

# CARTER

KRAMPUS BROTHERS IN LAS VEGAS



W.M. DAWSON

Carter  
The Krampus Brothers  
W.M. Dawson  
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# CHAPTER ONE

*"The ends justify the means."*

By Niccolò Machiavelli

This fool had broken his contract with the Krampus of all entities in the universe. Elias Schulz dared to scream and beg for his life. Tell me more lies about a family that didn't exist. He had changed and wasn't one of the more famous arsonists west of the Mississippi. He swung from his chains in this rather dull garage, surrounded by the tools of his trade laid out before him. I leaned down to watch the pitiful man swing back and forth, wondering how long it would take him to stop this act and get to the point. My father, the Krampus, had sent me to handle this situation, and I didn't have all night to address this annoyance. I did have a life.

*"Little firebug, you made a deal with Krampus when you were four years old to change your life. You have broken that bargain. I have come to collect,"* I spoke in his native German. His frantic hazel brown-green eyes reached to meet mine. They could barely meet mine for long.

*"The Krampus isn't real, and I only made it up. I blamed it on the fires that took my family in Bad Bergenheim,"* he choked back between shakes and sobs.

*"The fire you started to kill everyone in your family. The Krampus came for you afterward,"* I replied. I grabbed his long, sad face to keep his attention. I allowed some human features to fade into something familiar to my fathers. The horns swirled from my head. Black ice with fragments of foggy gray mist pouring off in this warmer climate of Las Vegas. It might be a colder desert, but nothing like where I originally came from. My sharp, deadly teeth stretched my face, elongated, and dripped, waiting to take a bit from this terrified victim. My standard Caucasian form was held to blend into society, and my dark blue skin stretched out over my features. I cracked my neck, expanding it to spin my head in ways no human could stare at him upside down.

The scream pitched closer to something dogs could hear. I could appreciate he had soundproofed his space for his work. I patted his face with my inhuman face. "*Be quiet,*" my deeper-than-human voice purred out. I pulled his face closer to mine. I gave a toothy grin to his face.

"*Krampus,*" he screamed. I might appear similar to the Krampus, with distinctive differences. Not that this person would recognize off the top of his little human mind screaming wildly.

"*Not exactly. He is busy in Europe.*" I began to shift back to my human form. I was tired of the screaming already. This was not something I enjoyed as my father did. I was sent to handle this as a favor to the Krampus, given this was not my day-to-day job. "*Now, what to do with you, little firebug?*"

"*Let me go. I will change my ways,*" he spoke. The lie tasted bitter on my tongue, with dandelion greens, dark beer, and saffron. Not even a good lie, a mixture of falsehoods and a lie he had told so many times he didn't even believe it, yet expected others. It was one of the skills I had picked up over many years. I could taste the lies of others.

"Hm," I pondered. A quick call to the local police as an early holiday gift wouldn't hurt. All of his tools around wouldn't pull. Not like this fool would remember me shortly, and blaming the Krampus for his predicament swinging in chains in his garage would be entertaining. It would satisfy father and finish this off my to-do list for the evening.

I picked up his cell phone to put an anonymous call to the police about some screaming I heard from this address, leaving the garage door open enough for the police to find their way inside. I went the phone on to hear him scream as I left him.

## CHAPTER TWO

*"Bad is never good until worse happens."*

Danish Proverb

The text I sent to Krampus about how I handled his old case would have to do. It was morning his time, and he would get to it later. He wasn't known to be a morning creature. Sliding into my car, I hit the speed dial for Trevor. It rang through the car directly into his voicemail. I hung up, not bothering to say anything. Driving away from this cookie-cutter suburb, I wanted to avoid the police and questions. I could pick up something for a late dinner to get this mixture of flavors lingering on my tongue out. I told my phone to call Larissa.

"Hey Carter, what's up, boss man?" my overly cheerful assistant answered.

"Did Trevor leave a message?"

"Nope, why are you two in a fight or something? I'm not emotionally prepared for you guys to be in a tiff or something," she partially squealed over the line.

"Stop jumping directly to a ridiculous conclusion. Trevor didn't answer his mobile device, and I am currently driving. It wouldn't be prudent of me to send a text message while I'm controlling the vehicle."

"Oh, you know, you can try to speak like modern people and say I won't text and drive. I will send him a text to see what's up," she replied with some clicking noises from her long nails against her phone. "How'd the job go?"

"Efficiently."

"That's all I get?"

"Correct, it was not our work. It was for my father and had nothing to do with business," I waited for a response from Trevor. The nagging feeling in the back of my mind continued. He was not one for ignoring phone calls this late into the evening. I wouldn't say I liked this feeling, each time this

creeping dread sunk through me, something terrible occurred. The stoplight continued longer than I wished. I squeeze the steering wheel tighter, and ice forms over my knuckles in sheets of black ice. "*Flüche.*"

"Bless you?"

