own. I’m not taking my sights off of that thing. It looks like it’s still moving.”

Both moved closer to the animal thing that was clearly still breathing and groaning in pain.

“What is it?” he asked.

"I don't know."

"Is it a bear?" he moved cautiously next to her.

Both moved closer.

"Oh my God, Derrick, it's someone!"

Both could barely make out the visage of a man laying in frigid foliage. Derrick fumbled the phone from his jeans and tapped on the pic light.

Faith screamed.

"Kill it!" Derrick shouted.

But as she leveled the weapon her finger didn't want to squeeze the trigger.

"Faith! What are you waiting for! Shoot it!"

The weapon lowered. "Derrick. I—I can't shoot him. He looks like someone."

"He? It's an animal! It almost killed me!"

"No. Shine the light on him again."

Derrick moved the light of his phone over the creature breathing and groaning in pain on the ground, moving the light from toe to body to its head.

"God! What *is* that thing?" he felt a chill of horror.

"It's not a thing. It's a person!"

"That is *not* a person, Faith. It's covered in hair. Good God. It tried to kill and eat me!"

"Roll it over."

"I'm not touching it!"

"Jesus, Derrick, he's got arms and legs. It's not a bear."

"It's got a tail, Faith. That is not a person."

"God, Derrick," she fumed, and knelt by the beast. Slowly she pushed it over onto its back.

It groaned. Then whimpered in pain.

"Give me some more light," she demanded.

He moved closer and shined the dim light over the face and head of the beast. "It looks like a cougar."

"He's wounded. We need to get him to a hospital."

"Hospital? Don't you mean a vet?"

She glared at him.

"Sorry," he frowned. Then knelt beside the thing on the other side shining his light. "Looks like you tagged it pretty good. I don't know if it's going to live."

"I want him to live."

"We don't even know what this is."

"I don't care, Derrick! He's hurt!"

"Maybe he should have thought of that before he attacked me."

"Or maybe he thought he was trying to protect me. We look like all kinds of foul play when you kidnap me like you do."

Derrick nodded.

"Open up the back of the rig."

"What?"

"We're taking him back to your place."

"Oh, no!"

"I live in town. Someone will see me if I take him home."

"He needs a doctor."

"Call the shaman."

"Oh, good God, Faith," Derrick rolled his eyes. "We'll have better luck with a Chiropractor. He's got bullet wounds for God sakes."

"I don't want a real doctor seeing him. They'll report him. I know they will. Then we'll never see him again."

Derrick pursed his lips. Then nodded. "I'll call someone at the tribe. They'll know what to do."

## 2

**T**egan ["Tee-gun"] opened his eyes looking into the face of someone he didn't recognize. Gods his body hurt; his thigh, one side of his chest and his arm. He lifted his hand to shield his face from the sunlight streaming into the small room.

"Oh, gods," he mumbled. "I'm in trouble."

"What did he just say?" Derrick looked at the shaman.

The old man shrugged.

Tegan just kept his hand over his eyes, not really wanting to look at either of the two Humans. He heard what they were saying, but he kept his ears open and his mouth shut. But the silence was short lived.

"Hey, Catman." Derrick moved to the side of the bed where the old man was checking wound dressings.

"Ow! Hey! That hurts!" Tegan growled.

The old man raised his brow but said nothing.

"What did he say?" Derrick asked the old man.

"He said you're a lousy shot."

"Huh?" Derrick grimaced. "That's not what he said."

Tegan half chuckled and then winced. Okay, so laughing was a bad idea at the moment.

"What is he?"

"Werewolf."

"He looks more like a cougar."

The old man glared at the youth.

"Fine. He's a werewolf."

The old man got up from the side of the bed. He lifted Tegan's hand from his face and looked him in the eye. In broken Ra the old man spoke. "Do not leave here. Your wounds are deep. Rest. You're safe here. For now."

Derrick watched the catman nod at the old man. "What did you tell him?"

The old shaman took hold of Derrick's thick arm. "To rest. And if he gets hungry, he can eat you."

"Oh, you're a comedian. I don't know why the tribe even keeps you on the payroll."

The old man broke a slight smile, gathered his tools and things and left.

Derrick turned back toward the beast. "Don't get any ideas, Catman." He patted his side arm.



Tegan rolled his eyes. The way he was feeling right now, he had no intention of doing anything but laying right where he was.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What are you doing here?" Sky watched her move up into the woods just outside of the church along the power company access road.

"Same thing you are. Following up on gunshots. Find anything?" she smirked.

"Nothing you'd be interested in."

"Bitch," she finished.

"I never said that."

"I'm sure you thought it."

He sighed. That wasn't what he'd thought at all. "What do you want, Jasmine?"

"You used to call me 'Jazz'."

"That was last year. I moved out, remember?"

"You didn't have to."

"I did have to. You were seeing someone else."

"A few someones, actually." It wasn't true, but she just wanted to see what his reaction was.

"I rest my case."

"Well perhaps if Detective Eaglefeather wasn't pulling all-nighters at the casinos—"

"I was working on a case."

"Sure you were. That case happen to have a curvy ass?"

"She was stealing from—never mind."

Jasmine knelt down, pushing his boot off of something he was hiding. She dug it out of the cold earth, looking at it.

"9mm. Steel casing. That's housing for a rather nasty round. Hollow points. Black Talons maybe? Not many boxes of that ammo still lying around."

