

Slowly thru the darkness, sharp pain pierces my mind. I can hardly move my arms. They tingle as if from the lack of blood flow. Oddly, they drag on the ground when I sit upright.

I have dislocated both of my arms from my shoulders.

Jesus Christ! What have I done?

Purely instinctive, I throw my arms up as if stretching after a nap. Somehow, they move. A series of crackles sound out. I lower my arms down to my sides for a moment. Then in one strong circular motion, I heave my arms up over my head. Following two loud sudden snaps, I feel my arms pop back in place.

A weird euphoria washes over my body and the pain fades quickly.

“Oh my God! Are U all right?” Chloe calls out.

“Yes, but,” I reply. “Chloe, there is just no way for me to fight this thing. It simply uses my own will against me, warping and corrupting my every thought. I can no longer trust myself. What can I do?”

“I don’t know, Saul. I just don’t know,” she replies defeated.

Overwhelmed, I lower my head and cry. I try to muffle it with my hands but can’t.

Standing up, Chloe walks in my general direction. As she approaches, she suddenly stumbles over me. Falling, she lands on top of me as I sit there. Terrified, she scurries back from me.

“Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ, Saul! How the hell did U get closer?” she shouts.

“I... I don’t know.” I reply.

Standing up, I investigate.

Following the chains back to the wall, I discover the unbelievable truth.

It can’t be. It just can’t be. I couldn’t have pulled the stone block out of the wall. Somehow, it’s true, though.

Impossible!

Shocked, I remain silent. Touching my shoulder, I notice no pain in them, any longer. Fear and amazement overwhelm my mind. What has Melusiné done to me?

“Did U figure it out?” Chloe breaks in.

“Yes.”

“What happen?” she asks.

“U’re not going to believe me. I know what happen, and I am struggling to believe it.” I reply.

“What happen?” she asks taking a step forward.

“I partially pulled out the blocks anchoring my chains to the wall,” I declare.

“What!? U got to be joking,” she declares.

“I told U that U wouldn’t believe me.”

“Are U serious, Saul?”

“There’s more,” I add. “That nasty cracking that U heard just a few minutes ago was my dislocated shoulders popping back into place.

“The beast possesses me, Chloe. From within, it drives me to the brink and beyond. It fears no physical pain for it simply heals itself no matter what the injury.

“Oh Saul,” Chloe coos. “Don’t do this to yourself. Please don’t. U torture yourself with your thoughts. Don’t do it. Let it go but stay in control.”

“How can U dismiss things so easily? U saw her attack me. Saul Lusingna is no more. He’s dead to this world. Dead,” I cry.

“Don’t say that. U don’t really know what she did to U,” she replies.

Her chains rattle as she approaches.

“Don’t! U’re already too close. U know that U’re in reaching distance. Don’t be foolish. Please, baby. Don’t tempt this demon. It’s what created Melusin ,” I warn.

“Stop it, Saul. U are in control. U are. U would never hurt me. I know this. U know this. U must trust yourself. U can break whatever hold she has on U. Come to me, Saul. Come to me. Let me hold U so my touch can calm U.”

“No! That’s not a good idea. Step back, Chloe! Now,” I bark.

“No. Come here.” she replies. “If not for U, do it for me. I need U. I need U to hold me even if it is just for a moment. Why do U think she keeps us apart? We’re stronger as one.”

Yearning to be by her side, to touch her, I hesitate. But, I can not resist.

Slowly walking to her, I feel the air become warmer as I approach. In the darkness, her hands reach out for me. I take one and her other covers mine.

“Here I am baby,” she declares.

Gently she caresses my stubble-covered cheeks.

Her touch intoxicates me. From her warmth, I smile.

Laughing as she feels it, she remarks, “U see, that wasn’t hard, now was it?”

Laughing, I reply, “No, it wasn’t.”

Falling silent for a moment, I add, “Thanks, Chloe. Thanks for everything.”

“My pleasure. Here, let’s sit down so U can take it easy.” Chloe replies.

“Okay.”

As I lay down on the cold stone floor, Chloe cradles me in her arms. For the first time in a while, I smell her instead of my stench.

Where has it gone? It cannot just vanish, can it? Did it? I swear I don’t stink like I did. Hell, I just don’t smell a hint of that stench.

“If there was one thing in this world that U could do, what would it be?” she pulls me out of my thoughts.

Laughing, I declare, “Hah! That would be easy. I would want us to be free of these chains and anywhere but here.”

Huffing, she remarks, “I’m serious. U know what I meant.”

