

Night Time Horrors

by Madeleine Dougherty

“Where are you, little one?” he hissed. He clicked two of his knives together in anticipation. Chasing around this sweet thing had begun to whet his insatiable appetite for killing and blood. He’d taken a few swipes at her, but gotten no purchase on her skin. He was sure the well-placed cuts in her shirt revealed more than she probably would have liked. A slice in her pant leg showed quite a lot of silky skin if Chris turned his head just the right way. His musing was cut short when she appeared before him and said:

“Don’t bother trying to scare me. Hell, I don’t even know what I’m afraid of.”

“Everyone is scared of something.” He sneered.

“Really? How about spiders?” she said. Her body was suddenly covered in tarantulas. He took a surprised step back. This was his dreamscape, his creation. She should not have been able to control this world like that, making things appear and change. A spider crawled out of her mouth as she spoke; “Their feet feel like whispers on my skin. Fire?”

The flames licked at what was left of her clothes, but left no mark on the fabric or the exposed skin. Chris turned and flinched away from the flames that did burn him, ironically driving him closer to the maker of the fire. A innocent giggle came from behind him as he looked around at his burning factory.

“WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT?!” His right hand struck out at the girl catching her cheek. Her head snapped to the right, her hand clasping her cheek. She smiled at him. The fire around them died down.

“Oh, darling. You do so like pain. There is some pain I can’t stand and some I like, so how can I be afraid of it. Now, what’s left? Death? Well, I can’t be afraid of something that I haven’t experienced. It’s not in my nature. So, this isn’t a nightmare and you can’t do anything to scare me.” She smiled at him apologetically.

“What about me? Do I scare you?” Chris leered at her, showing her in his expression just what he was going to do to her and her body once she let her guard down and screamed.

“I know you, Chris Caedo. You think this act fools me? I can see what you are under there. You’re the boy who was criticized for everything. In school, you were treated horribly and you wanted to get revenge. Your whole school career, all you thought of, was getting even with all those who hurt you, not that you really minded. You love pain of course. You just couldn’t stand the laughter. You killed their children, but as you put your hands on the first one’s neck, you were hooked. You didn’t stop with your school chums. You went through all the children you could find. As your killing progressed, you found a most decorative weapon.” She lifted her right hand. In it was Chris’ own blade. “Quite a feat of forging with all the jewels. It’s beautiful. And no one ever found out. No one knew the truth. Except one. He took a most awful revenge out on you, and you were trapped in Mountainspring. So, now you kill to pass the time, waiting for what? The addiction of killing is still upon you, but here,” She gestured around at the factory they were in, “Here, there’s no need to hold back, no need to hide. You have power here.” She spun slowly in a circle. “So, why not rule with your own power, instead of hiding in the shadows, Chris?” When she was facing him again, he sneered.

“Enough about me. Now, you die.” He swiped at her, but she stumbled back out of reach. He tried again, and again she evaded him. She ran from him just as all the others had. Around the

machines and up to the catwalks they went, the girl always a step ahead. She turned a corner, looking over her shoulder, and ran into him. She just gazed at him as he took a step back and swung. His knives went through her neck. Her head flew a few feet, finally hitting and rolling under a metal panel. The body crumbled to the ground. Chris's laughter echoed all over the factory. Sated, he stretched his head back and rolled his shoulders. His black hair and the black tattoo-like scars covering his body shown eerily in the low light of the factory as if they had some kind of metal in within them. He pulled the long sleeves of his tight, dark green shirt down over his wrists. He turned down a set of stairs, his boots dully causing the whole structure to shake.

She was standing directly below him on the next landing. Her smile was carefree, but melancholy. "You can't kill me, Chris. My dream self and my real self are so separate, they are two different people. To answer your question, no. You don't scare me. We're too much alike. I can't be afraid of myself, so I can't be afraid of you. Sorry," she whispered. Chris could see a faint tear on her cheek, making a track of blood through her earlier cut. She faded out of the dream as she woke up in the real world.

