

# The Curse of the Dragon Medallion

Series



## **Series and Books written by Laretta Beaver**

### **Series #1: White Buffalo (New Beginnings)**

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Book #1: Dream Dancer & the Celtic Witch

Book #2: Twin Destinies

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**DREAM DANCER**

& the

**CELTIC WITCH**

Written by: **LAURETTA BEAVER**

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This book is dedicated to my father, **Alexandre Charles Smith**

Thanks dad for being there for me!

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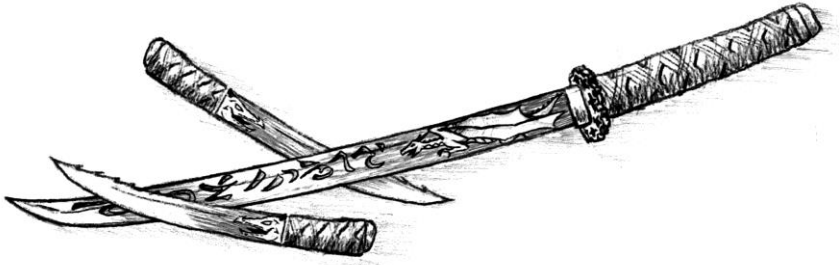
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you.

# Sacrifices



## The Prophecy

She will be called Cecille Luan Gweneal or White Buffalo to her people.  
She will become the protector of the Earth and keep the evil at bay for another  
forty years.

In the new century evil will begin leaking out of its prison, until the mists of  
Snowdonia are no more than the six sentient stones will disappear.

The white buffalo will come back one final time as the rise of the Dragon begins!  
There will be no turning back as judgement draws ever closer!

# United Kingdoms

## South Wales; October 1860

A young woman looked back over her shoulder fearfully as she shuddered in terror searching frantically for her pursuers. The white mare she was riding stumbled in exhaustion then almost went down.

The woman gasped in shock as she quickly turned back to face the front. Desperately she grabbed onto the pommel to keep herself in the saddle when she felt herself slip.

The only thing that saved her was her leg draped over the top pommel, the lower pommel also helped to stabilize her. She wasn't used to riding with a sidesaddle at this speed, but straddling her mare right now was just too painful to contemplate. Riding like this was similar to being on a rocking horse, smooth with no jarring or bouncing unlike riding astride.

The young woman let out the breath she was holding in relief as her horse found her footing before the mare continued galloping through the pitch-black night.

Only the extraordinary eyesight of her mare kept them going since the young woman could see nothing with the fog thickening around them; blocking out the moonlight the girl used earlier as a guide.

The woman was not sure how much longer her horse could maintain this speed; they were both fatigued to the point of dropping. However, panic drove the girl on as she pushed her mare for more speed. The young woman knew that her pursuers were still behind her somewhere not willing to give her up so quickly.

The young woman loosened her hold on the saddle in relief as her horse stabilized. She clutched her cape close to her almost naked body. She was freezing, getting colder by the minute as the wind howled fiercely. It made her shiver as goose bumps rose all over her body in reaction.

A drop of blood dribbled onto the sidesaddle; the bright red droplet slithered down before it finally dropped onto the silvery white sweat encrusted coat of the mare. If you looked carefully at the horse's side, rivulets of blood were tainting the mares beautiful white coat. The bleeding had slowed considerably now though as the girl's body worked to heal itself of the indignity that she had suffered this night.

The young woman sobbed in fearful disbelief as she pulled out her necklace before clutching the amulet in her left hand. She forgot for a moment that her palm was full of scratches with several deep cuts; they broke open again, but she ignored the blood trickling down her wrists.

Usually, the young woman had the medallion hidden under her chemise, but she needed its strength at this moment as she whispered softly in Celtic pleading desperately. "Please, someone help me!"

A gusty wind blew up whisking her words away, which caused the fog to thicken. Now she could barely see two feet in front of her. To make it worse, rain began to fall as thunder sounded in the distance.

She huddled down further inside her cloak in despair, as she tucked the bloody amulet back into her chemise, but still, she continued whispering for help; almost chanting as her young mind flew back into the past...

***Her life was suddenly shattered when bandits killed both her parents. They were on their way back to Wales from Worcester, England. She had been sixteen at the time so had not understood how such an innocent outing could turn her life into a living nightmare.***

***The young woman's closest living relative was a third cousin who owned the neighbouring castle. He petitioned Queen Victoria so the royal court would grant to him guardianship of his cousin; at least until she was eighteen or decided to wed.***



*Since his castle was not as crucial as the girl's was, Queen Victoria decided he needed to move in with his sixteen-year-old cousin immediately.*

*Everything went well for the first six months she thought; her cousin came and went whenever the whim took him, so she didn't see much of him at first. In those months, he only made small insignificant changes nothing to alarm anyone.*

*After six months were up, he began hanging around more. He started mistreating the servants badly, which turned her people sullen. Every day they withdrew even more, where once they laughed with her, now they ignored her. It was not just inside the castle either; he targeted everyone, even the guards.*

*A couple of months later, she was forbidden to speak Celtic!*

*If that wasn't bad enough the guards that were loyal to her that should have been standing on the walls, watching for intruders started disappearing... one at a time. Finally, her servants also vanished. By the end of his first year as guardian, he managed to run everyone off; then he too up and disappeared unexpectedly.*

*The young woman's home went from a happy, thriving place to a deadly quiet rundown castle. The girl suffered quietly knowing that one-day things would change. She bit her tongue trying to do the best she could by herself until she turned eighteen.*

*The next six months turned into a living nightmare as food became harder and harder to find. The young girl outgrew all her clothes, so had to resort to wearing her mother's old ones; they were way too big, but she managed.*

*Six months before her eighteenth birthday her cousin, which she had hardly seen, showed up with a wagon of food as well as gifts. He began hanging around the castle watching her with his ferret-like, small beady black eyes, assessing her every move. At*

