

Chapter 3

“Back and Forth”

Sarantos felt weak and wonderful at the same time. His excitement at becoming a vampire was exploding with emotions that moved back and forth between fear, desire, happiness, lust, indifference, love and sadness, all at the same time!

She started to move in so close he could feel her breath slowly burn passionately into his neck, and it quickly intoxicated him. Each drop of blood touching his skin sent impulses racing to his brain that clearly said, ‘take me.’ The blood that dripped on him became a drum solo that riveted through his body proclaiming to be Leigh’s heartbeat. They were one. *Take me.*

The room was filled with tension, as Sarantos friends held their collective breath. Wallis quietly stepped toward Leigh. Her fangs were dripping in fresh blood. She moved with an intensely slow and deliberate action. As she got closer to his neck her mouth opened wider and her eyes had a deep red glow. It was an intimate and joyful dance.

“Leigh!” The wizard’s familiarity caused her to pause. His soft voice emanated inflections based in magic, as he calmly questioned her, “You don’t want to do that, do you?”

She turned quickly. Her eyes flared with blood-red fire, as she stared directly into the old wizard’s soul. If it had been possible, she would have scorched his eyes from his face. Deep inside her throat a hiss bounced off the walls sending shivers through the band members while they stood by and silently witnessed the occult confrontation.

Sarantos almost lost the high when her lips pulled away from his neck. He reached for her and weakly wrapped his hand around her neck trying to pull her mouth back down to that pleasure point of ecstasy. *We are one, give me your heartbeat,* his mind reeled.

She smiled and shifted her eyes to Sarantos. “Foolish wizard. You can see he is mine.”

The wizard smiled at her, and with a forceful voice said, “Leigh, I wouldn’t hurt you. Look at me.” She tilted her head until her eyes were locked on his. He

continued, “You can’t have him. It won’t work. He will be nothing to you this way. He hasn’t relinquished his soul freely to you. You know this to be true.”

Her eyes mellowed, but the sadness behind them was unmistakable. Her fangs retracted. She woefully whimpered, “I’m so sorry.”

A horrendous cry, like that of an animal suffering, billowed out the open door and into the damp night to travel beside the gusty, harsh wind. Brad covered his ears and fell to his knees.

The sound was coming from Sarantos. His body was thrashing about and his hands were clawing the air desperately searching for Leigh. He grabbed her hair and pulled down hard causing her face to become buried in his neck. Sarantos ached for her and screamed, “I’m yours, your heartbeat belongs to me.” Then he passed out.



Sarantos felt the warm light of the sun against his skin and barely opened his eyes. He was in his own bed, but couldn’t remember how he got there. Suddenly, a pleasant memory came to mind. He remembered his girlfriend being a vampire and how much he wanted her. As he peered around the quiet room, he could feel the emptiness divide his heart in two. *‘Take me.’*

Wallis appeared in the doorway, “You’re finally awake. Very good.”

He walked over and sat down in a chair by his bed. He grinned, “I brought you something to drink that will help remove the after effects of being exposed to the powerful charms of a vampire.”

He handed Sarantos a cup with a purple liquid inside. The container felt warm. Sarantos decided to not ask questions and just drink it up. He did, but the minute he drank the potion his body swooned while he forcefully gagged and choked. The drink tasted like actual throw-up. He would think twice before accepting any more potions from him so readily in the future. The wizard handed him a cup of coffee. He promptly downed it after barely shouting, “Bottoms up!”

“Well, at least you’re in good spirits. I didn’t say it would taste good,” the wizard chuckled.

He was hungry and started to climb out of bed when Leigh entered the room. He felt a tinge of regret, as he looked upon her beautiful face. He shook his head and looked shamefully away. Was he mad? Did he really want to be a vampire?

“Good morning, my love,” she whispered from across the room, but it seemed she was close to his neck breathing her sultry words into his eager ears.

The wizard studied Sarantos for a minute and then said to Leigh, “I think it wise if you wouldn’t speak to him too much today and allow him to recuperate from your charms.”

She nodded and smiled warmly as she left the room.