"That wasn't a sneeze," I shook off the ice. "Scheiß." I drove through the intersection once the light shifted green—the burning through my chest began.

"What's going on? I don't know enough German to know what you are saying?" she said. I think she was shouting. I couldn't hear much over the blood screaming through my ears.

The crash jerked me from the burning pain radiating from my chest. This was certainly not going down as one of my better evenings. I smack into the freezing steering wheel to see stars and flashes of darkness leak into my vision. Something tore through my shoulder as something else snapped. Probably the collarbone. I heard another crash and felt my car shift further. The jerk sent me into the dashboard. I yanked back the seat belt into the seat and could see the front of the car that had T-boned me partly inside my vehicle. The headlight is nicely on my face. This was becoming a pileup I had no time for, but I was stuck between a ton of metal from my car and the car partly on top of me.

I could no longer hear Larissa, only horns, people screaming, and pain from various injuries my body wanted to heal. Metal stuck in places it didn't belong, other foreign objects I couldn't identify, and the burning through my heart. Something was happening to Trevor while I was trapped. I was stuck in these manufactured objects, unable to reach him. Suppose he died again and resurrected while I was trapped. Who knows what he will turn into, who he will become? He would be someone new and wouldn't remember themselves for days. The love of my life was in danger, and I was stuck in a multi-car pileup.

How long did it take people to get here to dig us out?



## CHAPTER THREE

*”There is nothing so strong or safe in an emergency of life as the simple truth.”*

By Charles Dickens

The sound of sirens pierced through my dozing. I lost my sense of time. It must not have been long, stuck under this rumble of metal and plastics. I had only faded for moments, minutes at longest. The burning had faded in my heart. Trevor had transformed by now. The Phoenix that he was had done something foolish, not even leaving a message. The love of my life had been in many different forms over the years, and this one lasted several decades compared to others. This is one got when in love with an immortal creature like a Phoenix. They would go to fight dark enemies I could only barely fathom and often die. They resurrected as new forms, completely different looking and sounding but the same inside, the same soul to start fresh. There was always the beginning, the rough few days to a week where they would be lost, not remembering anything. My love was now in that part, and they would know nothing.

I kept them safe in this time frame. I had no idea where they were, who they were, or even where to look. Worse, I was stuck, injured, and under a vehicle with no leverage. I wasn't super strong and invincible, which would be helpful now. I might not be human, but even I had limits.

The flashes of lights arrived. Help, in theory. I could hear people trying to assess the damage and who was where. I waved an arm and spoke up. This was going to be difficult. My powers were going to work against me. I was forgettable. People forgot me once they got out of my sight or I was out of theirs. They would not remember I was in this damned car while attempting to help me. I made for a great spy. This, though, was not helpful

“I found another one,” I heard someone close to notice me. They would see me now. Let's see how long this would last before they wandered off. I needed them long enough to

get me partly out or get this car off me. I could heal the damage; I needed out of my current predicament.

“Yes,” I spoke to the man in firemen’s gear. That was concerning; I didn’t particularly want to be set ablaze. That took longer to heal. “By chance, could you help get this car off me?”

“We are working on it, sir,” he leaned down closer to assess the situation. He appeared to be slightly older than I looked in human years. “How injured are you?”

“Quite a bit. My collarbone has broken with metal going through it. I think some muscle has torn near the break. It is hard to tell the rest of the damage to my left arm. I don’t have a lot of feeling through my left leg, and something pierces through my left lung and stomach. I didn’t go into the injured; I had healed from my right side. I believe there is some internal bleeding from the stomach injury, but that is a guess. There is a concussion from the head injury. I lost consciousness for a few seconds up to a minute or so,” I explained calmly.

“Are you a doctor?” he asked. I had a medical license, but that was from the 1960s, and I hadn’t practiced for what? Quite a bit now. I couldn’t remember right off, about thirty, forty years now.

“Medical student” was a simple enough lie to hit my tongue with sour milk and old grapefruit. My bends of the truth were worse than other people’s. It was the Fae in me punishing me harshly for trying to lie. It wasn’t a complete lie since I had been a medical student, but I was pushing it. My mother’s genes flared violently for this bending of the truth too much. I gagged over the flavors choking through my mouth.

“Sir, are you alright?” he asked in genuine concern. I spit out some blood and bile. I had pushed it too far this time. I felt the slice of punishment over my tongue and esophagus. Damn Fae genes and truth-telling, it made a living in the human world challenging on the best of days.

“I think there is some damage in my mouth and throat,” I spoke. It didn’t hurt to talk about that truth. There was some rough damage there now. “It will be fine, but I need this car off me. Is there a phone I could use? Mine is lost.”