That was one of the things he'd liked about her. She sure as hell knew her ballistics.

"You'd be surprised," he groaned.

"Not by much. What were they shooting at?"

"Probably a bear."

"Or maybe a cat?"

"Oh, don't start with the Big Foot thing again."

"It's not a thing, Sky, we have images."

"Of an eight-foot tall giant werecat."

"More like seven. But, yea." She looked around. "Tracks look like an SUV. Big one. Chevy Tahoe? Only a handful of those in the area."

"I keep forgetting why I fell in love with you."

"Surely it wasn't my uber-charming personality," she smiled.

"I think it was your ass."

"You can have my ass anytime you want, Detective."

"I'll pass. Thanks." He winced.

She placed the empty into his hand and curled his fingers around the casing.

"Careful, Sky. Some bad ass pussy just might eat *you* all up one day."

He watched her sashay back toward her car, swinging it like she owned him. He felt his groin tighten. Yea; he could easily fuck that again. All night in fact. The only issue was it came attached to one helluva an attitude problem. Sky dropped the casing into his evidence bag, shaking his head.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I don't know what the hell you found, Eaglefeather, but it's got my team stumped." The pathologist sat at his desk.

"Something bled all over the ground out behind that church, Seth; I want to know what it was."

"Yea," the doctor scoffed, "me too."

"So what was it?"

"There were two blood types actually. One was someone Native, and the other one," he shook his head, "I cannot begin to tell you what the hell that one is. We're running DNA forensics on it now."

"Native?"

"Yea, that's the easy one. Someone from the tribes. Male. Lots of testosterone in their system. Whoever was bleeding out there was running on lots of adrenaline."

"Like they were scared?"

"Or in the middle of a workout."

"Or having sex?"

"Any of those."

"What about the other blood?"

"I don't know yet."

"Then give me a best guess."

"I don't do guesses, Detective."

"Seth, someone fired close to a half dozen shots last night I want to know why? What were they shooting at. Obviously it wounded them."

"Alright. Off the cuff, Sky, its like everyone's been talking about. The blood is half feline and half Human—or something close to Human."

"You're bullshitting me."

"I wish I was."

"I don't believe in Big Foot, Seth; the Loch Ness monster, or, werewolves, vampires, or Ogopogo."

"Neither do I. But this isn't the first time someone's seen this Catman, or whatever it is."

"Catman." Sky groaned. "Propman. Sasquach. Jackalopes. They don't exist, Seth. It's a hoax. Someone's trying to create a new legend so they can sell more souvenirs."

"I've seen them selling in the casinos already. But you yourself gave me the blood samples. Our in-house equipment shows what it shows, plain as day. That blood, Detective, is both human and feline. I wish I were joking."

"Then someone's planting a ruse."

"Sure. That's what we thought too, at first. Only it's not. Sky, whatever created this blood type didn't just mix feline and human cells; we'd be able to see that. The DNA itself is comingled. That doesn't happen by just mixing animal with human plasma."

"I can't write 'Catman' DNA into my report, Doctor. In fact, I'm not going to."

"No worries, Detective, I'm not going to either. At least not at this point. Not until I know more."

### 3

Where is he?" Faith asked, getting out of her Honda. She'd had classes all day; not that she'd been paying all that much attention to them. The wounded 'Catman' had been ever present in her thoughts.

"Sleeping." Derrick met her out in the driveway.

"I want to see him."

"You mean 'it'."

"What is up with you?"

"The shaman doesn't want it being disturbed. It lost a lot of blood. It almost died last night."

"I just want to look." She pushed past him with Derrick now in tow. She entered the home quietly then ascended the main stairs and into the guest bedroom where they'd laid him. The nicely decorated guestroom wasn't exactly dark.

The drapes were still half open in the spacious room of the new but made-to-look rustic home.

She stood in silence by his bedside watching him breathing. Bandages wrapped his chest, just below his immense golden fur-covered pectorals and also his thick thigh and bicep.

"Wow—" she mouthed quietly, her eyes taking in every square inch of the magnificent guy—or, whatever he was. Her eyes lingered over the front of his blue Adidas-logo'ed running shorts that covered something lengthy and not small beneath them. A large pair of Adidas running shoes sat on floor next to the bed as well; the shoes were way too big for Derrick.

Derrick pulled her reluctantly out of the room, closing the door. Neither began talking again until they were in the kitchen downstairs.

"I can't believe it." She awed, still in a quiet voice. "Will he be okay?"

"The shaman will be back this evening. He thinks so. That thing's lucky you didn't hit a vital organ."

"I couldn't see. It was dark. I didn't know who he was."

"It could have killed me!"

"Let's see your shoulder."

Derrick carefully unbuttoned his shirts, slipping them open and off his shoulders.

"Looks like the shaman bandaged you up too. Does it hurt?"

"Not as much as it did last night." He pulled his shirts back up. "He taped the lacerations. That thing probably gave me scars. So much for the modeling career."

"Grow up. At least you're not lying in a bed bleeding to death."

"You seem a lot more concerned about that thing upstairs than you do me."

"Please. I'm dating you. I'm just worried."

"You're more than just worried, Faith. I saw how you looked at it, upstairs, just now."

"And how was that?"

"It's the same way you look at me. Just before I peel your clothes off."