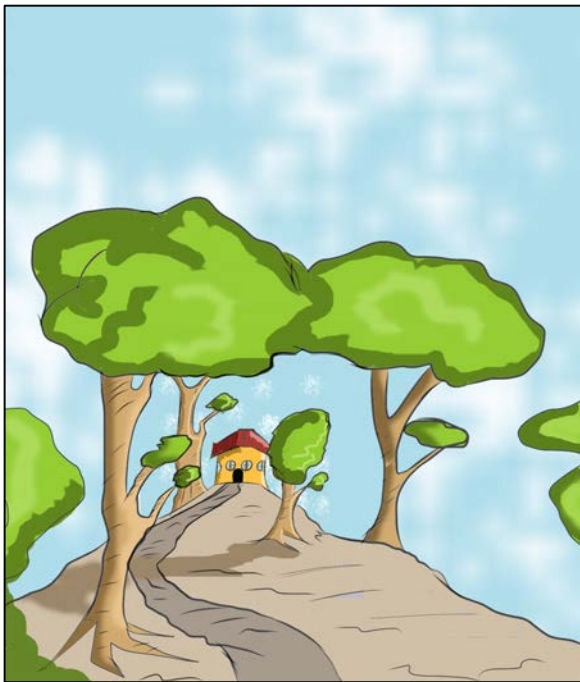
Wallis stood up, “Let’s get some food in you. That potion will give you strength, but moving about will earn it quicker.” The rustling of the wizard’s robes were the only sound he made while leaving the room.

Sarantos arrived in the kitchen about ten minutes later and found Wallis by the crackling fire looking through some old books and Leigh was brushing Mika, while her purr was vibrating throughout the room.

Brad was at the table and had poured Sarantos another cup of coffee and casually placed a plate of fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, toast, and strips of ham in front of him, “Eat up my friend. You had a rough night.” He patted him on the back, as he leaned down and whispered in his ear, “Still very cool though, your girlfriend being a vampire and all!”

Sarantos shook his head and laughed while shoving Brad away from him. He was utterly famished. The food was usually so delicious. When they had arrived, some two years ago, Brad had gathered up different foods to make a dynamite pizza, much to the pleasure of Wallis. He used goat cheese, fresh mushrooms and the seeds he'd brought from home. This variety of herbs and vegetables really enhanced the pizza. His own special crust was harvested wheat from the fields and then grounded carefully. He added fresh spices to the crust that gave it a very unique flavor. The sauce was always made from fresh tomatoes. Brad was really quite good at cooking as well as alchemy. Sarantos breakfast was again proof of that, and he heartily ate everything in front of him as quickly as he could.

Sarantos smiled as he watched his friend walk to the window and look out over the hilly and heavily wooded land laid out before him. He sipped his coffee and was glad Brad was with him, because he had the ability to take an edgy situation and make it appear much lighter. He was genial and a truly insightful friend.



The wizard's cabin sat upon a rather large hill with a dirt road that coiled through the woods eventually leading to the front door. Several groups of windows were strategically placed around his home to receive a clear view of the overlying area. Each window had shutters on the inside so they could be closed against the elements and latched without venturing outdoors. Sarantos knew of many magical traps placed around the vicinity to prevent unwanted intrusion. He'd helped Wallis set them up as part of his training. He loved learning magic! His favorite trap was one called, 'magic mouth.' When someone would approach a specific perimeter, a voice bellowed, "Begone

fools, or I'll turn you into a toad, or better yet, a fly. Run!"

The first time they'd set it up, Muriele had agreed to coax Brad into the direction of the spell until it went off sending Brad running and screaming through the woods. The memory made him laugh out loud and drew the attention of his nearby friends.

“What’s so funny,” Brad questioned him with a wry smile?

“Magic mouth.”

That was enough to send Wallis into a fit of laughter until tears streamed down his face. Sarantos laughed even harder with the wizard. The two of them were pretty dangerous together, as they both shared the same wicked sense of humor.

Even Mika appeared to smile, “It was humanly hilarious. You reminded me of your common house cats. You both spook easily.”

Everyone chuckled, including Brad.

“We can lose the jokester’s corner now, they’re here,” he remarked as he headed toward the door.

