

A Demon in the Night
By Meshia DeFrostice

Chapter four: Rhodes ancient Rival

Rhodes sat for a long time considering his words carefully. Her inquisition required him to disclose a little more information than he was comfortable with as yet but he did not want to deny her some of the answers she deserved.

“I suppose I should start by stating these creatures, the kahlendra, are ancient creatures whose evil once spanned over three continents including much of the United States. However, they were once thought to have been eradicated entirely. I, myself, assisted in the hunt for them,” he began.

“They are highly calculated in their attacks, going first after the things their target holds dear and then after the target itself when it is blinded by emotions. They seek power, thus they attack anyone or anything that holds even the slightest bit in an effort to attain more. They, themselves, have the power to take possession of the mind and guide the person or creature to their death and sadly, on this I speak from personal experience.

I was still young when the kahlendra surfaced in the winter long centuries ago, bringing death and destruction in their wake. Wolves were accused of several attacks on livestock and I was sent out to find and kill them to stop these attacks.

I could sense something was amiss the evening I left in search of the wolves and it was around midnight when I finally found tracks. I followed them diligently, however I found a bit of a surprise when the tracks ended. The wolves that had been accused of killing livestock lay slaughtered, literally ripped limb from limb, having apparently encroached on the land the kahlendra had claimed. I searched for prints in an attempt to find out what might have killed them but I found nothing.

It was approximately a fortnight later that the kahlendra made their move. They started with the families, catching them out and slaughtering them mercilessly. My sister and mother were killed in that attack, I might add but still these attacks were blamed on wolves despite my argument that the wolves had been killed already. So close minded were they that I was ignored when I tried to argue that it must be something else and it was after they had finished with everyone else that they had marked that they came after me.

I lay tossing and turning, my sleep restless and filled with the images of my mother and sister and what I had imagined had killed them when I awoke abruptly. I could feel something in the darker recesses of my mind pulling at me, forcing me to move and despite my ardent protests I could not stop myself. I was drawn, or pulled rather, into the woods by this invisible force that lurked in my head that continuously inflicted pain on me every time I tried to fight, its will pitted against mine. It eventually won and I found myself in the woods with no weapon or even protection from the bitter cold.

You see darling, this creature feeds on fear and when I began to turn in circles searching for an escape, it began to feed on the fear that welled up inside me and though I tried to dispel it I could not.

I could smell death in the air and I turned suddenly, having spotted a hint of red in the darkness and as I watched what I soon found to be eyes I was hit from behind. Its vile claws ripped open my side and its teeth tore at my arm as I fought desperately for my

life but I was knocked to the ground. In one last attempt to save myself from suffering the fate of those preceding me I searched the ground as its teeth sunk repeatedly into my arm. I found a branch just within my reach and plunged it into the only reasonable place I could find, effectively blinding it before I lost consciousness from the blood loss.

When I awoke I found my body was broken, figuratively speaking for the most part, though I had broken ribs and a shattered arm but I was neither in my home nor in the woods. I tried to move so that I might better view the room but a hand placed on my shoulder held me down in the soft feathers of the bed.

“Don’t move,” she whispered softly, “You are hurt much too badly. I am here to give you a choice.”

“What choice,” I croaked.

“We could not stop the bleeding entirely; your injuries are both outward and inward. There is a chance you could die or you could become one of us and assist in the hunt for these creatures. I am, however, not going to downplay this; it is painful if you choose to live.”

“What are you,” I found myself whispering, my voice groggy and slightly panic stricken at the thought that I could die.

She laughed in return to my question, though it was reasonable enough. “I am sure you have heard the rumors of vampirism.”

“Vampirism,” I choked, “Wouldn’t that mean I would die anyway?”

“Yes and no,” she answered as she brushed a strand of damp hair out of my eyes. “You see child, your body would die, yes but you would live afterwards.”

I found myself lacks for words. I did not want to die and I wanted revenge for the death of my mother and young sister.

“I shall leave you for a bit to come to your decision, child but I suggest that you not take too much time to consider the offer,” she said gently as she stood. “It is a difficult choice that I had to make once. I know you shall choose wisely as well. My name is Kairos, when you come to your decision call for me.”