"Seriously? Would you stop? I can't believe you're acting like this."

Derrick grimaced. "We need to call the authorities."

"So they can do what? Kill him like you wanted me to do last night?"

"It's not a 'him', Faith; it's a thing. An animal."

"An animal. Right. Wearing Adidas shorts and cross-trainers. Sure."

Derrick frowned. Then sighed. She had a point.

"What did the shaman say? Did you talk to him yet?"

"Not really. The shaman talked to it—"

"Him—" Faith glared.

"Alright, *him*," Derrick half mocked. "I couldn't understand what it was saying. I think the shaman did."

"Does he have a name?"

"I don't think the shaman got that far. He seemed like he was still in a lot of pain."

"He?" she smirked.

Derrick glared at her. "We still don't know if it's just an animal. Someone could have dressed—"

Both heard a toilet flush from upstairs.

Faith folded her arms. "You were saying—?"

"So it's toilet trained."

"I want to talk to him."

"The shaman wants him to rest."

"We need to at least check on him. Make sure he's not bleeding again."

Derrick pursed his lips. Then nodded.

Both found the catman resting on his back, only this time propped up on the pillows with the drapes a little more opened so there was a better view of the lake outside.

Tegan still felt really sore. The bathroom trip had expended all the energy he had. He was surprised by the window view. It gave him comfort to look out over the forested shore, even if it was dotted with homes and boat docks.

He vaguely recalled the two Humans from last night. Now he remembered them. The guy that was with her. She'd been trying to fight him off of her. His anger at the savage returned and he glared at guy.

"I don't think he likes you," Faith offered. "Maybe you should wait outside."

"I'm not leaving you alone with a wild animal."

Tegan's brow lifted. His glare softened.

"What's your name?" Faith moved up closer to the side of the bed. "Can I get you anything?"

Tegan coughed. Ow. Damn, that hurt. It made him want to cough again, but he suppressed it. He just shook his head.

"Did you see that?" Faith's eyes widened. "He does understand us."

"Faith, I think you need to leave him alone. Like the shaman said."

"No. Look. The bandage on his chest. It's red. He's bleeding again."

"I'll call the shaman."



"Tell him to bring a real doctor this time!" she watched Derrick leave the room in a hurry to grab his phone.

Tegan watched her for long moments. He half coughed again. His eyes met hers. He watched her move up to the side of the bed.

"You're going to be okay. I promise."

Tegan smiled at her. Then nodded.

"I'm Faith, by the way."

"Tegan."

She was half surprised by the smooth masculine voice.

"I'm sorry about all of this."

He nodded and closed his eyes. Then drifted off to sleep.

# 4

**T**egan awoke feeling much better than the day before. He was still sore in three places, but at least now he actually felt like sitting up in his bed.

There were new bandages on his body too. Nice ones. A thin clear tube ran into his arm from a bag dripping into it. Another thin tube ran out of the bandage wrapped around his chest. That tube looked like it had red and clear liquid mixed in it. It drained into a small opaque bag hanging lower toward the floor on the same chrome-metal tree the clear bag was hanging elevated from.

The door opened with Derrick entering.

Tegan pursed his lips.

Both guys met eyes.

"You're awake again."

Tegan said nothing.

"Are you hungry? I brought you some steak. I didn't know if you wanted it cooked or raw. I can cook it if you like?"

Derrick watched the guy wince.

"Oh? Steak not your favorite?"

Tegan was famished, but raw meat? He got the connection; the Human was obviously not at all familiar with who he was.

Derrick set the plate of raw steak cubes on the guest dresser by the door, and moved closer into the room to check the IV like the paramedic had showed him.

"You look better."

"I'm Derrick. Faith said your name is Tegan."

He nodded once.

"I'm sorry about all of this. We didn't know who, or I guess I should say what, you were."

Tegan met eyes with the guy. "Why were you attacking her?"

"Oh. Wow, your English is pretty good."

Tegan just stared at him.

"Attacking—what are you talking about?"

"Faith."

Suddenly Derrick was hit with the epiphany.

"Oh—shit. You—saw us. And you thought I was—oh, my God." Derrick ran his fingers through his hair. "Oh, Jesus. You thought I was raping her—"

"Weren't you?"

"Dude, that was foreplay! A sex game."

"Game?" Tegan looked confused.

"Yea. It's one of Faith's little quirks. She likes it rough."

Tegan blinked at him. "She—wanted you raping her?"

"It's not what you're thinking. Yea, so the kidnapping part was a little over the top, but she knew who I was the second I tossed her into the Tahoe. Not like we hadn't done it in there before."

"But—if she knew who you were, why was she fighting you?"

"It's just part of the game, dude. It's really hot pretending."

"I don't think I get you people." Tegan rolled his eyes, suddenly feeling really, really stupid. He looked away from Derrick.

"Hey, Tegan." Derrick moved up to the side of the bed. The guys met eyes again. "I think I know what you were thinking. If I had been in your shoes, seeing that situation; I'd have probably done the same thing. Tried to rescue Faith. I mean, with the Missoula Murders and all—"

"I'm sorry, Derrick. I misunderstood. I'm still learning about your world." He looked back out of the window, not really feeling hungry anymore.

"My *world*?"

Tegan said nothing.

"Tegan, where are you from?"

He looked at Derrick again. "No place you would have ever head of. I'm a long way from home."