The wizard was still wiping away tears when Muriele and Blake entered the cabin.

“What’s happened,” inquired Muriele while her brows came together worriedly?

“Nothing going on here,” Brad intoned much too quickly.

Muriele was an elf and they had such incredible instincts. She smiled and poked Brad in a teasing manner, “Magic mouth.”

“Whatever,” Brad replied, as he pulled out a chair and sat down at the table to finish his cup of coffee that had been left to grow cold.

The wizard spoke with a harsh and direct voice, “We’re gathered here for an important reason.” He leaned back in his chair and sipped from his mug. As his eyes searched the faces of his friends, he nodded at each one of them. “The vampires have a new leader. We don’t know who it is, yet. This leader is sending vampires on a bloodletting spree. Their intention is to own cities by creating more of their kind and then the rest will be herded like sheep to be used as a daily blood bank. This is to presumably try and appease their insatiable lust and hunger.”

The old wizard paused to remove several shiny objects from the red pouch hanging



from his waist. Blake used that opportunity to move himself in front of the fire and sat with crossed legs on the floor. He was muscular, but agile. The elf, Muriele walked over to Brad and jumped on his lap, much to his surprise. His face changed from pink to red and back to his golden tan within seconds. Sarantos thought there was definitely something magical about that reaction.

Sarantos looked around at his disturbed friends and saw real fear in their eyes, which both scared and

saddened him.

Wallis stood up and continued, “We will need to go to battle to prevent this takeover. Many small groups bannng together will take action, as well. What this means to us is more gigs in bad neighborhoods, more caution, and increased awareness. I will set up the gigs. Most likely each one will involve a battle during a performance or immediately after it. I can’t say how long this will take. It could be months or years.”

You could hear a pin drop, except for the whoosh of the wizard’s robes as he walked over and stood by Sarantos. Wallis held up a shiny bracer. It was gold with intricate shapes around the two outside edges. The middle had dark symbols that continuously moved around the circumference of the bracer. Sarantos became confused when he stared at the moving writings.

Wallis lifted it and placed the metal against Sarantos’s left arm and began an incantation until the bracer melded with his arm and was now attached. Sarantos gasped and noticed there were no cracks. The surface was really smooth. This enchantment was now part of his body!

The wizard smiled, “Sarantos, you are right in your expression, this will not come off. The bracer will protect you against the undead.”

The wizard walked around and did the same for everyone, except for Leigh. Mika accepted one, as well. There was no way to protect Leigh without giving her away. She would have to save herself.

Sarantos heart ached for Leigh. He watched her as she rubbed the cat with a loving touch. Her dark blond brown hair was pulled into several braids that were scattered about her head and each had lavender woven into it. He wanted to love her, so much. She slowly lifted her head, like she read his thoughts and her dark loving eyes penetrated his for the briefest of moments. She innocently smiled a tiny crooked smile. He felt his skin heat up until it singed his loins. She watched him carefully and knew what she'd caused. That was when her big, 'got you grin' became so perfectly beautiful, he smiled. Obviously, the bracer wasn't working very well. He wanted to be with her and feed from her luscious neck. When he moaned, the wizard quickly moved between them and gave Leigh a deep growl that frightened Sarantos.

Leigh apologized quickly.

Sarantos felt as though his heart wouldn't let him think. This back and forth moodiness about Leigh was painful. It made him weak. How could he contribute to the group when this fight inside of him would never end. He was very concerned, "Wallis, I don't want to let you down, but I'm not sure how strong I am emotionally, right now."

The sympathetic wizard put his arm on Sarantos shoulder, "I understand your concern, but I'm confident that you'll be able to help the group tremendously. You've been working on becoming a bard and those spells that you sing will give you strength. You'll be fine, my friend."

All Sarantos could do was to nod his head and smile weakly. He wished he had the wizard's genuine unwavering confidence and trust though.

"Brad, you need to work on some potions. I know you've been working with Brazon over in the small city of Telling. He's one of the best alchemists around. I've known him for years and he tells me you're quite talented. That's good news, because his potions have never let me down and now, I feel I can trust you to supply me with the same quality."