Abruptly I found myself alone and despite the thick down of the bed my body hurt badly. It didn’t take me long to make my choice and I called for her as the throbbing increased unbearably.

“Child, this will be painful,” she whispered in my ear, “But your body will be healed as if it had never been damaged. I must drain you first and then you must drink from me. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I whispered after only a moment.

Immediately following my answer I felt her fangs pierce the artery in my throat. It seemed as if time slowed as my blood flowed freely from yet another wound inflicted upon me though in reality only a minute or two passed before she pulled away with my own blood staining her lips.

“Drink, child,” she whispered, taking a dagger from a sheath on her hip and gliding the sharp blade vertically down her wrist and holding it to my lips.

My throat seemed to contract in protest as her blood flowed into my mouth and I felt as if I was spinning as I forced the hot liquid down my throat but her wrist soon healed and she gently pulled it away from my mouth.

“It was not as objectionable as you might have thought, was it,” she inquired but I had no chance to answer as a new pain filled my body.

I rolled over to my side in spite of the searing pain in my arm from the crushed bone and began to clutch my chest. It felt as if I was on fire and there was no way to douse the flames as I began to seize, my body moving convulsively. I tried to make a sound, to force anything from my lips but I could not speak. My throat had contracted again and I was finding it more and more difficult to breathe. I choked and gasped but I could not seem to force my lungs to expand and allow the entrance of fresh oxygen.

It was an hour or perhaps more that I suffered the excruciating pain and the lack of air but eventually it began to ease and I was able to breathe once more. I sucked in air in great gasps, thoroughly relieved that I could do so.

“Sleep now, child, the dawn approaches and you need your strength,” she whispered, her voice lulling me into a dreamless sleep as she caressed my hair as if I were an infant still.

When I awoke Kairos was nowhere to be seen. She had left me sometime during the day; however when I finally forced myself to stand someone new entered the rather large and extremely decorated room.

“Good evening, Rhodes,” he said extending his hand, “I am Lucien.”

“Oui,” I replied formally. “May I inquire as to where Kairos is?”

“She is out, however she requested that I inform you of certain things and that I ensure that you are well fed,” he said with a wan smile.

“Fed,” I asked, though I knew the answer even as I felt the mounting pain in my stomach.

“Oui, mon ami,” he replied, “But before you are fed there are some things you should know first.”

“Very well,” I said, unsure whether or not I wanted to hear what he had to say.

“I am sure you have heard the various rumors about vampires and you can discard most of them. Sunlight, stakes through the heart, silver, crosses, it’s all nonsense, although the sunlight will hurt your eyes since they have become more sensitive. There are, however, a few things that can and will kill us despite our immortality. If we are wounded badly and do not feed enough or if we are dismembered we will die. You will find that you are much faster, stronger and have various powers that will prove useful through time. You instinctively know how to use these powers so I find no need to instruct you. Furthermore, you can eat as humans do, though it severely reduces your ability to heal so I would recommend drinking blood and yes, we do feed on humans, though their disappearance is never noticed. Now, I can feel your hunger rising, shall we hunt now?”

I found that I did not find feeding off humans as distasteful as it may seem and I might add now, they do not come back as vampires when fed upon. We fed off the wretches and thieves; the scourges of humanity, as it were but after we fed we immediately went on a hunt for the kahlendra having been strengthened considerably from the blood we drank and despite the powers Lucien had mentioned I was still given a dagger.

It was a trying hunt but we found nothing. The kahlendra are intelligent, as I have said, and they knew how to conceal themselves from detection. In fact, it was months before we found any trace of them at all. They had watched us, however, and split into

smaller groups through out the various countries they had inhabited and refined their hunting so that any attacks were blamed on the various carnivores that lived there.

Many creatures were hunted to the brink of extinction because of the kahlendra and when this fact was brought to our attention we refined our search a bit. We began inquiring of the townspeople whether there was any sudden increase in animal attacks and we found some proverbially closer to home than we found comfortable.

Eventually we found some of the mangy beasts' packs but it was not easy despite our advantages for they had gained strength as we hunted. We eradicated those that we found but apparently some had escaped and slept for centuries.

Something has awakened them, darling. My theory is that they have sensed a sudden and very great wave of power that they wish to attain and they stalk your house because they sense the power that lies in you and your protector."