*first, all it did was to cause her more work as she cooked plus cleaned after him.*

*Unexpectedly though, he started popping up around every corner trying to touch or kiss her as if he were her beau, teasing her about marriage. The more she tried to avoid him, the more persistent he became as he stalked her unmercifully.*

*The young woman did manage to find a hiding spot for a while, which finally made him leave the castle in a rage.*

*In relief, she started moving freely around her home once more but kept a wary eye out for him knowing instinctively that he would be back. Her cousin had given up too quickly; she couldn't help thinking.*

*The day before her birthday dawned beautifully, with barely any wind, which was unusual this close to the sea. She was in high spirits as she raced around the empty castle in joy knowing her life would soon be changing drastically, since her cousin's guardianship as of tomorrow would be null and void.*

*She had made herself a promise last night that she would forget about her troubles for one day at least. She was sure that her cousin would not show until tomorrow, being as that was the day of her birth.*

*It was nearing the midnight hour when she left the balcony in her bedroom. She had spent over an hour basking in the rays of the bright full moon that shone down on her long coal-black hair.*

*She would have gladly stayed out longer, but the wind picked up blowing in the clouds that had been on the horizon to the south. A cold shiver shook her as the moon disappeared hiding its glow behind the threatening clouds; they were in for a storm, she could feel it in the air.*

*Once inside, the girl got ready for bed. She stripped off her dress then underskirt, followed by her bloomers and underwear;*

*leaving them heaped on the floor. She decided to keep her chemise on tonight since she was still chilled from the wind.*

*All of a sudden he was standing in front of her, where he had been hiding she didn't know! She screamed in loathing as he threw her violently onto the bed; her cousin pushed her chemise up out of his way before dropping like a stone on top of her with such force that the air was driven from her lungs. She couldn't breathe for a long moment.*

*With ragged breaths, she fought him desperately, but couldn't stop his dirty filthy hands from groping at her private parts. He savagely raped her, with no remorse for the blood pooling between her thighs.*

*The young woman begged and pleaded desperately as she pounded on his back until he managed to get a hold of her hands. Her feeble cries did her no good though, since nobody was around to hear her!*

*Once finished with her, he had stood over her gloating in glee as he rubbed his hands together in anticipation. "Nobody will want you now that I have broken your spirit, will they my haughty cousin? You should not have rejected me before when I tried so hard to woo you gently. So now, you have no choice but to marry me; like it or not since no man in his right mind will want your defiled body now. Your soul, as well as your body, belongs to me since I have stolen its innocence."*

*The young woman's cousin was utterly wrong about the girl though; thanks to him, she had learned over time what real strength was. He might have defiled her body, but at that moment, she vowed silently to herself that never would she allow her spirit to be broken by the likes of him!*

*As soon as her cousin left her bedroom, she grabbed her cloak as well as her amulet but was too scared that he would come*

*back before she could get away to worry about clothes. Besides, the young woman still had her chemise on; it would have to do! Most of her clothes were too big for her anyway, since they had been her mother's gowns. Being five-foot-one and too skinny, since she was malnourished the chemise covered her decently enough draping below her thighs. She rushed to the balcony not giving it any more thought.*

*Lucky for her there was a little overhanging roof that was just below her balcony, but a good three feet separated the two. Reaching it would be difficult because only a few inches stuck out enough for her to land on, which was not enough; she would also have to squeeze between a bedroom window overhang as well as a statue.*

*If she stayed as far left as possible, the roof widened in one spot giving her an extra three feet, so it would be big enough for her to land on. That would bring the girl into position to get to the balcony that led into the library below, which was her goal.*

*Climbing over the railing of her balcony, she carefully manoeuvred herself over to the left corner where she threw her cloak first, hoping to land on it instead of the rough roof. She eased herself down until she was hanging by her arms. She brought her legs up so she could dig her bare toes into the side of the balcony to push herself far enough away, to give her a little more distance.*

*Pushing herself backwards like that would also arch her body correctly to fit between the window overhang and the dragon. She had done this many times in the past to get away from her parents, but she had been younger more limber she couldn't help thinking.*

*Praying desperately, she hoped that she was right as she visualized where the roof below was. Now that the moon didn't*

*give off much light, she had to do this from memory; she shoved herself forcefully backwards away from the balcony hoping to miss the beautiful dragon as well as the overhang that would snag her if she hit them, or maybe worse.*

*Good fortune was with her as she landed precisely where she had planned. It was all the luck she would receive though as unfortunately, only her head landed on the cloak. Falling hard, the air was knocked out of her for a precious fifteen minutes as she groaned painfully trying to catch her breath.*

*The rough roof against the girl's tender skin caused many scratches as well as bruising since her chemise and cape had offered little protection. Her bare arms, the back of her legs, and buttocks got the worst of it.*

*Fortunately, her head was protected as it bounced off the cloak saving her from a nasty concussion. She could feel trickles of blood from the scratches, but she ignored them.*

*Finally, able to get up, she threw the cloak over her shoulders knowing that she would need both of her hands free for this next daring feat. She crouched before carefully negotiating the steep incline of the roof as she made her way to the far edge.*

*The young woman paused for a good fifteen minutes as she pulled out her medallion to pray to ask for the Lord's help. When she was done, she tucked the necklace away before taking a deep breath of courage to prepare. A miscalculation here could cost her dearly, even her life.*

*Turning herself backwards, she carefully lowered herself; she hung suspended in midair from the roof. The girl knew there was a forty-foot drop to the courtyard below. Her arm muscles screamed as they strained to hold her weight, but she had to make sure she was precisely in the centre of the overhanging roof because the balcony to the library wasn't extensive.*

*Also, there was a six-foot gap with a drop from the edge of the roof to the balcony below. Satisfied that the position was okay, the girl swung her legs back and forth several times gaining momentum before praying she let go.*

*She miscalculated slightly causing her to hit the corner of the balcony railing. Once again, the air was knocked out of her lungs as pain exploded in her chest. Desperately she made a grab for the top of the railing, but missed!*