“I will see if we can get one to you,” he leaned back to speak through his walkie. If he left, his memory would fade about me. This was inconvenient. A phone would get Larissa here to make sure people would remember me. I couldn’t tell if another Supernatural creature was around. This fellow was human, helpful as a firefighter but not valuable for remembering when he left my range. They remembered me better than humans.

“That would be great,” I wanted to lean back. Sleep screamed at me to go into its depths to heal the body. I couldn’t sleep. My body might recover, but who knows where I would end up. Probably a morgue, again. Besides, I needed to find whomever Trevor had become this time around. Male, female, or other this time. They were counting on me.

“I can let you borrow mine as long as it is a quick call,” he said. I must appear pathetic. Or they thought I was going to die. Either way, I took the offered phone.

”*Danke*,” I said. I dialed Larissa and thanked the stars. She answered an unknown number for once.

“Please be my boss,” she rushed through one sentence.

“Yes, I have been in a car accident,” I explained.

“But you drive like a grandmother.”

“Someone hit me, and I believe someone else hit them. It is a pileup, and I need you here, so they, you know,” I continued. Larissa knew my issues with humans. Being my assistant, one of her more critical jobs was to make sure if I had to deal with people was to make sure they remembered me.

“No problem. Where are you?”

“Good question. I was at the intersection of Eagle Canyon and Skye, up the Centennial Hills. How long will it

take you to get here?" I asked with the calm I always put on, no matter the situation.

"No, too long," she said. The jingle of keys and the click of her heels meant she was already out the door.

"Good," I hung up the phone, deleting her number to pass back to the fireman. "Thank you, my assistant will be arriving soon."

"Oh, not family?" he asked. "You might want to call family if they are nearby."

"I doubt my brothers would be that worried. They have other problems right now, and my partner," I paused. There was no way I wanted to explain this situation. "Unavailable."

"You aren't looking so good; we are getting the jaws of life to the second car. We are still trying to figure out how to get you out," he explained.

"Ah," I sighed. It was that bad. "Save who you can."

"You are taking this well."

"Blame it on the shock," I replied. There was a shock for the vehicles and my Phoenix, enough to put me into some shock. Once he left, he would forget and go to save the other humans. I would see what I could do once Larissa arrived. "Go help the others, and I should be fine for a while."

"I will send someone to check on you." He left and would forget. Now I had to wait.

## CHAPTER FOUR

*”Panic causes tunnel vision. Calm acceptance of danger allows us to more easily assess the situation and see the options.”*

By Simon Sinek

The knocking on my window brought me back to my senses. I had drifted back into my thoughts, memories of times of old. Well before Trevor had been these incarnations of themselves. Living as long as we had been together, some of our lives had blurred into a hodgepodge of uniqueness and the unusual. We moved several times to make sure we could blend into some of the societal norms, given I appear the same. Caucasian with sandy blonde hair and hazel blue-green eyes, even with the glamour magic, I could change but only for so long. I slipped back into my standard humanish form. Trevor, or whatever name they would become once they figured themselves out, would be something new. We had settled in Las Vegas since my other siblings had settled here, and they wanted me to understand my father’s side of the family better. We were working on it.

Jordan ran his foster home for the supernatural children, and Griffin was well Griffin; Morgan continued the family legacy live on stage for the world to see, literally. Aadam never met an animal he couldn’t save, magically or otherwise. At least I spoke with them more regularly now we attempted to live in the same country for once.

I must be loopy from the lack of blood; I am thinking of family. I glanced back to the window to see Larissa waving madly at me. Her cheerful curls bounced in red and green for the festive season, recently changed from her autumnal reds and oranges. “Boss, can you hear me?”

“Yes, I can hear you, Larissa,” I replied with the bit of energy I had left. “Can you move the car off me?”

“Probably. I ate before I got here,” she gave a flash of fang over her dark nude lip.

“Fantastic,” I said. “They will forget once I am up and can do more than bleed.”

“It smells awful in there. Your blood smells terrible,” Larissa gave a disdainful sniff.

“Demonic and Winter Fae make for an odd combination. Very few vampires have been interested in me for blood, only my skill set.”

“True, everyone hires you, but let’s keep ya alive first, boss man.” She left my eyesight. Larissa was strong enough to lift cars and recently feed. She would be able to do this better than the people around here. I heard crunching metal and pressure relief off my left side. I could take longer breaths finally. I leaned back into the ruined seat with a sigh. Several people we talk louder, and surprise and shock came to the masses as one of the cars was moved. The metal screamed closer as the car on top of mine shifted and was forced off mine. The door ripped off the car, and I came tumbling onto the ground. I heard Larissa calling for medical help.

“He’s free. Help me,” Larissa screamed. Her beautiful face came to mine. Her dark eyes were wide with fear, rimmed with bloody tears. “Don’t die on me, Carter.”

“I can’t, Trevor,” I began with a cough with blood spitting up. She turned me to the side. I coughed harder with blood freely coughing up from my lung injury, now freed. “Trevor died tonight.”

