Barnabas fights evil werewolf Christopher Jennings
BARNABAS CANNOT ESCAPE THE GHOST OF THE EVIL ANGELIQUE.

Barnabas Collins is trying to protect Paula Jennings, a lovely young heiress, from her new husband, Christopher. Barnabas fears that Christopher is a werewolf, and as such can inflict deadly, unmentionable harm on Paula.

Barnabas knows he has the power to defeat Christopher. But then he suddenly discovers that Christopher has joined forces with Melissa Henry—the reincarnation of the beautiful Angelique. Though the fate of Paula Jennings is at stake, Barnabas’s faith in his powers is seriously shaken.

Can he stand up against this deadly combination? Or will yet another victim be sacrificed to Angelique?
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THE SECRET OF BARNABAS COLLINS
THE DEMON OF BARNABAS COLLINS
THE PHANTOM OF BARNABAS COLLINS
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To our friends
Elsie and Gordon Willet,
of Saint John, N.B., Canada

CHAPTER ONE

Victoria Winters crossed the shadowed room and raised the drawn shade from the single window overlooking the lawn in front of Collinwood. She uttered a small gasp, her sensitive, lovely face frowning as a large, ugly spider scurried across one of the dusty panes.

“I’d advise you not to kill it, Miss Winters,” a genial voice said from behind her. It was the voice of Mr. Smallwood, the portly antique dealer from Bangor who was making his annual visit to Collinwood.

She turned to face the short, stout man with his pleasant double-chinned countenance. It was Mr. Smallwood’s business interests that had brought her up to the neglected storage rooms of Collinwood’s attic on this bleak, rainy afternoon in June.

She said, “No one comes up here much these days.”

The stout man in the drab gray business suit, his raincoat thrown over his arm holding his dripping felt hat, studied the murky room with its contents of dusty trunks, innumerable cases and cardboard boxes, old prints stacked neatly against a wall and a confusion of assorted bric-a-brac.

“That makes it all the more likely there’ll be something of value for me to buy,” the antique dealer said happily. “I’ve always had the feeling that Mrs. Stoddard has been holding back a lot of the best things from me.”

Vicky offered him a skeptical smile. It seemed to her extremely doubtful they would discover any treasures in the abandoned section of the great forty-room house which dominated the village of Collinsport in this isolated coastal region of Maine. She had lived at Collinwood for
several years, first as governess to Roger’s son, David, and more lately as a companion to Elizabeth Stoddard the head of the household.

It had been Elizabeth who’d interviewed Mr. Smallwood when he’d arrived an hour before. The regal, dark-haired mistress of Collinwood had received the stout man in a friendly fashion, knowing him from his visits to the village over the years.

Seated primly in a wing chair in the big living room downstairs, Elizabeth had addressed herself to the portly antique dealer, who sat across from her on an end of the divan. Vicky stood by listening.

“You have made your journey through the rain for nothing, Mr. Smallwood,” had been Elizabeth’s statement. “Come now, Mrs. Stoddard,” the big man said with a winning smile. “You can’t intend to send me away empty-handed. We have a record number of tourists expected this summer and my shop is nearly empty. I must have something for them.”

Elizabeth had smiled thinly. “I’d like to be able to help you, Mr. Smallwood. The fact is, I can’t think of a single item we wish to dispose of.”

The fat man chuckled. “Yet I venture that your attic or cellar is stuffed with items from another day you no longer use or want.”

Elizabeth’s reaction to this had been to shrug and say, “The things we have stored away are apt to have little value. But since you’ve made the trip out here from the village in the rain I suppose I should try to cooperate. I’ll have Vicky take you up to the several rooms you’ve never seen. Perhaps you may find something.”

Soon Vicky had found herself at the top of the old mansion with the stout man. She was not too familiar with this part of the house. The few times she’d visited the dank, musty rooms she’d been with Elizabeth, so she actually had little idea of what they might discover.

“This part of the house has no electricity,” she told the man from Bangor. “It’s used so little Mrs. Stoddard decided not to have the wiring extended up here. So we’ll have to make do with the rather poor light from the window.”

The stout man raised a thick hand to dismiss any wor-
ries on this score. He strayed over to a large, brown jug-like clay vase. Checking it carefully, he said, "I can use this. It's an umbrella stand."

Vicky said, "I'm sure Mrs. Stoddard will be glad to sell it to you. I've heard her describe it as ugly."

The big man smiled at her in the gloom of the shadowed room. "My customers will regard it as quaint."

She stood by as he continued to poke and pry among the stacked-up contents of the room. The rain outside was heavier now and it came in great bursts to slither down the outside of the dusty panes and give the gray world beyond a distorted shape. She shuddered a little as the dampness crept into her. The day and her surroundings had given her a feeling of depression.

Mr. Smallwood gathered a number of items to the middle of the small room, then advanced to the stacked prints and began going through them. After a little he selected two of them, scenes of country life long ago, in ornate gilt frames which were covered with a layer of dust and grime.

"Always can handle a little art," he said in his good-natured fashion as he put the prints with the pile of other things. As he did so a yellowed sheet fell from where it had been attached to the back of one of them. It was about twelve by sixteen inches in size. "What's this?" he asked as he quickly retrieved it from the floor in a pudgy hand and frowned as he stared at it.

Vicky joined him and studied the sheet of stiff paper from beside him. She saw that it was the drawing of a young woman in clothes suggesting the early years of the present century. Close examination showed that the girl's face had an exquisite yet sad cast of features. Her eyes were caught by some lettering at the very bottom of the pencil drawing. The caption read: "Paula by Barnabas Collins, 1910."

Mr. Smallwood seemed greatly interested in the drawing. He turned to her. "You know anything about this? Who this Paula or Barnabas Collins could be?"

Vicky was fascinated by the wistful beauty of the girl depicted in the drawing. The high forehead, the perfect nose and delicate chin all united to make a lovely face. And the eyes that stared off into the distance were gentle and yet penetrating. The artist had done his work well.
She frowned slightly as she studied the work. "I've no idea who Paula might be. We did have a Barnabas Collins visiting here a little while ago. A cousin of Mrs. Stoddard's from England."

"Was he an artist?"

Vicky shook her head. "Not that I know of." She hesitated. "And anyway, it couldn't possibly have been drawn by him. He's a comparatively young man."

Mr. Smallwood looked interested. "Is this Barnabas Collins returning here?"

"I don't know," she confessed. "He didn't mention that he would."

The stout man stared at the drawing again. "Too bad. He might be able to tell us something about this. I sort of like it anyway. I think I'll buy it." And he placed it carefully against the two framed prints he'd selected.

Mr. Smallwood didn't linger long after that, returning downstairs with Vicky to dicker with Elizabeth Stoddard about the price of the various items he wished to purchase.

Elizabeth showed surprise when he handed the sketch to her. She said, "Where did you find this?"

"It fell out of the back of one of the prints," Vicky explained.

"Know anything about the subject or the artist?" the stout man enquired.

Elizabeth sighed. "I believe this girl was distantly related to us. I've heard her name mentioned by older members of the family who are now dead. And this Barnabas Collins must have been the father of the Barnabas who has recently spent some time here."

"Would that Barnabas Collins have had a reputation as an artist?" the antique dealer wanted to know.

"I couldn't say," Elizabeth said staring at the drawing again. "I think not or I would have heard something about it. Apparently he was merely a talented amateur."

"A truly talented amateur," was Mr. Smallwood's opinion. "I like the drawing. I'm willing to buy it along with the other things."

The mistress of Collinwood gave him a small smile. "You may have all the other items, Mr. Smallwood, but I want this."
“Oh?” The man from Bangor raised his eyebrows.

“I consider it a part of our family history,” Elizabeth explained. “And the Collins family takes a particular interest in its history. I’d like to look this Paula up in some of the record books. And I believe I’ll have this framed.”

Mr. Smallwood took his disappointment in good part and left shortly afterward with the collection of items Elizabeth had sold him. After Vicky closed the door on the picture of his departing station wagon heading along the rainswept road to the village, she returned to join Elizabeth.

She found the elegant, dark woman in the library already searching through the volumes of family history to discover just who the Paula of the drawing might be. When Vicky entered the library the older woman was seated behind the big desk with the drawing beside her. She was carefully studying a large book that resembled a ledger and whose pages were filled with writing in a neat hand. The ink had faded to a brown, but the words were still clear.

As Victoria came around to her side Elizabeth said with an apologetic smile, “That lovely face in the drawing gave me a haunting feeling. I had to try and find out something about her.”

“Have you?” Victoria asked.

“Yes,” the older woman said. “According to this account, Paula was a distant cousin who bore the family name. She visited here several times and met the man she later married here at a party given by Michael Collins, whom she called her uncle although the relationship was much more distant.”

Vicky was thrilled. “How romantic!” she said. “And who did she marry?”

Elizabeth Stoddard glanced at the neat handwriting on the page of the record she’d been reading and sighed. “The young man’s name was Christopher Jennings,” she said. “The journal is not too clear in its references to him, but I would gather that he was not a person Michael Collins admired.”

“And yet he let this Paula marry him?”

The older woman made a tiny futile gesture with her left hand. “I suppose there was little he could do. Paula
was not closely related to him. And I gather she was very much in love with this Christopher Jennings who was born in Collinsport but had lived away from here until his marriage."

Vicky found this interesting. "Does it say where they lived here?"

"They lived at Cranshaw."

"Cranshaw?" The name was not familiar to Victoria.

Elizabeth nodded. "Yes. Cranshaw was a fine old stone house named after a Captain Cranshaw who built it on his retirement from the sea. He died and the house passed into other hands until Christopher Jennings purchased it. The house was located on a section of land not a mile from here and if you walk along the beach you can still see the ruins of its foundation today."

"I think I know the place," Vicky said. "I have walked past there. The house is much nearer the beach than Collinswood."

"Yes," Elizabeth agreed. "It was burned when I was a little girl. And now its ruins are almost obscured by the bushes that have grown up there. When Barnabas was here he went down to look at the area."

"Would he know about his father sketching the woman who once lived there?" Victoria wondered.

"I'm sure he didn't," was Elizabeth's opinion, "otherwise he would have mentioned it. I only wish this journal gave more information about Paula. Michael Collins seems to have been more than usually reticent in his mention of her and her husband."

"What a pity," Vicky said, staring at the drawing of the gentle, lovely face once again. "At least we do know that she lived in Collinsport and she was married to a Christopher Jennings."

"Yes," Elizabeth agreed as she closed the ledger-like journal, "at least we do know that."

* * * * *

On that bleak evening in late March, 1910, Paula Jennings was too excited to be depressed by the drizzle of rain which had started to fall. She was returning to Collinsport as a new bride to become the mistress of the
great old mansion, Cranshaw. Christopher, her husband of only a week, had spent an impressive amount of money on furnishings for this fine graystone house he’d purchased for her.

The day before, they had taken the sidewheeler **ANNIE BLAIR** from Boston. And safely below in the coastal ship were the many crates of expensive furniture to be unloaded at the wharf at Collinsport when they docked there in another quarter hour or so. She’d been below with Chris discussing the unloading of their possessions with one of the ship’s officers when she realized she was missing her chance to view the shoreline of Collinsport from the sidewheeler.

Chris had joked about her wish to enjoy the view of the village from the deck and urged her to go up on her own while he made sure that none of their purchases were overlooked in the unloading. Paula had been somewhat disappointed but she decided she would go up alone and watch the approach to land despite the drizzle which was keeping most of the passengers inside. Hurrying up to the level of the deck she held her long black rain cloak close around her. As she emerged out into the drizzle she saw that the slowly moving coastal ship was almost directly opposite the stretch of shore where Cranshaw stood. Approaching the railing she stood there staring at the fortresslike old mansion with its several towers and small windows. It was located close to the ocean and she could tell the view from her new home would be breathtaking on a fine day.

She was a pretty girl in her early twenties with reddish-brown hair, a pink skin marked daintily with some tiny freckles, green eyes that were large and expressive and the most striking feature of her sensitive face. The pleasure of this moment was shadowed a trifle by not having her new husband, Christopher, to share the experience with her.

It seemed she knew no happiness now when he was not close to her. In a few short months he had come to mean all the world to her. It had been Chris who’d insisted they return to Collinsport to live. “I want to let them see us living like the gentry,” he’d told her. “I know what they think of me in Collinsport and I want to torment them!”

Her lovely face shadowed as she considered those
words. Her eyes moved to the village further down the shore and the wharf which the ship was nearing. She doubted that her Uncle Michael Collins would be on hand to welcome them. For her Uncle Michael had neither approved of Chris nor her marriage to him.

And she had been a guest at Uncle Michael’s when she’d met the handsome, reckless young man who was to become her husband. It had happened in the previous autumn. Just before she was to leave Collinsport and take the train back to Boston. There had been a party at one of the big homes in the village. Uncle Michael and Aunt Sally had escorted her there. And it was during a waltz that a smiling young man in a smartly tailored dark suit had come over to her and asked for the pleasure of the dance.

That waltz had been the start of it all. As they moved gracefully to the strains of the violin and piano his eyes met hers with a shining light of admiration in them and for the first time in her young life she felt she could give her heart and future to a man. He was an excellent dancer and he arranged it so that when the dance ended he was able to whisk her through a doorway into a dimly lighted deserted hall.

And before she could give a thought to what was happening he drew her close to him and kissed her ardently. He was smiling as he released her and said, “My name is Chris Jennings and I have fallen in love with you.”

Her lovely green eyes went wide with surprise. She gave a small gasp. “You don’t even know my name.”

“Your name is Paula Collins and you came here with your relative, old Michael Collins,” he told her. “I’ve been gathering information on you all evening. But I had to wait for the proper moment to approach you. You’ll find it out so you may as well know now, your Uncle Michael does not like me.”

“Why?” she asked, staring at him.

“I was born here,” Chris told her. “I had a wretched boyhood. But an unknown benefactor paid for me to go to college. The Collins clan have never accepted me as fit to associate with the society of Collinsport, but every so often I come back here for a visit to taunt them.”

She was studying him and trying to decide what there
was about him that fascinated her so. He was good-
looking in a strange sort of way, his face had a touch of
gauntness and his hair was dark. His eyebrows were heavy
and very dark and his eyes had a kind of wild gleam about
them. The recklessness she was always to associate with
him fairly shone from those eyes.

She said, "You sound like a terribly bitter person."
"I am."
"I don't think I'd like you," she said. "Bitterness breeds
cruelty and I hate and fear cruelty."
"I shall be kind to you," he promised, seeming ready to
embrace her again.

Paula, a shining figure in a trimmed white gown, drew
back from him. "Please!" she said. "I must go back to my
uncle."

Chris's gaunt face had shown one of his twisted smiles.
"Run from me if you like. But I promise you that you'll
never escape me."

And of course his prediction was to come true. She had
avoided him for the rest of the evening, but they met as
she was going out of the house on her Uncle Michael's
arm. Christopher was standing in the hallway with another
girl and he had bowed and smiled for her benefit.

When she and her Uncle were seated in the carriage
with her Aunt Sally for the drive back to Collinwood, her
uncle had inquired, "Have you met that young
Christopher Jennings?"

"Just for a moment," she said, wondering why her heart
beat just a little faster at the mention of him.

"He's not your sort and he hates anyone by the name of
Collins," her Uncle Michael had warned her in his gruff
voice. "So you have a double reason for avoiding him."

"Yes, Uncle," she'd said meekly.

Perhaps for that moment in the darkness of the car-
riage's interior she'd honestly meant to accept the advice.
And then again, maybe she hadn't. She remembered being
thankful for the shadows that had cloaked her face as
she'd answered her uncle. And when she took the train to
Boston the next day, and Chris Jennings revealed himself
as a fellow passenger after the train pulled out, she made
no attempt to persuade him to sit a distance away from
her.
Rather, she was pleased when he took the empty seat beside her and announced that he was also going to Boston. “There was nothing in Collinsport to keep me there and I wanted to see you again.”

She studied his strangely attractive face and said, “My Uncle warned me about you.”

He seemed not at all upset. “I told you he would.”

“Why do you hate the Collins family?”

Chris shrugged. “Because they resent me. I told you I was born the son of a servant girl who died soon after. And I lived miserably during my school days with a drunken fisherman grandfather. What I didn’t tell you was that my mother never married. The identity of my father was always a mystery. And since my mother had been working at Collinwood before my arrival I have always had the theory that I might be half Collins.”

Paula was blushing. Such frank talk was not the sort of thing she was used to hearing. She said, “I don’t think you ought to discuss such matters.”

He gave her a mocking smile. “You asked me a question and I’m trying to answer it. Your revered Uncle Michael or either of his younger brothers might have been my father. In any case a sum was given a Bangor lawyer to provide me with a college education. I accepted it as my right and the payment for the guilt my unknown father must have felt. But it was a mistake on the part of my benefactor. It set me on the high road and I went much higher than anyone in Collinsport expected.”

She was interested. “What do you mean?”

“I attended Yale University. I had the money and decided on the best. While there I made a close friend. After graduation he introduced me to his lovely cousin, whose name was Rachel. It happened that Rachel was an orphan with a great deal of money. We fell in love and were married. Overnight I had a desirable wife, wealth and an estate in the suburbs of New York City.”

Paula stared at him. “And where is your wife now?”

“Dead,” the young man said solemnly, the gaunt face showing the pain the memory of it brought him. “We had a summer place upstate. Less than a year of our marriage passed before she was found dead in the woods. She’d been attacked savagely by a mad dog.”
Paula was shocked. "I'm so sorry," she said sincerely.

The young man beside her frowned and his eyebrows almost met. "I thought I might lose my mind," he confessed. "But somehow I held on to my sanity and came back to normal living again."

"Where do you make your home now?"

"I have moved to Boston," he told her. "So there is no reason why we shouldn't see a great deal of each other."

She stared into those unusual eyes of his and tried to read what was in their depths. It was impossible to say. She told him, "I doubt if you could ever forget that I am a Collins."

"But of such a distant branch of the family it doesn't matter," he assured her. "I've inquired into that."

Smiling ruefully, she said, "It seems you have delved into a great many things."

He nodded. "I've tried to find out all I could about you. You see I intend that you shall be my wife."

And that was how it went on. He never ceased in his wooing of her. He had inherited Rachel's wealth and active business interests. But he had no need to give the business matters his personal attention. He had others to look after his affairs and so he was a wealthy young man about town. As such he devoted himself entirely to Paula.

In spite of his recklessness and the spells of moodiness that came over him occasionally Paula found him a fascinating individual. Sometimes he would leave her for a few days to journey to New York on some mission and she always missed him dreadfully. By the time early spring arrived she had been willing to marry him.

Though she had doubted the wisdom of returning to Collinsport to live. She'd seen Cranshaw and knew it was available for purchase but could not conceive of living so close to her Uncle Michael and Collinwood with the hostility which existed between her husband and her uncle. She spoke of this to Chris.

That young man had merely laughed at her worries. "We'll manage splendidly without even calling on your Uncle Michael," he promised her. "I want to flaunt my money and you in his face."