"Denise, wake up! You're going to be late for school again and I'm not going to write a note for you this time," Denise's mother shouted up the stairs. Denise was sitting up in bed peering out her window. She saw two finches spiraling around each other in the spring air. "Chris," she whispered.

"Denise Amanda Sinclair, did you hear me?" her mother's voice was closer this time.

“Yes, Mom,” Denise called. She scrambled off the bed, pulling off her nightgown. She fell in her hurry, but jumped up again, grabbing a bra from the floor. She sniffed her jeans from yesterday and shrugged them on. Yesterday’s shirt reeked, and was thrown in the hamper. She threw open her closet. A typical person might be blinded by all the colors and price tags still hanging from the designer clothes: Louis Vuitton shoes, Gucci jeans -- clothes that would cause any teenage girl to drool uncontrollably. Denise had no girlfriends to share her extensive closet with, but if she did, she would have given at least three-quarters of the clothes away with no mind to the prices. Her mother wanted her to wear the expensive clothes, wanted her to be a miniature Carolyn. Denise had no affinity for clothes and just threw on whatever was clean. Daughter and mother had many a fight on the topic of her wardrobe, but Carolyn insisted her clothes be stylish.

Today, Denise chose the least flashy yellow tee-shirt, but it still had white lace hanging around the collar and down the arms to her wrists. She had normal tee-shirts once upon a time. Bought them herself, but they kept disappearing. She had a feeling Carolyn was working some slight of hand. “Dear God, save us from over-protective, witchy, old models trying to force their fashion onto others,” she complained.

“Denise!”

She froze, and rapidly thought of both an explanation and a compliment.

“Breakfast!”

Denise relaxed and threw on some clean socks and her usual black and white tennis shoes, grabbing *The Count of Monte Cristo* on the way out. She skipped into the kitchen and downed the first glass of orange juice she spotted. She sat at the table and her mother brought a

bowl of granola and yogurt. “There’s a bagel in the toaster. I have to go to a shoot. Bye!”

Carolyn gave her daughter a peck on the cheek careful not to smudge her lipstick. She noticed the scratch on her daughter’s cheek for two seconds until her mind flipped to thinking of her photo shoot. She danced out the door texting her friends to see if they were coming.

“Models. Still thinks she’s 18. Denial, anyone?” Denise grumbled. She ate then, grabbed a soda from her secret stash, and ran out the door to her late birthday present from her father, or her father’s secretary at least. The present came in the form of a blue Cadillac convertible with red lightning down the sides. Stylish and enviable though it was, she still had no friends in this new town of Mountainspring. Her mom still had her New York and California friends, and was making new ones here already. Carolyn always fit in everywhere. Her kindness overshadowed the stuck-up model stereotype. Even though she knew she was jealous of her mother’s popularity, Denise hid behind her mother, maintaining her anonymity. She couldn’t help herself; she wanted friends, but ever since her uncle died, she just wanted to be alone. So, Denise got to school with minutes to spare, but with no use for them.

She spent all of her morning classes doodling the man from her dreams. Last night was the third time she had seen him. The first time occurred three weeks ago just as she had been about to wake up and he had shouted after her, “Come on back, little bitch, and visit Chris, anytime.” The second time he had run her ragged through the factory, woods, and an impossibly constructed house that exploded any convention of feng shui, so she hadn’t gotten a very good look at her pursuer or the scenery. Last night had been the only time when they had stopped to strike up a conversation. He was quite a curious character with those knives that seemed to appear out of thin air. As the teacher droned on about calculus, the black, web-like scars covering

Chris's skin reminded her of a fractal; simple equations swirling into infinity, creating such beautiful and unique patterns. The normal shirt and jeans completed Chris's look of a deranged psycho with the contrast between the normal and the monstrous, or possibly, just weird. His style and flair kept coming back to Denise. How she wished she had the courage and devilishness of this man who haunted her dreams. Her dream self, Roselyn Prince, certainly could hold herself with a man like that. Too bad the two girls were so separate, they couldn't share themselves with each other. Roselyn knew Chris, knew what he was like, knew his story. They were perfect together. Denise could never hope to know another person like that. It was her uncle's fault, breaking her like this. Roselyn had protected her from him, when he came in the night while she hid. But ever since his death, Roselyn had been locked away, and Denise could not escape into her own dreams. She felt like she was wasting away, barred from the place she felt safest. She had shed far too many tears over their predicament. Denise belonged in the dream, and Roselyn belonged out here. She could feel Roselyn trying to break through every dawn and dusk though her efforts had lessened. They both had become too used to the pain of being separated in their cages. It barely registered any more.