“No, no, no,” she raised her voice in panic. She didn’t exactly do well under pressure. Larissa needed us to keep her grounded. Her becoming a vampire had been a cruel punishment from a vindictive man who wanted to keep her forever. Instead, we freed her nearly fifty years ago, and she stayed with us.

“He reincarnated. I don’t know where or what they are now,” I spoke through bloody coughs.

“It’s fine,” she patted me while medical people arrived with a crash cart and supplies to get me to a hospital. She hissed at them, full fangs and scarlet eyes flaring.

“No,” I tried to reach her before she got to the EMTs. Larissa turned into a blur of speed, grabbing one of them by his shirt to hold up.

“Fix him,” she hissed, using her powers to dominate humans with ease before tossing him down towards me to do the same to the other before I could even roll flat on my back. They shook out of surprise to go to work to attempt their methods to stabilize me. They started to patch up places they could stop the bleeding. I would be healing the damage faster than modern medicine. The blood loss would take longer to repair.

“Larissa, they can do much for me. These are EMTs, not doctors,” I sat up with their help. They cleaned up the damage they could reach. Pieces of flesh and bone began to reform over what had been damaged.

“They will clean you up, get the metal and debris out for you,” she circled, pacing with her bells through her hair. “They will do everything they can to help you. You have to be OK.”

“I am made of hardy stuff. Killing me is difficult,” I said through a wince of pain. The EMTs began to pull out pieces of foreign material from my body. Nothing they would ever perform on a mortal. Given they were deep under Larissa’s control, they would do whatever she wanted. I breathed through the pain to focus on what I could. Where my fiery heart might have gone? I could only hope they had left me a note at home. “Can you use one of you technologically inclined people to search for Trevor’s phone?”

Larissa’s jingling rushed over to kneel before me, “Of course, I will try to find him. Wait, them now?”

“I don’t know yet. I will go with them until we know what they have become.”

“Gotcha,” she nodded. She took my hand to hold it tight. “How are you, the pain?”

“Unbearable,” I spoke through my teeth. I would manage. I had had worse through the years. My mother had taught me the ways of the Unselie court and how to survive the ranges

of pain, torture, and horrors the realms had to show individuals.

“Why are you always so calm, even now?” she asked.

“One of the reasons you believe I am cool,” I said with only a hint of sarcasm. “I am good about handling pain. Go and see what you can find about Trevor.”

“Of course,” she said. She jumped up to start making calls. She had quite a network of contacts, one of the best investments she ever made in herself. Larissa was quite a people person. Even being a vampire hadn’t stopped her from meeting and handling people. I had to wait for these dazed EMTs to finish digging out foreign materials from my side. My body sealed up the leaks and ripping damage it caused. It took longer than I wanted, but the rest of the emergency people were busy with the others involved in the wreck.



## CHAPTER FIVE

*"The ultimate concept car will move so fast, even at rest,  
as to be invisible."*

By J.G. Ballard

"The phone was last used on the Strip. It pinged off several towers," Larissa chimed in and sat next to me. "I have people searching for where they might be."

"Thank you, Larissa," I said.

"Of course, I would do anything to find them," she nodded with a jingle. "How much longer until we can get out of here? I have been keeping the others away from us."

"I wondered why no one has been bothering us. I haven't stretched any of my powers," I started. "Soon, I should be able to walk with help shortly."

"Don't waste anything you don't need to. I will handle things here. Let me clean up the scene. Get your information out of the car and phone so that we can leave."

I nodded, saving my energy while allowing the healing to continue. Larissa took over the scene, wiping the humans of her existence since they wouldn't remember me shortly. The EMTs left my side, to speak amongst themselves, unsure what they had been doing to head back to their vehicle. I staggered up to head toward Larissa's bright pink corvette. She only drove this sporty car at night. I opened the passenger side door to get inside, and sitting took several minutes.

She skipped over to help finish getting me inside and buckle me in. She rounded the car to start up the car to head towards the Strip at speeds I would never consider driving.

"Please don't get me into another accident," I requested.

"I won't, boss man. I have the whole vamp reflexes. Should we go straight to the Strip to find out missing Phoenix?"

"If we can get by the house on the way. There might be a clue there as to what they were thinking before," I paused, not

wanting to go on. Their death, again. I knew it was part of the natural cycle of every Phoenix, life, death, and rebirth. Each time was hard, even if I knew it would happen at some point in their life. They would always return. Even in a different body, it was still them.

“It’s not too far out of the way. Do you think Trevor left something?” she asked.

“One can hope so. It would make finding them simpler. If Trevor felt the urge to hunt something down, he might have written down a note, a letter, something,” I said. I felt like I rambled on a bit, not something I was prone to do. Given the circumstances, I was not at my best.

