

Chapter 5

“Tired Of Being Scared”

Sarantos stared at the cherry snow in front of him. It was Gabby's blood that gave the cold in every direction some convoluted sense of warmth. It was ironic in a way, because she could be dead and death probably felt like a frozen tundra, just like this place. He wanted to weep but the frigid air prevented that, least his tears would solidify and then fall shattering onto her blood, mixing his life with her death. He wanted to puke.



The dwarf leaned down and picked up her cloak breathlessly gripping it in his hands as though he could somehow will her back into their world. Switch stared at the only thing now left of Gabby. His distorted expression tugged at Sarantos soul. He watched the dwarf's fingers slide between layers of bloodied fabric as though he were searching for some part of her that he had missed, something, anything that would help him find her and return her once again to the world of the living.

Although he hadn't known Gabby as long as the wizard and dwarf, he'd genuinely liked her. He felt their misery and pain. At this time, his stomach ached and he did what he always did. He looked to the wizard.

Wallis stood behind him with his cloak blowing madly in the wind. There was no composure left in his eyes, as they bulged wildly and darted back and forth searching the horizon for a glimmer of hope. He appeared like he had just escaped from a mental facility. Confusion planted itself on his tired face. He looked lost to the world he stood upon. The hood of his cloak lay gathered around his shoulders and was

quickly filling with snow. The wizard's hair hung tempestuously in a distorted twist of ice that looked like a dance frozen by fate and without a future.

Sarantos was suddenly tired of being scared! He'd always had one foot out the door and the other cemented inside, balancing eternally in-between. Now, he was so damn tired, tired of being scared. He'd showed his soul to the world, but felt the world never cared, but these people actually did. They cared for him. They felt, because their very existence, depended on feeling something. Otherwise, in this frozen world, to be without warm emotion, there was only one thing left – certain death. Sarantos needed to do something. He was tired of being scared.

There was only one thing he could do. He started singing. He started singing about warmth and love, leaving all of his fear behind. The ground in front of him surprisingly started to melt. The dwarf moved back a few steps, as the earth opened up beneath his feet.



Sarantos concentrated on Gabby's blood, watching intently as it went from red to pink, until it finally dissipated. When the hole was about six-feet deep, he noticed tips of fingers protruding out of the snow like a flag announcing where Gabby had died. He heard a gasp come out of the wizard. He was breathing once again, reborn with a hint of hope.

Wallis ran past him and jumped into the hole without any regard whatsoever. His body floated just above the hole as it expanded, exposing more and more of Gabby's lifeless figure. Within minutes the wizard had her in his arms and stood next to Sarantos and the dwarf.

“Grab my cloak,” the wizard shouted over an ever-increasing wind storm.

They both did exactly what they were told without any hesitation.

He felt the warmth of the room immediately flood into his veins as they reappeared back into the room where their friends were anxiously awaiting their return.

The wizard moved quickly across the room carrying Gabby’s limp body. He laid her down on one of the soft beds. Aurora sat next to her giving crisp directions to Murielle to bring her hot water at once. Sergio was running his hands down Gabby’s body from head to toe. Aurora reached into her pouch and produced a small sack of green powder and dropped it into the cup of water brought to her by the elf. Wallis started chanting and a white cloud of iridescent vapor came out of his hands, moved towards Gabby and calmly went inside her nostrils. Aurora was casting a spell over the cup of water with the powder in it until a glittery substance shimmered around the top of the liquid. She lifted it up to Gabby’s mouth. Sergio held her head up as the liquid was poured delicately into her mouth. The dwarf brought over Gabby’s cloak and squeezed a drop of blood out of it and it fell into the cup. Aurora moved her hands over the mysterious liquid once more and continued to pour it into Gabby’s mouth. Covers were then fervently placed over her body and tucked under her by Murielle.



Gabby's face was lifeless. Still her friends continued to work on her like doctors in the ER, not willing to give up. Sarantos didn't know how long they all stood there but once there was nothing more that could be done for her, they finally at long last, turned their attention to him, Wallis and the dwarf.

Their friends sat the trio down by the fire and brought warm tonics that soothed Sarantos insides and warmed his spirit and body. His heart however, was another matter altogether. Murielle and Aurora helped them remove their chilled and soaked

clothing, hung them by the fire and wrapped them in roasted blankets. The women removed everyone's wet boots and massaged their feet after placing them in warm tubs of water that smelled of lavender.