Now as she stood by the railing and the village of Collinsport drew near she fervently hoped that the climate
between the two men might not be too bitter. She felt that eventually she might even bring them around to a kind of friendship. But that would take time.

The drizzle of rain was now turning into more of a downpour. She was alone on the deck of the slow-moving sidewheeler, and she decided that perhaps she might after all be wise to go inside and wait for the ship to dock. She had enjoyed her brief glimpse of Cranshaw from the water and now she could rejoin her husband.

As she hurried back through the heavy rain she all at once lost her footing and slipped on the slick deck. Her cry of surprise was drowned by the noise made by the threshing sidewheels as they churned up the waters of Collin'sport Cove. Before she could make a move to get up hands reached down to assist her to rise.

When she was on her feet again she turned to see who her rescuer might be and looked into the sternly handsome face of a tall man in a black Inverness coat. He was hatless and his thick black hair was matted against his forehead by the rain. He had high cheekbones and his skin was sallow. He carried a black cane with a silver wolf's head handle.

Now he spoke in a rich baritone voice with a British accent, "I trust you weren't injured."

She managed a nervous smile. "No. And thank you for helping me."

His deep-set eyes studied her with a burning intensity. "It seems that we two are the only ones interested enough in viewing Collin'sport from the ship to brave the rain."

She stood there fascinated by the stranger and his manner of speech. With the rain forgotten for a moment, she asked him, "You sound like an Englishman. Is this your first visit to Collin'sport?"

"I am English," he said with a melancholy smile. "But my father came from here. I'm returning to visit a cousin of mine, Mr. Michael Collins."

Paula was astonished. "But we must be related. Michael Collins is my uncle."

"Indeed," the tall man in the black caped coat said. "Are you also here on a visit?"

"No," she said with a blush. "I've recently been married. My husband and I have come here to take up
residence in a house called Cranshaw."

"We passed it a few minutes ago," the Englishman said. Again she was startled. "But how do you know? You claim you have never been here before."

He smiled in a veiled fashion. "I must confess to spying on you from the deck above. I saw your expression when the ship went past a certain graystone house. I suspect that must have been Cranshaw."

She gave a small laugh of acceptance. "Of course, I understand now. I'm afraid I'm too excited about it all to conceal my feelings."

"That is natural," the tall, gauntly handsome man said. "My name is Barnabas Collins and I hope that we may meet again in Collinsport."

"Mine is Paula Jennings and my husband's name is Chris," she told him quickly. "And I do hope we meet. Though I must advise you that my husband and Uncle Michael are not on friendly terms. So it may be difficult."

The man in the Inverness coat looked thoughtfully at her. "I see," he said. "I really mustn't keep you out here any longer." Taking her gently by the arm he began leading her to the entrance to the main lounge.

There was something about the touch of his hand on her arm that gave her an eerie, uneasy feeling. She could not understand it. As they walked along the deck in the growing dusk, she said, "Will you be staying at Collinwood?"

"No. Michael Collins is allowing me and my manservant to live in the old house. I prefer a certain amount of quiet and I feel I shall be happier there."

"I've been in the original Collinwood," she told him. "It's a fine old house but no one has lived in it for a while."

"So I've been advised," the man at her side said politely as they reached the cabin door.

Before they could enter, the door was opened and Chris stood facing them with an expectant look on his gaunt face. "I was beginning to worry about you," he told her. "I thought something might have happened to you alone out there in the rain."

"I did fall," she admitted. "But this gentleman helped me." She turned to introduce Barnabas Collins and was
numbed to discover he had vanished.

“What gentleman?” her husband demanded, staring at her oddly.

“The man who was standing with me when you came out the cabin door,” Paula said.

Again Chris looked puzzled. “I don’t know what you’re trying to tell me,” he said. “But you were alone from the first moment I set eyes on you.”

CHAPTER TWO

The sullen look on her new husband’s gaunt face struck fear into Paula’s heart. She had several times known him to sink into moody fits and she had no wish to bring this about at the very moment they were nearing the Collinsport wharf. And yet she hardly knew what to say! How to explain the sudden appearance of the handsome stranger who had escorted her across the deck and who had so mysteriously vanished in a twinkling.

Gazing around at the rain-shrouded deck nervously, she said, “I had the feeling he had followed me here. I must have been mistaken.”

“Indeed you must have,” Chris said with a sardonic smile. “I’m afraid the bad weather is playing tricks on your senses.”

“Yes,” she agreed quietly as she went inside with him, but she knew this hadn’t been the case. The man in the Inverness cape had been at her side one moment and gone the next. She could find no rational explanation of the happening and began to wonder if she had talked with a ghost. But there was no point in telling all this to Chris. He would only scoff at her or think her mad.

In the short time they’d been married she’d learned that
he had an unfortunate temper. It took little to send him into sulking spells and withdraw into himself. She blamed this on his unfortunate childhood and hoped that in the security of a happy marriage he would become a more balanced person. He had wealth and a fine home to comfort him. And now she was at his side, a dutiful wife. What more could Chris Jennings ask from life? It was surely time for him to shed some of his bitterness. She hoped she might be of help to him in this.

She was still shaken by her odd experience on the deck when the sidewheeler reached the Collinsport wharf and she found herself standing below with Christopher ready to get off. She glanced around at the several other passengers gathered there to leave the ship as soon as the gangplanks were set out but she saw no sign of the man in the black Inverness. Could Barnabas Collins have been some phantom figure?

This was still troubling her when she and Chris walked up the gangplanks to the wharf. Everything was noise and confusion in the stormy night now. Lanterns were held high and shouts were exchanged by the crew of the sidewheeler and the workmen on the wharf as the cargo was transferred from ship to land. This began as soon as the small group of passengers reached the rough, tarred timbers of the wharf.

It was pitch dark now and raining fairly hard. Chris kept hold of her arm and guided her off the dock to the cobblestones of the main street. Here there were carriages lined up and waiting and further up the steep hill she could see the faint lights of what she took to be shops. Behind her the raucous cries of the laborers rang out as great hogsheads were rolled from the ship onto the wharf.

Chris glanced back grimly. "I expect a good third of our furniture crates will go astray," he predicted.

"Do you want to remain and oversee their unloading?" she asked, her rain cloak drawn about her.

"No," he said. "I’ve already notified the wharfmaster to take care of the shipment. We’ll hope he’s reliable. And Abel should be waiting for us with the carriage to take us to Cranshaw."

They moved on a few steps and then a giant of a man with a loping walk came quickly to meet them. He was
holding a lantern aloft in one hand against the rainy
darkness and as he came near Paula got a good look at
his weathered face.

He had the harsh features of an animal. Her first
impression was that he resembled a wolf she'd once seen at
a zoo. His bony, high-cheeked face and burning eyes sug-
gested the likeness. He wore a rubber raincoat and wide-
brimmed rubber hat. And he was tall enough to tower
above both her and Chris.

"Evening, Master Jennings," the tall man said, smiling
at them to reveal some yellowed fangs of teeth with black
gaps of several missing ones between them.

"Good evening," Chris said in a friendly fashion.
And to her, he said, "This is Abel, I have chosen him to
head our household staff. I'm sure you'll find him
devoted and reliable."

Paula offered Abel a smile. "I'm glad to meet you,
Abel."

"Same here, Mrs. Jennings," he said. "I have the car-
riage waiting. The roads are bad with the frost just coming
out. In some places the mire is more than a foot deep."

"We'll just take our personal luggage with us, Abel,"
Christopher told him. "You'll find it with the
wharfmaster. You can send a wagon for the crates of fur-
niture in the morning."

"Yes, sir," the tall man said. "First I'll show you and
your missus to the carriage."

When she and Chris were seated in the dark, musty in-
terior of the big carriage she leaned close to him. At once
he placed an arm around her. "I'll be glad when we are
safely at Cranshaw," he observed. "This had been a dif-
cult journey for you. And to be greeted with this down-
pour near the end of it is most depressing."

She smiled up at him in the gloom. "It will be all right.
Your man Abel is impressive."

"An unusual type," her husband agreed. "I located him
in the town last time I was here. He was looking for work
and I hired him to become caretaker of Cranshaw. In the
old days he was a crack lumberjack but an injury to his leg
finished him for that. So he was glad to accept my offer."

"He's so tall and powerful looking," she marveled.
"Like a great timber wolf!"
“That’s an unusual comparison you’re making,” Chris said. “I wouldn’t mention it to Abel. I fear he wouldn’t be flattered. Timber wolves are not often seen in this part of the country and the few that show themselves are not popular.”

“I’ll remember,” she promised. “I wouldn’t want to offend him.”

“You’re much too lovely to truly anger anyone,” her husband said with his familiar gallantry as he brushed her hair with his lips.

Paula was comforted by this attention. She was finding the experience of returning to Collinsport so soon after their marriage a little upsetting. And her meeting with the stranger on deck who had claimed to be a kin of the Collins family still haunted her. She could not dismiss the face of the man who’d called himself Barnabas Collins from her mind. She kept wondering what had happened to him.

Abel returned with their bags and loaded them into the rear of the carriage. Then he mounted the seat high up front and, flicking the reins, commanded the horses to move.

The carriage wheeled and then joggled over the cobblestones of the single business street of the village. As they drove up the steep hill past the shabby stores the noise and excitement of the wharf was left behind them. Paula sighed and pressed closely to the man she loved and had married. The few misgivings she’d known began to fade as she realized that they would soon cross the threshold of their new home. She was sure that Chris would be more contented and normal in his attitude towards her Uncle Michael and the village in general now.

Abel shouted an order to the team of horses now and then. They soon left the tiny village of Collinsport behind and were heading along the side road which led to Cran-shaw. Now the pace of the horses slowed and the wagon bumped awkwardly over the uneven dirt road.

Chris said grimly, “Abel was not exaggerating when he told us the road was bad.”

Paula glanced out at the menacing darkness of the night. “We truly are going to be isolated at Cranshaw, aren’t we?” she suggested. “It is even more by itself than Collinwood.”
“I want privacy,” Chris said in that firm tone of his. “We can see Collinwood in the distance. That will be enough for me.”

“I’m certain Uncle Michael will want to be friendly with us.”

“Then you are wrong. And even if he did offer a kind of friendship I’d reject it.”

Paula was troubled by the vehemence with which her husband of a few days had made this declaration. And the hopes she’d been building for a reconciliation crumbled, leaving her with a feeling of despair. Despite her Uncle Michael’s gruff manner she was fond of the old gentleman. Being so near him and unable to see him would be heartbreaking.

Her unhappy thoughts were brought to a conclusion by the carriage suddenly lurching drunkenly to the right, coming to an abrupt halt that pitched both herself and Chris forward so they almost tumbled onto the floor. Christopher let out an angry exclamation and up front Abel was harshly cursing and flaying the team of horses with his whip.

Chris assisted her back on the seat and then swung the carriage door open and leaned out. “What’s the trouble here?” he demanded.

Paula remained inside, aware that the carriage was stuck at a wild tilt. She heard Abel say, “Sorry, sir. We’re deep in the mud. I told you the frost had the roads in a bad state.” And the light carriage vibrated as the big man scrambled across the seat and leaped to the road.

She leaned forward and asked out the door. “What will I do?”

Chris came to get her. “Best join us out here,” he said. “We may have to abandon the carriage and walk the rest of the way through the rain.”

Paula took his hand for support and stepped out onto the spongy ground. Abel was holding the lantern high to see how deeply imbedded in the mud the back right wheel might be. Paula gasped when she saw that it was buried to the hub. And her husband let out a moan of disgust.

“We’ll need to be hauled out of this hole,” Chris complained.
The stalwart Abel was bending close to the wheel and studying the ground in the faint glow of the lantern as the rain continued to beat down. His craggy face bore a look of extreme concentration as he apparently weighed their chances of getting free of the mire.

Finally the tall man straightened and addressed Christopher, “It may not be so bad as we think,” he told him. “If you would take the horses’ heads, sir, while I put my shoulder to the rear of the carriage we might just be able to free ourselves. The young lady could help by keeping the lantern aloft.”

Chris frowned. “It doesn’t seem there’s any hope. But we can try if you like.”

“Yes, sir,” the tall man said. He came over to Paula and offered her the lantern. “Just keep it high to give the best light over all,” he said.

She nodded and took the lantern in one hand while she kept her rain cloak tightly around her with the other. The rain was heavier than ever at this moment. She saw Chris go up front and grasp the bridle of one of the nervously stomping black horses hitched to the carriage.

Abel was bending down by the wheel and he called to her husband. “Are you ready, sir?”

“Go ahead,” Christopher told him.

“Aye, sir,” the powerful man with the limp said and began to heave his weight to lift the carriage wheel out of the mud. At the same time Christopher cried out to the horses and pulled at the bridle of the horse nearest him. It was a moment of terrific effort as Paula stood by with the lantern. The carriage strained and moved a little and then rocked back into the mud once more.

“We’ll try another time,” Abel called to her husband. And he prepared to hurl the strength of his powerful body against the forces of the greedy mud once more. Again the tussle was repeated and Paula could see the effort registered on the wolf-like countenance of the giant man as he fought to free the buried wheel and the carriage.

She held the lantern high so the light might be evenly spread. And it was while the struggle to free the carriage was going on for the second time that a strange, black creature came winging through the rainy night towards
her. Involuntarily she dodged as its wings seemed to actually graze her head. The lantern toppled to the ground with a clamor and its flame went out.

Paula staggered back in the rainy darkness as the weird flying thing uttered loud, warning cries and swooped down close to her again. She screamed her fear and raised her hands protectively to beat it off. But it drew no closer and after a moment flew off into the darkness from whence it had come and left her weeping hysterically.

Chris was the first to reach her. "What happened?" he demanded. "Why did you drop the lantern?"

"That thing flew at me," she told him. "I thought it was going to attack me."

"I saw and heard it," her husband said grimly. "I took it for a giant bat, though I must say I've never seen a bat of such a size. And it had a weird cry."

"It was like some horrible warning," she said as she gained control of her emotions and began to recall the eerie visitation.

"No need to fear any more," Abel said as he joined them. "We got the carriage free that last heave and now we can drive on."

Paula nodded. "I'm sorry about the lantern."

"It can be fixed," Abel said calmly. "I'll take it back with me. We have only a short distance to drive now and I'm familiar with the road."

She found herself in the safety of the carriage's interior once more with Chris at her side. But she was trembling uncontrollably. The events of the evening had taken their toll from her. First the ghostly encounter with the stranger who had identified himself as Barnabas Collins only to vanish in an incredible manner, and then to be stalked by the odd bat-like creature with its strange cries. It had been almost too much.

Her husband's arm was around her and he glanced down at her sharply. "You're shivering," he said. "Has the rain soaked through your coat?"

"It's just nerves," she said. "I'll be all right in a moment."

Chris sighed impatiently. "I wonder what mad bird that was? I've never known its like in this region. It must have
been a giant bat attracted by the lantern's glow.

"I think it was a bat," she agreed.

"Well, you can stop trembling," he said. "You have no need to fear it now."

She said nothing. It would be too difficult to explain her confused state of mind. To try and have him understand that she now considered the bat-like creature might have come to her as a warning. It had startled her but still had not actually tried to harm her. Was it a harbinger of evil? A creature come to let her know that danger awaited her at Cranshaw? That their marriage was doomed to unhappiness?

All these depressing thoughts fled from her as Christopher once more became his charming, reckless self on their arrival at the entrance to Cranshaw. Despite her protests he lifted her lightly in his arms to carry her over the threshold. An approving Abel and a chuckling, stupid-looking older woman whom Abel introduced as his sister and the housekeeper, stood by to applaud Chris's romantic action.

She forgot her fears for a little. And then he took her upstairs and showed her the commodious rooms they would occupy. She was surprised to find that she and Chris were to have adjoining but separate bedrooms. She carefully hid her confusion at this development but her husband of a week evidently noticed it, for he frowned, his eyebrows almost joining as his brow furrowed. He gave her a keen look. "I suppose you wonder why I have arranged for us to have bedrooms of our own," he said. "There is a simple explanation. I sleep rather poorly. I'm given to after-midnight prowling. And I have no wish to disturb your rest."

She managed a forlorn smile. "You haven't bothered me with such prowling in the past week of our marriage."

He rubbed a forefinger impatiently over one of his sideburns. "I have gone out of my way to avoid bothering you," he said. "But now that we are moved into our own home I felt it best to follow this procedure." He paused. "At the most, you are only a short distance away from me with a door linking the rooms. You have only to call and I will be at your side."
He seemed so genuinely concerned that she was sorry she had made anything of it. Smiling again, she said, "I'm sure it will work out happily."

"Then all is well," her husband agreed, taking her in his arms for a goodnight kiss that lasted long enough to make her forget all the hardships and worries of the evening. "You must retire early," he told her. "I'm sure the weather will improve by morning."

Later, Abel came up with her bags and set them down at the foot of her bed. The tall man with the animal-like features gave her a mocking look. "I've tried to get you a proper lady's maid," he said. "But so far I've had no luck. But in the meantime my sister will be glad to help you in any way she can. Her name is Peg, and if she's not the brightest, at least she's willing."

"Thank you," Paula said, wishing that he would go. She didn't like the way he was so brazenly staring at her nor the familiarity of his tone.

He lingered a few minutes more with talk that had no importance. And when he finally did go she was left with the impression he had deliberately gone on as he had to give him an excuse to stay longer in her room. The big man was friendly enough, but she wondered if the friendliness could be a pretence. In spite of his easy manner she didn't trust him. He actually made her nervous.

When he left she slipped the bolt in place on her door. Then she went over and opened the door leading to her husband's bedroom. She found the bedroom empty, and decided Chris must have gone out somewhere to check on the operation of the old mansion. With a tiny sigh she went back into her own room and began to change for bed.

The bedroom she occupied had its own bathroom. It was up-to-date and Paula decided a warm bath might be the best thing to ease her distraught nerves. And so she luxuriated in one before turning out the lights and getting into bed. Since there was no sound from her husband's room, she assumed he had not yet returned, but she was very tired and at once her eyes began to droop shut with sleep.

The room was pitch dark when she woke up with a start. For a brief second she didn't know why she was
awake. And then she heard the cry—not far distant and utterly weird. As the cry echoed through the night she sat straight up in bed and listened with a stricken expression on her lovely face.

It was like the mad cry of some outlaw wolf! And at once she pictured Abel. The grinning animal-like face was engraved on her mind. And she knew it wasn’t fair to condemn the big man because of his odd appearance and to connect him with this weird howling.

As her full power of thought returned she made up her mind to try and waken Chris and ask him about the howling. She tossed back the bedclothes and found her slippers. Then she crossed quickly to the door linking their rooms.

She touched the handle and turned it only to discover the door would not open. It had been locked from the other side! She gasped and tried the door again, but with no better success. It was a stupefying discovery. And as if to heighten her fear, the terrifying wolf-like cry came once more.

Frightened and a little angry she pounded on the door with a small fist and cried, “Chris! The door is locked!”