"I hope Chris likes Roselyn enough, and she him. Maybe one of us can be happy. I wonder what it took for Chris to gain that power, to live in dreams like he does. What I would give for that freedom!" she mused.

"Do you have anything to say to the class, Denise? I sure they would love to hear your thoughts on calculus."

"No, Ms. Kreen. Sorry."

"Class is for learning, not daydreaming."

Denise nodded dutifully. *Thank God my last class is Art*, she thought.

“Now everyone, take out your supplies and continue on your sculptures. You have only a few days to finish them, so don’t waste time,” David Cornelius told his class. He walked around the room surveying his students’ work. “Ms. Sinclair, you must pick a subject. We are spending only three more days on sculptures. You are my most creative student. You can’t leave this to the last minute. Don’t you want to show off your best work for the show?”

Denise frowned at her half-formed lump of clay.

“Of course, I want to create a good piece for the show. I just can’t think of anything to sculpt. I’ve changed my mind five times. First, it was a dog, then, a sun, then, a computer, then, a bottle of ink. The last one was a dolphin. I keep changing direction.”

“Well, it is good that you are looking for something that speaks to you, but I don’t think you’re working from the right place.” Mr. Cornelius reached down to pick up the smashed aquatic animal.

“And where is that?”

“From your heart, Denise.” Mr. Cornelius put down the clay. He smiled at her, looking hard into her eyes.

“I think I get it now, Mr. Cornelius. Thanks for your help.” She nodded and smiled stiffly.

“As long as you understand the passion that must come from within. You’re a good artist, Denise. Show it. Expose your heart. Don’t be afraid of it.” He walked away.

“Creep,” Denise murmured when he was out of range. She went back to her awkwardly done dolphin frowning. She began just pushing the clay around playing with it. Scars appeared

from her play. A nose. A crooked leer of a mouth and evil eyes. The whole head was done when Denise went to get more clay. The new clay became spiky hair. Some more fiddling became a knife. She debated creating a hand for it and then a torso to connect the head and hand or some kind of pedestal. A genuine smile came over her face. Mr. Cornelius came by. His eyes went round, then frowned.

“Have you ever seen this man, Denise?” he asked forcefully. Denise thought it through. Should she tell a teacher about her late night visitations from this cut up freak? *I think not.*

“No. I just made him up.”

“What’s the name of your sculpture?”

“Killer. Why?”

“No reason. Carry on.” He turned away abruptly, knocking into another student’s table before returning to his desk.

Denise finished the class and put away her unfinished sculpture. She drove home, did her homework and crashed on the bed after some TV.

“Hope for good dreams, Alice. It’s time to go down the rabbit hole.”

Tonight, Chris decided not to chase the little puppies all the way to hell. Instead, he planned to sneak, to peak, and to observe that strange girl in her own dreams. Chris didn’t always have to drag others into his world. He could watch them in their own dreams. He was the proverbial Peeping Tom in the girl’s locker room. Tonight, he chose to gain some knowledge on Miss I’m-not-afraid-of-anything and maybe find out about her tears.

He snuck into her dream by way of the back door to a fine estate. *Hmm, it's always castles or ponies with some girls. No imagination.* The halls were cold and drafty. He heard noises coming from a room on the second floor. He crept down the hall, and quickly made himself invisible when a giant of a man came from opposite him. The man was gorgeous with large muscles, fine features, and flowing brown hair. *Great, it's the Brawny guy.* Brawny entered the room where the noise was coming from. Light blossomed from a crack where the door was left open. Chris crept up to the opening, and silently made his way into the room, careful to keep by the wall. He was amazed by what he saw.