Laughing, I declare, “I am serious.”

“Honestly,” I add, “I am not really sure.”

“Oh, I know,” she declares. “I would love to sail the seas like my father. See and discover foreign lands. Just think of it, there could be a whole new world across the uncharted waters of the west. Just think of it.”

“Hah! Come on, Chloe. Who is talking nonsense, now? Don’t U think if there really was more land across the seas that it would have been discovered, by now?”

“Well maybe but, I would like to think that there is always more than what we know. Either way it would be great, just the same.” Chloe declares.

“Yah that would be pretty wild,” I agree. “I would be sea-sick most of the time, though.”

“Nah! U get use to it.”

Slipping off in thought of being with her on a ship, I envision the open churning sea and a distant exotic land.

Suddenly, a heat flash overwhelms me. Hot and suffocating, the jungle closes in around me. What... What is going on? I... I... I am reliving past emotions.

Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! How is this possible?

The emotions... The thoughts... The feelings... They... They... They are so real.
I labor to breathe. Fear swells within. I feel like a little boy lost in a huge forest at night. I am in Tamoanchan.

Tamoanchan? Where is...

The Land of Rain and Mist. In a certain era which no one can reckon... From which no one can remember the beginning of our great people...

This is Lady Melusiné's world, thru her eyes. It's her land. It's... It's when... when she *changed*. She loved the one that *changed* her.

But... But, something happen.

Everything is so murky. So unclear as if on purpose.

I... I can't make sense of...

Pulling me out of my own thought, Chloe's lips lock on mine. She overwhelms me. I forget everything. Everything except her.

My lips hunger for her. I can resist her no longer.

Oh God, she is so perfect. Gently I kiss her. The tip of my tongue runs down the side of her neck. The chains drop from my mind. She frees me. I continue to the front. I taste her soft sweet skin.

I stiffen.

Instantly striking like a wide-mouth snake, I am Melusiné and she is me. Our teeth clamp down on Chloe's wind pipe as Melusiné done to me.

No, what am I doing? No!

Chloe tries to scream but can't.

God, I feel her words vibrate my lips. I try to let go.

The numbing taste of the blood washes over my tongue and I forget everything. Thoughts fade from my mind. An unnatural euphoria consumes me.

Greedily, I drink and I drink. Instantly intoxicated, I can't move.

I close my eyes, concentrating on getting a hold of myself.

With a flash, though, my thoughts are not my own.

They are of an older blonde-hair man with a thick beard. They consume me.

Why? Why do I know small details about this man? Who is he? Why do I feel so attached to him? As if ... as if he was my... my father.

Jesus, it's Chloe's dad. These are her thoughts. Her emotions. Her love. That's why there is so much of this man flooding my mind. But... but, how do I know these things?

The blood! No, God. No! It's her blood! What have I done?

The deeper I delve into these feelings the more overwhelming they become. They madden me. Collapsing onto Chloe's chest, I lose touch once more.

Some time later, I awake to an intense foul stench. It burns my nose and eyes like horse piss. It covers me.

I am wet and lying in a lukewarm puddle of piss.

"What the hell happen?" I question.

I go to get up and I touch Chloe. She's cold.

"No, God! What have I done? I thought it was a dream," I scream. "Jesus Christ, this can't be happening."

A rushing thrill comes over me. It overshadows Chloe's death. It is the thought of her blood

invigorating me like it has. But... But, the thought of it sickens me at the same time.

Vividly remembering what I had done, I cannot move.

Sitting in my own waste, I clutch and cradle her corpse.

“U have killed the only thing in your life that U might have actually loved, well that is beside yourself,” Lady Melusiné calls out from the darkness.

Enraged, I lunge at her.

Still, I cannot get to her.

Amused, she laughs at me but only for a moment. Her laugh trails off. It’s not her normal sharp undying tone. Still taunting me just the same, she paces in front of me just out of reach.

As I grumble and bark back, she suddenly snatches my throat with one hand. With the other, Lady Melusiné grabs my shirt and picks me up off my feet.

Without hesitation, she charges toward the chamber door.

Lady Melusiné’s unnatural strength rips my wrists and ankles free from the shackles. My flesh burns from the force of it.

Using me as battering ram, she slams me straight thru the thick wooden door. Bones break and the door explodes spraying debris everywhere. I try to block out the blinding light from the torches in the room.

As I kick and scream, she drags me out of her personal quarters and down the south hall. Getting to the outside door, she opens it. A wave of sudden heat rolls over me as if I had just fallen into a bonfire.