Brad allowed a grin to fill his solemn face, "Thanks. I'll do my best."

“Good. I’ll need five clairvoyance brews. In my shop I have a lot of dried mugwort leaves and roots you are welcome to use. If you need more, I can give you the location of the plant. Since it needs a lot of sun, you won’t find it close to these woods. Also, for every gig we’ll need a protection powder placed around the stage. You’ll find dill in the bare garden beyond the hill close to my shop and juniper runs along the river banks. Make sure you get enough. We will need some sachets made of mugwort to hang from our door and windows. I can’t emphasize the importance of protection. These vampires will stop at nothing and risk their own existence as well as many others.”

Brad nodded.

“The rest of you know what to do. Sarantos will work with me. I’ve scheduled a gig in a fortnight at the ‘*Moon’s Arrow*.’ I know that place doesn’t seem like a vampire hangout, but they’re spreading out very quickly. The owner is a man named, Sojan and has been highly concerned about his establishment and his own life, along with that of his family. He has two small children and a loving wife. He’s a hard worker and a likable man. Some of you may know him. I’ve supplied him with some magic to assist him and his family against the vampires. We need to find out the location and name of their new leader.” He turned toward Leigh, “Leigh, as much as you’re an asset to us, if you can’t control your heart’s desire for Sarantos, you’ll have to stay back while we work. I’m so very sorry.”

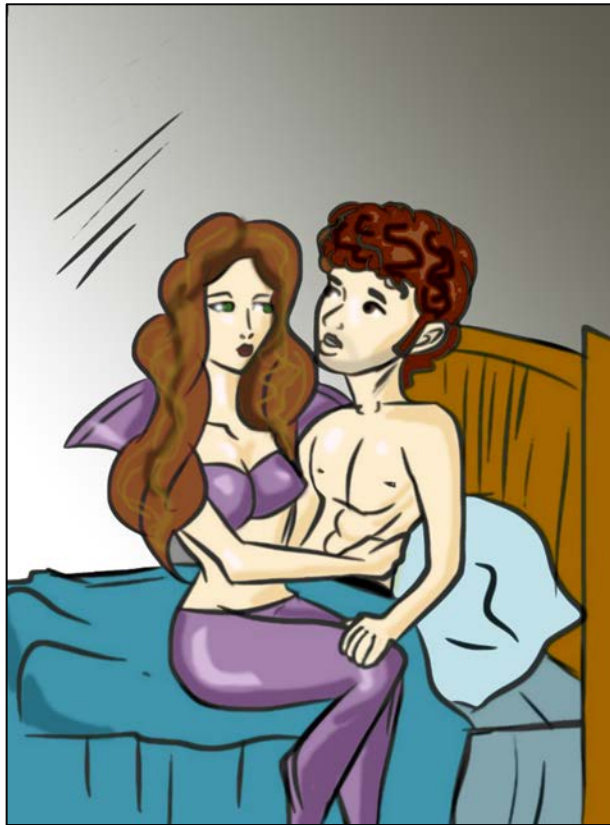
Her eyes flared. She stood up, her face reddened and her voice grew loud, “You can’t go alone. It’s too dangerous. You need me and you know it!” She took a deep breath and her expression softened, “I’m sorry. You’re right Wallis.” She looked at Sarantos, “I guess when he found out about me, it’s been somewhat easier for me to feel closer to him, but I won’t let you down again. I promise.”

The wizard moved over next to her and put his arm around her vulnerable shoulder, “I know, but we must be careful. There is danger everywhere. We are not safe from prying eyes. Trust no one, but those that are gathered in this room.”

Sarantos heard melodies of sorrow while darkness drew nearer and nearer. He couldn’t speak. His voice was gone. His life was being drained and he didn’t care. He felt her teeth sink into his neck and it was delicious. As they shared this close intimacy, he couldn’t stop her from taking him to his death. And he didn’t want to.

She slowly lifted her head. He was mesmerized as he stared at his blood dripping from her sharp fangs. He looked deep into her eyes. Suddenly, panic took hold of him. It wasn't Leigh. He couldn't die like this, with this undead filth. He flailed about until horror finally gave him back his voice and he screamed, "Leigh, Leigh... save me, please save me." He closed his eyes and kept them shut tightly.