Ms. Rosalyn Prince, dressed in luxurious robes, beckoned the highlander to lay with her on the thousand pillows of a curtained bed. A fire was made up in the fireplace to banish the cold. It was also the only source of light. It wasn't enough to cut into the dark shadows, but Chris could see glimpses of full bookshelves covering the walls. A record player quietly played a classical tune from its place in the corner. In their shadowy den, Roselyn and her giant made noises that would shame a woman of the night into blushing. After an hour of this play, Roselyn pushed herself on top. The robes fell away revealing her skin to the darkness. Now that she was facing the other direction, Chris could see a familiar scar on her cheek.

"Touch me," she whispered. In the man's right hand a scalpel appeared. The knife lightly ran over the skin of her breasts and stomach. Thin lines of blood appeared in its wake. At the same time sweat rolled down her body, pulling the blood along with it. She glistened in the low light. The knife curved around her legs, but as it reached in toward her inner thigh, she stopped the hand.

“Not there. Only he’s allowed there.” Rosalyn smirked and took the scalpel from the man’s hand. It became a familiar dagger. Chris grinned in the corner. He knew he had made an impression. She plunged the knife into the man’s stomach. The man snapped up, curling around the knife. Rosalyn’s weight in his legs kept him from getting away. She snatched his hands away from the knife and held them down beside his head on the pillow. He spasmed and jerked. When his thrashing lessened, she let go of him and smoothly pulled out the knife. He twitched and groaned. Blood poured onto the blue satin sheets. When he had given his death rattle, his body disappeared. She laughed as she lay down in the warm blood. She rolled in it, laughing until she cried. She fell asleep as in the real world the sun rose. Chris surprised himself by smiling with her. When the dream world disappeared around him as she woke up, he felt strangely melancholic without her. But instead of analyzing his feelings, his mind was already scheming and planning for her return.

The rising sun breached the lace curtains and crept toward Denise. The rays barely touched her chin before the rancorous beeping of an alarm clock broke the silence. Bolting upright, Denise gently pressed the off button of her clock even though she desperately wanted to crush it. She dropped back on the bed chanting, “Must wake up.” Her eyelids fluttered closed, but her uncle’s face crept into her mind’s eye causing her to bolt up and run through her morning routine. By the time she was in her car, the face was successfully distracted from her mind. In her panic, she caused the car to jump off the curb a bit, but after a trip to Starbucks her frayed nerves finally calmed.

She walked onto the campus, bag in one hand and coffee in the other. The late bell rang as she mounted the steps.

“Oh, great,” she sighed.

“Hey, you! You should be in class, young lady, but I see that coffee is more important to you than an education. I’m afraid that your late morning will cost you your afternoon. One hour of detention, young lady,” said a matronly woman as she walked towards Denise down the hall. Another voice, male this time, came from behind Denise causing her to jump. He spoke fast, keeping the woman from interrupting and giving them both detention.

“Oh, Ms. Callahan. This is the new girl. I’m sure she just lost her way through the halls. I did the same a time or two when I was new. She doesn’t deserve detention. I’ll just take her to her class. Bye.” A hand settled on Denise’s arm during this speech. She turned and followed where it tugged. Once she and her companion were out of Ms. Callahan’s glaring view, Denise peered up at the boy.

He was taller than her and thin, but built like he lifted weights. He had gelled black hair and green eyes. His hand was warm on her skin. He wore a black tee shirt, a blue over-shirt, jeans, and large black boots. A silver chain swung from his neck. It made a soft jangle as they walked.

“Thanks for the save,” she said timidly. She wasn’t very good with strangers especially ones she wanted to like her, like the very cute boy who just saved her from detention.

“No problem,” he gazed down at her, smiling. *He has a nice smile.* “I’m Rick.”

“I’m Denise. Why did you help me?”

“I saw a pretty girl in trouble of being eaten by a dragon. I guess I just couldn’t help myself.” His smile grew bigger. She felt a red-hot blush creep up her neck into her cheeks. Denise ducked her head and looked away. He laughed.