It didn’t take long to arrive back home. The large gate was still closed. Larissa opened the code to open the garage. We got into the house, and she helped more than I wanted, but I could still not move at my average speed. We got into the house, turned off the alarm, and grabbed a walking stick to help me limp through the house. Larissa blurred past me to search for any mystery notes or clues. I heard her through upstairs as I made my way to the kitchen.

The note awaited me on the granite island by the prominent display of colorful roses as an apology. I flipped open the envelope to read the brief letter with a sigh. Trevor had known what he was doing when he left the house and set up a warning for me. I knew where they had gone and why. Another portal between realms, something the Phoenix were sensitive to. They could stop invaders from slinking into our world, often at the cost of their lives, which is what he did. I shouldn’t be surprised, but occasionally it took me, shook me what he did even if I understood.

I sat on one of the barstools waiting for Larissa to finish her house search. I poured a healthy glass of Glenmorangie Signet, drank the first glass before she arrived, and started on the second as she returned. I slid her a glass to finish mine, “*Slainte.*”

She glanced at the flowers and downed the glass. “Where?”

“Near Huntridge Theater, a portal opened. We need to get there and find them,” I started before she held up her hand.

“You have to take a shower and change. You were in an accident. You’re covered in blood and gore; everyone will notice the bloody man hobbling around Maryland Parkway looking like crap. Take thirty minutes to clean up and change. Eat something to refuel to be useful to them, and we can get there and help,” she lectured me. It reminded me of how many times we had in the past done to her. I guess it was fair. I nodded to hobble my tired old ass upstairs.

## CHAPTER SIX

*"A little bit of this town goes a very long way."*

By Hunter S. Thompson

Huntridge Theater is part of the older section of Las Vegas and the original. Old ghosts haunted these parts, along with supernaturals that had come with the rush of the 60s swarm into this desert. It wasn't a territory I enjoyed treading on, nor Larissa. The vampire that claimed this zone didn't like outsiders, especially ones it considered "tourists." We hadn't been here long enough to be locals. No part of any regional vampire clans, Larissa was a loner given another issue. Yet, we needed to go into this territory. I brought a blood price to offer along with gold to sweeten the pot as yet to offend the one called Lefty.

Crossing the threshold of the territory, we were followed by vampires and human spies without any of them trying to hide their goals. Arriving at the theatre, one of the lackeys came forward. She tossed her long boxed black dyed hair and hooker clothing that matched her surroundings. Sauntering up, she made it look like she was offering her services for an onlooker who might not be part of this vampire coterie.

"Lefty wants to know what you want?" she asked, smacking her grape gum. It covered part of her blood scent for normal humans.

"A phoenix stopped through here and exploded tonight," I started. Her blood-rimmed eyes widened slightly; the fire concerned all the vampires. Something that would kill them should, as she jerked behind her. "I have come to retrieve them, and offer gives to your liege."

"Liege, you mean Lefty?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied. I handed her the case with the offerings. "I will retrieve them and leave. I have no issue with Lefty."

"He doesn't want you staying here other than to get the bird off the turf. Enough damage has been done."

“There is gold for the property damage and for compensation for his time,” I nodded toward her. “Along with the blood price for his understanding. He should understand and remember what that means.” the portal was closed, which saved his people.

She stopped, as only one genuinely dead could listen to what Lefty was telling her from wherever he was lurking. Using her as a puppet, he didn’t want to come out to talk himself. He still treated everything like an old-time mob boss and avoided things older than himself. I might be a “tourist,” but I was centuries more senior, and he didn’t know what that meant. “He understands and accepts your gifts. He gives you an hour to get the bird.”

“Acceptable,” I replied. I pulled out my glasses to start searching for signs of their energy flowing through this area. I walked past with Larissa on my heels.

“You look like a professor, Carter,” Larissa giggled.

“So be it. They help me track energies of a Phoenix.” I followed the burn marks from the alleyway where the portal had formed, and a fight must have occurred. I didn’t stay long. I didn’t want to linger one where my love would have passed.

The energy flickered towards houses. I’m not sure where they were going, but my guess would be somewhere to rest or hide. They would want shelter, clothing, and food. They need to figure out who they are and their necessities. I followed until I came to a condemned house with a warning of the danger to its safety. The energies were flaring within. They were here. Finally, I found them. I took off the glasses to keep them safe. They were difficult to have made and certainly weren’t going to have damaged when they were in this sort of mood.

I swung the bag over my shoulder of supplies to head inside. Larissa stepped side to side, “Should I wait?”