"Sarantos."



A soft voice whispered his name. Could it be Leigh? He realized his heart was pounding madly in his ears. His eyes slowly opened. Leigh was beside him holding his hand and sitting on the edge of his bed, "Are you okay, my love? It was just a bad dream."

He grabbed her and pulled her down next to him. Sarantos understood her now, and didn't want to let her go. She was his life and what was in the past should be left there. She'd protected him from her for months, as she suffered alone. He loved her for that. She slid her hand around his waist and pulled him closer. His neck began to throb.

"We'll be okay, Sarantos," she said, as her breath covered his skin with goose bumps.

He wanted to believe her. How could she be here this close to him without -

"She can stay with you," Mika said and jumped assuredly on the bed. "I'll help watch over both of you."

"Thanks, beauty," Leigh said as her foot reached out to touch her neck.

Mika purred.

The next few weeks were hectic. Everyone was in a serious mood. Only Brad would bring the conversation to a lighter tone. They were all thankful for that. Brad already had gathered what he needed already and began working on some other projects directed by Wallis and Brazon. Sarantos had no idea what they were making.

He had his own thing going on. Every day and night he tirelessly worked on his music using just the right sound with his voice to cast spells. He had the power to write the lyrics for his spells and created whatever he decided was appropriate for their needs. According to Wallis it was 'the gift'. It was really rather cool! Sarantos created a spell called, *Back and Forth*, since this seemed to be the way he felt about his relationship with Leigh. What this meant for the vampires, well let's just say it wasn't going to make their day. He would bounce them from the ceiling to the floor and back again, until they were so enraged Blake would slice off their heads with his sticks. This would keep about ten vampires super busy and unable to respond while his friends had time to fight the others and when available would eliminate them. This was exciting for him and he couldn't wait to try out his new skill on something real and tangible.

Leigh had continued to sleep with him, which made him feel safer in a twisted sort of way. Some days he felt closer to her until the emptiness of not having a full relationship would divide his soul into an endless game of cat and mouse. Sarantos needed answers to make this work, but he couldn't put any questions together that made sense. So he awkwardly fumbled through their time together, never sure what to do, but always knowing what he wanted to do. However, he knew full well that wasn't healthy or reasonable.

Muriele hadn't been around much and after a week of hardly seeing her, Brad's happiness started to become sporadic. You never knew what to expect. When his humor would surface, it was like lightening - it would strike fast and disappear rapidly, leaving those in the area caught in a laugh that was quickly despoiled, by 'Mr. Doom and Gloom.'

Mika drifted and roamed all day long now. She only came in at night. Sarantos knew she did that to appease him and Leigh, and the big cat never complained even though she was a night walker. He would never find a better pet in his old world. Sometimes it bothered him that he liked Yarrowtopia so much and very

seldom missed his homeland. He'd hardly ever seen his family since he lived there but he still frequently wondered how they were doing. Whenever he had a chance, he would ask if he could visit and if that would be cool. Maybe though, he'd found where he wanted to be after all. He loved that his music had real meaning here and was unique to anything musical that existed in this world.

In the short time he'd been living in the wizard's home, everyone he met felt like family. They all took care of each other and enjoyed one another's company every single day. What he loved most was not worrying about great financial status. Instead, the focus was on your own personal accomplishments and spending time helping others achieve their goals. When you helped the local farmers in the simplest of ways, they would sometimes reward you with dinner, one of their finest chickens, or home-made apple bread. If you were in town and assisted any pub owner with bringing stock out of their cold and damp cellars, you were sure to get a pint of their finest ale and a wonderful tale about what was happening in the local area, or stories of the strange but interesting travelers that frequently passed through.

When Sarantos thought about it, he couldn't even remember why he came here to the land of 'Mellow Yellow.' Brad had given that name to this new land, which seemed more appropriate than Yarrowtopia after they witnessed the influence of the three moons. Sarantos chuckled as he remembered what had inspired his friend while they laid out under the three full moons the first week they'd arrived.