*Good fortune was with her as she managed to hook her left hand into one of the trellises as she fell, preventing her from dropping the thirty-five feet to the courtyard below. Hanging from one arm, she gave a small squeal of alarm.*

*Fighting to regain her breath, she shook her head trying to stop herself from passing out from the excruciating pain. Finally, she managed to pull in a much-needed breath of air so that the spots floating in front of her eyes would disappear.*

*Quickly remembering the layout of the balcony, she felt around with her left barefoot trying to find another piece of mortar that jutted further past the gallery. It was the match to the one above, also in the form of a baby dragon; both were decorations that her mother requested her father add here.*

*Finding it, she lifted her leg before carefully manoeuvring so her leg was draped over it. That way she would be sitting behind the dragon giving her stability when she let go of the balcony.*

*Once in position, she was able to release her precarious hold on the balcony trellis, but it took her a few precious minutes to regain the rest of her breath before she was able to grab the top railing as she pulled herself up.*

*Now standing on the dragon, she quickly climbed over the railing then dropped thankfully, into a sitting position. She held her left hand painfully against her chest for a moment as she*

*rocked back and forth, tears of pain streaked her face. She wiggled her fingers before rotating her wrist checking to see if she had broken any bones.*

*It hurt something awful, but thankfully, it wasn't broken. The girl could feel several cuts and scrapes on her palm where her hand had dug into the carvings on the balcony trellis, but it would have to wait!*

*The girl wiped the blood on her cloak as she sent a silent thank you prayer to her mother for adding that little dragon, since it had just saved her life. She inhaled a couple of times deeply; thankful she had not broken any ribs either.*

*Reassured that she had not damaged anything, she quickly got up not wanting to stay there any longer. She hurriedly raced through the library to a set of stairs leading to a landing before turning right. She ran down more stairs as she made a beeline for the door, praying that her cousin wouldn't see her.*

*Once outside the castle, she paused in the doorway. Two door height statues of dragons, one male, and the other female flanked it. Quite a few times the girl had squeezed behind one of the dragons to hide in a niche behind them. They protected her from her cousin many times.*

*Past the dragons was a set of stairs, which would bring you into the courtyard. The girl raced down the six steps, turning left she quickly ran to the stables. She saddled her mare with her mother's sidesaddle since it was the easiest one to get too.*

*Once saddled, she led her mare out the back way. She slipped silently through the garden to the gate in the back corner; quickly, she disappeared!*

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The young black-haired girl sobbed loudly, which brought her back to the present as she hunkered further into her cloak for protection.

She should have known what he was up too. However, she was young and innocent with no guile or duplicity in her nature at all.

The young woman had been completely sheltered by her adoring parents when they were alive, which put her at a disadvantage when dealing with people like her cousin.

The woman bent forward suddenly in terror; she whispered urgently to her mare at the sound of the baying hounds behind them. "Run Mist, you must go faster we are almost there... please hurry!"

The mare's ears flickered back at her mistress's urgent command before the horses stride lengthened obediently. Mist couldn't maintain that speed for long though as hard as she tried to obey, but she was too weary to go any faster. After only a few minutes, the animal's stride slowed once more.

Thankfully, the girl saw a hill ahead rising up out of a denser fog that surrounding it. She could not see much, but it was enough as they raced on trying to reach the safety of the thicker mist ahead.

She wanted to get there desperately, but dreaded reaching it at the same time. If she did make it her pursuers would never find her, but legend warned that once you entered the fog, there was no way out.

The hill was called Snowdonia, it was rumoured to be haunted by the locals. According to legend, twenty-five years ago, several teenagers dared each other to push up against the mist; spacing themselves out around the fog, they all tried to enter together. Three of them disappeared and they were never seen again!

The deep pearly grey wall of mist surrounding the hill never dissipated even on the sunniest days. It was said to be impenetrable by most; only a chosen few were permitted entry.

The black-haired girl fearfully searched behind her. Her silvery-grey, crystal eyes filled with terror as she saw the hounds closing on them. She turned back frantically urging her exhausted horse for more speed; she grabbed her amulet through her chemise. Clutching it



desperately, she prayed for all she was worth in Celtic to be allowed entrance into the thick, impenetrable fog.

Legend also spoke of many would be adventurers trying to enter only to come up against a thick grey wall that stopped them. Try as they might they could not step foot into the mist.

The young woman was on the edge of the fog. Almost, but not quite into its safe reaches when Mist had to stop short as several massive hunting dogs surrounded them.

Mist, neighing in fear, backed away before rearing in alarm; the horse tried to keep the snarling dogs away from her. The mare struck out at them with her front hooves.

The large hounds, bred for bringing down big game, circled the horse looking for an opening growling viciously. Lunging, a Karelian Bear dog snapped its great jaws at Mist as it searched for an opportunity to bring the mare down by reaching the horse's throat.

The woman held on for dear life as Mist almost unseated her; in desperation, the woman did something that she had never done to her mare before. Although the girl had always carried a whip, never once in all these years that she had her horse did she ever need to use it on Mist, but the girl was frantic.

Screaming encouragement at her mare in Celtic, the young woman reached behind her with the whip before slapping Mist as hard as she could on the rump. She made sure to hold on to the saddle for dear life, knowing her mare was going to bolt. "RUN MIST! RUN!"

The mare screamed in shock before instinctively leaping forward when her mistress hit her. As the horse surged ahead, one of the mastiffs in front of Mist lunged for her throat, but the dog was too late as the terrified mare knocked the English Mastiff to the ground.

The young woman winced in remorse when she heard the mastiff scream painfully as her mare trampled it into the ground. It was not the dog's fault the girl couldn't help thinking, but its master!

Tendrils of fog reached out engulfing Mist and her rider as they rushed ahead; quickly the pair was swallowed up into a world filled with heavy misty vapour. No longer were they able to hear, or see, as dead silence surrounded them.