No one had spoken in over two hours. They all knew what to do without instruction. Their communication was passed through thought or what they said nonverbally through their worried eyes. For this amazing group of heroes it somehow managed to work on this day.

Sometimes Sarantos couldn't believe his luck. He thought back to when an extremely large cat ended up in his shower years ago. He felt alive back then because he threw his fear into the wind that blew past him, freeing him to expand his horizons and move into a new fearless future. Now he wasn't so sure.

He sipped his tonic and breathed deeply.

"Sarantos." The wizard's voice rang like a deafening bong in the silence, releasing everyone's private train of thought. Although, he wasn't sure how private it was at times.

Mika chuckled.

The wizard continued, "Sarantos, my dear friend and apprentice, you were amazing today. When all my years of experience and wisdom fell to the wayside, you leapt forward like a calm, but charging bull." His head nodded up and down like one of those bobble dolls. "You did what the rest of us wanted to do. Sometimes we all fall to the hard times in front of us, but always a friend grabs our hands and hearts and lifts us back up from the abyss. This time it was your turn, dear Sarantos. You've become one of us, a hero in his prime. This is your time. You've learned to conquer your fears even when faced with certain death. Some would say that's the easiest time to achieve that, but it's not always the case. I am proud to call you a friend and trust you'll always have my back. We have a big road ahead of us and this thought comforts me greatly."

Everyone in the room smiled and toasted to him with their drinks. Damn, he was proud of himself, too. He felt his face redden and knew he'd squandered his time for many years, but now his fear was gone. He was a survivor. Somehow, he got to this

point in his life. He was sure he'd be scared again, and probably soon enough but he also realized how very human that emotion was. Everyone was scared at one point in time but it didn't mean you had to stay scared forever.

Sarantos looked at Gabby and wondered how she could even be possibly alive at this moment. If she was, her life force was weak for sure. Would she recover? He felt exhausted. He hoped all their magic would work. Only time would tell.

“Go to sleep, Sarantos. I will guard you,” said a soft reassuring voice.



“Thanks, Mika.”

He moved to one of the beds, pulled back the cover and jumped onto the soft bedding. He listened for a while to the fire crackling, the fluffy voices of his friends and his own breathing before darkness took him into silence.

He didn't know how long he'd slept, but a hushed weeping woke him. It was Leigh.

She was barefoot and walked within a violet mist, dressed only in a flimsy white gown that revealed her firm figure.

He stared at her body, watching her thigh and buttock muscles tighten and release with every step. He couldn't see her face but her hair swayed in a light breeze except for the long braid that fell down around her loose hair.

He wanted her.

He couldn't see what was around her. Where she was, wasn't visible within the misty space she walked upon. Suddenly, she turned her head as though she heard a noise. Her face was as beautiful as ever, but tear stained. She then turned all the way around. He could see her breasts as they moved gently with her breathing. He vaguely wondered how he could notice that but her tattoo stood out underneath the sheer fabric she wore. He now couldn't remove his eyes from her nipples. How shameful he felt! The woman he loved was crying and all he could do was stare at her luscious body, wanting her, desiring nothing more...

"Who's there?" Her voice was soft and seductive. It sent chills down his spine. Now, he ached for her. There was a craving deep within his belly for her touch.