There was nothing but silence in answer to her words. As a full realization came to her that he must have locked the door and did not want her to bother him, she leaned against its ornate wooden panels with a shocked expression on her pretty face.

The wolf howls came no more and after a little she went back and got into her bed. She was hurt and frightened so it took her some time before sleep returned.

The morning was bleak when she opened her eyes. Instantly she remembered of all the night’s events. As soon as she rose she went to the door and tried it. To her surprise it was no longer locked and she went on in to her husband’s room. She found him standing before the dresser mirror in his trousers and shirt, tying his necktie. He paused in his effort to give her a bright smile of greeting.

“You look rested and very lovely in your nightgown,” he said.

She blushed. “I’m glad you think so. I had a wretched night.”
He finished with his tie and gave her a look of casual concern as he quickly slipped on the jacket of his suit. “I’m surprised,” he said, glancing into the mirror again as he adjusted it to hang properly from his shoulders.

“I was wakened by some awful howling. Like that of a mad dog or a wolf.”

Her husband now swung around to regard her with deep interest. “You amaze me!”

“Are you telling me you didn’t hear it?” she demanded.

He smiled in a puzzled fashion. “I’m afraid I am. I slept soundly.”

“It’s not possible,” she argued. “You claim to be a light sleeper and those horrible cries were loud. As if a wolf might actually be prowling on the grounds.”

Chris listened patiently. “Could it have been a nightmare?”

“I think not,” she said, meeting his glance with a firm one of her own. “In my terror I ran to the door to ask your comfort. And I found the door locked.”

His eyebrows lifted in surprise. “More and more it appears you had a bad dream,” he told her.

“I’d like to know why you locked the door,” she insisted.

He smiled ruefully. “Didn’t you just come through it now?”

“Yes.”

He shrugged. “Well?”

It was her turn to frown at him. “Are you actually trying to convince me that it wasn’t locked?”

“I’m advising you of a fact.”

“I don’t accept it,” she said. “I tried the door and it was locked. I know it. And when I pounded on it and called your name there was no answer. You probably weren’t even in the room.”

“You had a nightmare,” he repeated in that annoyingly calm fashion.

She hesitated. Then she asked, “Why are you treating me this way?”

“You’re accusing me wrongly,” he said in a more understanding voice. “I don’t know what has caused this confusion. Perhaps the door stuck. Whatever it was, I’m
truly sorry. Surely you can’t question my love for you?” And he took her by the arms.

Paula stared at him unhappily. “I don’t know what to think.”

“Believe in me,” he implored her, his eyes fastening on hers with an almost hypnotic stare.

“I want to,” she faltered.

He embraced her and she forgave him. She forced all the doubts she’d known from her mind. He was her husband, and although he was difficult in nature, she felt she owed him her full allegiance. And so the initial day of their sojourn at Cranshaw began on a happy note of reconciliation.

The weather remained bleak and her first view of the grounds as mistress of the old estate was somewhat depressing. The rain had given way to a dark foggy morning. It was cold and she could barely see Collinwood off to the left a short distance. The cove was shrouded with the billowing gray clouds and everything was damp and cold. In the hallway leading to the rear of the house she met Abel.

The big man came limping along in his odd fashion and when they met he nodded politely. “You’ve been taking in the view, Missus Jennings.”

“Yes. But I’m afraid there isn’t much of it to enjoy today,” she said. “The fog is so heavy.”

“Comes by spells, mostly in the spring and fall,” the tall man agreed. “Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?”

“No. Though I do hope you can get us a maid soon,” she said.

Abel smiled in a knowing fashion. “I’ll do my best. None of the village girls want to work this far from their homes. We’ve had a strange murder or two in the district and the village people are scared. But I’ll find someone.”

She looked sharply at the handyman. “Did you happen to hear a strange howling last night?”

“Howling, Missus Jennings?”

“Yes. Like a wolf baying at the moon. Only I know there wasn’t any moon. And I doubt if there are wolves in this region.”
The big man looked grave. "Some say there are."
"Really?"
"But most folks don't go along with the idea," Abel said.
"I see," she said. "Did you not hear the howling?"
"Can't say that I did, Missus," Abel told her cheerfully.
"But that don't mean there wasn't any. I sleep sound."
"I'm sure you must if you didn't hear the mournful cries that wakened me," she said with a touch of sarcasm.
"What about the furniture?"
"Mr. Jennings has gone down to the wharf to supervise the loading of it in a wagon. It should be here this afternoon if they don't get mired down again," the big man said.
"I'm anxious to see it arrive," she said. "I'd like to begin putting it in place."
"Yes, Missus," he said, and with another nod he was on his way back to the kitchen.
Paula devoted the balance of the morning and nearly all the afternoon to an exploration of the stout old mansion and its cellar. She was impressed at the soled construction of Cranshaw and a trifle dismayed at the number of rooms completely empty of any furnishings. It would take much more than they'd brought down from Boston to properly fix the house up. She would have to discuss that when Chris returned.
But dinner time arrived and her husband did not return. She was more than a little panicky at his long absence. Dinner was announced and she sat alone in the somber dining room with Abel's sister silently serving her. The food was good enough but she had no appetite. Her concern about what was keeping Chris and where he might be steadily mounting.
It wasn't until she was on her way out of the dining room that Abel came loping to meet her. He bowed and with a strange glitter in his almost colorless eyes informed her, "I've just had word from Mr. Jennings. The wagon bogged down in the mud at the exact place we were stuck last night. He's waiting for an extra team to come and pull them out. Could be a spell before he gets here, Missus."
"Thank you," she said in an almost abrupt manner. For she felt the explanation was less than completely satisfac-
tory. Christopher must have idled a good deal of time in
Collinsport before starting out. And once again she was
struck by the wolf-like features of Abel and his odd man-
ner.

It was dusk and she felt she could not remain in the big
house with Abel and his peculiar sister another moment.
She put on her cloak and stepped out into the foggy, cool
evening. After a moment’s deliberation she made up her
mind to walk slowly up the road towards the spot where
the wagon was supposed to be mired.

She walked briskly, avoiding the occasional mud puddles and soft ground of the country road. The only sound
to break the silence was the pounding of the waves on the
beach a distance away. She kept reminding herself that her
husband and the wagon could only be a little way off and
there was no need for her to be afraid.

Suddenly she had the eerie sensation that she was no
longer alone—that someone was close to her, trailing her
footsteps. Her heart began to pound and her throat
became dry. She swallowed hard and braced herself
against these new fears. She began to walk more quickly
and just as she rounded a bend in the narrow road she
froze and let out a tiny cry. A familiar figure in a black
coat with a cape was standing there blocking her way. The
man who had called himself Barnabas Collins!

CHAPTER THREE

The shock of the initial confrontation over, she felt relief
rather than an increase of her fear. The stranger from
England was hatless, as he had been on the ship, and he
looked at her with interest.

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In his cultivated fashion, he apologized, “I’m afraid I may have frightened you.”

She nodded. “I wasn’t expecting to meet anyone so suddenly.”

“I have been wondering about you,” Barnabas Collins said, his deep-set eyes searching her face. “Speculating on how you liked your new home.”

Somewhat embarrassed, she said, “I’m gradually getting adjusted. You were gone when I tried to introduce you to my husband. And I didn’t see you get off the ship.”

Barnabas Collins showed no sign of a change in expression. “I did leave you rather abruptly,” he admitted in his rich voice. “I realized I’d made no arrangements for the luggage of myself and my servant to be unloaded. So I hurried off.”

Paula felt the explanation left a lot to be explained since he’d almost literally vanished into thin air, but she also felt that no amount of questioning would get her any more information, so she said, “Did my Uncle meet you?”

“Yes.” The man in the dark Inverness coat shifted his black cane with its unique silver wolf’s head from his left to his right hand as he answered. “I was late in leaving the ship. That is how we must have missed meeting again.”

Impressed by his suave authority, she stared at him silhouetted against the grayness of the growing dusk and again wondered why he had such an unusual impact on her. He gave her the impression of a person with almost frightening perception. His eyes seemed to pierce through her and read her secret thoughts.

Nervously she told him, “My husband is bringing back a wagonload of furniture from the wharf. I understand the wagon is mired in the mud a little distance from here. Did you happen to pass by it?”

He shook his head. “No. I’ve only walked a short way along the road. I came over from Collinwood by a footpath. I mentioned you to your Uncle Michael. I have the impression he is worried about you.”

“Oh?” Paula said, trying to sound off-hand.

“He does not like your husband,” Barnabas Collins went on. “Although he gave me no reason for his attitude. And he mentioned a servant named Abel, whom he distrusts.”
"There is such a servant at Cranshaw," she admitted. "Did he give any grounds for his dislike of Abel?"

"Not really," the man in the dark caped coat said. "He spoke in a general way of your husband bringing a new evil to Collinsport. And he seemed to feel a responsibility for your having met Chris Jennings while in his care."

Paula managed a rueful smile. "But it was a happy meeting. I love my husband."

The burning eyes of the Englishman were fixed on her. "Still, your Uncle Michael seems to fear you may sooner or later need help. I hope you will not suffer torment without appealing to him for the aid I know he'd gladly offer."

She listened to his solemn words as they stood there, two shadowy figures in the growing darkness. Cold fear twisted its fingers around her heart. And she was convinced this man knew of the doubts she'd suffered since her arrival at Cranshaw. He might even be aware of the eerie wolf-like howling she'd heard and know the secret meaning of it. But she dare not ask him. Dare not let him guess what an uneasy state she was in.

"I'm sure my uncle's concern is needless," she said.

Barnabas shrugged. "I speak only for your good," he told her. "I would be happy if you would think of me as a friend. I plan to remain at Collinwood for a period. On any evening you will find me at the old house. I'm working on some sketches of the area."

"Then you are an artist?" Paula said.

The melancholy smile crossed his handsome face again. "Not really. I have a small talent for drawing. This countryside means a great deal to me. And I also enjoy doing studies of the local people."

"I'm glad you're enjoying your visit," she said, and as she spoke there came the sound of slowly turning wagon wheels from further up the narrow road. "That will be my husband with the furniture," she said.

Barnabas turned and glanced in the direction of the creaking wheels. "Yes," he agreed and, gazing at her again, added, "It might be better if he didn't see us together at this time. Please don't forget, you can reach me at the old house almost any evening."

"Please call on us," Paula suggested. But her words fell
on empty air. The man in the black Inverness coat had already stridden off into the night. She could no longer see any sign of him, and she realized that he had gone almost as quickly as on that other occasion. There was something ghostly in the way he appeared and vanished.

The wagon was drawing nearer but she gave up any idea of meeting it. Instead she turned and walked hastily back to the great stone mansion. The lights at the ground level showed from its small windows. She was grateful for the beacon to guide her in the country darkness. Her mind was filled with confusions and doubts.

But most of these were dispersed when Chris embraced her warmly in the main hallway of the old house shortly afterwards. She had waited there for his arrival. In spite of the delay and nuisance of being stuck in the mud he seemed to have retained his good humor.

“Not a crate lost,” he told her jubilantly. “And in the morning we’ll begin our unpacking. I’m anxious to get the place set to rights.”

She stared up at him lovingly. “I missed you so today.”

He smiled. “That is the way it should be. But you must understand that I cannot spend all my time here with you.”

“I know that,” she agreed with a deep sigh. “It would be much easier for me if there were other servants in the house. A maid or two are needed and they would provide a touch of youth about the place.”

“I’ll speak to Abel again,” her husband promised.

“I don’t think he’s very interested in whether we get extra help or not,” she said. “And yet he and his sister are such a peculiar pair they make me nervous.”

Chris’s shaggy eyebrows met in a frown. His gaunt face had quickly taken on an expression of displeasure. “But Abel is a good servant and so is Peg.”

“Yet they are odd,” she pointed out. “It would also be nice if I could occasionally go over to Collinwood and spend an afternoon or evening with my aunt and uncle. And it would be generous of you to have them visit here.”

“No!”

Her husband’s reply was one of shocking rebuke. She thought she had never seen him so angry. His heavy nostrils dilated in the wrath her suggestion had raised.
"I meant no harm!" she faltered.

"In that case let us end the discussion," her husband said coldly. "I made it clear I could never be friendly with the Collins family before we were married. If you had any second thoughts you should have expressed them at that time."

"Perhaps I hoped you would relent."

Chris regarded her angrily. "Then that was a bad error of judgment on your part," he said, turning and striding out of the hallway to leave her standing there alone and shattered.

The exchange marked the beginning of another unhappy night for Paula. Her husband deliberately avoided her for the balance of the evening. And when it was time for bed she went up to her room to find that the linking door to her husband's bedroom was locked once more. Accepting this as a final rebuke she made no attempt to knock on the door or plead with him to open it.

With a heavy heart she changed into her nightclothes and went to bed. But sleep did not come when she put out the light. For a long while she lay staring up into the darkness, fearful that her marriage had been a dreadful mistake. She already felt she could not cope with her new husband's moodiness and belligerence towards her family.

And then there were the other things. The fear the old mansion and its surroundings had generated in her. The eerie suspicion she held that Abel was an evil man and his sister was in league with him. The dreadful sense of isolation she'd known since her arrival at Cranshaw.

There was only a single ray of hope in all the bleak picture. Her Uncle Michael had not forgotten about her and Collinwood was reassuringly near if also out of bounds by her husband's orders. She would not hesitate to defy those orders if the need should arise.

And there was the stranger, that Barnabas Collins! He had suddenly come to play a prominent role in her life. Perhaps might become more important to her as the days went by. He had offered her friendship and showed genuine concern for her welfare. And yet, he was a person cloaked in mystery, somebody unlike anyone she had ever met before. Why did he fascinate her and make her uneasy at the same time?
Her muddled thoughts gave way to sleep and nightmares which caused her to stir in torment in the bed and murmur protests. The wolf cries she’d heard the night before now haunted her dreams. And she imagined herself in a snowy field fleeing wildly with a snarling wolf pack close behind her. The freezing snow cut into her bare feet and she stumbled and plunged forward into it, the snow filled her mouth and nostrils with a suffocating iciness. She clawed at it wildly and tried to scream but couldn’t.

And then she wakened abruptly to see the cool beams of a full moon streaming through the window of her room. It dispelled the inky darkness and gave her some small reassurance. She sat up, staring at the window and gradually casting off the panic her nightmare had brought. And next she began to feel lonely for Chris and wondered if perhaps he might have relented and unlocked the door between their rooms after she’d gone to bed.

Clad only in her flimsy nightgown she crossed over to the door and tried the handle. Disappointment shadowed her face! It was still locked. She leaned her ear to it and could hear no sound from Chris’s bedroom. Pride would not allow her to call out to him.

After hesitating there a moment she turned and slowly went across to the window. The moonlight flowed in to softly illuminate her shapely figure and the beauty of her features. She gazed down at the lawn and the sea beyond and saw that it was all etched in an eerie silver tone. And then as she stood there she heard that flesh-creeping howl once more. It came from close by the house and her startled eyes searched for some sign of the creature that had uttered the wolf’s cry.

From a clump of bushes on the other side of the road she saw a furtive movement and then the figure of a gray wolf as it darted across the lawn with a gait that seemed strangely familiar. And even as she watched she saw the wolf dissolve to become the manservant, Abel, who continued on towards the house with his loping walk.

She stood there transfixed by what she’d witnessed. Of course it must have been an illusion caused by the weird moonlight. It had been Abel she’d seen from the start. But why had he been lurking by the bushes? What was he
doing out on the grounds at this hour of the night? Had he also heard the strange howling and gone out to investigate? When she’d asked him before he’d denied hearing any such sounds.

She recalled the words of Barnabas Collins from earlier in the evening. He’d told her that her Uncle Michael regarded Abel as a dangerous and evil man. She herself had felt uneasy about him from their first meeting. What was there about the crippled but powerful man that made others regard him with distrust?

If only she could talk sensibly about all this to Chris. But she knew there was no hope of that. The man she’d married was neurotic to an alarming degree. They’d begun their married life at Cranshaw with him literally locking the door against her. Having reached this mournful conclusion, she returned to bed and eventually to sleep.

Next morning Chris underwent another change of mood. He was at the breakfast table to greet her and discuss the unpacking of the furniture crates. He behaved exactly as if nothing had ever happened. And he did offer her one bit of good news.

“You’ll be glad to hear we have a housemaid,” he informed her. “Her name is Lizzie Wells. She’s the blacksmith’s daughter and has worked in several fine homes in Portland. She’s back here because of her mother’s illness. However, her mother is better now and Lizzie is willing to take a job in the area. She’ll be arriving in the late afternoon.”

Paula was pleased. “That’s wonderful,” she said. “And I think you should try to find at least one other girl. Two if you can manage it.”

Her husband showed tolerant amusement on his gaunt face. “I consider us lucky to get Lizzie. You must allow more time for me to locate others.”

The day was bright and warmer. The crates had been piled in an empty rear parlor and there Abel and her husband ripped the wooden boxes open and revealed the furniture pieces that were to be spread through the large house. Peg, Abel’s sister, dusted and polished the items as they were unpacked and Paula made the decisions as to where each piece of furniture should go. It offered them
pleasant and exciting hours. And their spirits improved as
the gloomy big rooms of the mansion showed the
benefits of the new additions.

Abel worked with silent persistence, the perspiration at
times running down his furrowed face. Several times Paula
found herself on the verge of questioning him about the
previous night, but something always seemed to hold her
back or interrupt her. She still wondered what he had been
doing out there in the small hours of the morning.

There were some paintings stacked together in one of
the wooden crates. Christopher seemed to take a par¬
ticular interest in these. As he lifted them one by one from
the container he gave each a moment.

“We’re short on good art here,” he advised her. “Cap¬
tain Cranshaw was not one to devote much time to such
things. So I’ve got a half-dozen paintings to use in the liv¬
ing room and a special seascape for over the mantel in the
study. Do you like it?” He held it up for her to study.

She looked at the painting in its ornate gilt frame. It
was a subdued seascape with a suggestion of the waves
pounding against the shore on a bleak winter day. “It’s
very good,” she said.

He smiled before he put the painting aside. “I agree,”
he said. “I’m glad our taste in art is similar. At least that’s
a beginning.”

She was about to make some suitable reply when he
drew the final large painting from the wooden container.
As he swung it around she had all she could do to contain
a startled gasp. For the painting was a winter scene of a
pack of wolves gathered on a high, snow-tipped cliff. It
was almost identical to the scene she’d been tormented by
in her nightmare.

Christopher didn’t appear to notice her shock. His eyes
were on the painting. “This goes in the living room,” he
said. “I’ve a place planned for it.”

“It’s unusual,” she murmured.

He glanced at her as he still balanced the painting with
his hand on it. “An old painting,” he said. “I don’t think
there are any wolves left in New England. But I find it a
stirring subject.”

The housekeeper, Peg, had left the room for something
and Abel was busily engaged pounding another of the
cases open. She felt that there was enough privacy for her to bring up the unpleasant subject again.

So she said, “It’s strange you should have purchased that painting of the wolf pack. If you’ll remember I thought I heard a wolf howling night before last.”