"Home—like, another world kind of home?"

Tegan again said nothing but turned his gaze back outside.

"Dude, you need to talk to me." Derrick watched the guy just sigh. "Can I get you anything? You need to eat something."

"Maybe some fruit," was all Tegan said.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Good Morning, Missoula!” one of the student radio hosts began. “You’re listening to *Brian and Becky in the Morning*. I’m Brian Dodge—”

“And I’m Rebecca Wiles. So let’s get right to it, Brian, the thing everyone’s already talking about this morning.”

“You know it. This morning’s top story is the killing of what some are saying has been Missoula’s mysterious ‘Catman’.”

“It’s not really a man, Brian.”

“No, but it is one of the biggest cougars ever bagged here in the Rockies, weighing in at 260 pounds according to the hunter who shot it. Standing on its hind legs, the cat is easily close to seven feet tall.”

“So ‘Catman’ is really just a big cougar that’s been stalking local farms in and around Missoula all year?”

“That’s what the Missoula Sheriff’s office reported this morning. Sorry guys—hope you didn’t spend too much making all of those ‘Catman’ souvenirs ...”

“Brian, what about all of these images we’ve seen online of something that looks human? A lot of these pics were from private home security cameras.”

“A lot of those pics were clearly Photoshopped, Becks.”

“Sure—those are obvious. But there are still a lot of them where it sure looks like someone who could be half man and half cat—right?”

“I think some people are better at Photoshopping than others.”

“Well if this is our mysterious Catman, then we won’t be seeing anymore sightings, huh, Brian?”

“Who knows? I kind of like the idea of our Catman ...”

\* \* \* \* \*

"How was class?" Derrick watched Faith enter the kitchen from the back door after she'd parked in the garage.

"Irritating. I swear I'm going to punch that butthead if he doesn't stop with the politics. What are you making? It smells wonderful."

"Vegetable soup."

"Vegetable?"

"Our friend upstairs is vegan."

"What?! He's a cat."

"Yea, go figure, huh?"

She moved up to the pot savoring the wonderful smell.

"Faith—you know why he attacked me the other night?"

She shook her head.

"He thought I was attacking you. He saw the game and thought you were getting raped. For real."

"Oh my God." Faith blinked. "And I'm the one who shot him."

Derrick gave her the look. "Yep."

Her hand went to her mouth.

"I think you and I need to tone it down a bit. I'm not really all that big on the whole sex wrestling anyway."

"I just—think it's hot. That's all."

Derrick pursed his lips. He wanted to say more, but decided to save it for another time. "Tegan feels really bad."

"Now I do too."

"It wasn't his fault. I think I would have done the same thing. Tried to rescue you. I mean; you can't be too careful around Missoula these days. All of those girls have been turning up dead after they were raped."

She nodded, frowning. "I guess I caused this."

"No—I came up with the kidnapping part."

"That freaked me out, by the way. Until I saw your Tahoe." She half smiled.

"Well Tegan didn't know what was going on. He knows about the killings too. He thought I was the perpetrator."

"Wow."

"He feels really bad."

"So—it sounds like you guys have been talking."

"A little. He doesn't really talk much. I think he's embarrassed."

"How is he feeling after the paramedic treated his wounds? What did he say? I hope he doesn't start talking."

"Johnny is the shaman's son-in-law; he used to be an army medic; he won't say a word. But Tegan is feeling a lot better. He still needs to rest and heal. Johnny thinks he'll be fine; he just needs to not move around too much."

"I should go talk to him."

Derrick nodded, pouring some still frozen corn into his pot.

# 5

**H**ey," Faith rapped lightly on the door poking her head inside. "How are you feeling?"

Tegan looked up from the skiing magazine Derrick had brought for him to read to pass the time. The idea of binding a board to one's feet, or a pair of boards, to slide over snow was odd to him, but it looked like it might make for a good workout. These Humans had apparently taken the activity to a level of great commercial success. The sport looked expensive.

"Better. Thank you." He set down the magazine.

She moved up to the side of his bed. "I'm really, really sorry about all of this."

"Why should you be sorry?" he smiled at her. "It wasn't your fault." She'd dressed in denim jeans again, white ones



this time that looked nice with her unzipped white ski jacket. The strawberry-blonde female looked nice in white.

"Maybe if we hadn't been—you know, pretending."

"I get the game, Faith. I just didn't know. You defended yourselves. It was a stupid thing for me to do."

"No, it wasn't stupid at all. It was brave." She sat down on the side of the twin bed and took hold of his hand. "Oh, your fingers are warm."

"Yours are freezing." He gently wrapped both of her hands in his much larger ones.

"It's still really cold outside." She liked how his fingers laced with hers.

"Your hands shouldn't be cold." He smiled at her.

"Your eyes," she began. "They're like turquoise. They're beautiful. I never really noticed before."

"Yours are almost like mine, green. Almost blue."

Both looked into the eyes of each other for long moments. Until she broke their silence.

"I think you're really amazing."

"You're amazing too. Your aim could be better."

She giggled. "Don't even say that. I'm glad I missed."

"Yea. Me too."

"Who—what are you?"

He sighed. "I guess you'll find out soon or later. It may as well be now." He smoothed his hands over hers trying to warm them more. "I'm Kit. I'm, not from your world."

She nodded her understanding like the revelation was no big deal. "We see the ships in the skies over Earth now and then."