“So, what’s your class right now?” He tried to catch her eyes.

“History with Mr. Reid.” She looked up again. He nodded.

“So, we’re almost there.” He kept looking at her.

When they got to the door, Rick let go of her arm. She was reaching toward the door-knob when he said, “You’re new here so why don’t we go for a soda after school and I can show you around town.

Even though she had been living in Mountainspring for three weeks and knew the small town pretty well by then, it was not a large town, she said, “That would be great and very helpful, but I have my car parked here. What would I do with it?”

“Why don’t you drive it to Starbucks and I’ll meet you there? Since you obviously know where that is.” He glanced at the cup still in her hand. She smiled.

“That would be okay. Thanks again for the help.”

“My pleasure, see you later.”

“Bye.” She watched him walk away, then turned to her class.

“Oh, wait! Here.” He ran back and handed her an excuse slip. “Can’t safely go in without one of these. Bye.”

“Thanks, bye.”

She turned again to her class with a bright smile on her face.

It was during her last class of English that her morning coffee gave up its effectiveness. This in combination with lunch just before the class lead Denise to finding a comfortable position on her desk for a nap. The teacher had a habit of giving the students free writing time which took over the entire class period. She did not collect the product of this time, so the class became a study hall for some and nap time for others. Denise, with her lack of friends in this new town and her own studiousness, rarely had extra work to do in this class. Normally she would use the extra time to continue writing or drawing pictures for her stories. Today, she was asleep just as her head landed on her crossed arms. The desks in this school were also particularly good for sleeping on. They were just the right height.

Chris was surprised. He had tied a sort of metaphorical bell to Roselyn's dreamscape to alert him to when she appeared. It was far too early for her to be awake in the dreams. He had not yet set his traps. He quickly gathered his thoughts to create the world he wanted Roselyn to see. Watching her open one of the doors in her castle, but stepping not into the kitchen she expected, Chris thought of disguising himself as her barbarian from before. He thought of playing to her fantasies, but there was a part of Chris that wanted to show her himself, to do away with the facades and let her in. After he had his fun, of course.

Instead of a kitchen, Chris watched with glee as his prey looked around curiously at the new torture chamber that graced the halls of the castle she had modeled after the Dromoland castle of Ireland. The room was large and strangely amoeba-shaped. It was circular, but had nooks and corners and cave-like areas. There was light in the center of the room from an unseen source. A hook hung from the center of the ceiling. The walls had chains attached as well as tools

hanging from pegs and sitting on shelves. There were stone benches created in the walls. To the right of the room's center sat a wheeled metal table with straps attached. Directly under the hook was a grated drain. In the wall by the door was a water spigot with a long hose attached.

Roselyn's fingers lightly skimmed over the blades and hammers, needles and other torture devices set on the shelves on the left side of the room. In one of the dark corners, she laughed upon finding an old Iron Maiden. Chris grinned as he saw interest grow on Roselyn's face.

When she was halfway around the room, Chris appeared in the doorway.

"I'm going to use them all on you," he said plainly with a big smile on his face. Roselyn turned toward him, placing a scalpel back in its place on its shelf.

"But there are so many. This is just a nap during class." She gestured around her, intimating the dreamscape. "However will you get through so many shiny toys?"

He tilted his head down and looked at her from below his brows. From the placement of the light, his eyes were completely covered in shadow except for the pinpoint stars where the light directly hit his blue eyes. His smile became a fierce showing of teeth.

"This is a dream. Time moves however we want it to move. This place is also of my creation. It does not depend on you to exist. So, while you forget its details in the waking world, when you return to me, this place will all be as it is now."

"Ah, so there will be no fading that comes from dreaming a dream multiple times. I've had that problem before, back before the separation. So, every time will be like the first dream."

"Exactly. It is not your dream, but my world. Where everything goes my way."

Roselyn began to grin.

“Really? It always goes your way?”

“Well...” His smile faded, and he looked to the side. “You seem to be the exception. You with your fearlessness.”