The mare stopped short in uncertainty not sure what to do next. Suddenly, the horse's ears went up and Mist relaxed calmed by something she heard.

The black-haired woman shuddered in relief; she threw herself forward hugging her mare in apology as the girl whispered softly in Celtic. "I'm so sorry Mist. I promise I will never hit you like that again. Please forgive me!"

Mist nickered softly as she bobbed her head accepting her mistress's apology before the mare began slowly walking forward.

The young woman sat back up before urging her horse on gently; all the while, the woman continued whispering to her mare in excitement. "We made it Mist! I am so grateful that the fog accepted us. Thanks to our God he who watches out for us!"

The black haired woman let her mare find her own way; the woman was unsure where to go, but knew that she could trust her horse's instincts. The girl relaxed back in the saddle letting Mist roam where she would.

They wandered aimlessly, becoming lethargic as time moved on, seemingly endless.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was an hour later but felt more like days as they slowly continued on their way. Mist wasn't sure where they were going, but the mare knew that she must keep going. Something was compelling the horse to do so; the impulse was so intense that Mist could not refuse it.

The young woman finally roused herself from her lethargy; she frowned in surprise at a dark, motionless grey shape ahead. She sat up in the saddle in fearful anticipation before an uneasy feeling

surfaced causing her to brace herself, unsure if they should go any further.

The woman tried to pull her mare up. "Whoa girl, Mist, please stop!"

Mist showing no hesitation at all ignored her mistress's repeated attempts to stop her.

Abruptly, a vast grey stone archway was directly in front of them; now, it was too late to stop.

The young woman's mouth dropped open in awe as they walked through. She could see ancient symbols all over the stones, which spoke of peace; plus tranquillity, to all who came under its protection. Her horse shuddered under her as they entered its sacred walls.

Mist came to an uncertain halt in the centre of the six large towering rocks that surrounded them. The compulsion the horse felt to continue going ended, quelling the inner urging as suddenly as it had appeared.

The young woman stared around in apprehensive wonder, still unsure if they should be here. There were six towering grey stone rocks spread out in a circular pattern, all were about fifteen feet high. If you included the stone archway, that would make seven stones. For some reason, the woman didn't think the entrance was added though, why, she couldn't say for sure!

They all had different carved patterns going up about halfway, which were about seven feet; then a deep engraved line separated the next section.

Directly above the line was a single elemental symbol a foot high before a deep indent partitioned off the next section. Each stone had a different element. Stone one had an air symbol. Stone two, had the fire element. Stone three, had a water symbol. On the fourth stone, there was the Earth element.

Surprisingly stone five had an aether or quintessence symbol, which was a spiritual element; because there was no physical attribute to it,

five circles entwined were used. This one was often forgotten by religious leaders as one of the five elements. The sixth stone had the sun/moon symbol, which brought to mind light and darkness.

Past the elemental symbols just above the line, a picture formed for the last six feet of each pillar. It was an engraved picture of Jesus or God encircled by the angels as they helped fight an enormous black dragon or serpent of some kind. Why each pillar had the same image at the top was a bit confusing to the girl because below everything else was different.

The girl lowered her gaze to the last seven feet of each stone; there were so many symbols that almost every available space on each pillar was covered. Most, the girl didn't even recognize, it could take a lifetime to be able to understand them.

There were markings associated with healing, and some regarding sacrifices, plus many more. It confused the girl greatly as to why they would have protection as well as warning symbols on the same pillar. It was identical to the healing and sacrifice stone, both were opposite to each other on the same stone pillar.

The woman shook her head irritably to clear it because each time she tried to focus; the symbols began to run together. Finally, she looked away trying to distract herself. It was not until that moment she noticed the shorter stone that was in the centre. It only stood about ten feet and was pure ebony black; not grey, as the others were. It also had markings carved on it, but they were indistinguishable since the stone was too dark to see from where she was sitting.

The grey stones surrounding it seemed to be keeping watch over the ebony stone as if trying to keep it contained inside the circle of pillars. The young woman dismounted then stood gazing about in wonder.

The girl frowned in anxious puzzlement all of a sudden as a niggling thought pushed itself into her consciousness clearing her head, there

was something not right here! She knew that nobody outside the fog could see what was hiding in the mist, but inside the stone formation there was no fog at all; it was clear as day with sun shining down, but yet it was not an enclosed circle there was a five-foot gap between each pillar. She could see mist swirling between the rocks, but it almost looked like the fog was not allowed to enter here.

Did that mean the girl was now stuck in this formation of pillars forever? That thought disturbed the young woman making her stiffen in fear, but quickly it disappeared from the girl's mind as the mist swirled around the formation calming her; it put her back into a dreamy, lethargic state.

Now distracted from her thoughts and fears, the dark grey-eyed woman took a hesitant step forward then a second; she was surprised that her legs held her up with only a wobble. She was just thankful that the pain of her ravishment, as well as all the scrapes and bruises that she had gotten when trying to escape, had almost completely disappeared.

The young woman gazed at the towering black rock in front of her in fascination before approaching it, curious. She touched it hesitantly with her left hand, forgetting that it was still tender and bloody; she wanted to feel the patterns engraved into the rock with her hand, since she couldn't see them properly.

Instantly the black-haired woman snatched her hand away in revulsion before backing away uneasily. She wasn't sure if she should have touched it; the young girl shook her hand before wiggling her fingers painfully, not realizing that she left a bloody hand print on the ebony stone.

Standing by her mare once more, she put a hand over her mouth stifling a huge yawn, suddenly feeling tired. The young woman forgot everything else as the thick, lush emerald green grass tickled her bare feet enticingly.

Wiggling her toes in delighted surprise at the feel, she gave into her need for sleep. She lay down as she gave another considerable yawn; nestling into the thick grass, she instantly fell asleep.

The young woman cried out once in her sleep as she mumbled desperately for help in Celtic. "Please, someone help me!"

A soft wind blew over the woman to calm her as it whisked her words away into the eerie stillness.