Chris’s gaunt face wore a guarded look. “Did you?”

“Yes. And I heard the same weird cry again last night. Could there possibly be a stray wolf roaming the countryside?”

Her husband hesitated and then she saw that Abel had halted his work to stand there gazing at Chris with a wary expression on his animal-like features. There seemed to be a current of apprehension between the two.

At last her husband said, “You’ve been allowing your imagination to run wild. What you’ve heard has been some dog baying at the moon.”

His explanation had been given in such a way that it held no conviction for her. And she decided to go a little further. “I looked out the window last night to see if I could spot anything. And after a moment I picked out Abel hurrying towards the house.”

This brought a momentous silence. Chris looked annoyed. “Are you certain it was Abel?”

“Quite certain,” she said, glancing at the big man.

Abel regarded her with unconcealed contempt. In his harsh voice he said, “Missus is right. I have some traps set out and I went to see what I could find in them. Leave them too long and the scavengers come and devour whatever you’ve caught. That’s where I was coming from.”

A gleam of cold triumph shone in Chris’s eyes. “Does that satisfy you?”

“I suppose so,” she said, but it didn’t. She was sure Abel had made up the story on the spur of the moment. But they went on with the uncrating.

Later, she was impressed by the extreme care Chris took in hanging the painting of the wolves in the great drawing room of Cranshaw. It was an imposing piece of art in its giant decorative frame and did suit the somewhat gloomy room. It struck her that her husband’s interest in the painting was out of all proportion to that shown towards the rest of the things they had unpacked.
As the afternoon drew to a close the arrival of Lizzie Wells, the new maid, came as a welcome diversion for Paula. She liked the girl on sight. Lizzie was a blonde with a rich head of hair in an upsweep, a mischievous face and sparkling blue eyes. After Peg had shown the girl around the house Paula interviewed her and took her upstairs to explain how she wanted the bedrooms kept and the care she would require for her clothes.

The girl was bright and seemed anxious to please, listening attentively as Paula escorted her from one bedroom to the other and showed her the location of her various dresses in the different closets.

When everything had been covered Paula smiled at her. “Well, do you think you have it all clear now?”

“Indeed, ma’am,” the girl said. “I’m sure it will be very pleasant working for you.”

“I hope so,” Paula said sincerely. “We are so short of help here. If you know of any other girls who might like to work at Cranshaw I wish you’d advise me.”

The pert blonde showed a moment of discomfiture. Looking down at the floor, she said, “I can’t say that I do.”

“It’s odd,” Paula said with a sigh. “I’d expect there’d be at least a few village girls interested in employment.”

Lizzie raised her eyes. “There’s plenty of girls would like the work well enough. But not here.”

Paula was at once struck by the shyness shown by the girl. “Why not here?”

“Because most of the village folk think Cranshaw is haunted,” Lizzie said, staring at her with wide-eyed earnestness.

Paula frowned. “What nonsense! They tell such tales about all old houses. You surely don’t believe that?”

“I’ve been around more than most of the local girls,” Lizzie said. “I suppose they’re more likely to think such things than me.”

“Well, you can tell them that you’ve found nothing here to alarm you,” Paula said.

“Yes, ma’am,” the girl said soberly. “But then there’s Abel.”

“Abel?” She wondered what might be coming next.

Lizzie nodded. “The folk in Collinsport are afraid of
him and that Peg. They say she’s a kind of witch and he’s a wolfman.”

“A wolfman?” Paula repeated in a shocked voice. “Whatever do they mean by that?”

“You know how he limps.”

“Yes,” Paula said impatiently.

“The folk say that when he was a wolf he was caught in a trap. He did live on the edge of town with Peg and worked in the woods a little. Mostly he trapped animals and sold their pelts for a living. The local people say he can turn into a wolf at will and once he stumbled over a strange trap and nearly lost a paw.”

Paula stared at the girl. “But that’s a fantastic story!” she protested. At the same time there was a picture in her mind of the gray animal she’d seen the night before which had seemed to turn into Abel.

“I suppose so,” the girl said quietly. “But now that he has come to work here at Cranshaw I doubt if you’ll get any of the village girls except me. They remember too well what happened to Ann Bodley.”

“Ann Bodley?”

Lizzie nodded. “She was the grocer’s daughter. They found her in a field with her throat ripped open. They said it was the work of a mad dog. But the village people didn’t believe that. They still think it was the wolfman, Abel. He always had a fancy for Ann and some saw him walking with her that very night.”

“You’re saying that Abel could be a murderer!” Paula said in a shocked tone.

“Yes, ma’am.”

She was at a loss for words. At last she managed, “It can’t be true. I’m sure my husband wouldn’t employ a man of such character.”

“The master is a stranger, ma’am,” the girl pointed out. “He’d not hear of what Abel and that Peg were like. But I would be careful of those two just the same.”

Paula studied the girl with troubled eyes. “I will speak to my husband about them,” she promised. “Knowing what you do I wonder that you are willing to remain.”

The pert blonde made a face. “I need the money, ma’am. And I’ve always been one who could take care of myself.”
“See that you do,” Paula entreated her.

She remained in her room after the girl had gone downstairs. Glancing at her reflection in the mirror she was alarmed at how pale and shaken she was. Hearing this talk from Lizzie had not been pleasant. Discounting a good deal of it as village gossip, there was still enough to the story to upset her. And adding this to what she’d seen and heard she began to feel she’d stumbled on some horrifying secret. Worst of all, she suspected that Chris knew more about it than he was willing to let on.

Was Abel some kind of maniac who behaved like a renegade animal under cover of the night? And if so, why was Chris shielding him and employing him? Was there some secret bond between the two? If only she could ask Chris frankly about these troubling questions, it would be so much easier.

But she’d discovered that Chris was not a one for frankness. This early in their marriage she was forced to cater to him and submit meekly to his moods. She could only assume her husband had been taken in by Abel and his sister. But Chris had grown up in Collinsport and it was unlikely that he’d not heard the vicious stories about the weird brother and sister.

Perhaps that was his reason for hiring them. He had a contempt and hatred for the village and its people. This could be one of his ways of flaunting his power in their faces.

Cranshaw had no electricity, for the village itself did not have electric power as yet. So when Paula joined her husband at the dinner table that evening the glow of tall white candles in shining silver holders cast a soft light over the table.

Chris’s gaunt face had a look of great strength in the flickering glow of the candlelight. He smiled at her across the table. “You look your best tonight, my dear,” he told her. “And that is lovely, indeed.”

She returned his smile, though she felt anything but at ease. “I’m beginning to feel more at home here,” she said. “You mustn’t let the tall ceilings and gloomy hallways scare you off,” was her husband’s admonition. “This is a fine old place. Suited to our kind of living.”
This left her wondering just what he considered their kind of living might be. She said, "Surely we will be doing some entertaining. You must have a few friends here in Collinsport."

He at once looked less genial. "Not any more," he said curtly. "I ask only to be let alone."

"Is that a healthy attitude?"

"It is mine," he told her flatly.

She knew it was useless to discuss the matter further with him. But she could not help thinking of the much warmer setting Collinwood had offered. Her Uncle Michael and Aunt Sally were fine hosts. She’d known a great deal of happiness as their guest. And when she’d met the charming Chris at that first dance she’d had no idea he had another side to him, or that almost the moment they were married he would change into the somber young man seated across the table from her.

When they talked again they discussed such things as the new furnishings and what to do about drapes. Peg came silently into the room to serve them and glided out like the witch the villagers had dubbed her to be.

Chris finally asked Paula, "How do you like the new maid?"

"She seems intelligent enough," she said.

"I'm sure she is," her husband assured her. "Abel has promised to try and find some others."

She gave him a knowing glance. "Wouldn't it be wiser for you to conduct the search yourself?"

His eyebrows arched. "Why do you say that?"

"You are the owner of Cranshaw. I'm sure the villagers would show you more attention and respect."

He considered this. "Perhaps you are right," he said at last.

She had not dared come out with the true reason, since she feared it could be the signal for another outburst of rage on his part. The mention of the village people’s superstitious fear of Abel and his sister would be enough to send him into a tirade.

With dinner over she excused herself and went upstairs. She had a wretched headache and decided she might be wise to retire early. Before doing so she made the rounds of her room and then her husband’s. She had little idea of
how well supplied with shirts and other furnishings he might be. Checking his closet she counted a half-dozen suits. There were also a number of pairs of shoes. She went across to the dresser and opened it. The top drawer was crammed with socks and handkerchiefs. She tried the drawer below it and there were the shirts neatly starched and piled. She rummaged through them in a rough attempt to make a count of how many were there. As her hand brushed the bottom of the drawer she encountered something furry.

It gave her a start. Then she pressed back the shirts to see what it was she'd inadvertently touched and was surprised to find that it was a belt. A broad fur belt of a dirty grayish color. She drew it out and held it up by the buckle. She'd never seen anything like it before.

Concentrating on the belt she failed to notice she was no longer alone. When rough hands seized the belt from her and rudely hurled her aside she was completely shocked!

Paula gave a loud sob for it was her husband who stood there angrily holding the strange fur belt he'd wrenched from her hands. Chris glared at her.

"How dare you pry in my things?" he demanded.

"I was only checking on your shirts," Paula said brokenly. "And I came on that by accident."

He listened and looking less enraged folded the belt up and stuffed it in a jacket pocket. "You should have asked me before you came poking in here!"

She had regained her poise and now she was ready to show her resentment at the way he'd abused her. "I am your wife," she reminded him, "and I don't expect to be roughly treated as I was just now."

Chris looked sullenly ashamed. "You know how I am," he said in a quieter tone. "I have a quick temper."

Her lovely face was pale and defiant. "More than that, I'm afraid," she said in a tense voice. "I doubt if you have any love for me or ever did."

"Paula!" He spoke her name in a repentant tone and stepped forward to take her by the arms and stare down at her. "I'm sorry. Believe me, I am. But this belt you found has a special meaning for me. It was given to me by someone long ago. I value it even though it appears
worthless. I was afraid you might be going to throw it away.”

She looked at him with wide-eyed concern. “I had no intention of that,” she said. “I was merely curious about it. What kind of belt is it anyway? And what is its use, since it has such a peculiar wide design?”

“I used to wear it when I went hunting,” her husband said. “It has great warmth. I don’t know what kind of fur it is. It’s not important. The only thing I care about at the moment is that you know I do love you.” And he brought her close for a brief kiss.

She submitted to the kiss but at that moment there was nothing but fear and revulsion in her heart. After the slight contact of their lips she wearily pushed him away from her. And in his new humble mood he allowed her to do as she wished.

She said, “Please leave me alone. I have a bad headache.”

Her husband’s gaunt face showed concern. “Shall I send up Peg?”

“No.”

“Then how about the new girl, Lizzie; she can bring you a hot drink or whatever you’d like?” Chris was apparently now filled with a desire to please her.

She touched her hand to her forehead and closed her eyes. “Just let me be by myself,” she told him. “I need rest and quiet.”

“Whatever you say,” Chris agreed hastily. “Please try to forgive what happened. I’m truly sorry.”

Paula nodded without making any other reply. He stood there awkwardly for a moment, then sighed and turned to exit into the hallway. She waited, listening to his footsteps descending the stairs. Then, when she was sure he had gone, she went on back to her own room.
CHAPTER FOUR

When she returned to her room she went directly to the window and stared out as she tried to sort her thoughts. She gazed down at the bushes and the lawn where she had witnessed the weird transformation of what had seemed a wolf-like animal to Abel. Since she’d arrived at Cranshaw she’d undergone one eerie experience after another. Chris had behaved in such a strange fashion she could no longer have the same feeling for him. Her Uncle Michael had been right. She should never have married the neurotic young man.

But what to do now? Her dilemma was made more difficult by her pride. She did not want to run straight to her uncle and confess that she’d been wrong even though it would probably be the wise thing to do. And yet she did not see how she could endure what she was going through alone without a friendly word or any advice.

The room was shadowed with darkness but she had no wish to light one of the several lamps. Instead, she remained by the window, staring out into the gathering gloom. She remembered the handsome man in the black Inverness coat who had invited her to visit him at the old house near Collinwood whenever she felt the need of a friend. Surely she needed one as much now as she ever would.

She made an impulsive decision. Somehow she would get out of the silent old mansion and make her way to Collinwood by the path the stranger had used. It was a shortcut and she thought she could find it. With her mind made up she went to the closet and got her flowing black cloak. She pulled the cowl well forward on her head to
conceal her face. Then she stealthily crept out into the hallway and down the stairs.

There wasn't a sign of anyone below and she quickly went to the front door and let herself out. The heavy oaken door squeaked a little on its hinges as she drew it closed after her, giving her a bad moment, but no one seemed to have heard it for there wasn't a move as she hurried down the front steps and across the dusk shrouded lawn.

She followed the road until she came to the footpath. It was completely dark now and she wished she'd brought a small lantern with her, but she'd had neither the time nor opportunity to do that. Even a tallow candle would have been a help if she could have kept it alight against the cool night breeze. The path had an uneven surface and she was forced to go slowly. Every once in a while a branch hanging low would brush against the cowl sheltering her face like a ghostly hand. The path was almost grown over in places and seemed longer than she remembered it, but the only time she'd used it before had been during the daylight. And she'd not been under such tension then.

Every so often there was an unexpected rustling or a quick scurrying from the dense bushes that fringed the path. Her nerves were taut and towards the end she hurried more, stumbling every few steps. At last she came out into the open to see the dark outline of Collinwood against the still darker sky. Lights were showing at the windows of its great living room and she thought wistfully of Uncle Michael and Aunt Sally and how much she'd like to be with them.

But Collinwood itself was not her destination. She walked in a direction that would take her to the original old house where Barnabas Collins had mentioned he was staying. Now as she drew near it she began to suffer from doubts. Had she any reason to bring her problems to this man she hardly knew, regardless of how friendly he might seem? Would she be able to make him understand what was happening at Cranshaw? Or would her talk about wolves merely suggest that she was mad?

When she reached the entrance to the old house her heart sank. It was all in darkness. Barnabas Collins must be visiting the main house or he might even have gone off
somewhere for a day's sketching. It was terribly disap¬
pointing. She hesitated on the granite steps a moment
before she decided to try the old-fashioned iron knocker
that hung from the door. Lifting it she gave several re¬
sounding knocks and waited. Perhaps the servant he'd
mentioned would be home and tell her where Barnabas
was.

She was about to give up and retreat down the steps
when the door was opened cautiously a crack and she saw
a candle and a broad, bloated face with a scraggle of
beard looming above it. The expression on the face was
uncomprehending rather than unfriendly.

Paula spoke quickly. "I'm looking for Mr. Barnabas
Collins," she said.
The face had small reddish eyes that peered at her
doubtfully. The door opened a crack more. Then there
were the sound of footsteps advancing from the rear of the
hall. And a moment later Barnabas Collins appeared. He
motioned the stout man away and smiled at her.

"I'm afraid Davis didn't give you much of a welcome," he said, taking the candle as he opened the door wide for
her.

She entered the dank hallway with a smile of gratitude.
"When I got here I didn't see a single light," she said.
The handsome, sallow face showed a returning smile. "I
was working in the cellar when you arrived. Davis is a
mute and not too bright. He would have given your
message to me in due time, but one must be very patient
with him."

"I've hesitated to bother you," she said.
"No bother," Barnabas Collins assured her. "You must
forgive me for the sad state of this place. I haven't been
here long enough to make any improvements. We'll go in-
to the living room."
The servant had vanished somewhere and Barnabas led
her down to the wide entrance to what had surely once
been an elaborate drawing room. At the moment its fur-
niture was shrouded in white covers, the walls were thick
with grime and there was even a huge spider's web in the
corner of the doorway.
Barnabas went ahead and threw back a covering from
an easy chair. He gestured for her to seat herself in it.
“Next time you call I hope the place will be more presentable,” he apologized.

The one thing that bothered her was the dampness. The house seemed colder than the March night outside. She sat down with a tiny shiver and glanced around at the faded grandeur of the shadowed room as he placed the candle on the table beside her.

He stood directly in front of her a sympathetic light in his deep-set eyes. “I wonder you found your way in the darkness.”

“I had traveled the path before in daylight,” she said. “But it wasn’t an easy journey tonight.”

“I shall accompany you back,” he promised. “How are you making out at Cranshaw?”

Paula hesitated. Then she said, “Oh, Mr. Collins, I’m so confused! I don’t know what awful business I’ve gotten myself into. There are things happening at Cranshaw that terrify me.”

Barnabas appeared interested. “Go on,” he said.

Somehow she managed to get control of herself again and tell him of a few of the things that had upset her. As she went over it she was once more appalled to realize how fantastic her account sounded. She was sure that he would decide she was a liar or an idiot, but he seemed to think neither of these things. He clasped his hands behind his back and sighed. “Interesting,” he said. “A hint of lycanthropy.”

Paula opened her eyes wide. “Lycanthropy?”

“Yes,” he said. “That’s the name for the condition when a man believes he has become an animal or is accused of having the ability to transform himself into one. The word means literally wolfman. The wolf being the most dangerous animal known in European countries. The term is also applied to persons supposed to have assumed the form of any other wild life.”

She listened carefully to the explanation. “I did think I saw Abel change from a wolf, but it had to be my imagination.”

Barnabas’s burning eyes fixed on her thoughtfully. “I wonder,” he said.

“The dreadful thing is that Chris seems to be linked with him in whatever is going on. My husband has
changed beyond belief. He is sullen most of the time. And tonight when I accidentally happened on that belt he treated me harshly."

"I'd like to have a look at that belt," Barnabas said. "Do you think it could have been made of a wolf skin?"

A look of fear came into her lovely eyes. "Why, yes, come to think of it I'd say that's what it was."

"It fits," Barnabas assured her. "I have talked with your Uncle Michael and heard the same weird gossip about Abel. The villagers do call him a wolfman."

"Why would Chris hire such a person?" she wondered.

"He may not have known of his unsavory character," the handsome, dark-haired man suggested.

"No. I think he must have heard of him. Chris spent his boyhood in the village."

"Your husband is not fond of company," Barnabas went on in his suave way. "He may have hired Abel and his witch-like sister to discourage intruders at Cranshaw."

"It surely has discouraged us getting much extra help," Paula worried and she told him of their luck in getting the pert Lizzie on the staff.

"I have heard of a girl being murdered here," Barnabas agreed. "And the marks on her throat suggested a mad dog or a wolf. And I have heard Abel's name linked with the crime."

"The villagers believe he did it."

"Still, they may be wrong," Barnabas pointed out. "It will take some time to find out."

"Meanwhile, I don't know whether I can stay there or not," Paula said.

"I suppose it depends on how much you love your husband," the man standing facing her said.

She shook her head. "I thought I loved him a great deal. I don't know if that is any longer true."

Barnabas Collins spoke gently. "Perhaps you should remain at Cranshaw until you are positive of your feelings."

"Yes, I suppose so," she admitted with a sigh.