“Damn straight.” She walked toward him. A piece of chain was in her hands, dragging on either side of her feet. Chris was standing at the edge of the light before it faded to darkness at the walls. It made the shadows from his brows all the more prominent. She stepped into the light and crossed to him. Roselyn raised the chain, offering it to Chris. He raised his hands, and she dropped the chain into them, the cuffed ends whipping back and forth on the stone floor. She stared at him silently. Under her gaze, Chris began shifting about. He looked up at her uncertainly.

“You will return to me, won’t you?”

Roselyn’s expression was serious.

“Every time. We’re alike remember?” She strutted over to the center of the room, her hips swaying. Chris followed her, shifting the chain around. Taking her left wrist, he snapped one cuff around it, raised it and the chain up and through the hook. The other cuff went around her right wrist. When he stepped back, both of her hands were stretched up tight. She was forced to balance on the balls of her bare feet. She still stared calmly at him with her vibrant purple eyes.

Chris walked to a wall and back, grabbing one of the tools there. It was his favorite. When he stepped back into the light, the jewels, rubies along the blade, sapphires and emeralds in the hilt, glittered like stars. Roselyn watched the blade as Chris slid it along the side seam of her shirt. It cut cleanly through, not a snag or problem with the hems. He did the same to the

other side. The filmy, metallic shirt hung down from only around her neck. One more cut and it fell with a whisper to the floor.

“How many children did you kill with that blade?” Roselyn asked. The tip of the knife snapped through the center of her bra. A drop of blood rolled down her smooth stomach to soak into her jeans. Chris’ eyes went to hers. “Over or under 20?” she said.

“Over,” he replied. He sunk to his knees. This time he slid the dagger up the inseam of her jeans. The denim was harder to get through. Roselyn had a few more nicks sending blood down the inside of her legs. He brought the blade up to the center seam of the jeans, then rose to his feet. Keeping his blue eyes on her purple ones, he unbuttoned and unzipped her. With one last flash of the blade, the jeans joined the shirt. A fast cut along the top of each breast spilled more blood, yet freed her bra to fall to the ground as well. They stared into each other’s eyes, both knowing what was coming next. Chris let his eyes drop down to her underwear. “White. Color me surprised.”

Roselyn smirked. Chris walked around her trailing the dagger against her waist, creating a thin red line that slowly began to weep in places. When he reached her back he brushed his knuckles down her spine. She shivered. As the blade dipped to the back of her right hip, Roselyn bit into her bottom lip and shook her head back. Chris hesitated as her golden red curls quivered releasing a perfume of lilac into the air.

“Do it,” she whispered. One slice, then two and all that was holding the fabric up were her pressed together legs. With a grunt, Chris pushed his foot between hers, kicking her legs apart. He gripped her hips and pulled her back against his groin. Roselyn arched into him. In one

swift motion, Chris wrapped his arm around her waist and plunged his knife into her stomach.

Roselyn gasped.

Denise squeaked and wrapped her arms around her chest and stomach. Looking around the room, she realized her location. She felt her face burn. Her classmates all looked back at her, except for the teacher who was lightly snoring in her chair. The cranky, awful sound of the bell lead to Denise's sigh of relief and the students stampeded for the door. Denise followed a bit slower, checking for eye-crinkles and drool before quickening her pace as she remembered her casual coffee date with Rick.

She drove up to Starbucks, and just as she was turning off the engine, Rick ran up to her door. He opened the door for her and held out his hand to her.