The warm air burns worse than my chafed extremities.

Still holding onto me, she drags me out onto the patio.

Instantly, the heat intensifies twenty-folds.

“Aaaaaaaahhhhhh! Aaaaaaaahhhhhh! Aaaaaaaahhhhhh!”

Dipped in boiling sunlight my entire body burns with unimaginable pain. My skin shrivels and splits. I thrash on the ground.

Literally, I smoke.

Within moments, my smoldering clothes flare up into thick blue flames. Quickly, the fire spreads and chars what it touches. Terror devours me as fire consumes much of my body.

Thru my panic attack, she watches and smiles.

“Aaaaaaaahhhhhh! God, make it stop,” I scream. “Pleeeaaassee God!”

“As U wish.”

Melusiné takes off the cape that she wears. She wraps me up with it. With little trouble, she puts out the fire that has blistered much of my body. She picks me up as I cling to life. Wrapped up like a babe in her arms, my body shakes and trembles from her touch and the stinging air.

She carries me west past the barn and into the orchard. The smell of the flowers fills the air as the blossoms fall from the trees like snow. She moves quickly but I feel no jolting steps. It feels as if we are gliding across the ground.

Where is she taking me?

Stopping, she stands in front of a grassy knoll. There is a narrow doorway leading into it. Turning me headlong she side-steps thru the entrance.

The temperature of the air feels as though it dropped twenty degrees in the dark damp mound. She gently lays me on the moist dirt.

My blistered skin cools. Already, the power of the beast heals me.

I struggle to make sense of all that has happened.

Overwhelmed, I simply lay there allowing the demon to work its dark magic. A soothing sensation spreads thru me as my flesh heals.

As the agony slowly fades, I ask, "Why have U done this to me?"

"I told U already, monsieur. I wanted to teach U a lesson. And a fine job I did, I would say."

The woman brags.

"What!? U haven't taught me a damn thing, woman." I bark.

"Sure, I have. I have taught U many things. U just don't realize it, yet. I have shown U that love is all consuming. Well at least, yours is. Hah! Hah! Hah!

"Besides, U should be thanking me. I have given U the best gift in life, immortality. Especially for a man like yourself. One of the flesh, that is. U should be grateful. Only thing is, dear boy, there are limitations and conditions to your newfound immortality.

"First, as U have already found out, U must always *feed*. And the only thing that will satisfy *this hunger* is blood. Also, as U already know, U must release the impurities picked up from the blood. Finally, U must find a place of complete darkness like this mound. Then, U can sleep without fear of disturbance or burning up in the sun. Its rays have destroyed stronger ones than U.

"There is much more I can teach U but, U seem to learn things better the hard way. So, I am not going to waste each others time. Besides, I must be leaving for Angers, soon. So U will be on your own, once again. I suggest going to library."

"Huh? What for!? What do U expect me to do?" I declare.

"Well for starters, educate yourself about this estate and its lands for they are now yours and yours alone. And what languages U didn't know before, *the Blood* will reveal the meaning of the foreign script to U, now. All of these things I have given to U out of the kindness of my heart. I can see purpose even in U," the woman declares as she stands up to leave.

"What!? U do not really expecting me to stay here for the rest of my life. What about Josselin? What about my titles? My lands? What about my family? Don't U think they are going to come looking for me." I declare. "They will."

"They won't," she declares. "Don't U see? I didn't just get back from Angers. I just got back from Josselin. I have already given them the letter that U wrote. They believe that U have simply ran off.

"Hah! Hah! Hah! Your pathetic father wept as if it's his fault for your delinquency. What a fool. But your mother, on the other hand, she seemed happy that U're gone."

I lay there in disbelief. But, I know she speaks the truth.

Lady Melusiné ducks her head and steps out into the sunlight.

Sunlight? How can she stand it and I burn?

"For I have the strength of a thousand years of *drinking*," she answer.

Candidly, she adds, "Face it. Saul Lusingna no longer exists. I have given U a new life. U should be grateful but I don't expect your gratitude. Take care, boy."

"Damn U, witch," I bark. "U should have killed me because I'll..."

"U'll what?" she fires back. "What do U think U really can do to me?"

"Destroy U and everything U hold precious."

"Hah! U don't have a clue on the extent of power I have. I command kings like peasants." She declares.

"So from a peasant, I shall become a king and drive U from your own homeland."

"Hah! I would love to see that," she smiles, "It's always good to have ambitions, boy, but don't waste eternity on foolish notions."