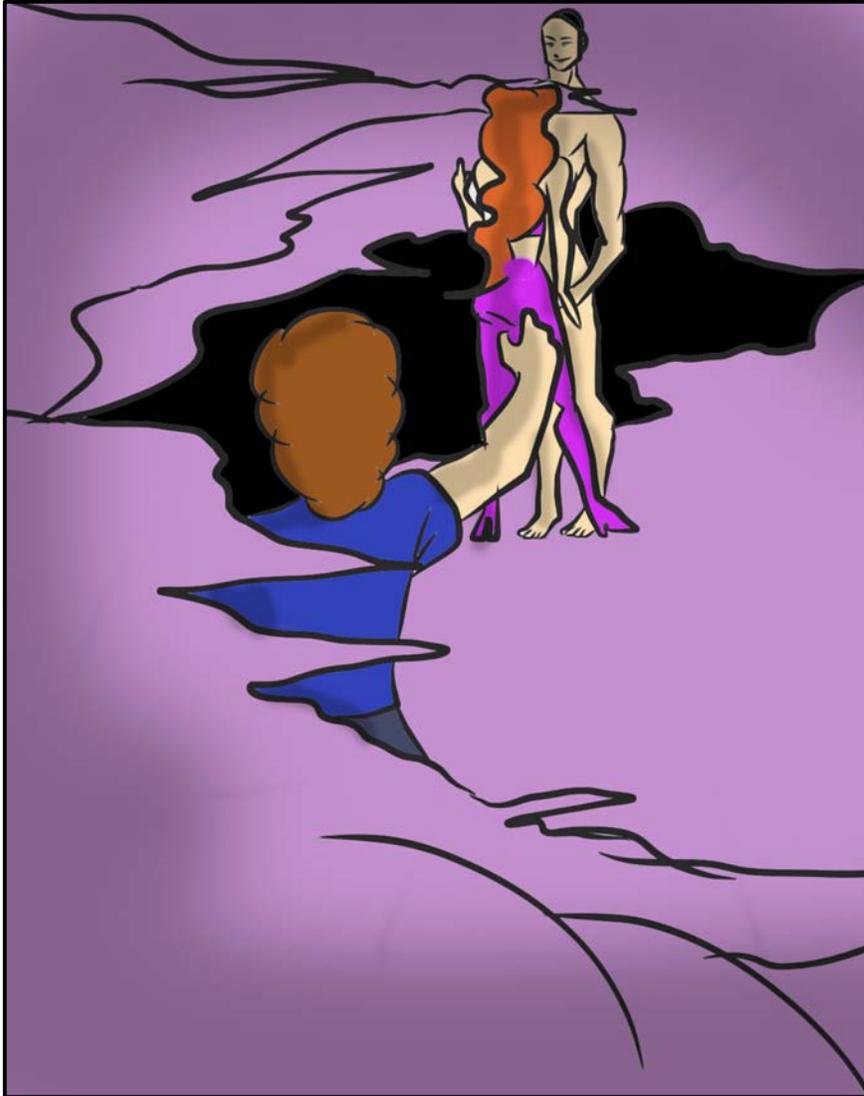
When she spoke again he forced his eyes to find her mouth. Her lips were pouty and bright red. He wanted them wrapped around him, obviously he'd been away from her too long already.

He tried to move towards her, but his feet felt embedded in concrete. He couldn't get close to her so he moaned. He screamed out into the dark violet mist. It was the best he could do.

"It's me, Leigh, Sarantos. I love you."

"Who's there?"

Her voice sounded frightened and desperate. He screamed out, again. How could she not hear him?



A tall naked man appeared out of the mist as though by some magical force. Who was he? He was incredibly handsome with a finely chiseled body. Sarantos didn't recognize him or understand what he was doing with Leigh.

“Leigh!” He screamed one last time before she turned away and faced the man in the mist.

All Sarantos could do was watch.

“Leigh, it's been too long. I've missed you.” His voice was otherworldly and held a

tantalizing seduction that caused even Sarantos to flinch.

Could he be a vampire? Someone out of her past coming to entice her, now? How could that be? His head began spinning as the man moved toward her. She held out her arms.

“Oh, it's you. I thought for a moment...oh, never mind. I was looking for someone else.”

She knew this godlike man! His heart sank. How could they not see him trying to get their attention??

“Do you travel here often, Leigh? If so, I must start dream walking more often.” He spoke charmingly as he shifted to her and held his hands out to take hers. Then he pulled her into him and kissed her long and hard.

Sarantos couldn't believe it. It was too long of a kiss and her body was blissfully tilted back in his arms for the long hard kiss. He wanted to throw-up.



“Leigh!” Sarantos screamed.

She turned his direction one last time, then allowed that stranger to caress her shoulders. He stood there helpless and watched as the dark stranger kissed her neck. As the mysterious stranger slid his hand down and fondled her assets, he looked right at Sarantos.

What?

He stared back into the eyes of the man who held the woman he loved and knew he saw him, because he winked at him while continuing to gently lick and kiss her neck.