“Probably,” I stated. Larissa hadn’t been through this yet. She had only known Trevor as Trevor. We had prepared her for this moment over the years, but this will be her first time

with them being someone else, not the man she has known for her life with us. Someone new.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

*”The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.”*

By Nathaniel Branden

The house floor bent when I entered the broken front door. The whole place moaned in instability. Not a place one would want to stay long, nor one I wanted to be attempting to bring my love back to themselves. I am sure I had done this in a worse place, but it wasn't coming to me. I walked carefully over the cracked flooring, avoiding the exposed wired dancing before me and ceiling dusting the air towards the kitchen where I could see the edges of a person. My breathing had kicked up as I entered.

“I come in peace,” I spoke calmly. By now, they should remember English or some language skill. “It's me, and I'm here to help you.”

The room began to brighten before me in oranges and yellows of fire. “If not, I can defend myself,” the female voice replied. They had become female again. It has been nearly a century since that happened. The forger I used will have a heyday making new documents for her. That will be different, and I didn't bring any of the correct clothing. The sweater will work long, and we will have to shop to get a different wardrobe after she calms down.

“I'm well aware of that. I don't enjoy healing the fire damage, and tonight has taken a toll on me, so I am late picking you up. I do apologize. I don't get hit by cars and pinned,” I explained. “I do hope you shall forgive my tardiness.”

“Wait, what?” she asked. Some of the fires went down to a dull dim. She began to move into my eyesight. I could see her in the kitchen door frame, and she was lovely as ever. No longer a tall African man with dark auburn hair and golden eyes. She was not nearly as tall with Asian features; I believe she was Korean, but I couldn't be sure until I got closer. Her eyes were still golden with long black hair with golden

strands. She didn't seem to care. She was naked, not that I did either, with golden-hued skin.

"You are still beautiful, my love," I whispered. I say, her face pinkening slightly.

"Was I different before?"

"You have reincarnated," I explained. "You were lovely before and are lovely now."

"I," her nose scrunched up. She seemed to remember something. This would take her time, days, a week or so before it would make sense. Now I just needed to get her away from this death trap of a home. "I burned."

"You did. But now you are better," I spoke with my hand out. "I am here, and I can take you home."

"Home?" she glanced up at me. Something different now. They had been taller than me for decades. "Home for me?"

"Our home," I replied. She took a few steps closer to me.

"We live together. Why do I trust you?"

"Because we are mated. You chose me over a hundred and seventy years ago," I said. I have been lucky ever since then. They had kept me from falling down a darker path since that day. Being born of darker entities, I had been pushed into a dark destiny and a course of blood and violence. My mother had raised me in the Winter Court of the Fae, and my father saw me as the child that might be molded into a demonic spawn that could finally follow in his footsteps. Instead, in a brutal fight with a Phoenix, I nearly was killed by the love of my life and shown a different way. We hadn't parted much since that day.

"You, I," she came closer to sniff the air around me. "You are hurt."

"As I said, I was in an accident which delayed my arrival," I replied.

Her fire within her pulsed from the pale orange-yellow glow to a fiery white. "Who?" she demanded with a roar. The wings unfurled from her, flickering through everything around



us. The house began to set ablaze. The temper of my love was not in control. One of the problems when they first came back, not all the rules were in place.

“My love, it was an accident. Not on purpose. It was an accident,” I yelled over the fire and her raging scream. I rushed over to her; I grabbed her hand to feel the burn over mine. I had to focus on the black ice to calm her emotions and not set them on fire myself. That might kill me, and I wasn’t sure. “Please, you must stop. This could set you back into reincarnation and kill me.”

The hand shifted into a bird paw, and we were swept out of the house onto the rocks in front of the house. I gasped for air, coughing out the smoke with the large Phoenix hopping on the ground. She had transformed into bird form to get us out of the burning building.

“Thank you,” I leaned down with my arm for her to perch on. She jumped on as I nuzzled her feathery face. The fires on her had calmed.

“Carter, there you are,” Larissa blurred into view. “The building is burning, but I heard you over here.”

“We escaped,” I replied. “We need to leave now.”

“Is that” Larissa stared at the bird. “Them?”

“Yes, she transformed to help get us out of the burning building.”

“Wait, Trevor’s a girl?”

“They reincarnated into a female form, and I don’t know what name they have chosen for themselves yet or their gender identity,” I replied, walking towards where we had to leave the SUV. We brought something large enough for any situation we might have encountered with the Phoenix. They might have been unconscious and had to be put in the back.

“Did you two, you know, talk?”

“Briefly, enough for them to come with me home. Will you drive?”

“Of course.”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

*”All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.”*

By Galileo Galilei

The uneventful drive allowed me time to keep her calm in her bird form. I fed her meats, cheese, fruits, and anything else she could take from the food I had brought. She was famished, taking everything. I offered to gobble it down and rip through the next offering. I doubt she tasted anything. It would take some time for her to shift back to human. It was not easy to change to bird form for any Phoenix, they had to be well past the century mark even to attempt it, and usually, it was rarely done. I knew she was perfectly capable of it on a whim. It took her about an hour or two to shift back to human.