He nodded. "I'm sure most of those are Aden's, Earth's. Some of them are from my home."

"Where is that?" she wrapped her hands deeper into his.

"Another galaxy. A constellation called Keena. My home world doesn't exist anymore."

"What happened to it?"

"I'm not sure. My home was a moon of our mother world that ignited and went nova for some reason. Some say it was a superweapon of some kind. I'll probably never know what really happened."

"I'm sorry."

He smiled. "No worries. A lot of us escaped before it exploded."

"And all of you came here?"

"No. Just a few handful of us. They didn't want us attracting attention, so they split all of us up. Only a couple of us came here to your mountains. We've been trying to keep a low profile. But, I don't think it's working out well."

She ginned. "People have seen you. They're calling you 'Catman'."

He rolled his eyes. "I've heard. They placed us with someone who has a farm near here. My people have gotten very good at farming over the years. We try to keep to the forests. I guess we get careless sometimes."

"So there's just two of you?"

He nodded. "My sister."

"Why were you out by our church?"

"I was looking for strays. People alone who might be targets of this monster that's killing you."

"And that's when you saw Derrick and I."

He nodded again. "I'm sorry."

"I'm the one who should be apologizing."

"You defended yourself from 'Catman'," he chuckled.

"Actually, I couldn't see what you were. It was too dark."

Both fell silent for long moments. Tegan moved his hands from hers, sliding them along her forearms. His touch was electric. Enticing.

"You're very gentle," she smoothed her hand over the fur of his forearm. "I like how your fur feels." His muscles felt firm, and very solid.

"You're beautiful, Faith."

She half blushed.

"It appears we're attracted."

"I'm sorry?"

Tegan half rolled his eyes with a nod. What would she know about the Ra. He just smiled. "Never mind for now. It's too hard to explain."

"No—explain it to me. I want to know."

"Ahhh, Faith," he sighed. "Look, I'm in enough trouble as it is."

"Does this have something to do with it?" She lifted one of her hands from his and touched it to the side of his nylon running shorts, the front of the lined split-seamed loose shorts had grown bulging and thoroughly indecent just being this close to her in the same room, let alone holding her hands.

He drew a bated breath. "Yes. Unfortunately."

She watched him rock his hips softly while his spire filled out even more than it already had beneath the thin material. He wasn't the only one. Beneath her jeans her own button was hard as diamond and tingle-throbbing. She loosed her own soft bated breath.

"See?" he looked into her eyes. "You feel it too."

"I guess we like each other."

He smiled. "Our bodies do, at least."

Both of them heard Derrick come into the room.

Faith quickly pulled her hands away and stood up, feeling suddenly self-conscious.

"Hey, Johnny just pulled up. The shaman's with him."

"Oh—I'll go see if they need anything," Faith quickly left the room.

Derrick moved up to the side of the bed and sat down.

"See what I mean?" Tegan half grimaced at Derrick, his hand covering the front of his shorts. What Faith didn't know is that Tegan and Derrick had been talking quite a bit during the day. They'd gotten to know a few things about each other. Faith wasn't the only one attracted to the Kit.

"I guess you *were* right."

Tegan nodded.

Derrick tugged at the side of his shorts pulling the material taut over his thick hard spire. "I'll keep them busy for a while down stairs while you let things simmer down up here."

"Thanks." Tegan glowered with sarcasm.

Derrick smirked lifting himself off the side of the bed. "Don't mention it."

\* \* \* \* \*

"... exactly Andrea." Jasmine confirmed. "My sources tell me, confidentially, that the blood found spilled in and around the scene only a few nights ago wasn't just that of some cougar or even a bear. We were able to obtain copies of DNA that shows, clearly shows, something that is *both* feline and humanoid. There's just no question within the report. ..."

The sheriff clicked off the TV with his remote. "How in the hell does *she* get the DNA reports before we do?" He glared at Eaglefeather.

"She has her connections, Mike. I didn't tell her and neither did Seth. I called him personally."

"Then the leak has to be with the contractor who ran the samples. They're not supposed to know anything about whose blood they're dealing with. Just run the DNA."

"No, you're right, they don't know who it belongs to. Until the blood sample shows up as a whole new species. Then it lights up their offices like its nobody's business. The 'Catman' story is all over the news in five states and the U.K., it's on the front page of The Daily Mail. Not to mention the tabloid press now. I'm sure some enterprising employee at the lab's office probably sold her the DNA report."

"Well, I hope it cost her a pretty penny," the sheriff fumed.

"Or she slept with them." He wasn't sure how, but the last quip just sort of slipped out.

The sheriff half glared at him. "That ember is still burning you, isn't it?"

Sky sighed. "No."

"You lie like two year old with your hand still in the cookie jar, Detective."

He frowned.

"She's bad news, Sky. Ah, no pun intended."

"I know exactly what she is. Believe me."

"I know you do. I just need you focused on this serial killer, not some ignoramus 'Catman' story."

"What if they're related?"

The sheriff raised his brow. "How would they be even remotely related?"

"I don't know yet. But something doesn't feel right."

"Your uncanny intuition again?"

"Yea. That."

"Too bad it never helped you with Jasmine."

Sky smirked. "How do you know it hasn't?"

## 6

I got here as fast as I could." The sheriff entered the apartment. The usual crew were still around gathering their evidence. "I was in Kalispell for the weekend."