A drop of blood trickled its way down the inside of the young girl's thigh before falling onto the emerald green grass. Suddenly the grass turned a blood red as the six sentient stones standing guard, blackened almost instantly.

The thick fog that was once a pearl grey darkened to a deeper grey. An evil chuckle made the hill shudder painfully in reaction, but it was incapable of stopping what was taking place.

The once innocent maiden thrashed then her body arched in excruciating pain as she slept an unnatural sleep; still, she tried desperately to fight off the dark mist that was entering her through every open wound she had. Although she tried frantically, she was unable to stop what was happening to her.

The evil that was hidden here since the dawn of time overcame her resistance as it took over her ravished body.

Nothing could stop it now!

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Northern Wales; October 6, 1860**

The Earl of Summerset stood with his back to the ballroom looking out the window in brooding discontent. He could hear the music behind him, plus the laughter but wasn't really paying much attention. The Earl hated these functions with a passion!

Edward still couldn't figure out why the Queen had followed him here! Even though she had said that she would come, the Earl hadn't really believed Victoria. Especially since everyone considered his estates in Conwy, only a couple of days from the border of Snowdonia to be haunted.

It seemed like only yesterday, but it was actually a month ago today that the Earl was standing precisely the same way staring out a different window longingly. Edward was at his ancestral castle entertaining Queen Victoria, which was in northwest Summerset not far from Clevedon; unexpectedly, a burning urge took the Earl away suddenly to visit his castle in Wales.

Unable to help it, Edward sigh in aggravation as he thought back to that night; the Earl remembered turning from the window as another shiver of need shook him...

\*\*\*\*\*

***Edward looked around for the brown-haired, blue-eyed, Queen Victoria. She wasn't difficult to find, the Earl waded through the crowd surrounding Victoria before bending to whisper a plea for privacy.***

***Queen Victoria looked up at Edward's uneasy expression before nodding; she waved her hand in dismissal to clear the antechamber where she was holding court. Once everyone was gone, Victoria looked up inquisitively. "What seems to be the problem, Earl Summerset?"***

*Edward sighed in relief when the two of them were left alone. He had thought that it would be more of a fight to get the Queen by herself, but thankfully, it wasn't.*

*Dropping to one knee in front of Queen Victoria, Edward knew how much she hated looking up at anyone. Especially because Victoria was only five feet tall, which she didn't like at all. "Your Majesty, I ask your leave to go to my estates in Wales tomorrow there is something bad happening or going to happen; I need to be there. I can't explain this feeling of need I'm experiencing!"*

*Queen Victoria frowned in surprised disapproval as she instantly opened her mouth to deny his request, but shut it quickly; Victoria smiled suddenly with a wicked chuckle instead.*

*The Queen knew that her husband hated Wales with a passion so it would be the perfect place to take Albert next. They had been ignoring each other for a week now, ever since they had argued over him paying too much attention to one of Victoria's ladies-in-waiting.*

*Queen Victoria had sent the poor unfortunate girl home, even though deep down she knew nothing was going on between the two. Victoria just couldn't help the strange feelings of jealousy she was feeling all of a sudden.*

*Afterwards, Queen Victoria took everyone to Earl Summerset's since she knew that her husband would not like that at all. It was petty of her, of course; Victoria chuckled silently to herself, but oh so satisfying to punish Albert so subtly that the Prince Consort didn't even realize that he was being chastised.*

*Queen Victoria grinned like a naughty girl making her look years younger; Wales would be perfect to finish off the Prince's punishment. She finally nodded in permission at Edward as Victoria's grin widened in anticipation. "Ah Wales, I haven't been there in quite a few years. I think I will join you there in a week!"*



\*\*\*\*\*

Edward returned to the present with an angry frown; he had thought Queen Victoria was joking, but the Earl should know her well enough by now to know that Victoria always did what she said.

Still, Edward couldn't help but feel annoyed by the Queen's presence, since now he felt trapped here!

Tensing in suspicion, Edward instantly felt the hairs on the nape of his neck bristled in warning at a whisper of sound behind him; immediately the Earl's guard rose as he waited for whoever was approaching to make the first move.

Nose twitching Edward inhaled, he smelt Queen Victoria's perfume before she touched his arm to get his attention; relaxing he turned around immediately. The Earl made sure his expression was void of all emotion; he bowed deeply to Victoria in greeting. "Your Highness?"

Queen Victoria snapped her fan closed in irritation as she eyed the dusky skinned Earl of Summerset. It was hard to believe sometimes that he was three-quarters Cheyenne, with his dark-blond auburn streaked hair as well as the remarkable Summerset deep green eyes.

Victoria's father had banished Edward's grandfather to the new world; there, the late Earl Summerset met a Cheyenne maiden that he later married. He died not knowing that his banishment had ended when she had taken over the throne.

When Queen Victoria found out that the late Earl Summerset's grandson was coming to attend school, she had been dead set against him. There was no way, she was going to allow a savage into her kingdom to stay or let him become an Earl of the realm. Not while Victoria was the Queen, she insisted vehemently to her husband, Prince Albert.

What happened next, Queen Victoria had no explanation for it at all! As soon as she saw the boy, with his genuine Summerset eyes, a

weird feeling had come over Victoria. Instantly, she knew that Edward was meant to be at her side.

Where the feeling came from, Queen Victoria had no idea. Why she felt that way was even a mystery to her. It had turned out to be the best decision the Queen had ever made though, since Edward had saved Victoria's life many times already.

Still, the Queen didn't like this feeling of being indebted to anyone. Particularly not a savage from across the sea, even though, Victoria felt drawn to Edward unwillingly.

Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert was furious with her when she allowed the savage to stay in England against his wishes.

Victoria's friendship with Edward had grown strong over the years, so she pushed her qualms aside; the Queen tucked them further and further away into her subconscious mind, until they were forgotten.