'They were down by the river, Singing, so named for the mystical songs it seemed to play as it wove around rocks and cascaded down many tiny soothing waterfalls. Brad had kicked back looking up at the night sky and had started chatting about how powerfully mesmerizing the three moons were. Two of them were a mellow yellow and were located to either side of a light glowing lavender moon. Their different hues reflected in the trees and moved across the water breathing into it vivid colors of life. It reminded him of the color organs

of the sixties, when colored lights behind glass moved with music. Brad had laughed and renamed the land that memorable night and it took.'

His daydreaming was interrupted by several loud voices coming up the path to the house. He heard a growling noise and wondered if someone was being attacked by a bear. Quickly, he ran toward the door to find out what was going on. Their voices were getting progressively louder as they approached the cottage, but he still couldn't make out what they were saying. He'd barely arrived at the door when it burst open and Wallis came into the room looking quite agitated and went straight to his chair. He'd always used it for thinking. Blake and Muriele followed him inside.

"What's going on," asked Sarantos?

Blake ignored him and continued the conversation with Wallis. His voice was edgy and loud, "I don't know what we're supposed to do? We can't fight this, Wallis. Quit being so pigheaded. You're always on this peace and love mission that can cost those close to you their very lives."

"Don't say that," Muriele said quietly. Then she turned and smiled at Sarantos and looked back at the wizard and said, "We have to do this. This fight is ours."

Wallis shook his hand and pointed a finger at Blake, which made Sarantos worry he was casting a spell, "Blake, calm down. Let me talk to Sojan. I'll go speak with him tonight."

Blake countered, "It won't do any good, Wallis. He will not speak to us. What is wrong with the two of you, are you not hearing me? They drained the life from his wife and daughter and left them to rot. It was a message. Do you want him to lose his son and his own life? It's too risky!"

The wizard pulled on his beard and sighed, "He has no choice. We have no choice. If we don't go to the pub in two nights time and stop them they will take him and his son. What would you have us do? Should we leave this town and allow the bloodletting? They'll find us eventually, as they grow in power and status. What concerns me is I don't know what happened to the magic I gave them. Did they forget to use it, or worse is it no longer working? I must know. I will speak with Sojan." He threw up his hands to signal the fight was over - then he impatiently

turned to Muriele, “Have Daniel bring Sarantos horse and mine to the house, go quickly.”

She never answered, but ran out the door.

The old wizard searched the face of Blake, “Are you in, my friend? I have to know if I can depend on you.”

Blake wrinkled his brow and pursed his lips, then with a nod of affirmation he softly said, “Yes, of course, my dear friend. I lost myself after I saw the bodies. You are, of course, right.”

“Good, then prepare this house.”

He turned to Sarantos, “You’re with me too. Get ready quickly. We leave for Brazon’s and then we’ll head to Sojan’s.”

Sarantos turned to head toward his room and wondered why Daniel was still working. It was pretty late for him to still be there. He was a hired hand that assisted Wallis with the garden and did simple tasks around the buildings, such as feeding animals and cleaning. He was what Sarantos would call a part-timer.

This wasn’t good at all. How horrible for the farmer’s wife and daughter.

Sarantos threw his guitar over his shoulder and was glad he had ‘Back and Forth’ memorized. A Bard with a guitar was unusual, to say the least. He could make his own lyre, or better yet a lyre-mandolin. He grabbed a sachet of mugwort and put it inside his shirt, then put his silver cross necklace over his head. Shoving several potions of holy water into his pouches, he smiled nervously. This world certainly had its problems and the dangers were indeed real. He needed all the help he could get. It certainly was an adventure and it was now time for action. This was his home.

“Sarantos,” Wallis called from the next room.

The wizard’s voice was stern and Sarantos knew he’d better be swift. He hurried to find the old wizard.

After traveling for a short while they found Brad at the alchemists. He was behind a large table with bottles, spices, herbs, and a variety of strange looking things scattered about him as he worked diligently.

He looked up and Sarantos was glad to see his friend's face as it grew into that wonderful broad smile, "Hey buddy." He slapped him on the back and gave him a bear hug.