"No worries. She's not going anywhere." Sky opened the door to the bedroom.

The sheriff only needed to take a brief look to see the body. She was in the same position; same M.O. Then he stepped back out of the room. He frowned. "Another white girl again, huh?"

"He's not very equal opportunity, that's for sure."

"These demons are going to be the end of us," the sheriff fumed.

"They're not demons, Mike. They're just Ra. Half-Ra in this case."

"I'm not gonna argue the 'End Time' significance with you again. I don't care what you call them," Harris grimaced. "There was a reason we got rid of them in Bible times. Now we're seeing why."

"You spend way too much time sitting in that church of yours."

"And you don't spend enough."

"Touché." The detective mocked.

"Same M.O.?"

"Nothing's changed. The guy's DNA is all over the place."

"Why can't we nail this bastard?"

"Because he's smart, that's why. He's got the IQ of a demigod."

"I need that girl in the hospital to awaken."

"Yea, well, that's the other bad news."

"What happened?"

"She died over the weekend."

"Dammit." The Sheriff fumed.

"I know. I just found out yesterday myself. I didn't want to sully your family retreat with bad news."

"Thanks. But now we're back to square one."

"I need another one."

"Another one what?"

"Another demigod."

"What the hell for?"

"To sniff this bastard out."

"You want one of them empaths."

"That's exactly what I need."

"Yea, good luck finding one. The way those U.N. slobs hunt them, they stay hidden but good."

"I still need one."

"Shit." The sheriff chuckled. "Why don't you just ask the U.N.?"

"I did."

"Oh? What they tell you?"

"They'd get back to me."

"Sure they will. They don't care shit about one rogue demon. Now if you showed them a real devil—"

"You mean a newblood?"

"They'd be all over us like the plagues of Moses."

"What I wouldn't give for one of those."

"Ain't gonna happen, my friend. The Ra don't care about Humanity. They're at war with themselves, and all of us are caught in the middle."

"I need an empath."

"Don't we all."

"Don't you have connections?"

"Nope."

"Now who's lying?"

"Not lying. She's gone, Sky. Died last year in another skirmish with the U.N., of all people."

"Oh? You never said anything."

"Some things you just keep quiet about."

"I'm sorry."

"Yea. Me too."

"I guess that's why you're not big on the U.N. helping us out."

"The U.N. employs demons to catch demons, Sky. I don't give a tinker's damn about them. I hope all of that spawn eats them alive for what they did to my niece. Just sayin'."

"Alright. I'll have to try looking somewhere else."

"I hear the Dominion's got people."

"Yea, that's another dead end. They all act like the Ra don't exist."

"Can you blame them? They're at war, Sky."

"Yea. Aren't we all ..."



Derrick watched Tegan hobble slowly into the kitchen. For a cat he wasn't moving very quickly. He limped and though his arm was no longer in a sling, he wasn't using it much yet. Derrick had found him some new extra-large running shorts in town, but they fit his waist like they were still a size too small. He took a seat on one of the bar stools.

"You're getting around better," Derrick smiled, stirring some pasta sauce on the stove.

"Yea. Everyday seems to be getting better. I wish I healed like the Ra."

"Yea, you've said that before. I guess they heal really fast."

"You wouldn't believe how fast. What are you making? It smells fantastic."

"You've never had spaghetti?"

"I guess not."

"Teeg, how long have your people been here?"

"Only about six of your months."

"Your English is really good for only six months."

"We're a very astute people, Derrick. Once we put our minds to something it gets done. Language was the first thing we learned when we got here. Even your dialect."

"How many of you are there?"

"They split us up, in case the Seven found out about us."

"Yea, I've heard about these Seven. They control like the whole world supposedly."

"I guess; I wouldn't really know. It's what they told us."

"So all of you've been living in the forests around Missoula for the past six months?"

He nodded. "Only it's not all of us. There's only two of us here in Missoula. I'm sure she's worried about me."

"She?"

"My sister, Kyra."

"Is she cute?"

"I thought you were dating Faith?"

"I am. Just—making conversation."

"We look a little alike. We're from the same litter."

Derrick chuckled.

"That is what you call it, right? There used to be five of us."

"What happened to them?"

"The Ra sold them into the slavers market."

"The Ra have slaves?"

"Doesn't everyone?"

"We don't. Slavery's illegal here."

"Then you would be one of the few worlds that does that."

"Well, actually I mean here in America. I think it still happens in other countries."

"Your world is strange. You divide it up into different nations even though all of you are the same."

"We find all kinds of differences to divide ourselves by, believe me," Derrick rolled his eyes. "Skin color, religion, politics, wealth, all kinds of things."

"The Ra do as well. Just not something so petty at skin color, especially on something so small as a planet."

Derrick chuckled. "Well, one planet is all *we* have."

"The Kit have eleven now. At one time we had thousands—all across the Travada."

"What's a Travada?"

"The most beautiful nebula you've ever seen."

"I think I've only ever seen pictures of Orion. Maybe a few others."

"I've seen Orion from a distance. It's not bad."

"I'll take your word for it." Derrick smiled. He wondered what it must be like to have traveled to different planets like

Tegan obviously had. He dished up some of the pasta and sauce and served the two of them at the kitchen bar, sitting next to his feline guest.

"Wow," Tegan offered with his mouth still half full. "This is really good."