"I can't deny you will be in danger," the handsome man in the Inverness coat told her. "At the moment I don't know what the danger may be. Or how deeply involved Chris Jennings is in it. But I promise I'll do my best to discover the truth for you."
She looked up at him gratefully. "You are so kind."

Barnabas shrugged. "I have known many frustrations in my own life," he said. "It would give me great satisfaction to help you in this." His burning eyes met hers. "Have you had any experience with the supernatural?"

"No," she said, a chill running down her spine.

"This could have something to do with the world of the unknown," the man in the black cape told her solemnly. "There are many things beyond our understanding."

She stared at him. "You think my husband and Abel are linked in some horrible business?"

"It could be," Barnabas said. "You are his second wife, are you not?"

"Yes," she nodded. "Rachel, his first wife, was killed in a horrible accident. A mad dog—" She paused with a stricken expression on her lovely face and raised her eyes to meet his.

"Go on," he said.

She touched a hand to her temple. "I don't know. I was going to say that she was found dead. Her throat had been torn by a mad dog." She hesitated. "Just like the grocer's daughter here."

"Interesting," Barnabas said. "But it doesn't have to mean anything."

Her face was sickly white. "But it must!" she whispered.

He came forward and touched a hand to her shoulder and she noticed that his long slender hands had the same sallow skin as his face. There was a strange quality to his touch. Suddenly the whole atmosphere of her surroundings seemed macabre and somehow wrong. It was like a room of the dead!

"If you decide to go back to Cranshaw you must learn to live with the unknown," he told her.

She rose quickly caught up by a sudden desire to escape from the strangeness of the old house. She gave Barnabas Collins a troubled look as she tried to decide what there was about him that had all at once terrified her. He was her friend and yet momentarily she'd been frightened by him.

Her face perplexed, she said, "I had an odd feeling just now. I don't know what brought it on. It was when you
touched me, although that could have had nothing to do with it."

The handsome, sallow-faced man smiled sadly. "These moments come to all of us without any particular cause. I believe some people express it well by saying that someone has just walked over their grave."

She nodded. "Yes. I have heard that said. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be childish."

"On the contrary," he said. "I'd call you a brave girl. And I wouldn't suggest your going back to Cranshaw unless I felt you were in little immediate danger."

"Then I will return," she said.

He lifted the candle as they started out, his shadow reflected in a giant fashion on the grimy wall. At the doorway, he paused to tell her, "One of these evenings I'd like to show you more of the house. And explain something about myself."

Paula mustered a smile. "I know all I need to about you. You are my friend."

"You may be certain of that," he said.

He left the candle on a table by the front door and they went outside to brave the coldish March night together. She insisted she could find her way back alone but she was relieved that he wouldn't allow her to try. Together they made the trip along the footpath in much less time than it had taken her by herself.

A stiff wind had replaced the gentle breeze of earlier in the evening. Barnabas kept a protective arm around her as he guided her along the blackness of the path. The fear that she had suddenly felt for him at the house had passed. In her mind she blamed it on the chill, dismal air of the place, and she hoped that she hadn't hurt his feelings by her behavior.

They reached the road and he accompanied her to within a hundred yards of Cranshaw. He studied the faint light from the several small windows of an upper floor. "Not everyone has retired," he said. "I'll watch from here until you are safely in the house."

She looked up at him through the darkness. "How can I thank you?"

"No thanks required," he said. "Come and visit me whenever you have a problem."
“What will I say if he is still up and asks me where I have been?”

“Tell him you felt the need of some air and went for a walk,” he suggested. “Somehow I don’t think he’ll question you.”

“I hope not,” she said. “Goodnight, Barnabas.” She lingered gently on his name.

His response was to take her in his arms and touch his lips to hers. His kiss was ardent enough but what shocked her was the coldness of his lips. They were positively icy!

When he let her go she turned and started back to Cranshaw without further parting words. She was too confused to say anything. The kiss had come unexpectedly, although she’d somehow guessed that Barnabas was falling in love with her. A feeling of guilt surged through her. She was a married woman and she’d almost encouraged this handsome stranger to make love to her. But it had been the desperate state her husband had thrown her in that had made her seek help from Barnabas.

The entrance door was not locked. She let herself in and mounted the steps quickly. Then she hurried along the dimly lighted hall to reach her room. A glance told her the door to Chris’s room was shut. She went into her own. Lizzie had left a lighted lamp, and making as little noise as possible, Paula began undressing and preparing for bed. Her thoughts were in too much of a turmoil for her to sleep at once. After she’d put out the lamp she tossed and turned in a frenzy of anxiety.

Then there came the sharp sound of something falling to the floor in her husband’s room. As if he’d toppled something from a shelf. She raised up on her elbow and stared into the darkness, listening intently. After a bit she thought she heard him moving about in the room. And finally his door to the hall was opened and closed. So he was still awake and he’d left his room to go somewhere. All her curiosity came back to torment her.

Slipping on her robe, she left the bed to go over to the door and press her ear against it. She heard someone walking down the hall and then it seemed they were mounting the stairs to the next floor. She waited for a little before she cautiously opened the door and went out to the hallway herself. There was no one in sight.
Taking a deep breath she slowly went down the hall to the foot of the stairs leading to the upper part of the house. What could Chris want in the attic? Especially at this time of night. Yet she was certain she’d heard him leave his room and go up there. After standing for a moment with her hand on the newel post, she began to ascend the stairs.

It seemed to take her an age to reach the attic corridor. The old mansion was cloaked in silence. She stood at the head of the stairs, gazing down the length of the narrow hallway. Where had Chris gone?

Taking a few steps from the head of the stairs, she strained to see along the shadowed corridor. Suddenly she was aware of something moving in the semi-darkness. Something coming towards her. Her throat tightened and she began to tremble, but she determined to take a stand there until she could make out whatever it might be.

The tension became more than she could bear and she called out her husband’s name, “Chris! Where are you?”

Her answer came in a way she’d never anticipated. From out of the darkness a form took shape, crouching and snarling at her! It was a huge gray wolf that suddenly leaped into the air as it sprang at her. Paula screamed for help and fainted.

She came to in her own bed with Chris, in trousers and shirt open at the neck, standing over her. His gaunt face showed an expression of relief as she opened her eyes.

“I’m glad you’re all right,” her husband said. “I’ve been frantic since I heard you scream and found you stretched out on the floor of the attic hall.”

Paula stared up at him. “Where were you?”

He showed mild surprise. “I went downstairs to find a book in the library. I hadn’t been able to sleep.”

She closed her eyes for a moment and gave a deep sigh.

“I was sure I heard you go upstairs.”

“Then you were wrong,” her husband said. “Is that why you went up? You were following me?”

“I suppose so,” she said wearily, studying him again and thinking of the snarling wolf-like creature that had attacked her. “Where is Abel?”

“I haven’t any idea,” Chris said. “Probably in bed. And where were you all evening? I knocked on your door when
I came up to bed but you didn’t answer.”
“I mustn’t have heard you,” she offered as an excuse.
“I guess not,” he said, accepting her version of the situation whether he believed it or not.
“Something sprang at me up there,” she said. “Some kind of animal.”
Chris showed disbelief. “You’re allowing your imagination to run off with your good sense again.”
Paula studied him with forlorn eyes. “You think I’m talking wildly.”
“I think whenever you get scared you see or hear wolves,” he told her. “It seems to be a particular problem with you. Have you always been bothered in this way?”
“Never until I married you and came here,” she said.
He smiled bitterly. “Well, that seems to place the blame where it’s most needed.” He paused. “In spite of your story I don’t see that you were hurt at all.”
“I might not be so fortunate another time,” she told him.
“And I think you must learn to have more courage,” her husband told her. “I’m going to Portland on business tomorrow. I’ll be gone overnight. I hope when I return you’ll have no long, sad tales to offer me.”
She sat up in bed. “Why can’t I make the trip with you? I’d give anything to get away from this dreary old house for a day.”
“That’s not possible,” he said. “I just said this is strictly a business trip. There’s no point in discussing it further.”
Paula was let down by his curt denial of her request, and by the time she appeared for breakfast in the morning he was gone. Peg came in to serve her breakfast with a leer on her face.
Paula asked, “When did Mr. Jennings leave?”
“Abel drove him away along about seven,” the woman said. “They won’t be back until tomorrow.”
“I know that,” she said with a touch of annoyance. And she deliberately avoided any further talk with the old housekeeper during breakfast.
When she’d finished she went up to her room and found Lizzie making her bed. As soon as she saw the blonde girl she was struck by a sort of lassitude in her manner. She
was working at a much slower pace than usual and looked pale.

Paula came up behind her and said, "Well, Lizzie."
The pert blonde gave a start and turned around with an expression of surprise. "I didn't hear you come in, ma'am," she said. "You gave me a fright."

"It's a good place for scares," Paula agreed wryly. "You don't look yourself this morning. Are you ill?"

Lizzie hesitated with the end of a sheet still in her hand. Then in a confidential tone, she said, "I can tell you, ma'am, though I wouldn't want any of the others to know."

She raised her brows. "Oh?"

Lizzie leaned forward. "I was out with my boyfriend last night, ma'am. He always sees me to the rear door since he's heard the tales about Abel being a wolfman."

"That's good sense," Paula agreed.

"He no sooner left me and I went inside," Lizzie said, "than there was a knock at the rear door. I didn't know what to do. Then I decided to answer it in case it might be you or the master. When I opened the door there was a stranger standing there."

"Yes?" Paula said expectantly.

"Someone I've seen around before," Lizzie went on with a clouded look on her pert face. "A handsome sort of man in a black coat with a cape."

Paula's tension increased. "Go on."

"Well, I asked him what he wanted," the girl said. "And he didn't make any reply at all."

"And then what?"

"I was going to close the door on him, gentleman or not," Lizzie declared. "But before I could do it he takes me in his arms and kisses me on the throat."

"The man in the cape did that?" Paula asked sharply.

Lizzie nodded. "I meant to slap his face. But I didn't. Instead I went off into a kind of faint. When I recovered I was stretched out on the kitchen floor."

"And the stranger was gone?"

The girl nodded. "The odd part is I've felt sort of fuzzy-headed ever since. I slept like the dead and this morning I'm still not myself. And look at my throat," she said in-
Paula found it difficult to hide the discomfiture she felt on hearing the girl’s strange story. She said, “I don’t know what to say, Lizzie. But I believe you are right. It is a matter best not spoken of.”

The pert blonde gazed at her in wonderment. “The odd part of it, ma’am, is that I don’t feel anything against the stranger, whoever he was. I mean I’m not angry or afraid as you might expect me to be.”

“You’re not?” Paula couldn’t help being interested in the girl’s odd reaction to Barnabas.

Lizzie’s blue eyes took on a dreamy expression. “He was truly a handsome gentleman and if I should meet him again I don’t think I’d fear him.”

“Though his kiss did cause you to faint?”

The maid grew thoughtful. “It was an odd sort of faint, ma’am. I sort of dropped off into a pleasant kind of dream. And it’s that feeling I can’t rid myself of now.”

Paula said, “I’d say the best thing you can do is put the whole incident out of your mind. It’s not something liable to happen again.”

“But I keep wondering what the meaning of it was,” the girl said.

“It probably had no meaning.”

“Then why did he come here?” Lizzie asked.
Paula was becoming annoyed at the girl’s worrying of the subject. She said, “There are some things better forgotten. I think this is one of them. I do hope you’ll follow my advice, Lizzie.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the girl said quietly and returned to making the bed. But Paula felt the maid was still not satisfied with what she’d found out.

For that matter, Paula felt she wasn’t satisfied either. She could not picture Barnabas Collins as the type who forced his attentions on pretty servant girls. Yet this was what seemed to have happened. It tormented her that there must be some logical reason for his unlikely behavior. At the moment she couldn’t dream what the explanation might be.

She left Lizzie and impulsively went to the attic stairway and mounted it. The long corridor where the wolf-like phantom had threatened her the previous night seemed less fearsome now with the shadows dispelled by a murky light filtering in through some tiny windows. Slowly she made her way down the narrow hall to the very end. Here a door opened out onto one of the several balconies at the top level of the ancient graystone building.

Hesitating there a moment she stared out through the four small glass panes at the stern, forbidding sky and the distant sea. Spring was coming in a grim reluctant manner in this far-off region of Maine. She again wondered about Lizzie’s story and what had made Barnabas Collins behave in such a fashion. The red mark on the girl’s throat was irrefutable evidence that it had happened. And from her description the man could only have been Barnabas.

She frowned. He had said something last night about wanting to tell her more about himself. Was he another one with a dual nature? Did he have some guilty secret of which she was unaware? A mad force driving him to such lengths as Lizzie had described? She didn’t want to believe this was so. Barnabas had come to mean too much to her. And yet?

In an attempt to banish the troublesome question from her mind she made herself concentrate on the horror of the wolf’s attack on her the previous night. Chris had insisted he’d seen no sign of any animal up there. That he’d found her by herself. Maybe he had but before that the
snarling creature had sprung at her. She couldn’t have imagined anything so vivid. The yellow fangs of the enraged animal had flashed before her eyes and she’d felt its hot breath on her face. Had it been Abel in another of his weird transfers to the animal state? The villagers would say so. And even she was beginning to believe the weird story.

She opened the wooden door and stepped out to the balcony. Glancing down she gave a small gasp! For there outlined in the dust were the multiple tracks of fairly large animal paws. And next her attention was drawn to the wooden railing surrounding the balcony. In several places the railing was marked with the indentations of worrying teeth. She stared at the teeth marks in dismay knowing this was a confirmation that some animal had been out there. But what sort of animal? A real one or a supernatural creature? A demon of the night come to stalk her!

Paula hastily left the balcony with the determination to journey back to Collinwood again and speak to Barnabas Collins about her findings. She also wanted to question him about his own doings. Since he was only at the old house during the evenings, or so he’d indicated, she decided it would be best to remain patient during the day and leave for the adjoining estate the moment she finished dinner.

It began to rain shortly after noon. Not a downpour but a miserable April drizzle. The sky grew dark and ominous and it was so bleak in the big living room that she was forced to light one of the lamps to read by. She was seated comfortably with a copy of Harper’s Weekly when a carriage rattled along the driveway and came to a halt outside the front entrance.

She put down her magazine and glanced toward the hallway with a wondering expression on her attractive face. She had no idea who it might be at this point in the late afternoon. Certainly not her husband back, nor was it likely to be Barnabas. At that moment there was a firm knocking on the door and Lizzie went scurrying through the hall to answer it. Paula did not hear the exchange when the door was opened but she could make out an elderly male voice in conversation with the girl. A voice whining and high-pitched.
Then Lizzie showed herself in the doorway with a frightened look on her pert face. "It's a Mister Joseph Sharon," she announced. "He would like to see you, ma'am."

Paula was struck by the girl's tense manner. She rose at once and said, "You may show the gentleman in, Lizzie."

Lizzie nodded and vanished. Paula took a few steps forward to meet the newcomer, quite unprepared for what was going to follow. Her guest showed himself in the doorway. He stood there posed a moment and she had all she could do to restrain a cry of alarm. He was the most hideous looking man she could ever remember seeing.

He wore an old-fashioned suit with a long jacket showing a flare from the hips down. The suit was a drab black and at his throat there was a black silk tie worn in the fancy bow fashion adopted by some artists. But aside from his dress the man himself was of a phantom ugliness!

To begin with he was immensely tall and thin. He seemed to tower a full foot above her. He had the appearance of a skeleton dressed like a human. More than an apparition than a creature of this world. His bald head was a chalk white to match his face. His eyes were deep-set and surrounded by black shadows and his nose was a bony snub like that found in a skull. His lips were thin and his smile of greeting revealed a skeleton's rows of glistening teeth.

Slowly he crossed the dimly lighted room and offered her his slim, bony hand. In his whining voice, he said, "Mrs. Jennings?"

"Yes," she fought back her revulsion to shake hands with him. His grip was cold and clammy. "What is your purpose in visiting me, Mr. Sharon?"

Joseph Sharon stared down at her grimly. From deep within the skull's head his harsh voice issued, "I am a friend, Mrs. Jennings. I have come to give you warning."

Paula touched her tongue to her dry lips. She indicated a chair. "Do please be seated."

He raised a skeleton hand. "Thank you, no. I'd rather stand. But I beg you to sit. The news I have for you may come as a shock."

She hesitated, staring at him. "Are you sure you have come to the right place, Mr. Sharon?"
"I have followed you and your husband here from Boston," the phantom in black said solemnly.

Still staring at the tall, wraithlike stranger, she slowly sank into an armchair. "You seem to know a good deal more about me and my husband than I do about you," she ventured.

The dark-shadowed eyes in the skull head studied her. "I was the godfather of Rachel, Christopher Jennings's first wife," the thin man said in his weird voice.

"You were Rachel's godfather," she repeated slowly, staring in a kind of hypnotic state which the stranger seemed to have induced in her.

"Rachel was a sweet girl. I loved her like a true father," Joseph Sharon went on. "You know that she was an orphan and wealthy?"

Paula nodded. "I heard some such thing."

The tall man threw back his skull head in what apparently was a gesture of despair. A faint moan escaped the thin lips of the chalk-white face. "It was her misfortune to meet and marry Chris Jennings, poor girl!"

She felt she could understand his grief and was touched by it. She said, "I know how you must feel. Her death was a tragic one. I'm sorry my husband is not here to talk with you. He's away overnight."

A bony hand swirled close to her startled face in an indignant gesture. "Do you think I'm not aware of that? I timed this visit precisely to be here when he was absent. Rachel's death was indeed a tragic one! Chris Jennings murdered the poor dear!"

Paula gaped at him. Ever since the previous night she had been tortured by this possibility. But she had not expected to hear it so soon be put into words. She clasped the arms of the chair so tightly her knuckles showed white. "Oh, no!" she begged.

The skull head atop the black clad figure nodded. "Yes!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Yes!"

There was a death-like silence. Then she said, "Do you know what you're saying, Mr. Sharon?"

"Too well, Mrs. Jennings, too well," the thin old skeleton figure said with emotion. The bony hands went up to cover his face and he turned away from her as if unable to continue.
Staring at him in a dazed fashion, she said, “I don’t know why you came here. Why you would expect me to believe this terrible accusation against my husband coming from a stranger. What possible proof can you have of this dreadful crime? It was written in the police records as an accident. Chris told me this.”

The tall figure swung around with a stricken look on his skull face. “I know,” Joseph Sharon insisted. “I called on dear Rachel only a few days before she met her death and she told me she was frightened. Afraid for her life.”

“Afraid of whom? Surely not of Chris.”

The chalk-white bald head nodded. “Of Chris!” he said dramatically. “She knew he had married her only for her money. And she had come to realize he was not a normal man.” The skeleton figure paused significantly. “Have you been bothered by wolf cries in the night, Mrs. Jennings?”

Paula swallowed hard. “Why do you ask?”

The shadowed eyes fixed on her triumphantly. “I think you have. I can tell by the way you answered. Well, my godchild heard those same eerie calls, Mrs. Jennings. And she died shortly after of a throat torn open by a savage animal. Do you want to sit here idly until your throat is ravaged in the same way?” His voice rose in high-pitched ranting.