"What's up? My friend."

"Enough chit chat," the wizard's tone was gruff. "Brad and Brazon, we have an urgency. I'm not sure if the magic we're using is any longer effective. There's been an incident and we need to work on stronger potions, with only two days left for the making."

As the wizard explained what had happened over at Sojan's home, Leigh walked in from outdoors and spoke directly to Sarantos, "So you're here. I'm ready to go when you are."

"I didn't know you were coming with us," he said.

"Of course, it could be dangerous."

The wizard had finished explaining the situation and walked like a very young man to the door and went out without another word. They both followed.

The stillness and smell of death lingered around the home of Sojan. As the three of them rode closer, they could see a tiny light flickering through the cracks of a shuttered window.



A withered old man with grey whiskers approached them from the barn. He carried a lantern and held it high to peer into the faces of the intruders.

“Hello Barnaby. It’s Wallis, come to check on Sojan.”

“Yeah...well, you be givin’ me your horses, then. Best be quick about it, that curse of the bloodletting is on this here home. I’ve got that there barn protected, I do.”

“Stop that kind of talk, Barnaby,” Wallis said with a firm tone.

“Well, don’t you be worried about my talk none and just give me them poor

horses. You’ll see wizard. Had to bury the bodies, I did. Didn’t smell good and there was nothing left anyways. They were just the skin and bone, they were.” He shook his head back and forth and mumbled the last few words, “That’s all that was left wizard, skin and bone!”

The three of them climbed down from their horses and handed them off to Barnaby. Wallis never said another word, as they all stood there and watched Barnaby slowly walk the animals to the barn.

It started to rain and Sarantos shivered as the cool night air touched his skin. The wizard tapped on the door with his staff. After several moments Derek opened the door.

The tall son of Sojan stared at them from underneath dark shaggy hair. Today, he looked older than his eleven years.

“What do you want wizard,” the boy asked?

“Derek, I must see your father. It’s urgent.”

“Seems when you visit it’s always urgent. My father isn’t taking any visitors.”

Leigh moved to the front and stared into the eyes of the boy, “Derek, go sit down and we will visit with your father,” she said with a sensually persuasive voice.

He smiled at her and went inside leaving the door open for them to easily enter.



Inside, they found Sojan sitting at a rather large wooden table that was set close to a huge blazing fire. His swollen eyes lifted to look upon the faces of his guests. He appeared exhausted and drained of will power. There seemed no fight left in him. Then he calmly looked into the fire and never said a word.

Leigh opened the window and watched the quiet darkness outside. Wallis pulled up a chair and sat down between Sojan and Derek. Sarantos was uncomfortable so he just stood by Leigh.

“Sojan what happened to the magic I supplied you? Tell me, was it used?”

There was obviously no time for sensitivity from the old wizard.

Sojan’s expression grew more anguished and he stared directly into the wizard’s eyes, “I don’t know. I gave it to Llywen and told her what you said, you know, how to use it. She was a stubborn woman and chose to argue and replied that I was foolish for believing in your magical nonsense. She said...(he began to cry), ‘vampires will not come for us because they stay to their region and if they did come, then no silly magic will stop the likes of them.’ I took my son to work and warned her again to heed caution. I can’t be sure if she used it. There was nothing left...there was nothing left...” He started sobbing uncontrollably.

The wizard patted his trembling shoulder and looked at Derek, “Are you okay, boy?”

“Yes, but I need my father whole.”

“I understand,” he said and hugged the boy.

They chatted softly for a while allowing Sojan to feel more settled. They made coffee to warm their insides and the aroma filled the modest cottage with comfort. The wizard pulled out a flask and took a sip, then placed it back in his pouch. Drinking and sharing stories helped to bring a sense of normality to a situation that was far from normal.

A sudden scream out in the darkness broke the silence.

Sojan went for his sword and Derek grabbed his bow. The wizard looked at him quizzically. Sojan nodded toward two finely sharpened scythes made of the finest silver hanging on hooks by the door. Wallis’s eyes lit up and he nodded approval. He stood up and moved to stand next to Leigh.