Occasionally, Queen Victoria would get a nagging thought that would surface; how did she allow this to happen, but instantly it would disappear again? The Queen had never told Edward any of this since most of the time she didn't remember it herself.

Victoria tapped Earl Summerset smartly on the arm in angry demand as she waved in aggravation. "What is troubling you tonight you have been restless all day? It's not like you at all to be this edgy. So for goodness sakes, what is troubling you?"

Regarding Queen Victoria reflectively, Edward wasn't sure himself what the problem was; he shrugged self-consciously before lowering his voice so no one else could hear their conversation.

Edward was glad that he had encouraged the English nobles to fear him over the years; now everyone stayed clear of the dangerous Earl. "I am sorry Victoria, but remember that urgency I felt in Summerset. Tonight it is even worse! I feel as if I should be out there somewhere, not in here entertaining a bunch of pompous fools. I keep thinking someone or something is in trouble and will need my help!"

Queen Victoria looked at Edward sharply in disapproval. In the nine years that she had known him; never had the Earl called Victoria by her first name or referred to his abilities in public, only in private.

Queen Victoria's frown eased as she smiled inwardly in pleasure; well that was perfect timing, now she had an excuse to stay longer. Her husband had insisted that they leave tomorrow, but Victoria was not done punishing him yet!

The Queen motioned irritably; she ignored Edward's use of her name only because he kept giving her the opportunity to punish the Prince Consort more, without Albert becoming suspicious. Victoria was enjoying her husband's discomfort, maybe a little too much she couldn't help thinking.

Queen Victoria finally nodded her blessings. "If you must go, you have my permission; I am sure you will come to my room immediately once you return to give me all the details. If you need me for any reason just send someone, I will come to you!"

Bowing, Edward kissed Queen Victoria's hand in gratitude that she extended to him for the expected kiss. As the Earl stood up, he couldn't help but wink devilishly at Victoria. "Thank you, your Majesty; I will tell you everything when I get back, I promise!"

Queen Victoria reached up teasingly before patting Edward's cheek with a knowing smile. "Of course you will, I expect nothing less."

Edward turned away from Queen Victoria as soon as she removed her hand from his cheek with a wicked chuckle at her dramatic statement. He did not dare move away until Victoria allowed him to.

Once Queen Victoria removed her hand, Edward raced out of the ballroom; the Earl hurried to his room before she changed her mind.

Edward was stripping out of his hated finery even before he entered his bedchamber, but once inside the clothes came off faster in unseemly haste. The Earl dropped them on the floor then eagerly headed for his closet to get the buckskins he brought from Montana.

Inside the closet, Edward grabbed a shirt that had once been fringed as well as beaded. However, the Earl had removed the beadwork and the fringes after an embarrassing confrontation with some Lords who didn't know him. He did have one more set, but they were ceremonial, so they stayed hidden away.

Grabbing a saddlebag that Edward always kept inside, he lifted it up; it was filled on one side with extra clothes. There was also a couple of hunting knives, with some dry kindling plus a bit of wood since Wales was so wet most of the time dry wood was impossible to find.

On the opposite side of his saddlebag, there was a hatchet and other survival necessities that Edward always kept nearby. Old habits die hard, even this far away from his former home. The Earl changed inside the closet before stepping out with saddlebags in hand.

Hearing a faint noise off to his left, Edward instantly dropped the saddlebag as he crouched. Spinning to the right the Earl instinctively lifted his arm up over his head. He just managed to save his skull from a hard thwack.

Making sure to keep a hold of the stick, Edward didn't want his attacker to be tempted to try another crack at him. The Earl made the mistake of releasing the stick too quickly only once since he had begun his training.

Edward had ended up with another whack for his inattention, but it had been a good lesson to learn. He stood up to his full six feet four inches before letting go of the stick as the Earl bowed deeply to the five-foot grey-haired man standing in front of him.

Everyone mistook Edward's teacher for Chinese, but if you looked closer, you could tell Dao's Oriental mixed blood by his looks. His face was round with eyes angled downward typical of the Chinese people, but his eyes were more prominent and broader with a pronounced nose bridge that spoke of his Japanese descent.

A dark complexion, as well as Dao's short, slight frame, pointed to his Vietnamese heritage. Surprisingly his pronounced nose bridge flared out before broadening. Edward's teacher also had single eyelids with black pouches under his eyes, which showed off his Korean descent.

Edward's teacher didn't seem to know why Zevak was part of his name since it was Hebrew, as far as Dao knew there was no Hebrew in him.

Dao smiled in approval as he returned the bow. He stood up eyeing Edward's old clothes in surprise before gesturing casually. "You are going somewhere I take it Dream Dancer?"

Nodding instantly, Edward had never kept anything from his faithful companion. "Yes, someone is calling me for help I think. Can you keep the servants in line, please? Plus keep Queen Victoria entertained until I return, Teacher?"

Inclining his head, Dao was used to his student's unexpected departures; he never needed to ask, knowing that Edward would tell him the details later.

Even after all these years, Dao still thought of Edward as his student; even though, the Earl's training had long been completed. "I will do this for you Dream Dancer."

Instantly Dao turned away then scurried out.

Edward smiled at the Oriental he called Dao in public, but teacher in private. The Oriental always insisted on calling him Dream Dancer when they were alone. He was adamant that his students Cheyenne Indian name suited him better.

For the past ten years now, Dao had been Edward's teacher as well as his companion. Even though the Earl's training in the Oriental arts had long since finished, his teacher still occasionally tried to catch him off guard. Several times over the years, Dream Dancer had a hard lump on his head to prove that he was still a little slow.

Edward shrugged off his reflective mood as he grabbed his cloak before putting it on his shoulders. The Earl picked up his bedroll and grabbed the saddlebag that he had dropped to protect his head.

Racing out of his room, Edward went down the backstairs that would take him outside into the back courtyard of his castle where the stables were located. Barrelling through the backdoor, the Earl jumped over the four stairs. He landed soundlessly cat-like in a crouch. Immediately, Dream Dancer put his free hand down pressing it flat on the firm ground feeling for any vibrations that would tell him others were coming or nearby.