He was taunting him. Was Leigh under a spell? He didn't like this man and wanted to punch him but he couldn't move. Sarantos saw red.

“Mm mm...I've missed you, as well,” Leigh breathed passionately.

He winked at Sarantos and said, “I thought you might've, after all, we were meant for each other. Why'd you leave me, my fire loins?”

She laughed gaily.

Sarantos swallowed the bile that came up inside his throat.

“Yes, I still remember our passion. What is such a beautiful woman doing out here without a guardian?”

She shook her head. “I’m not sure, but I thought I heard someone calling me and I needed to warn them to stay away from yellow. How silly that sounds.”

“No, not silly at all, my darling. It was me calling you into our favorite meeting place and you came, but why the tears. Someone as precious as you shouldn’t be crying. Let me make them go away.”

As he lifted her up into his arms, his muscles rippled.

“I’ll carry you to our special love-making place. The private spot we both love.”

She nodded and opened her mouth. Sarantos watched in horror as the man’s tongue entered her mouth and they instantly disappeared from view.

“Noooooooooooo!!!” He screamed.

“Sarantos, wake up.”

“Nooooooooo!”



He felt someone grab him and he began to fight, screaming and crying at the same time. “Let go of me. I must find her. I must. I can’t let this happen.”

He was blinded by his dream and couldn’t see anything else around him. As far as he was concerned, he was still in the mist desperately searching for Leigh.

“Sarantos,” yelled Wallis. “Open your eyes.”

He finally did, yet the violet mist still swirled in front of him. He could even smell Leigh’s perfume.

“You’re going to be okay. Follow me.”

Wallis moved forward with such speed that Sarantos lost sight of him, his feet felt like they were still in concrete.

“I am strong,” he thought to himself. “No fear”. He still couldn’t move though.

Wallis returned out of the mist. “Sarantos follow me.”

“I can’t move.”

“Oh, I should’ve known. My mistake.”

He lifted his hand and mumbled a few intangible words and said, “Now, come on let’s go, before it’s too late.”

Sarantos followed.

“Keep me in your sight.”

“Okay.”

He almost ran to keep up with the wizard. The mist was so thick in some places that he could barely see the man, but his staff was lit like a beacon and he continued to follow without question. A thought occurred to him; what if this wasn't Wallis?

“What's the name of your cat, Wallis?”

“What? Are you mad? Just follow me or we'll be too late.”

“Answer me.”

The wizard turned to face him and grabbed his arm. The mist faded and they stood in a room, an incredibly decorated room. The walls appeared to be made of gold and there was no floor now, just the violet mist. A lavish bed was to his left and there was Leigh with that man actively seducing her. He looked at the wizard.

But the wizard was now gone and in his place was an incredibly ugly-looking creature with warts all over its torso. He'd been played.

He tried to go to Leigh, but again couldn't move. What witchery was this?

“Stop! Leave her alone!”

The lovers never acknowledged him, but the creature said, “Oh, sorry, really sorry, for sure they can't.”

“Why are you doing this? That's my woman.”

“Oh, sorry. We know she is, but every ten years he needs to bear a child or he’ll die. Yes, he’ll just die. We can’t have that. He keeps this world alive. So you must understand, that would be bad. Then we’ll all die. We will. Sorry. She is beautiful though. My master is quite pleased with her.”



“She loves me. She can’t have his child!”

“We’re sorry, but his children create the mist. This is part of the dream weaving. We are part of the dream weaving. So every once in a while we need outside help. She came willingly. He never forced her.”

“You call that not forcing, cripe, he had me under a spell as well.”

“Not his fault. That’s the way he is, like a male bird of vivid color, it is called survival. We all have our own abilities, do

we not?”

“It doesn’t matter, please ask him to stop hurting her?”

“Oh, he doesn’t hurt them. I grabbed you, because I was afraid you’d go back and bring Wallis here. He’d be mad, but we had no choice. It was getting late. He only

had two days left when she showed up. No one travels here much anymore, it makes it difficult to share good dreams.”

“Sorry, but this isn’t a good dream for me!”

“Duke, leave her alone.”

The wizard entered the room with Blayke.

“You’re too late Wallis. He removed himself from the smiling Leigh.”