Sarantos started singing a simple Bard’s ballad of protection. His voice rose against the incoming screams and he felt the power of the moons.

Leigh hissed and leaped out the window. Wallis ran to the door and carefully opened it. Mika staggered into the room. She was bleeding. Sarantos couldn’t see how badly she was hurt, but knew his job so he continued to concentrate harnessing the magic from the energy around him into his song.

The wizard slammed the door shut and leaned over the big cat checking her leaky wounds.

“Derek bind her wounds.” The wizard reached into one of the layers of his robes and pulled out a small light blue bag.

The boy left and came back with warm water, and rags.

“Hold out your hand, Derek.” Wallis emptied a powder into his hands that matched the color of the bag. “Put this on her wounds once you’ve cleaned them.”

The old man stood up and appeared to be listening to Mika. Sarantos had long thought they used telepathy but wasn’t sure until this moment.

The wizard’s face went pale, “No...no...It can’t be.” He turned and Sarantos caught a glimpse of something inhuman. The wizard looked insane, “Leigh,” he screamed uneasily. His voice made everyone in the room want to cower in fear.

His face went dark and his robes began fading in and out of existence.

Leigh was suddenly there in the window squatted down like a cat and teetering back and forth on the ledge. She was nearly naked. Her bloody robes were hanging in strips down her body and as she swayed, scratches could be seen hiding beneath her torn material. She was bleeding everywhere. Her eyes were red and glowed with fire. Blood was dripping from her mouth. She watched the wizard and then gave a blood-curdling cry. The wizard had spoken to her inside her mind.

Sarantos could barely keep on singing. His head was reeling with the pain and anguish of seeing his girlfriend bleeding. It made him weak. He wanted to run to her and beg her to stop fighting and run away with him from this madness. What had happened? Their reaction terrified him. Something horrendous had occurred, but what?

A giant eagle swooped across the room and its wing span alone almost took out anyone standing. It knocked over several lanterns that Sojan quickly righted. The bird was next to Leigh and Sarantos couldn’t run to her, to save her life. He turned toward the wizard, but he was gone.

He looked back at Leigh and the eagle. They were both staring at him. Then his head became filled with voices.

He heard the wizard’s voice in his mind, “My friend look to me - look to my eyes.”

Sarantos found himself looking into the eyes of an eagle and abruptly recognized the spirit of the old wizard.

“Take care and protect this home. It is urgent that I fly,” his voice crackled with deep emotion that almost made Sarantos pass out, until another sound nudged at his thoughts.

“I love you Sarantos,” he watched a tear slide down her beautiful face and followed it to the wooden ledge. He knew that voice.

In his mind he told her he loved her and wanted her, but wasn't sure if she heard.

She blew him a kiss and opened a small bottle that glittered with many colors. Leigh poured a small portion down the eagle's mouth and he shrank down until he could fly out the window.

Sarantos kept playing his song as he walked across the room toward the open window. When he got close to Leigh his skin heated up and his neck throbbed as he stood next to this incredible woman. She reached out her hand and touched his soft cheek. Then she jumped out the window.

Sojan moved next to Sarantos and they watched as the eagle grew back to its gigantic size. Ten vampires were closing in on them along with two zombies. Leigh was quickly on the zombies viciously tearing them apart. The wizard took to the night sky and with incredible speed and agility he flew at the vampires mercilessly ripping out their eyes. Their screams of agony matched those that they destroy. Leigh started to drink their blood.

Sojan grabbed his scythe and jumped out the window and walked around slicing off the vampires heads, one by one. He needed to avenge his daughter and wife.

The eagle flew toward Leigh and she jumped on its back. Sarantos watched them fade into the night.

Sojan had piled the zombies and vampires together and was now burning them.

How could Sarantos protect this house and those in it against such a strong army? Mika was his great ally, but would she survive and if she did, how strong would she be during additional combat?

As the day's story unfolded, he ached for Leigh and didn't know if he would ever see her again. His heart felt solo, no longer two. His heart felt broken. So broken.

He cried out in fear, but the darkness effortlessly absorbed the sound. Alone and scared for his friends, Sarantos could hear the cry of the vampires as the night surrounded him.