Quickly Edward looked around, but not seeing anyone and with the Mother Earth being silent, he relaxed. Dream Dancer put two fingers in his mouth before giving a shrill whistle of command.

Edward stood to his full height listening intently, waiting. In satisfaction, he heard the expected answering whinny from the back of the paddock where the Earl kept the horse that he had brought from his homeland. Dream Dancer listened to the thunder of hooves as his horse obediently jumped the fence before racing towards him.

Strolling purposely forward, Edward walked toward his horse to meet him. The Earl reached up to pat the sleek pitch-black coat of his stallion. Dream Dancer changed his language to his native tongue. "Good boy, Cheyenne; come I need to get something in the barn."

Obediently the black stud turned before following his master without hesitation; he made sure his nose didn't quite touch his master's right shoulder so that Cheyenne wouldn't be crowding him.

Edward quickly saddled Cheyenne before going to the back tack room to grab his rifle. If the Earl didn't think, he would need the bedroll; saddlebags, or the gun, he would have just jumped on his stallion bareback. However, Dream Dancer had a sense that he would be gone for at least two or three days, so it was better to be prepared for the unexpected.

Edward went into his private backroom where he had jerky hanging as well as hardtack stored. They made excellent travelling food; plus kept for a long time without spoiling, so Dream Dancer always had some handy for emergencies. Going to another shelf, he grabbed canned and dried fruit, beans, plus anything else that would keep in his saddlebags. Last, the Earl grabbed two canteens then walked to the hand pump in the corner to fill them.

Once finished putting the tack on his horse, Edward led Cheyenne out of the barn before mounting him. He sat quietly for a moment closing his eyes; Earl Summerset let his mind drift remembering who he really was.

Edward tucked the gentler Earl of Summerset away as he released Dream Dancer, the stronger half of himself... the Cheyenne half!

When Edward opened his eyes, they were so dark a green they were almost black. Now having a sense of where he was going; Dream Dancer turned his horse towards the open gates of his castle before kicking Cheyenne into a gallop.

As they thundered out the gate, Edward turned his horse south towards the border of Conwy and Snowdonia. Knowing it was going to be a long ride; Dream Dancer let his mind drift as he remembered back to that long ago day ten years ago when he left his homeland for good. Although it seemed like only yesterday to the Earl sometimes, it had been over a decade already.

Edward missed Montana fiercely, but he had never regretted coming to England to become the next Earl of Summerset. Dream Dancer couldn't help remembering fondly the last hug he had given his sister...

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***Edward hugged Raven fiercely in farewell, hating to say goodbye. "I love you, and I will miss you terribly while I am gone. You take care of that new husband of yours; try to keep him out***

*of trouble, will ya. Remember, if you ever need me I will know then come home!"*

*Raven stepped back and wiped tears from her eyes; she motioned plaintively towards her younger brother. "I love you too, Edward! Are you sure you don't want us to come to Boston with you, I don't like the fact that you are going by yourself it's not like our small towns."*

*Smiling reassuringly at his sister, Edward reached out then squeezed her hand in assurance. "I will be fine Raven; I must do this alone it is my destiny. Besides, you need to help nam'-shimi. I will write you when I get to Boston, and before I leave for England, I promise!"*

*Devon standing behind Raven put his arm around his wife before pulling her back against his side in rebuke. Golden Eagle looked at her chidingly as she looked up at him. "Let your brother be; he will make out all right. Edward must do what he thinks best, besides he will be riding with Melissa and Jed to North Dakota before catching a train to Boston. They will not let him get into any trouble, I am sure!"*

*Letting go of Raven, Devon turned to his brother-in-law. Golden Eagle bowed deeply in farewell. "You take care of yourself, Earl Edward William Charles Summerset; always remember my teachings and you will do fine in England."*

*Edward smiled in gratitude when Lord Devon Rochester stepped forward then clasped his new friends arm in the traditional Cheyenne way; Dream Dancer grinned at Golden Eagle. "Goodbye blood-brother I will remember everything you taught me. You take care of my sister for me; please, try to make sure Raven doesn't get into any more mischief."*

*Both men chuckled knowingly at an indignant huff behind them then Edward turned away without another word and walked to*



***his horses. There were three of them in total; his gift from Raven a coal black two-year-old stallion he would use in England as a stud. Dream Dancer had named him Cheyenne to remind him of his home roots and the other half of himself. A mare that was being used as a packhorse, but eventually the young Earl would breed her to his stallion. He was also taking the gelding he trained on his own then rode since he was eleven years old.***

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Returning to the present suddenly, Edward reached down to pat his black horse in appreciation! "Well Cheyenne you were the best present ever, plus you remind me of home every time I ride you."

Cheyenne snorted as if in agreement.

Edward laughed at his horse before sighing plaintively; the Earl missed his family fiercely at times especially his sister Raven, her husband Devon, as well as his Cheyenne grandparents.

Grinning in anticipation, Edward remembered Raven's last letter. The Earl had received it only two weeks ago, Devon's brother here in England was dying; since Earl Rochester had no heirs to replace him, Golden Eagle would have to come here to claim the Earldom for his ten-year-old son.

Raven had said that she would be coming as well for a visit.

Edward chuckled in delight before sighing slightly in anxiety as he pictured his wild, rugged sister in England. As soon as he had read the letter, Dream Dancer had warned Queen Victoria immediately.

Victoria had waved away his concern with a laugh; the Queen joked that her court needed livening up anyway, but she had no idea what was in store for her.

Raven was not like the nobility here in England, not even a little. She wore pants, a man's vest, a Stetson, with moccasins or riding boots on her feet. She also had a lethal colt revolver on her hip that she was a crack shot with.

Not only that, but Raven was a full-fledged Cheyenne warrior. The Cheyenne referred to her as their 'Protector' since she was the buffer between her Cheyenne Tribe and the whites.