"Usually I put cheese over the top, but you said you were vegan."

"Some of us make cheeses from different lactates."

"You mean milk?" Derrick grinned.

"Right. The Ra like it. We were just never raised on it."

"Are all of the Kit vegan? I would have expected a race of cat people to be carnivorous."

"Originally we were as cats—a long time ago. But then we became children of the Yin."

"Is that a religion?"

Tegan chuckled. "Kind of. The Yin were our gods. They created us. We were once beasts but long ago they came to us and had children with us. We became part Yin. Now they call us the Kit. It's the same thing that happened with Humans." Tegan lifted his glass for a drink of apple juice.

"Huh?"

"Your race. You were once beasts like us, of some kind, I'm sure."

"Some people say we evolved from Apes."

"Ah," Tegan was shaking his head. "Evolved is probably the wrong word. More like 'descended'. The Yin created you from these 'Apes', just like they created us."

"I think Faith would disagree with you. She goes to that church on the edge of town. They don't believe in evolution, other gods, or even aliens."

Tegan chuckled. "Who does she think I am then?"

"I don't think she's made up her mind yet. But most churches think you're demons."

"Not demons. The Ra, they are the demons."

"I thought the Ra were gods?"

"They only wish they were gods."

Both guys continued to eat. Derrick was impressed with how poised Tegan appeared when he ate, like he was royalty.

"So these Yin gods," Derrick continued their conversation. "Where did they come from?"

"The Yin have been around longer than anyone can remember, back when the Universe was new, the two supreme races appeared, Yin and Yang, the mother and father of creation."

"Not just one God?"

"No, there were many of the Yin and the Yang. Some say countless. They were the children of the Universe."

Derrick continued to munch, listening to Tegan tell the story.

"But the two eventually drifted apart from each other going their own ways. So sad."

"The mother and father divorced?"

Tegan nodded. "You could call it that. But then they did more than just divorce, they went to war."

"Ouch."

"The Legend is that the Yang created the Ra to destroy the Yin."

"Did it work?"

Tegan took a drink from his glass, frowning. He nodded. "Almost."

"The Ra under a devil named Darius hunted down and destroyed what remained of the Yin mother race."

"What happened to the Yang?"

"That's the ugly part. The Ra destroyed them too."

"Oh! So the weapon you create to kill your enemy—?"

"Ends up destroying you as well."

"Are there any Yin left?"

"Yes and no. There is a prophecy we were given, eons ago. That the Yin would once again rise. They created the Promethean races; people like the Kit, Tellarian, even Humans. There were twelve in all. I don't know all of them. But each race would harbor the spirit of the Yin; and from them the Yin would emerge, reborn once again."

"Born again, huh?" Derrick smirked over his glass.

"Yes. That is if the accursed Ra don't destroy Aden first."

"I think they've already tried. A few times. Faith says when the sky goes amber and dims the sun, it's a sign of the Second Coming."

"Second coming of what?"

"Not what—who."

Tegan lifted his brow listening.

"Their prophet, Jesus."

"Hmm," Tegan nodded. "I read their holy book. And a few others as well."

"I'm agnostic. Whatever is going to happen will happen."

Tegan grinned. "Then you side with the Fates."

"I guess."

"It is an honorable tradition, Derrick. Some say the Fates were more powerful than either the Yin or the Yang."

"I don't know that I believe in them either."

"That's a fair perspective. I've met others who say the Fates don't exist as well ..."

\* \* \* \* \*

Lisa set the iPhone onto the bedside table after tapping it off.

"Who was that?" Kent sat propped up in bed, the black satin-like sheet barely covering the lower half of his hunky-god body. The lights of their room now dimmed as a romantic fire danced in the hearth.

"Cali."

"Everything okay?"

"One of the Kit went missing."

"Do you think they're okay?"

"I don't know. Some things we can still see, but details are murky now that the time streams have been altered."

"You did the right thing, Lis. All of you."

"Millions died," she frowned.

"And you saved trillions."

"I keep telling myself that. But I guess we'll never know. Not for a very long time."

"You're not the first to have to make a sacrifice. The Yin sacrificed themselves. To save us."

"I know. But I just keep asking myself if maybe there could have been another way?"

"You all could see there wasn't."

"No. There wasn't." She climbed into bed under the sheet snuggling up close to him. "I just wish—"

"Shhhh," Kent gently scolded. "No more work. Okay? Right now it's just you and me."

"I'm usually the one saying that to you," she smiled, then kissed him gently on the lips. A kiss that quickly warmed into a heated make-out under the covers by the fire.

# 7

**G**ood evening, I'm Shepherd Smith, and you're watching Fox News. In the past few weeks the community of Missoula and local authorities have been stunned by a rash of serial murders in and around the small college town. All of the victims female, university students—until now. This morning a male student was discovered, his grisly body looked as if he'd been attacked by a wild animal. The name of student and the student who discovered the body were not released to us by the Missoula police, but the story is now attracting national attention ..."

"James Lightfoot," Sheriff Harris tossed the folder onto Sky's desk with some of the pictures half sliding out of it. "Sound like anyone you know?" he raised a brow to the detective.

"I met him once or twice."

"Was that our serial rapist?"

"I have no idea. Maybe. Maybe not."

"You're not leaving me with a lot of confidence here, my friend."