Larissa busied herself, calling off people searching for our missing Phoenix. Arriving home and getting settled, I placed her on the giant bird tree we had set up as an art display. I hung up an enormous ham for her to feed herself, popped some painkillers for my body, and burned my hand. I poured another glass of liquor to sit before the tree display to wait for her to shift back to human.

“Do you need me to stay?” Larissa asked over my shoulder. It had been over an hour since we had returned.

“You can go home. They might need to rest in this form tonight, and I won’t rush this process. Go do what you need,” I patted her hand.

“Should I bring, you know, feminine products and clothes?”

“I hadn’t thought about the products yet, probably. They have changed over the decades. That would be lovely, thank you.”

“I will order them and have them ‘carted over tomorrow,” she said and left shortly, waving to us.

I waited for the garage and gates to lock before standing up to help her off the tree. She shifted once hitting the ground.

“Dare I ask why you didn’t want to shift in front of Larissa?”

“She is dead,” she turned towards the kitchen.

“I know that, and so do you. We have raised her from her creation.”

“We did?” she asked, opening the frig to pull out several juice bottles to start drinking through them. “I don’t recall.”

“You saved her from her creator, and we took her in,” I spoke, pulling out a glass for her to use after taking an empty bottle to throw into the trash.

“I feel like I am supposed to stop evil creatures,” she waved her hand towards the back door. “But I save them?”

“She isn’t evil, and she was a girl taken by an insane vampire who desired her. You found out from her family searching for Larissa and hunted down the bastard who did it to put him down to free her from his control. She tortured and forced her to become a vampire against her will, to become his puppet. Another vampire clan offered to care for her, but you didn’t trust them, so we kept her away from politics. She is a loner vampire who feeds on animal blood and donated human blood from the hospital.”

She weaved her way through the kitchen, tossing the finished juice bottle in the trash to grab an apple. “That feels right, like something we have done. I think I remember that.”

“We have kept her safe for decades.”

“No one looked for her since she was. What’s the wrong color or something?” she asked.

“Yes, racist America, especially at the time. She is considered a black woman, and no one cared that she was missing. You took that as an insult.”

“I was,” she paused. “I was black too, at the time, wasn’t I?”

“Yes, you were.”

“But you aren’t?”

“No, in my human form, I appear white.”

“Not in your normal form, though,” she stopped to look closer at me. “You are blue?”

“Yes, I am blue. Often you are shades of fires, so not everything is always the same color,” I pointed out. I poured out another glass of liquor. “Right now, you are sort of a tan-gold color.”

“I change often,” she stretched out her arm to stare at it. “What am I now?”

“You, in a different packaging. You will be different but the same in a lot of ways. This is what happens when you die and come back.”

“Are you upset with me?”

“I’m confused. I didn’t want to lie, but I certainly not be blunt. I wish you had given me some heads up about what was happening before you closed the portal.” I paused.

“I didn’t warn you, but you said you were late?”

I handed her the note to wait. “I got this when I got home. I felt you die while driving. I always know when you die.”

“You do?”

“We are mated. When a Phoenix is mated, their partner, no matter the species, will feel their death within their heart. It burns as they burn out. It is,” I paused to finish the drink. “Painful.”

“But,” she started.

“I know why you do what you do. I have always known. I do not blame you; I wish you had given me a better warning this time. We have the technology to call one another,” I explained, reaching out for her.

“I would apologize,” she started.

“Don’t, not yet. Not until you remember. For all I know, you have a good reason.”

“Oh, your hand.” She squeezed my offered hand. I returned it, holding in pain from the burn from earlier.

“It will heal. I need sleep and time,” I said, holding her hand to pull her closer.

“I hurt you,” she stared at our combined hands. She took them to kiss the top of mine.

“Our lives have been complicated over the decades, and this is not the worst we have had,” I leaned my head on top of hers.

“Really? Are we into kink or something?” I laughed before I caught myself. Everything hurt when I did that. Too many were injured, too long of a day, and such a question that I lost my composure.

“Love, we are into a lot of things,” I said through laughter. “Oh, these hurts. I have got to get some restful healing before you ask such entertaining questions. I am held together by luck and duct-taped magic right now.”

She went to my right side, where it hurt less. “Let me help you.”

“I don’t say no to you much,” I said with a smirk.

“But you do say no?”

“I’m part Fae, and I don’t lie well. So, of course, I do,” I replied. “We are semi-normal of a couple. We fight, argue, makeup, have dates, and do the normal things couples do. We happen to be Supernatural and live for a long time. You happen to be older than me.”

“How much older?” she asked while we made our way to the primary bedroom.

“A few centuries,” I said back.

“Only a few?”