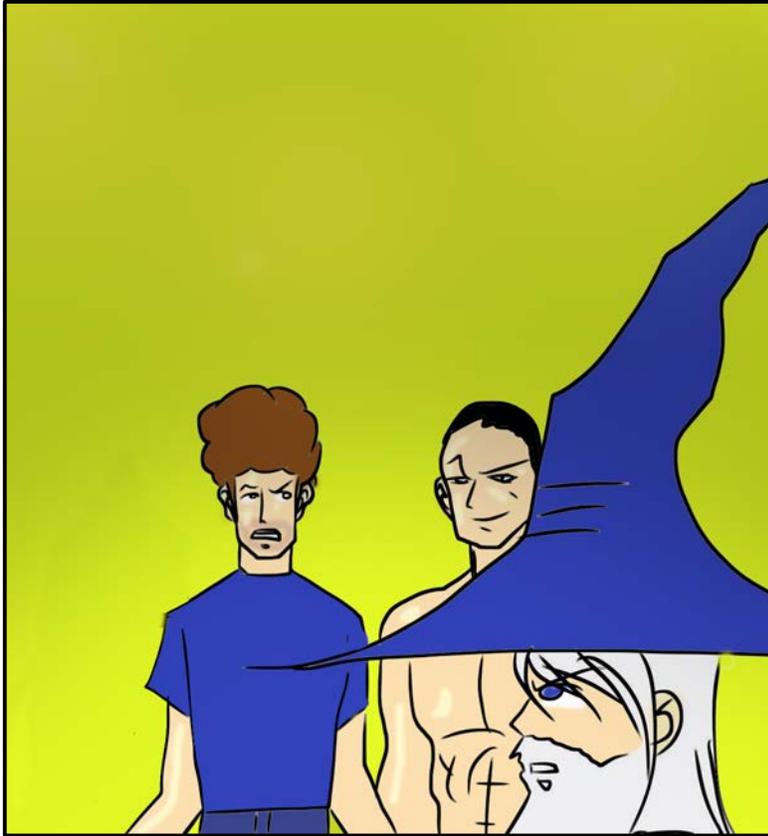
The wizard grimaced. “Okay, do what you need to complete your action, but I’ll take this one with me.”

“I’m not going anywhere without Leigh. What do you mean complete your action?”

“Just what I said, Sarantos.”

“What’s your cat’s name?”

“Mika.”



“Good grief. I can’t believe what I’m hearing.”

“Sarantos this is Duke and that creature that does a great impersonation of me is Frog, although he has a very poor memory. It’s not at all the type of child you think it is, Sarantos. She’ll remember very little and this world will be allowed to continue to exist. Many years ago, she came here of her own free will to prevent this world from destruction. So she shares this intimacy with Duke, and then he doesn’t need a wife.”

“It’s the very little part that she’ll remember that worries me.”

“Sometimes she’s drawn here in her sleep.”

“No, she came here to warn me of yellow, again.”

“Oh well, take good care of her Duke and return her in her time to her world.”

“Sure Wallis, I always do.”

“What? That’s just wrong.”

“Come Sarantos just call it a pleasant dream.”

“I wouldn’t say that Wallis! I’d call it an extremely pleasant dream for her and Duke and a nightmare for me. I want to touch her, please. Wait, I mean to say I don’t want him to touch her. I can’t leave her here with him.”

“I’m sorry, you can’t. Your hands will pass through her and she’ll feel nothing. Now, let’s go.”

“Fine.”



He no sooner said the word and they were back in the room where his body was still asleep, until he opened his eyes.

“What just happened?”

“What do you mean, Sarantos?”

“Was that a dream or what?”

“I don’t understand the question.”

“Don’t play games with me, Wallis.”

“Games?”

“You told me to leave Leigh with that madman Duke. You know the

one, the great seducer.”

“I think you’re still recovering from the snow and the rescue of Gabby.”

Now, he was beginning to seriously doubt what he'd just witnessed. Could it have all been a dream?

The wizard turned and moved toward Gabby. She opened her eyes and a violet mist moved around the wizard's body, like some left over residue of his strange dream. For a moment he froze in fear...and then smiled.

“Wait, I just remembered. I'm not scared anymore, I'm a survivor”.