Sky slid the pictures out from beneath the folder. He winced. "That must have been a helluva fight."

The Sheriff stood up from his creaky chair and set his palms on the desk. "Whatever took out Lightfoot wasn't just some animal, Sky."

"I told you the two cases were related somehow."

"I want to know what the connection is."

"I thought you didn't believe in 'Catman'?"

"I don't; at least I didn't until this morning. But something just shredded one of your 'demons' and left him dead, and in the middle of the city this time. The police are in it now."

"Not my tribe."

"Bullshit. You're all related."

Sky frowned.

"I've about had it up to here with all of the 'tribal this' and 'clan that' bullshit, Detective Eaglefeather. Either you clean this mess up and start policing your own, or I'll bring the National Guard down on the county to break all holy hell loose on this place until there's not a fucking halfblood left in the whole damn state! You hear me?!" The sheriff generally didn't use that kind of language, but enough was enough.

Sky nodded.

"Now get the hell out of my office."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I knew you'd be calling me again." She smirked at him, dressed in an open dark overcoat and red scarf. Her Native features were unusually beautiful.



"Harris wants an end to these killings, Jasmine." Both walked in the cloudy afternoon. A light dusty snow blew through the air as if trying to figure out if it wanted to let loose or not. "This last one was in town, close to the university. Someone made a mistake. It's not just the county. The police are involved now."

"And you think I don't?"

"You know who is behind these. You have to."

She said nothing, for once.

"Why won't you do something?"

"Because I can't."

"Your family runs the reservations, don't tell me you can't."

"And I'm telling you—we can't."

"What is the matter with you people anyway?"

"It's complicated, Sky. That's all I can say."

"So you're just going to let whomever keep killing and killing? Is that it?"

"No. Of course not."

"So tell the tribe to put a stop to it."

"We have!" she glared, half frowning.

"Then you need to do something that is more than just talk. If this keeps up, we're going to have U.N. showing up here."

"We might need the U.N." she scowled.

"What?"

"He's not just awakened, Sky. He's newblood."

"Oh, good *God!*" Sky's eyes widened. "Jazz, dammit! Why didn't you say something?"

"Because I like breathing."

"Is he that dangerous?"

"Ten bodies, Detective. You tell me."

Sky fumed. Now he understood. "We can't be the first people to have to deal with this. Who can we call? There has to be someone?"

"There isn't anyone. They've all gone underground. Between the Seven killing anything that moves and the Ra battling the Dominion at every turn, no one's policing Podunk college towns. If this were Seattle, Chicago or New York, sure; one of their families would have probably taken him out by now. But we're just a small tribe, and the *one* newblood we do have decides to go rogue."

"He's playing with fire. Someone's going to notice and then all of us are going to pay the price. Like James did."

"He didn't kill James," she leveled.

Sky met eyes with her. "Then who did?"

"I thought you could tell me. That's why I agreed to meet with you."

"Oh, sure. Forget about a serial killing rapist, no, the incomparable Jasmine Lightfoot wants to talk about 'Catman'? Please." He rolled his eyes.

"Sky, don't mock this," she took hold of his arm with the grip of a halfblood. "Something just took out a demigod and left him so ravaged his body couldn't heal. He bled to death. That's *not* my imagination."

Sky frowned; then sighed. "Alright. You're right. Something is out there. I don't know what it is."

"Now we're both coming clean."

"You should have told me about your newblood."

"And you should have told me about your Catman."

"You know as much as I do. You got the DNA report before I did."

"Someone at the lab owed me a favor. I called it in. Nothing more."

"Really?"

"You think I slept with them—" she scowled.

"The thought did come to mind."

"You know, Sky, I really didn't sleep around on you. What I did, I did for information. I broke the story. Now people are going to jail—including the governor. It was a few trysts. I used my body to get information. Nothing more."

"I didn't sleep around on you at all."

"Well maybe if you'd have been a little more enthusiastic between the sheets..."

"What did you want from me, a gymnast?! Your brains fucked out?!" His voice was emphatic.

"Maybe I'd have liked having my brains fucked out now and then!"

"You're insatiable, Jasmine."

"So. Fucking. What?"

Sky fumed, then looked away from her. "This is getting us nowhere."

She agreed. "You know I still think about you."

"Why?"

"You know why. I bet you still think about me?"

He scowled but said nothing. She could read his feelings.

"See?" she nodded.

"I'm trying not to."

"It won't work." She moved up closer to him. "Because we're attracted." She walked her fingers up his chest. He took hold of her hand in both of his. It was a bad idea having his skin touching hers. She felt the sudden reaction of feeling moving through his spine, straight into his groin. "We've always been attracted. You're trapped by fate."

"What I am is trapped by a job I love and a woman I hate."

"You don't hate me."

"You're right. It's your tribe I can't stand. You just happen to be associated with them. It's why I left—remember? The corruption. I'm a lawman."

"There was always plenty of money." She smiled.

"Casino money was part of the problem."

"Please. We all take it. Even you."

Again, he said nothing. Then took a step back from her, releasing her hands. "I'm going to have to arrest him, Jazz."

"And then what?"

He frowned.

"He's a god, Sky. He's not like us."

"He is like us."

"No. You're wrong. He's more powerful than you know."

Sky nodded. "I'll see you around, Jazz."

She watched the handsome Native walk away into the blowing snow.

\* \* \* \* \*

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