“I was born sometime in the early 1800s, give or take. My mother is Fae, and no one to keep track of human

calendars. I was raised in the Winter Court, where time doesn't work the same as here, so my age and time aren't exactly normal. My father is the damned Krampus," I explained. We made it to our room. I breathed through the ward she had put up. It tingled through me uncomfortably. It kept out all sorts of nasty creatures and made my skin itch, but worth it to sleep with the ease of knowing things that went bump in the night couldn't get through.

"Like the things that eat naughty children during Christmas?"

"Technically, it depends on the mythology. The Krampus is working on his PR these days," I replied. "He has movies, TV shows, video games, and plushies."

"Are you serious? I thought he was a demon who likes to do terrible things?" she asked, helping me to the large bed. I sat down with a long sigh.

"He can be. He is another Supernatural creature trying to survive in this world," I paused. Did I try to defend my father? Ugh. "He hasn't eaten any children in years. Usually bargains or scares the ever-living daylights out of them to be good, or he will come back to do bad things to them."

"And this is your father?"

"Yup, hence the name Carter Krampus."

"I'm married to Carter Krampus?"

"Well, not at the moment. Trevor and I weren't married. Legally, Trevor and I couldn't get married for a long time," I explained.

"Why not?"

"First, we had been together since the 1950s, and it's 2022, so explaining that one would be," I paused, looking for a better word than impossible for us both looking still in our 30's. "Difficult. Also, it would have been illegal."

"Why?"

I facepalmed, oh America. "We were both men and of different races. It was not just a little illegal. But a lot illegal."

“Oh, the whole Phoenix and Fae demon thing. I didn’t know that they would care that much,” she started. I laughed again, not even thinking about that part. Thankfully she wouldn’t have to live through that part of our lives again. It was rough during those years of our lives. We had to move often, change locations when people wondered about us, and shift countries often to get away from people wondering what we were.

“Darling, you are adorable, and when you remember, you will understand. Now, that is something we won’t have to deal with,” I pulled off my shoes and socks. “I adore you.”

“I adore you too,” she smiles down at me. She stood raking her fingers through my hair. “How long do I have to wait for you to heal?”

“I don’t know. I had a car on top of me.”

She sighed and helped me get undressed for bed. She went over all my damage, lightly kissing a few of the fresh wounds with some annoyed sighs, and tucked me into bed to nuzzle beside my uninjured side.

“Will I remember more tomorrow?”

“You will remember more every day.”

“Do I have a name?”

“You will pick a name when you feel comfortable.”

“Do you ever pick my name?”

“No.”

## EPILOGUE

The next few days went by, allowing me to heal without pain every moment and for her to start remembering herself. I didn't push, allowing her to explore the house, the memories she had figured out, the questions she needed to ask, and the objects we had kept through the ages. We saved a few things between journeys, some photographs now that the technology was every day, especially since we could scan the pictures and upload everything. We had to drop everything and run several times through the decades. A few times, the places we had lived had burned down through some incidents of her burning out and losing everything. Things could be replaced. We had learned that well over the years, people, and ourselves less so. Our memories I kept journals hidden away in vaults and had scanned years ago for easier access. This made things simple, and we would duck out anytime without losing much.

She had gotten herself clothing while I donated the older clothing that no longer fit local charities. These days allowed us to settle into a new pattern while she rediscovered who she might now be and who we would now be together. She settled on the name Nyx for now. It would take time, but we would find our new arrangement. Now for our winter holidays, we took the time to get to know one another again, away from the chaos of the world around us. Nyx decorated the fresh tree with bright new lights and ornaments from around town. The first in many years, it was nice to see the house lit up in holiday cheer to chase away the gloom of the changes in our lives.



## About The Author

### **W.M. Dawson**



W.M. Dawson lives in the middle of New Mexico. She avoids the melting heat by writing in a wonderfully air-conditioned house with her husband and a herd of cats that believe they run the place. She writes under her pen name Wendy Cheairs. Wendy has been writing for several anthologies and short fiction and breaking into novels. She often lurks on social media when pondering too many story arcs.

## Books By This Author

### [Welcome to the Jungle](#)

Seraphina Cortez's life year before had been turned upside down when she became a shifter. She found a new life in the Dark Leopards MC, working her way up as the Sergeant at Arms, protector of her cats and people. It might not have been the life she wanted, but it was her life. It was turned upside down when a blast from the past she escaped returned bleeding on her doorstep. Caleb Anders, the ex she never fully got over appeared, on the run from people hunting him. She couldn't just leave him and went right back into to help him from the enemies after him for his magic. Can they stop enemies coming for magic users, stop a war from coming on her territory, and her MC and ignore the fires of passion that never snuffed out between them?

## Books By This Author

### **Unwanted: A limited edition anthology of rejected mates paranormal romance**

Unwanted. Rejected. Renounced.

These heroines have been through a lot. Their fated mates and sacred other halves have done the unthinkable... they've rejected them. They've rendered them, unwanted.

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