She pressed her hands to her ears. “No!” she begged him to stop. “No!”

“Your husband is a madman, Mrs. Jennings. He murdered my Rachel and he only waits until he tires of you until it’s your turn! That is why I am here. To beg you to leave before it is too late!”

Her eyes were closed and she had sunk back with her head resting on the chair back. She was sick from what she’d heard. Despite the odd appearance and dress of the old man there was a conviction behind his words that underlined her worst fears. Gradually she had come to suspect that Chris was not stable mentally but even now she clung to the hope that she might be wrong. That these moods he’d had were only a passing thing.

She’d tried to shift the blame to Abel. It was the loping handyman who had been termed wolfman in the village. Surely he had been the one who’d terrorized her. He was the one who’d played the role of snarling animal and
lunged at her in the darkness. But it was Chris who’d hired Abel and brought him to Cranshaw. Could it have been because he was of the same ilk and knew he could depend on Abel to do his bidding?

Now she was confronted by this old man, who could himself be mad, saying that Chris had committed a murder. That Rachel had not died an accidental death. And surely the facts of her death were suspicious enough when you linked them with the wolf business. Had Barnabas Collins been right? Did Chris suffer from the pathological condition known as lycanthropy and believe he was an animal?

“Well, Mrs. Jennings, what is your decision?” The hoarse voice of the weird old man broke into her train of thoughts.

Weakly, she opened her eyes and looked at him. “I don’t know,” she confessed.

The tall skeleton figure wrung his bony hands. “Surely you will listen to me. Say I have not made my long journey here for nothing!”

“What can I do?”

The shadowed eyes deep in the skull face blazed at her. “Beyond leaving Jennings for your own protection you can testify in my behalf. Together we might be able to still bring your husband before the police for the murder he committed.”

“I’ll have to think about it,” she sighed.

Joseph Sharon gazed down at her and asked her bluntly, “Do you think me mad, Mrs. Jennings?”

It was dangerously close to the truth. She was slow in deciding on her reply. “I’m not sure,” she said. “In a way I would prefer that you were. But I don’t believe you are.”

There was a deep sigh from the skeleton figure. “Chris Jennings has the knack of picking fine females,” he observed. “You are a lovely woman and obviously an honest one. I agree, it would be simpler if I were mad. Tragically, I’m not.”

She looked at him directly. “Would you make your accusation to my husband’s face? Call him a murderer?”

“I will confront him with his villainy any time,” Joseph Sharon assured her. He pointed to the doorway with a skeleton finger, “I will march through that doorway to
stand before him and tell him he murdered Rachel!"

"I see," she said quietly. "Are you staying in the village?"

"I shall remain a guest of the hotel until I hear from you," he said.

Paula got up slowly. "You must realize this has been a shocking interview for me."

"It had to be that," the old man agreed.

"When my husband gets back tomorrow I will do something about this," she promised.

"Protect yourself," Joseph Sharon advised.

"Thank you," she said. "I will try to do that. And do not be surprised if I summon you."

"I'll come when you bid me," the tall skeleton figure in black assured her. And then he reached out impulsively and took her hand in his icy cold one. "Let us work together to end his criminal madness!"

His touch made her flesh creep but she managed to seem casual. "You will hear from me," she said by way of dismissal. "How will you get back to Collinsport?"

"My carriage is waiting for me," he told her.

She went to the door with him and watched as he donned a broad-brimmed black hat and walked out to the hired carriage. His tall, skeleton-like figure had a proud and lonely defiance as he turned before stepping into the carriage and bowed to her.

She closed the door and slowly made her way back to the living room with its soft glow of lamplight to dispel the gloom of the late afternoon. It had been a terrifying interlude and she still didn't know what to make of Joseph Sharon. If what he said was true, she was in grave danger.

But then Barnabas had been quick to point that out. And he had promised he would try and discover more about her husband and the strange happenings at Cranshaw. What would Barnabas have to say about her odd visitor of this afternoon? And what did he have to tell her about himself? A rustle in the hallway behind her made her turn with a tense expression to see what it might be.

It was only Peg, standing there with a questioning look on her face. The crone asked, "Will your company be remaining for dinner?"

Paula frowned at her. "My company has gone back to
Collinsport. You needn’t worry about him.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Abel’s sister said with a malicious smile and crept off towards the kitchen.

Paula still was angry with her. She had an idea the woman had been eavesdropping. If so, she’d heard plenty. There was no pretending that the aged woman was efficient or welcome in her post of housekeeper. Paula would have discharged her in a moment if she’d felt there was any chance of getting someone to take her place. But there wasn’t. Lizzie had been the only other person from the village willing to hire out where Abel was employed. There were so many of these frustrations!

The drizzle ended about seven o’clock just around the time Paula finished dinner. She told Lizzie she was going for a walk and asked her to see that lamps were set out in the lower hallway and in her bedroom. This taken care of she hurriedly threw on her cloak and started on her way to visit Barnabas at the old house. She felt slightly embarrassed about going to see him so soon again. But then, a great deal had happened since the previous night. Including his own unexpected behavior with Lizzie.

By the time she reached the old house it was dusk. Once again she found the place in darkness. But tonight the entrance door was partway open. She took this as an invitation to enter and found herself in the damp, shadowed corridor leading to the other rooms of the ancient house. She paused at the doorway opening on the living room and found the room with its shrouded furniture was completely dark. She moved on until she came to a doorway that led to the cellar.

There seemed to be a faint glow of light emanating from down there. And she recalled Barnabas having said something about working in the cellar. Perhaps he had a kind of studio below where he did his painting. With this in mind she began to descend the uneven stone steps. Reaching the earthen floor of the cellar she saw a soft light showing through an open doorway at the far end of it.

It seemed to her this was a strange spot for Barnabas to have his studio. But she went on. There was a squeal and a scurrying at her feet and she gave a tiny cry of alarm. Surely it had been a rat in the damp, dark area. Quickly she moved on to the doorway.

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As she reached it she stared into the room beyond. And
it was then she saw the massive coffin with its lid open.
On a nearby sideboard in tall ornamental brass holders
burned the candles which lighted the place. What did it
mean? Did Barnabas have some kind of secret shrine here
in the depths of the old house?

Once again she had the feeling of being in a place of the
dead. A kind of stifling fear came over her. She dared not
go into the room further and yet she dared not leave. Then
a hand touched her elbow and she froze into a terrified
motionless state. What horror awaited her now?

"Well, Paula." It was Barnabas who addressed her in
his rich English accent.

She turned to him with a gasp of relief. "You almost
scared me witless," she said. "I'd just come down here
and found this coffin and then I felt your hand. I thought
it had to be some kind of spirit."

There was a melancholy smile on the sallow face of the
handsome Barnabas. His heavy black hair shone in the
candlelight. He said, "I had a feeling you would come
tonight, but I would have preferred to have brought you
down here after I'd explained certain things."

"I shouldn't have intruded," she apologized. "But I
have so many questions to ask you."

"It's all right," Barnabas said. "Perhaps this is the best
way." He went over to the coffin and rested a hand on it,
turning to her, a noble figure in his black caped coat.
"This is where I spend my days. Only in the hours from
dusk to dawn am I free to move about in the fashion of
normal humans."

Paula offered him a perplexed frown. "I don't under-
stand."

He looked at the coffin again, his fine face showing a
wistful expression in profile. As he spoke he continued to
stare into the emptiness of its satin interior. "This coffin
has traveled a long way. Over the years it has been back
to Collinsport many times. I have had a series of servants
to care for my welfare, Davis being one of them. I prefer
mutes like him. I can depend on their discretion." He
glanced at her again. "I don't want you to be afraid,
Paula. Try to think of me as just like yourself. I'm not.
But I can pretend to be. The truth, you must know. Because of an ancient curse, more than a century old, I am one of the living dead. I have walked the wide world as a vampire since 1796."

She trembled as she listened to what he had to tell her. She had suspected there was something unusual he had to divulge, but not anything as bizarre as this.

She said, "You must be joking."

The handsome man in the caped coat shook his head. "I wish it was a joke. But it's far from that. I bear the vampire curse. It means I must have human blood."

Her eyes opened wide with the horror of it. "Then that explains last night—why you came to the house and attacked Lizzie. That mark on her throat and her weakness today means you drank her blood."

Barnabas took a step toward her. "Yes, it's true," he admitted. "But I was gentle with her. Believe me, she suffered no harm."

Paula stared up into the melancholy, sallow face. "She said that. She said you were kind to her," she admitted in a dazed fashion.

"You must try to understand. It's a need I sometimes cannot control," Barnabas went on. "But I try to avoid doing harm. And I constantly seek a love strong enough to make me a whole human being once again." He came closer to her and, in an earnest tone, added, "Perhaps you could be that love."

She rubbed a hand across her temple. "How did you come to be cursed?"

"Angelique's hatred," Barnabas said bitterly. "A beauty from the West Indies versed in voodoo cursed me. A great bat came out of the darkness and bit me on the throat. It was the beginning. Ever since, I have been a vampire."

"And you are very old."

"That does not count," he said. "Except in memory. I remember too much. I was here when Cranshaw was built. I loved Josette and she threw herself from Widow's Hill more than a hundred years ago. It is painful to live too long and store up too many memories."

Paula had gotten over the first shock of his revelation. She studied him with wonder in her eyes. "It's strange,"
she said. “I should be afraid of you but I’m not.”

“You’ll never have reason to fear me,” Barnabas promised.

She nodded. “I believe that. I believe you are my friend.”

“I am,” the handsome man said, impulsively taking her hand in his.

Paula trembled again ever so slightly. “Your hand,” she said in a small voice, “it’s like ice.”

“I’m sorry,” he apologized, releasing her with an unhappy look shadowing his sensitive face.

“No, it’s all right,” she said. “I’d rather we didn’t mention any of this again. Unless there is some strong reason. I want to think of you as a normal living person.”

Barnabas smiled faintly. “That could be the first step to my becoming one,” he said. “I have a feeling you are going to play an important role in my life.”

Somehow she managed a smile of her own and then leaned close to him. “Let us go upstairs,” she whispered. “Away from all this.”

“By all means,” Barnabas agreed, his arm gently around her to comfort her. “I had to let you know the truth. That is all. Now it shall remain a closed chapter.”

Later, they sat together in the living room upstairs and by the light of a single flickering candle she told him of the visit of Joseph Sharon and what the eccentric old man had said.

“He made no secret of it,” Paula told Barnabas, “he says Chris murdered Rachel. And he’s willing to say it to his face.”

Barnabas sighed. “He could be telling the truth. Or he may be mad.”

“I realize that,” she agreed.

“When your husband returns I think I should call on you,” Barnabas told her.

Paula showed alarm. “He won’t welcome you.”

Barnabas rested a hand on his silver-headed cane. “I feel sure I can persuade him to let me into the house. I have a way with people.”

“I’m sure of that. But Chris is terribly suspicious.”

“Let him be,” Barnabas said. “I’m familiar with Cranshaw. I was there years before your Chris was ever born. I
know a few things about that house that I’ll wager he doesn’t.”

“It would help to have you come by,” she agreed. “It makes me nervous to know he’ll return in the morning.”

“I don’t think you have much to fear from him yet,” was his opinion. “But be wary of Abel. I feel he is an evil force on his own. And it may be that your husband cannot always control him. We must find a way to deal with Abel and then with your husband.”

She looked at him with admiring eyes. “You make it sound so easy. As if everything will turn out all right.”

“I’m hoping that it will,” Barnabas said. “That the trouble between you and Chris will be settled and your marriage be a happy one again.”

“But if he turns out to be a murderer? Tainted with this wolf madness?”

Barnabas shrugged and stood up. “Then I trust there may be room in your life for me,” he said quietly. “That together we might find a way to a normal life and love.”

He saw her back as he had the previous night, and when the moment came for them to part she impulsively threw herself into his arms. The kiss between them was filled with emotion. And she steeled herself against the biting cold of his lips by remembering the warmth of his friendship.

“Take care,” were his parting words. “I’ll watch until you’re inside.”

CHAPTER SIX

She ran most of the way to Cranshaw. It was a dark night and every tree and bush seemed to cloak a phantom figure. At last she reached the entrance door of the old
mansion and went inside. The lamp was there in the hallway as she’d requested of Lizzie. Taking the lamp in hand she started up the stairs, still short of breath from her race across the lawn in the darkness.

She’d only gotten about halfway up them when she suddenly had an eerie feeling of imminent danger. She raised the lamp a little and peered anxiously up at the dark landing. As she did so a figure took shape in the shadows and the evil face of Abel appeared to grin down at her.

“Abel!” she said in a frightened voice. “You weren’t to be home until tomorrow!”

The big man continued to leer at her without saying a word striking new fear in her. She stood there hesitating, not daring to go on up and afraid to turn and start down the stairs.

Then a second figure emerged from the darkness to stand by Abel. It was her husband! Chris glared at her. “It seems you have some explaining to do,” he said grimly. “Where have you been?”

She had not expected to see the two back before morning. Now she stood there shocked into stupidity. She clutched the lamp fearing she might faint and topple back down the broad stairway.

Chris, neatly dressed in his gray traveling suit, crimson cravat, and diamond stickpin, came slowly down the steps to meet her, an overbearing look on his face.

He roughly snatched the lamp from her grasp. “Well, what do you have to say?”

She stared at him. “You’re home early,” she said in a low voice, aware that Abel still lingered on the landing overhearing all that was said between she and her husband.

Chris’s manner remained grim. “That is my business,” he told her. “I’m asking you where you were?”

Improvising quickly, she said, “I became very lonely. I thought I would go over to Collinwood and visit Uncle Michael. I took the path but became frightened along the way and turned back.”

Her husband smiled sarcastically. “A neat story,” was his comment.

“Don’t you want to believe me?” she asked.

His eyes were hard and cold. “And what made you so
nervous and lonesome? Could it have possibly been your visitor?"

"My visitor?" she repeated, playing for time.

"Don't pretend ignorance," he snapped back. "I know who was here. You spent quite a time entertaining Mr. Joseph Sharon!"

Paula bit her lip. Of course Peg had told him. The old woman had been listening from the hallway. She said, "You seem to know all about it."

"I have had trouble from Rachel's godfather before," her husband said angrily. "I'm not surprised he's followed me here. And I can well imagine what he had to say to you."

"Then why ask me?" she retorted with a hint of defiance.

His smile was not a pleasant one. "He told you I murdered Rachel, didn't he?" She made no reply. " Didn't he?" he repeated in taunting fashion.

"Did you?" she asked quietly.

Chris's eyes held a dangerous glitter. "I'll let you decide that. Think what you like. But I can tell you this. Joseph Sharon is mad. He has been for several years."

"That might be difficult to prove," she said.

"He'll pay for coming here," her husband vowed. "And you'll find out who to believe. Now go to your room."

Paula hesitated a moment. Then decided it would be better to humor him. Whether he was mad or merely evil, she would gain nothing by flaunting his wishes at this time. But it was humiliating to be ordered about like this with a leering Abel standing there to witness and enjoy her discomfiture.

Without a word she mounted the rest of the stairway and hurried past the hulking menace of Abel to go to her own room. When she got there she closed and locked the door after her and quickly checked to discover that the door linking her room to her husband's was also locked. She was grateful for this. Lizzie had left a light in her room and she proceeded to make ready for the night.

She heard Chris talking with Abel from a distance down the hall. Then her husband came back to his room and she could hear him moving about in there. Before getting in bed she went over to the window and looked out. She'd
only been standing there a moment when a rider came from the stables heading for the road leading to the village. Even in the uncertain light she had no difficulty identifying the rider as Abel. What was he doing riding off in the middle of the night? No doubt on some vicious errand for Chris. Still, Barnabas had warned her that Abel often acted on his own and could perhaps be a greater menace than her husband.

Apparently Chris had no hint of her friendship with Barnabas Collins as yet. And she was thankful she’d been able to think quickly enough to put her husband off the track when he’d questioned her on the stairs. It gave her a feeling of security to know that she had Barnabas in reserve to help her.

She lay back on the pillow and stared up into the darkness. Barnabas, one of the living dead! Surely there must be some way to aid him. This handsome, charming man who had so much to offer the world. He’d suggested she could be able to play a part in his redemption. She fervently wished that this might be true.

Where Chris was concerned, the problem was much more complex. The bond between him and Abel frightened her. The two men apparently both had something to do with a wolf cult. Was it a mad obsession or a demonic condition of the spirit? Her encounters with the snarling, yellow-fanged creature of her nightmares had left her horror-stricken.

The love she had known for the man she’d married was fast vanishing. Now she was remaining at Cranshaw through necessity rather than anything else. Her mind went back to the days in Boston when she’d been so happy. And she thought of Brian Glason, the young businessman who had so faithfully wooed her and then unselfishly stood aside when she told him she had fallen in love with someone else. Someone who offered her perfect happiness.

She gave a deep sigh. If Brian only could know how it had turned out. That she was caught in a web so bizarre that it defied description. That her very life could be in danger! But it was too late to think about the past and allow herself pointless regrets. She must find courage to get herself out of this dreadful situation.
The following day was a quiet one at Cranshaw. Chris said little to her and avoided her a good deal of the time. He was making it clear she was not forgiven. But at least his mood wasn’t as outwardly hateful as it had been when he first arrived back.

Abel spent the sunny afternoon working at the garden. Paula watched from her window as he spaded the flowerbeds and went back and forth with a wheelbarrow evening the gravel of the roadway and walks. His loping walk kept reminding her of the nightmarish experience she’d had in the attic when the snarling gray wolf had loped down the corridor to crouch and spring at her.

Lizzie, who was dusting in the bedroom, came over to stand by her. The blonde girl said, “Abel was out all the night. He didn’t come back until I was having breakfast in the kitchen with Peg. He was all pleased with himself and wearing one of his nasty smiles.”

She glanced at the girl with a small frown. “I wonder where he went?”

“I don’t know,” Lizzie said with a grimace. “But I’d be willing to bet he was up to no good.”

“He is a strange man,” Paula agreed, staring out the window again and seeing the subject of their conversation empty another wheelbarrow of gravel and begin to spread it with a rake.

“The village folk tell of him having a belt of wolfskin,” Lizzie said. “The gossip is he clamps it around his waist and stands under the full moon. Within minutes he turns into a wolf!”

Paula listened with growing apprehension. “A wolf belt!” she gasped. And she recalled too vividly the scene she’d had with Chris about the belt he’d had hidden under the shirts in his dresser. Did Chris have his own belt for a wolf transformation?

“And when he wants to turn back into a human he takes the belt off and plunges his body in water,” Lizzie said solemnly. “There are those who have followed Abel and swear they’ve seen him do it.”

“You don’t really believe it, do you?”

The girl sighed. “I think maybe I do. That Abel fair makes my flesh creep.”

Paula could not argue with the girl, since she felt ex-
actly the same way about him. As a means of changing the conversation she said, "Have you seen anything more of the gentleman from Collinwood who came to the kitchen door the other night?"