"I'm glad you made it," he said, helping her out of the car. He moved his arm around to her back. They went inside and ordered. Rick got a grande caramel mocha with extra whip. Denise got a tall, nonfat latte. They sat at a corner table. Rick told her all about his childhood, growing up in the small town. He got good grades, was the quarterback for the Mountainspring Black Bears. He had been dating a cheerleader, Marina, but they broke up four weeks ago. Denise couldn't help thinking snidely that he was virtually the golden boy of Mountainspring. Slowly, Denise began to offer things about herself. She grew up in Los Angeles where her dad was still working as an agent for all kinds of actors, musicians, models. Her mom was a model, even now, in her "twenties." She had a very youthful figure and face. It was what drew Richard to her in the first place. She still looked more like Denise's older sister rather than her mother. When they divorced, Carolyn wanted to get far away. So, she moved them, her and Denise, to

this little town that wasn't all that far from New York City where she mothered Denise incessantly. In contrast to her father's "hands off" approach, her mother just could not stop treating her seventeen-year-old daughter like she was still five. Then again, as soon as Carolyn had a shoot or a party to go to, she became just like absentee husband. Getting into lighter subjects when she saw Rick's eyes go wide with worry and she realized that he did not have any parental problems and probably didn't appreciate her dumping her's on him, Denise explained that she was very into art and English. Rick said his interests lay in science and sports. Overall, neither felt they had made a connection. They really had nothing in common.

"Hey," Rick said, "Why don't I show you that the best place in town to get a pizza? We can take my truck, then come back here later." Denise wasn't ready to completely give up on this hot potential boyfriend material.

"Okay, but I have to get home by eleven," she lied. Her mom was in NYC that night for a shoot and an after-party. She never had a curfew.

"Sure, that's fine. Let's go."

Rick was the perfect gentleman. He opened her door, waited for her to get in, then rushed around to get them out of there. While he drove, he asked her more questions about her old school and the friends she left behind. He asked if she had told anyone that they were on this little date. She said no, that her mother was in the city that night. It was when they were on a dark road with forest all around them that she grew suspicious of Rick.

"Are you sure we're going the right way?"

"Oh, yeah. A lot of places here you have to go through woods to get to them. Hey, there's this spot up ahead where the view is fantastic. We'll just stop for a minute," he told her with a

welcoming smile. They stopped and the view was awesome. Denise began to feel butterflies about whether he would kiss her. He turned to her, leaned forward, and gave her the sweetest, gentlest kiss. He pulled back and asked, "Is this alright? I don't want to move too fast."

"No, it's perfect." She leaned further toward Rick. He moved back and they began kissing in earnest. Denise pulled Rick close, wrapping her arms around him. She was no virgin, and from the dreams she'd been having, she wanted a Chris for herself. It was when Rick put his hands on her breasts, trying to pull off her jacket and shirt, that the face flashed through her mind's eye. She startled, pushing Rick back.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Rick reached for her hands. He got ahold of one and squeezed. "Calm down," he said forcefully.

"Ow, you're hurting me." She tried to pull away. He held tighter.

"Calm down." He pulled her close. "Relax. Kiss me." He smashed his lips down on hers.

"No...No!" She struggled and wriggled. He reached under her shirt and grabbed a breast. She pushed and pushed. She dug her fingers into his shoulders. She scratched at his face. She reached for his crotch.

"Yeah, baby. Now, you're getting it." She found the bulge she was looking for and squeezed hard. He yelped and gave several high pitched moans. Once he let go of her, she wrestled out of her seat belt and out the door. She ran blindly into the dark forest. It was about midnight by now. The moon was only half full at this time of month, so her way through the forest was unclear. She tried to dodge the trees and fallen trunks, but it caused her to slow down. At her slower speed, she could hear Rick's crashing steps through the undergrowth. He called out to her.

“Denise, come on. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have pushed. Please, I’ll make this right.”

She couldn’t take Rick’s fake placating and apologizing.

“Did you do this to you’re girlfriend? That’s why she dumped your sorry ass. Don’t come near me, you son of a bitch!” she screamed. She ran faster as she heard him closing in. She didn’t see the fallen tree before her. Her toe hooked under it, and she went down. The ground had begun sloping downwards. She rolled, hitting trees and rocks. When she finally stopped, she was covered in blood and dirt. By the time Rick stumbled upon her, she was unconscious. He ripped out his phone.

“My friend just fell down a hill in the forest. She’s unconscious and bleeding. Yes, she’s still breathing. I’m five miles from...”

On her bed in the castle, Roselyn awoke.

“Something’s wrong,” she whispered to the still air.