Nobody would compare Raven to a delicate rose like the women here; she was more like the thorn that pricks you when you least expect it. The Cheyenne woman laughed heartily, joked with the best of them, she could out drink almost anyone, as well as hold her own in a fight.

In Montana, Raven was unbeatable with a bow in the Indian village!

Edward couldn't help chuckling to himself in anticipation. Now Raven would have real competition though, since Dream Dancer was sure that he had surpassed her in the last few years because of his training with Dao. They would have to put on a demonstration for Queen Victoria to see who the best was now.

Edward laughed in delight just thinking about Raven. Dream Dancer couldn't wait to see his sister; it was going to be an exciting visit, to say the least!

One of the reasons Edward fit in so well with the English nobility was because of Raven; his sister had known before he was born that he would be coming to England, so had made sure that Dream Dancer was prepared.

Regrettably, Edward didn't get to spend much time with his Cheyenne family he was brought up at the ranch. Dream Dancer had also gone to a white school, unlike Raven who had quit school as soon as their parents died.

Raven took the responsibilities of raising her brother seriously, plus managing the vast, sprawling ranch that their parents built up.

Lucky for Edward, Raven's new husband Golden Eagle who happened to be an English Lord spent as much time as possible with him before he left Montana. Lord Devon Rochester taught Dream Dancer English etiquette plus about the nobility hierarchy.

Thankfully, it had helped Edward's transition go smoothly; Dream Dancer settled into his Earldom with hardly any problems.

Edward shook off thoughts of Raven as he looked around; it was getting late, time to stop for some much-needed sleep. It would be another full day tomorrow before he got to the border. Dream Dancer was confident that Snowdonia was where he was going to end up.

Usually, Edward would have just kept going, but since he had been entertaining Queen Victoria's court half the night, Dream Dancer needed some sleep.

Remembering an Inn that Edward had stayed in not too long ago; the Earl turned southeast heading to a little town in the distance. It was not very far out of Dream Dancer's way, so hopefully, he could sleep there for a couple hours at least.

Suddenly Edward doubled up in pain before falling out of his saddle to the hard ground. Hitting his head on a rock, Dream Dancer's eyes rolled back in his head as he lost consciousness.

Cheyenne stopped instantly; the black stallion turned back around before going to check on his master. He nudged Edward with his nose curiously in concern as he snorted gently. When he got no response, he lay down against Dream Dancer keeping him warm as well as protected as he waited patiently.

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Edward groaned as he came too suddenly. He had not been out very long, maybe half an hour at the most he figured. His head really hurt, Dream Dancer put his hand up so that he could feel the small lump before bringing his hand in front of his face.

Unable to see anything, Edward reached up; he could feel a wet sticky substance. Dream Dancer must have broken the skin, which would account for the blood.

Edward opened and closed his hands a few times in surprise, his palms were burning; the back of his arms also, most of his back and

his buttocks too. It almost felt as if Dream Dancer had slid on his back down a hill scraping every inch of his skin on the way down.

Of course, Edward hadn't; Dream Dancer still lay where he fell.

At this moment, Edward was unsure exactly what had happened to him; he did have a hunch though that it had something to do with whoever was in trouble. If that were the case, it would mean that they were somehow connected. That wouldn't be good at all, especially if Dream Dancer continued falling off his horse without warning.

Edward knew that he had not passed out before falling off his horse. The Earl didn't think that he would have passed out at all if he hadn't hit his head on a rock.

It was the sudden feeling of falling through space and the pain in Edward's back that had him tumbling out of the saddle so abruptly.

Sighing grimly, Edward sat up slowly. He turned to smile at his horse in thanks. Glad now for the long hours he had spent sleeping with his stallion when he was a colt; this was not the first time he had curled up beside Dream Dancer to keep him warm. "I am okay now Cheyenne, up you go we need to get going!"

The horse obediently got to his feet; Cheyenne stood steady, as his master got ready to mount again.

Edward squealed in surprise before he could even put his foot in the stirrup. Unable to keep his balance, Dream Dancer stumbled backwards away from his horse in shock instead.

Again, Edward felt that feeling of flying through the air. Dream Dancer grunted as he doubled up in half before grabbing hold of his chest, as the wind seemed to be knocked out of him.

Edward sat down hard on the ground panting in exertion trying to catch his breath. He grabbed his left hand as it stung and burned for a moment; thankfully, it only lasted a few minutes.

Cheyenne turned when his master stumbled backwards before going over to him. He nudged the sitting Edward in demand trying to

help him rise. This was not the first time this had happened as the stallion snorted in rebuke trying to help Dream Dancer to his feet.

Pushing Cheyenne's nose away, when a gentle nudge almost toppled the unfortunate Edward backwards. He chuckled grimly; this reminded him of his last drinking episode. The Earl had been so drunk his horse had to resort to lying down to help him mount.

Twice Edward had gotten on his horse only to fall off again as soon as Cheyenne stood up. His stud had been very patient with him that night; Dream Dancer couldn't help laughing out loud remembering.

Edward wondered if Cheyenne recalled that! The next morning bruised as well as very hungover, Dream Dancer had vowed never to drink that much again. "I am okay; Cheyenne, just give me a minute!"

Slowly Edward got up testing his stability as he moved around. He sighed thankfully when no other incident occurred so going over to his horse Dream Dancer finally mounted.

Sitting for a bit, Edward waited but nothing else happened. Dream Dancer sighing relieved before turning his horse southwest.

Now that Edward had a siesta, unwillingly he could not help thinking with an unamused chuckle; Dream Dancer decided to keep riding.

Whoever was in trouble obviously couldn't wait for Edward much longer so going to bed would have to wait a while. Dream Dancer would have to sleep sometime though, but he would go as far as he possibly could tonight.

Edward looked up before chuckling, or today he should say since daybreak was just starting. Dream Dancer frowned grimly as he kicked his horse into a ground-eating cantor as he continued riding.

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