The pert blonde's face brightened. "You mean Mr. Barnabas."

She was surprised. "So you know his name now?"

Lizzie nodded. "Yes. He has come by since to apologize. And a very nice gentleman he is. He meant no harm by what he did."

Paula stared at her. "You feel sure of that?"

"Yes, ma'am," the girl said. "But then you know him as well, do you not?"

"I do," Paula said carefully. "Has he tried to kiss you again?"

Lizzie smiled shyly. "Somehow I can't recall the times I'm with him now. He casts a sort of spell over me, a happy spell, if you know what I mean. I'm sure I wouldn't grudge him a kiss if he wanted it. Though I am planning to marry Dave. That's the boy from the village I'm going out with regularly."

"Wouldn't Dave be jealous if he knew about Barnabas?"

"I'm not so silly as to tell him," Lizzie said with a smile and a toss of her head. "And anyway Mr. Barnabas will probably soon go away."

"I hope not," Paula said, wondering if Lizzie might know more of his plans than she did, and feeling a sudden pang of jealousy until she realized how stupid this was. Barnabas had explained to her that he had exerted a hypnotic spell over Lizzie so she would recall little of what passed between them. And that little would be remembered pleasantly. It was the device he had to use to secure the blood he needed so desperately. For the time being, Lizzie was little more than an automaton under his power.

Dinner was an unhappy experience. Chris sat opposite her with an expression of bleak disdain on his face. The little that was spoken between them was initiated by her, and the meal ended with her feeling they were drawing further and further apart.
She was not prepared for what happened next. Just as she and her husband were leaving the dining room there was an unexpected knocking at the entrance door. Chris gave her a peculiar questioning look and then went to answer the loud summons himself. Paula stood by nervously wondering if it might be the skeleton-like old Joseph Sharon come back to confront her husband with his crimes.

But when Chris threw open the door it was Barnabas who stood there in the fading light. Looking assured and impressive in his black caped coat and carrying his usual silver-headed cane, the handsome Barnabas bowed.

“I’m living on the adjoining estate for a few weeks,” he said in his British accent. “I have taken the privilege of calling on you. I have been watching your lovely wife when she takes her outings. She is a rare beauty and I would like to sketch her and present you with the drawing. My name is Barnabas Collins.” He stepped inside and offered Chris his hand.

Her husband shook hands reluctantly. “We have few visitors,” he said. “My wife has not been quite herself lately. I doubt that she would care to sit for a sketch.”

Barnabas smiled broadly. “Well, why don’t we allow her to decide?” And he fastened a waiting glance on her.

Paula was quick to take the cue. “I’d be happy to have you make a drawing of me, Mr. Collins,” she said. At the same time she caught the frown of displeasure that clouded her husband’s face.

“There!” Barnabas said expansively. “We mustn’t cheat the lady out of such a small pleasure, must we?”

Chris turned to her in anger. “Wouldn’t it be more convenient for this gentleman to return later?”

She was ready for his question, and she was not going to give way to him in this. “No,” she said. “Now is as good a time as any.”

“Excellent,” Barnabas said exuberantly. It was plain that he was playing a role and enjoying it. All the melancholy that was so much a part of his normal manner was hidden by his playacting. He held up a folder which he was carrying under his arm. “I have everything I’ll require here.”
Chris gave him a look of hatred. “It seems you came certain you’d be able to carry out your plan of sketching my wife.”

“If you infer I already had been given her permission, you are wrong,” Barnabas assured him. “The truth is, I’m always prepared to make a drawing for I never know when the moment of inspiration will come.”

“An excellent idea,” Paula said, admiring the bravado with which Barnabas carried the situation.

Barnabas now gave this attention to her husband. “You have an interesting old house here. I heard about it from my father. It has many unusual features, but then I suppose you are aware of them.”

Chris didn’t seem to know how to cope with the exuberant Barnabas. Warily, he said, “Who was your father?”

“Same name,” Barnabas said cheerfully, “Barnabas Collins. Sons of the line have been dubbed Barnabas for generations. Stupid British custom, I suppose. But it gives one a rather solid feeling, you know.”

Her husband frowned. “I have heard about Barnabas Collins,” he said. “As I remember he left Collinwood under a shadow.”

“That could very well be,” Barnabas said without taking offense. “Can’t be responsible for the sins of the grandfathers and great-grandfathers and all that kind of rot, eh?”

“I don’t remember the exact details,” Chris said, still scowling. “I must look it up.”

Barnabas shrugged. “Speaking for myself, I find the past without interest. The present is what concerns me. And the present is here! This moment! The moment when I’m to begin sketching your lovely wife.”

Chris seemed loath to allow him to begin. He said, “A moment ago you spoke of the unusual features of this house. To what were you referring?”

Barnabas lifted his brows. “Surely you know more about the place than I do. You’ve heard about Captain Cranshaw who built it when he returned from the sea.”

“I know a Captain Cranshaw was the first owner,” her husband said shortly. “I don’t know anything about him.”
Barnabas looked surprised. "Then you are missing a great deal, sir," he said. "Captain Cranshaw was a fabulous old character. Something of a miser. He had a fear the British would try to recapture this territory and he would be stripped of all his treasure."

"Indeed?" Chris said sarcastically.

"Banks weren't available in Collinsport in those days," Barnabas reminded him. "And this is a seaport town, vulnerable to naval attack. So the old man was not completely out of his mind."

"What is all this leading up to?" Chris asked brusquely.

Barnabas chuckled. "I thought you would ask that."

"Well?" her husband demanded harshly.

Barnabas turned to Paula and offered her a wink which her husband could not see. And he said, "I wonder if you know about the hidden treasure room?"

"What treasure room?" Chris demanded impatiently.

"The room Captain Cranshaw built to hide his valuables in," Barnabas went on. "It is below cellar level. Actually he dug well below the beach level to construct the secret vault. And it has a concealed entrance. My father explained the whole thing to me."

Paula listened with growing admiration for Barnabas. Of course the father he was talking about would be himself. He probably had known Captain Cranshaw as a friend in those long ago days of his first vampire wanderings. And it would have been the captain who would have shown him the room and explained its workings.

Chris's gaunt face wore a dubious expression. "I doubt if there is a hidden room. Otherwise I'd have heard about it."

"But there is," Barnabas insisted. "Would you like me to conduct you to it?"

Chris shrugged. "I don't mind your trying."

"If you'll take me to the cellar steps I'm sure I can locate the room for you," Barnabas said. To Paula, he added, "I trust you won't mind a few minutes delay in beginning the drawing?"

"Not at all," she said. "I'd like to see the secret room myself."

Chris led the way down the winding stone steps to the
cellar with her following after him and Barnabas in the rear. When they at last reached the brick floor of the cellar they halted. Chris turned to Barnabas “Well?”

Barnabas pointed with his cane. “Isn’t there a storage room over there?”

Her husband nodded. “Yes, but it’s empty.”

“Let’s take a look in it,” Barnabas suggested.

They went in through the heavy oaken door and found themselves in a room about thirty feet square and ten feet high. It’s walls were of graystone and so was the floor.

Barnabas had taken the candle from her husband and now he stood with it held high, the flickering flame setting off his high-cheekboned face to perfection. He told them, “You will note that the floor here is of stone construction rather than brick as in the other part of the cellar.”

“What does that mean?” Chris demanded.

“Part of Captain Cranshaw’s plan,” their visitor assured him. “The hidden room is directly under us and a long flight down. Several of these stones are fake fronts for a trapdoor that falls in when a secret control is touched.”

“Fantastic nonsense!” Chris complained. “The floor underneath us is obviously solid!”

Barnabas smiled in the flickering candlelight. “You think so?” And he turned to walk slowly to the wall across from them as if he were pacing his distance. He called to them, “Stand back just a little.”

“What kind of foolery is this?” her husband demanded, but he didn’t say anything more, for at that moment Barnabas pushed against one of the wall stones and there was a section of the floor about three feet by five fell away with a grating wrench. Chris very nearly toppled in and would have taken her with him. They both stumbled back.

“You’ll see the hidden steps now,” Barnabas said urbane.

Chris was staring down into the secret passage with an incredulous look on his gaunt face. “I wouldn’t have believed it,” he gasped.

“What’s down there?” Paula asked Barnabas with a worried glance.

“Nothing, I imagine,” Barnabas said. “Just a large empty room the same as this one. Captain Cranshaw in-
tended to place his valued possessions there in the case of attack, but the attack never came."

"I'd like to look at it," Chris said, going to him for the candle.

Barnabas surrendered their only means of light to him. He said, "Mind the stone steps. They are steep and liable to be damp and slippery."

"I can take care of myself," her husband said with a scowl as he started down to investigate.

She and Barnabas were left alone together in the upper level. Barnabas came quickly to her side. "Things have been happening," he whispered. "Meet me later tonight, after I have gone. I'll be around at the back of the house. You can come through the kitchen. About eleven. Do you think you can get away?"

"If it is like all the other nights," she said tensely. "He usually locks the door between our rooms. I can wait until he's asleep and then slip out."

"I'll be waiting," Barnabas promised.

They had barely finished their brief exchange before Chris came up through the trapdoor again, holding the candle aloft. He had a sour look on his face. "Nothing down there at all," he said. "It's just another room a little smaller than this."

"I told you that," Barnabas said.

Her husband gave Barnabas a curious look "How does that trapdoor work?"

"I'll show you," Barnabas said, and as Chris went over to stand beside him he pressed hard against one of the stones which had two indented lines across it at top and bottom. "As easy as that," he said exerting pressure on the stone as the trap door creaked up into place once more.

Chris sighed. "Well, at least I know about it."

"And now, Mr. Collins, let us go back upstairs so you can begin work on my drawing," Paula said with a small smile.

Barnabas joined her. "I had not forgotten," he said, and they went upstairs.

While she and Barnabas went to the living room. Chris chose to remain in his study. The last she saw of him he
was liberally helping himself from a brandy decanter, and she suspected it might be one of the nights when he would drink heavily.

Barnabas took great care in posing her on the divan directly under the portrait of the wolf pack. Then he sat down in a nearby wingback chair to sketch her.

As he worked he said, “I notice you have an interesting work of art in here. That pack of wolves is very realistic.”

“My husband chose it,” she said with meaning.

“Indeed,” Barnabas said, going on with his drawing. “I doubt if you have heard but we had a tragedy in Collinsport last night.”

She moved a little to stare at him. “What sort of tragedy?”

“A visitor in town met a violent death,” Barnabas said with significant expression on his handsome yet melancholy face.

Paula’s eyes opened wide. “What visitor?”

“A Joseph Sharon,” he said calmly, and as she reacted strongly and was about to rise in protest, he gave her a warning signal with a forefinger to his lips to be silent.

With great effort she sat there. “What happened?” she enquired dully.

“Very strange accident,” Barnabas said, continuing to sketch. Then he lifted his eyes to meet hers. “This poor old man wandered out of his hotel in the late evening and was attacked by a mad dog. They found him with his throat torn open.”

“No!” She said it with a low sob.

Barnabas raised a warning hand once more and glanced toward the doorway to make sure that Chris wasn’t eavesdropping in the hall. Then looking at her with a grim expression on his sallow face he said, “I believe something like this happened before. A girl was found killed the same way. The local people are very confused. They talk of a mad dog, even a stray wolf. And some even hint about a wolfman.”

“Poor Mr. Sharon,” Paula mourned him.

“He was a very unhappy old gentleman,” Barnabas said quietly, his burning eyes fixed on her. “I believe he had come here for a purpose. The goal he sought may still be achieved by others.”
Paula nodded brokenly. “I hope so. I truly do.”

Barnabas studied her with his critical sketching eye. Then he said, “I think I’ll take this home and work on it. I have done enough for one evening.” He folded up the sketch and rose from his chair.

She came solemnly to meet him in the center of the big room. “Thank you,” she said.

“We’ll be seeing each other again,” he said, and she knew from the way he said it he was referring to their rendezvous at eleven which they’d planned when they were in the cellar alone for those few minutes.

“Yes,” she said, her eyes meeting his. “Aren’t you going to let me see the sketch?”

“After I’ve done some further work on it,” Barnabas told her. “It’s in too rough a state now.” He began to walk towards the door leading to the hall. “Please say good-night to your husband for me.”

“Yes,” she said. “I’ll do that.”

He did not linger at the door. She watched for a moment as he walked briskly off across the lawn. There was a full moon and she could watch him quite a distance. After a few moments she went inside and shut the door.

She leaned against it and closed her eyes. The shock of hearing of Joseph Sharon’s murder was still tearing at her, for murder it had to be, and she had no doubt who had planned it and who had looked after the execution. Chris had promised to even things with the old man and she’d seen Abel riding off towards the village later. Lizzie had said the handyman hadn’t gotten back until morning. It all fitted in. Abel had another murder to his credit.

“What are you moping for?” Chris’s harsh words came suddenly to bring her out of her moment of summing things up.

“I have a headache,” she said quietly. “I’m going upstairs.” And she started across to them.

But Chris, who was weaving already from his bout with the brandy bottle, was in an aggressive mood. He blocked her way. “You always have a headache,” he mocked her. “Are you feeling the strain of posing for your gentleman caller?”

“Please!” She begged him to allow her to pass.

“I know something is going on between you two,” he
railed at her. "Don’t think I’m a fool!"
"You’re drunk!" she accused him.

He smiled nastily. "That’s not important. But I’ll tell you something that is. I’ve been looking through some books in the library. A history of the village among them. And I’ll tell you something about the background of your friend. His great-grandfather was driven from here accused of being a vampire.”

She shook her head. "I don’t want to hear it!"

But her husband seized her roughly by the arm. "You’ll listen and like it," he said. "Your Barnabas Collins is tainted with vampire’s blood. Perhaps he is one of the night creatures himself.”

"He’s not a cold-blooded murderer like some people,” Paula cried out in reply.

Chris’s gaunt face took on a look of sullen surprise. And staring at him she thought he looked more like a menacing wolf than ever.

Letting her go, he demanded in a slurred voice, "What do you mean by that?"

“What happened to Joseph Sharon?” She cried as she ran past him to hastily mount the stairs. He called something after her but she could not make out what he said. All she wanted was to reach the safety of her room.

When she got there she locked the door and waited. She was trembling and ill from the strain of the evening, but she had still more to go through. It would soon be eleven and she had given her promise to meet Barnabas by the rear door at that hour.

She sat on her bed and watched the full moon as it shone in through the window to bathe the room in a faint, silvery glow which hinted of the supernatural. It was the kind of night for ghosts!

After what seemed an eternity she heard her husband’s uneven footsteps as he stumbled drunkenly up the stairs. She sat pale-faced as he made his way to the adjoining room and went in slamming the door after him. She was afraid he might next try the door to her room. But he didn’t. Instead he threw himself heavily on the bed and a few minutes later he began to snore.

It was only a few minutes before eleven, but she still hesitated long enough to make sure he was deep in sleep.
Then, when she was sure, she quickly left her room to go downstairs.

The kitchen was as silent as the rest of the house and in darkness. She made her way across its stone floor to the rear door. Opening it she stepped outside. A moment later the shadowy form of Barnabas appeared beside her.

“Come,” he said. “Tonight we’re going to trap a wolf!”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Paula didn’t understand the meaning of his words, nor did she have time to question him concerning them. Barnabas guided her quickly away from the house. They walked in the direction of the beach and the rocks fringing on it. The full moon gave everything the same ghostly sheen and turned the night into an eerie sort of false day. As they reached a cluster of boulders Barnabas touched her arm to halt.

“Here,” he said in a low voice, crouching down, a romantic figure in his black caped coat.

Paula bent down beside him and whispered to him, “What now?”

“We must wait,” he said.

The pound of the waves on the beach was close enough to make conversation difficult. She knelt with him in the shadow of the rocks and watched the broad expanse of wet beach wondering what he had in mind.

Then from far away there came the weird wolf’s howl which had sent chills surging through her on so many other nights. The mournful howl was repeated, seeming to be nearer this time. She gave Barnabas a questioning look.

The moonlight made his black hair glisten and he nodded in a somber fashion. So she guessed that their being
concealed there had something to do with the wolf cult. And as she let her eyes stray further down the beach she thought she saw a figure. A wraithlike figure approaching them out of the silver mist of the full moon.

“Look!” she clutched his arm to get his attention.

Barnabas was not in any way surprised. “Yes,” he said, “I've been waiting for her.”

Paula showed amazement as the figure became recognizable. It was the lovely maid, Lizzie, walking towards them across the wet sand in what appeared to be a filmy negligee. Her blonde hair streamed down her back and she looked ethereally beautiful.

“Lizzie is serving as our bait,” Barnabas whispered in her ear.

Paula was now watching the girl with a tense expression as she began to think she understood something of what was going on. Lizzie was clearly in a hypnotic state. She passed their place of concealment and went strolling on along the beach. Her face bore a rapt look and her eyes seemed dazed.

Again the mournful howl of a wolf rent the air and this time it was so close that it made Paula start with fear. She glanced down the beach from whence the cry had come. And then the howling came again and was repeated several times. A moment later she heard the thudding of animal paws on the wet sand.

“Look!” Barnabas at once was on the alert.

And she quickly saw why. She shrank back as the thing came racing down the beach past them. A giant gray wolf with shining amber eyes, slavering mouth with yellowish fangs, and gray hackles raised. The fearsome creature bounded on after the slowly walking Lizzie.

“Lizzie!” Paula cried. “She'll be killed.”

“Wait,” he said, restraining her with his arm.

She watched the giant wolf spring towards the distant figure of the unaware Lizzie and closed her eyes. But the piercing animal cry of pain that followed made her open them again at once. She saw that Lizzie was still standing there unharmed but the wolf was lashing about on the beach in a frenzy of suffering! It was an unbelievable sight!

Barnabas was on his feet. “Come!” he said, and he ran
swiftly down the beach to the spot where the wolf had been trapped.

We’re going to trap a wolf! Of course, now she remembered his words, as she half-ran, half-stumbled after him. By the time they reached the scene the giant wolf had lost most of his fight. Now he merely quivered with pain and made half-hearted efforts to escape the jaws of the cruel trap in which he was held. Barnabas lifted up a large stone and then gingerly approached the giant beast at bay. Paula saw him raise the stone to bring it down on the wolf’s skull and she covered her face with her hands and turned her back on the horror.

Barnabas did his work swiftly. There was the crunch of the animal’s skull and silence. Then he walked back to her and said, “It’s over.”

She looked at him. “Is it dead?”
“Yes.”
“What about Lizzie?”
“She’ll be all right,” Barnabas assured her. “She’ll continue on to the house on her own and never remember a thing.”

Paula looked around apprehensively, forcing herself to stare at the beast in the trap. And she raised a hand to her mouth to stifle a gasp. For it was no longer a wolf stretched out there but Abel.

“It was him!” she said in a terrified whisper.

Barnabas nodded. “After last night’s murder I had to take some action. I set this trap for him. It seemed the easiest and best way. He’s killed more than one person. Joseph Sharon was merely his last victim. He’ll do your husband’s bidding no more.”

Paula had turned her back on the body again. “Chris will be furious when he finds out.”

“There is nothing he can do about it,” Barnabas said. “And if he refuses to mend his own ways he’ll pay the price for his sins.”

“You must be careful,” Paula warned him. “He hates you and he’s bound to suspect you of this.”

“I’ll risk that,” Barnabas told her.

“More than that,” she went on, “he’s got some idea about what you are. After you left tonight he raved about your great-grandfather having been a vampire. Of course
he didn’t guess he was actually discussing you.”

Barnabas chuckled softly. “Perhaps he’ll find out who he’s dealing with sooner than he expects.”

Paula was shivering. “Promise me to be careful. You are my only friend.”

“There is your Uncle Michael,” he reminded her.

“I can’t go to him now,” she said brokenly. “Not after my marrying Chris against his wishes.”

“I’m sure your uncle would gladly forgive you and take you in as a guest at Collinwood,” Barnabas suggested.

“No. I must stay here a little longer. I’ll give Chris every chance,” she said. “It may be that he’ll redeem himself now that the evil influence of Abel has been removed.”

“We can hope so,” Barnabas said, but he didn’t sound hopeful. “Now I must see you safely back. At least I won’t have to worry about Abel any longer.”

Paula slept little that night. The scene of horror she’d witnessed on the beach kept repeating in her mind. And she had dread visions of her husband’s anger in the morning when the body of Abel was found.

But, as he had on many other occasions, Chris surprised her. When she went down to breakfast he was on the point of leaving the house. He waited and came to the foot of the stairs and greet her. He was in a much more subdued state of mind.

“I’m glad you came down before I left, Paula,” he said. “There has been a tragic accident. Abel was killed last night.”

“Oh?” She pretended surprise and trusted her nervousness would make it seem real.

He sighed. “Yes. It’s hard to explain the circumstances. He apparently went for a stroll along the beach in the moonlight. You remember it was moonlight last night.”

His eyes fastened on her oddly.

“Yes,” she faltered. “I do.”

He nodded. “Well, Abel must have been walking along the beach when he stumbled into a trap. A particularly vicious type of trap for a very large animal. I can’t imagine why anyone should set out such a cruel thing around here. At any rate, Abel was caught in it.”

“How awful,” she said.
He was watching her closely. "Yes, and it must have been for him," he said. "Later someone mercifully crushed in his head and put him out of the mortal agony he must have been suffering. There could have been no hope for his life at that time."

"Are you going to him now?"

"I'm going to supervise the funeral arrangements," her husband said. "His sister is in no condition to take any responsibility. I'd appreciate your looking after things here."

"Of course," she said.

Her husband's face had an awkward expression. "I know you never did like Abel," he said.

"That's of no importance now."

"I believe we should be truthful even in the face of death," was his reply. "But I regarded him as a faithful servant and friend. So this unhappy business has brought me a great deal of grief."

"I understand," she said quietly. "Will there be an investigation?"

"Yes. But it won't amount to anything. No one will be willing to come forward and identify themselves as the owner of the trap and the perpetrators of the crime."

"Then there were no clues?"

"There might have been footprints on the wet sand," he said with a frown. "But the tide came in later and erased any that were there." He shook his head. "I doubt if those responsible for Abel's death will ever be linked to the murder."

He left just after that and she was thankful. In her tense state she didn't think she'd managed very well in pretending to be shocked by word of Abel's violent end. She hoped the crisis would pass quickly without her having to undergo any more such ordeals. And she couldn't help being curious as to whether Lizzie remembered anything of her part in the affair. The answer to this came sooner than she'd expected.

She went out to the kitchen to inquire about old Peg and found Lizzie there alone doing all the work. The blonde girl came over to her at once. "Peg is completely useless this morning," the girl announced. "She hasn't left her bed."
“I imagine she feels very badly about her brother,” Paula agreed.

“That one!” Lizzie said, rolling her big blue eyes to indicate that he was better done for. “Peg says she wants to leave this afternoon and stay with a cousin for the funeral and afterward. So you’ll be needing a new housekeeper.”

“I’m sure we can find one,” Paula said.

“Yes, ma’am. Help won’t be so hard to get now that Abel is gone,” the girl agreed. “They found him all battered and caught in a trap on the beach. The tide had come in and covered him. They didn’t find him until this morning.”

Paula gave the girl a penetrating glance. “Where were you last night, Lizzie?”

“My boyfriend came early in the evening,” Lizzie said. “But he left before then and I went straight up to bed.”

“It was a beautiful moonlight night,” Paula said. “But you didn’t go to the beach?”

“I wasn’t near the beach last night,” was Lizzie’s answer, proving she had no memory of her role in the affair. Barnabas worked a strong spell with his hypnotism.

“Perhaps it is just as well, considering what happened,” Paula said.

The next several days passed quickly. Chris was busy with the details of the funeral. He did not force her to attend, for which she was grateful. She was also relieved to find him in a much different frame of mind. He had changed to the point where he was considerate and almost tender toward her. She began to feel that their marriage might be salvaged after all.

Then as a new week began she saw the old restlessness grow in him again. He had several of his irritable moods and he resumed staying in his own room and ignoring her. Once when she went in to see him she caught him standing staring at the wolfskin belt which he was holding before him. When he saw her he behaved in a guilty fashion and tried to hide it by placing it behind his back as they talked. She took this as an ill omen. His interest was reverting to the wolf cult even though he no longer had a partner in Abel.

Several times in the night she wakened to what she
thought had been a ghostly wolf’s howling. The eerie atmosphere was beginning to shroud the old stone mansion once again. Meanwhile, Barnabas did not show himself at the house for a week. And when he did come Paula felt that Chris was unusually hostile towards him.

As soon as Barnabas arrived he apologized for not having come to continue the drawing, and he mentioned Abel’s death, considering it a reason for his not intruding during the crisis.

Chris had listened to this with a cold smile and then said, “We never see you during the daylight hours, Mr. Collins. Are you so devoted to the night?”

“Not really,” Barnabas said. “But I have certain work that occupies me during the day. I cannot rob from that time.”

“Indeed,” Chris said sarcastically. “I had put you down as a nocturnal creature. You know. Like the vampire bat.”

Barnabas took it without any sign of resentment. His deep-set eyes even showed a glimmer of amusement. “Yes, I’m familiar with the vampire bat,” he agreed. “Some people are naturally of the night,” her husband went on. “I don’t think we should try to fight it.”

“I have no theories on the matter,” Barnabas said lightly. “I’m not a dabbler in witchcraft or the like. I’ve read articles on vampires, werewolves and other monsters of legend. I must confess to being a skeptic. Though I do feel the werewolf has struck more terror into the hearts of honest people than any of the other demons.”

“Indeed,” Chris said with a surly glance. “I think I’ll just stay in here while you work on the drawing tonight.” He gave her a look. “I won’t make you nervous, will I, dear?”

“I’ll be all right,” she said, though she didn’t feel it. She took her place on the divan and sat at the exact angle she had the other evening.

“Excellent,” Barnabas said, opening his drawing kit. “I should be able to finish it this session.”

Paula sat very quietly as he worked, conscious of her husband’s disapproving glare. She hoped Barnabas would find some excuse to continue his visits after the sketch was finished.

As if he had read her mind, Barnabas paused to turn to
her husband and say, “I’d like to do a half-dozen sketches of some of the rooms in this house when I’ve completed Paula’s sketch. Would you mind?”

“I very well could,” Chris snapped. “I always valued my privacy.”

“I promise I won’t disturb you,” Barnabas said.

Chris smiled coldly. “And of course you’d only be able to come in the evenings.”

“How right you are,” Barnabas agreed.

“I suspected that,” her husband said with a malicious note of satisfaction in his tone that worried her.

Barnabas, looking confident, switched the talk in a deft manner by revealing his finished work. Paula was enchanted with the quality of his style and the remarkable likeness he’d managed of her. Chris merely gave it a grudging grunt of approval.

Barnabas gave her the sketch. “I hope you will keep it as a pleasant memento of our meeting,” he said.

She smiled at him gratefully. “I certainly shall.”

Her husband spoke up. “If you’ll tell me the price of it, Collins, I’ll be happy to make you out a check.”

She turned to him shocked. “Mr. Collins doesn’t want money for it.”

“Why not?” Chris demanded. “He asked permission to do you.”

“Not for money, Mr. Jennings,” Barnabas said firmly. “I merely wanted the satisfaction of recording your wife’s beauty.”

“Indeed!” Chris said with sarcasm.

“I’m only an amateur artist,” Barnabas went on. “I could not in fairness charge you.” And he started for the door.

Paula saw him off. As he stepped out in the night, she said, “Please do come back soon.”

“I will,” he promised.

“And don’t mind him,” she added, glancing over her shoulder nervously, fearful that her husband might have come after them.

“I won’t,” Barnabas said with a bitter smile. “He may discover that his small knowledge can be dangerous for him.”

With that enigmatic statement Barnabas left her. She
went back into the living room to discover her husband striding up and down angrily. He halted to glare at her.

“You’ve said your goodnights to your friend,” he snapped.

“Our friend,” she corrected him.

He gave her a look of utter contempt. “Never!” he said. “All my life I’ve had reason to hate the Collins family. And he is one of them.”

“So am I,” she said raising her head defiantly.

Chris moved close to her, his face purple with anger. “I’ve only begun to realize that,” he said. “I thought because you were of a distant branch of the family it would make a difference. That we could be happy. But it seems to be useless.”

“Because of your attitude, not mine,” she told him. “Have you allowed your hatred of the Collins name to twist your entire life? Are you willing to let it ruin our marriage. Is that why you’ve resorted to this mad wolf cult business? All to vent your hatred on my family?”

He stared at her in silence after her outburst. “You’ve changed a lot,” he said at last.

“For the better, I hope.” And then she touched his arm. “Chris, if our marriage is to be saved we must try hard now.”

“Do you want to save it?”

“Yes.”

“I wonder,” he said. “You’re friendly enough with that Barnabas. Have you fallen in love with him?”

“I like him. That’s all.”

Chris smiled knowingly. “You say that very easily. Maybe you wouldn’t want him as your friend if you guessed the truth about him.”

This struck a nerve. She stared at him. “What truth?” And she prayed that he hadn’t found out.

Her husband took on a crafty smile. “I don’t think it would do any good for me to tell you more now.”

“But that’s rotten of you,” she protested. “You’re not being fair.”

Chris seemed to be enjoying himself again. “I’ve decided. My news had better wait. But I’ll tell you something else.”

“What?”
“I’m going to Boston on business tomorrow. And while I’m there I’m going to find a suitable housekeeper and companion for you and bring her back with me.”

She frowned. “Why look for one in Boston? There must be many women available here for the position.”

“We tried to hire local people and they refused,” he reminded her.

“Because of Abel. They were afraid of him. You know the villagers referred to him as the wolfman. And they considered Peg a witch.”

Chris scowled. “I will not listen to that kind of malicious gossip against my friend. Not even from you.”

“It’s the truth. We’ll have no trouble getting help here now.”

“I don’t wish to hire local people.”

“I see,” she said. “More of your bitterness against the village.”

“They made it difficult enough for me here when I was a child,” he reminded her.

“It would seem you could forget that, now things have changed so for you,” Paula said. “If you would make the first move my Uncle Michael would probably be glad to offer you his friendship.”

“No, thanks,” her husband said firmly. “I’ve made up my mind. I’ll get a housekeeper in Boston and bring her back with me on the boat when I return.”

She sighed. “Then there’s no point in my arguing.”

“Not really,” he said. “I’m sure I’ll select someone of whom you’ll approve. Someone to make this house a more lively place.”

“How long will you be gone?” she asked.

“A few days,” he said. “I can’t be positive. And I doubt if Mr. Barnabas Collins will allow you to be lonely.”

His sarcasm ended the exchange. She picked up the sketch and in a dull voice said, “I’m weary. If you’ll excuse me.”

Chris’s manner suddenly changed. He smiled and said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be unpleasant. Let’s have a glass of wine together before you go upstairs. I’ll be gone when you awake in the morning.”

She really wasn’t interested in drinking with him, but she felt she shouldn’t reject this overture of friendliness on
his part. So she said, "Very well."

"Thank you," he said. "It's good to know there are no hard feelings between us." And he went over to the sideboard to pour the wine. She took the opportunity to again study the sketch Barnabas had made of her and once more she was impressed by his ability as an artist. She was still looking at the drawing when her husband returned with a glass of dark wine.

Chris smiled at her as he handed her the drink. "Enjoying the sketch, I see. It's very good. And I hope you like this wine. It's a very special one."

She took a sip of it and was astonished. She glanced up at him. "It's not like anything I've ever had before," she said. "It has a bittersweet taste that I can't identify."

He nodded affably. "It's a very old and expensive wine. Guaranteed to make you sleep well."

She went on with the drink to be polite. The truth was, she didn't like it at all, but she somehow managed to finish it. Then she at once stood up. "I really must go to bed now," she said.

Chris put aside his glass and came to take her in his arms. "I shall miss you," he said earnestly. "You must forgive my arrogance. I am harsh with you only because I'm jealous of you."

She stared up into his gaunt face and said, "You should try to curb your temper. It is your great weakness."

"I know," he agreed quietly. "I get far too much enjoyment out of my hating."

She continued to eye him anxiously. "Chris, have you finished with that wolf cult business now that Abel is gone?"

His face became hard. "Let's not talk about it."

"I can't help worrying. I know you still have that horrible belt. Does it signify anything?"

Chris smiled, but it was obviously a forced smile. He said, "You mustn't worry about the belt." He drew her close and kissed her lightly on the lips.

She went upstairs right after that. By the time she reached her room her head was reeling in a mad way. She leaned on the bedpost for support and the room still continued to swim around. After a moment's hesitation she lurched over to the dresser and carefully placed the sketch
in an upper drawer under some of her things. She was suddenly filled with an almost psychotic fear that her husband would find it and destroy it.

Her dizziness grew worse but somehow she changed her clothes and got into bed. She was asleep instantly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The next thing Paula remembered it was daylight and Lizzie’s worried face was bending over her. Lizzie seemed to be shaking her gently and calling her name. “Mrs. Jennings, ma’am. Please wake up and answer me.”

Paula gazed at her with dull eyes. “Is it morning?”

“It’s three days and nights since you left your bed, ma’am,” the blonde maid said in despair. “All you’ve taken for nourishment is a little broth I brought you. And you’ve talked like a crazy person!”

Paula touched her tongue to her parched lips. “You’re saying that I’ve been ill?”

“Very ill, ma’am. Mr. Barnabas has come by every evening, but you didn’t even know him.”

Paula’s mind was gradually clearing. She stared up at the pretty maid in horror. “The drink!” she said. “The drink Chris gave me!”

“Yes, ma’am?” Lizzie looked puzzled.

“There must have been something wrong with it! Something in it!”

“I’m sure I wouldn’t know, ma’am,” Lizzie said. “But you have been sick and there’s no mistake about that.”

Paula gave a small moan of despair and raised herself on an elbow. “I shouldn’t have trusted him. I should have known better.” And a sudden thought came to her. “Lizzie, look in the top drawers of my dresser. Lift up the
things in them and see if you can find a drawing of me in either of them."

"Yes, ma'am," Lizzie said, and she went to carry out her instructions. Paula lay back weakly and tried to sort out her thoughts. In a few minutes the girl returned with a smile on her face. "The sketch is in the upper right drawer, ma'am. It's a very good one. Mr. Barnabas has talent."

She gave a relieved sigh. At least the drawing was safe. Knowing how her husband had resented it, she hadn't been sure. She said, "Thank you, Lizzie. You say that Barnabas called several times."

"Yes. He promised to be back this evening."

"Good."

Lizzie looked uneasy. "And, ma'am, there is someone else here to see you. A Melissa Henry. She claims to have been sent here from Boston by the master." Lizzie was indignant. "She says she's to be the new housekeeper but she's the oddest one I've ever seen."

Paula sat up again. "This woman is here? Now?"

"Yes," Lizzie said.

"When did she come?"

The girl shrugged. "To town, I don't know, but there was a knock on the door this morning and when I opened it, there she was with her luggage. I can't imagine how she managed to get here from the village. I didn't see or hear a carriage."

Paula frowned. "She must have arrived late last night on the night boat."

"If she came from Boston she must have," Lizzie said doubtfully.

She sensed the girl's disapproval of Melissa Henry, whoever she might be. And she said, "You don't seem to be favorably impressed by this phantom creature, Lizzie."

Lizzie looked grim. "She's not my idea of what the master should send here to be a housekeeper. If you'll pardon my saying so, ma'am, she looks too young and she has a hard face, even if it's a pretty one."

"Really?" Paula said with mild surprise. "I must summon all my small strength and go downstairs and have a look at this girl whom Chris has sent."

Lizzie showed indignation. "It is her place to come up
here and be interviewed by you, ma'am!”

She smiled ruefully. “Perhaps it is. But I’m anxious to get out of bed and away from this room for a while anyway. This gives me a good excuse for doing so.”

“You have been so ill, ma’am,” the maid worried. “Perhaps you should have the advice of a doctor before trying to do too much.”

“I think not,” Paula said with a sigh. “I have a reasonably good idea of what was wrong with me. I’ll have something to say about that to my husband when he returns. Meanwhile, I’ll make a trip down and see what kind of creature he has foisted upon us.”

Lizzie hovered about her like a worried mother hen as Paula put on a pale blue robe and gathered her long tresses in the back with a matching ribbon. A few dabs of powder to conceal the pallor resulting from her illness and she was ready to go down to the living room.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs she looked in through the wide doorway and saw the newcomer standing with her back to her as she gazed up at the painting of the wolf pack on the cliff. Paula quietly made her way into the big room and took a stand a few feet behind the girl.

She said, “Is your interest in art or in wolves, Miss Henry?”

Melissa Henry whirled around with a surprised look in her snapping black eyes. She was a beauty, there could be no denying that. But Paula was ready to agree with Lizzie; the young woman facing her now was hardly anyone’s idea of a housekeeper.

“You are Mrs. Jennings?” the girl asked in a rich, husky voice which was tinged with a slight accent Paula couldn’t place.

“I am,” she said coolly. “My maid informs me that my husband had you come here from Boston to take the position of housekeeper.”

Melissa Henry offered her a sultry smile. “That is true,” she said in the same throaty fashion. She was slightly taller than Paula, had shining jet black hair and an olive complexion that suited her exotic foreign type of beauty. She was wearing an expensive suit and a wide-brimmed, flowered hat with the veil thrown back over it. She carried a small parasol.
Paula said, "You’ll forgive me but I do not see you as domestic help. You seem far too prosperous and your manner is that of a lady rather than a lady’s maid."

The dark beauty with the svelte dainty waist trilled a little ripple of delighted laughter. "Thank you for the compliment, Mrs. Jennings," she said. "You are not entirely wrong. My life has had its ups and downs. At the moment fate decrees that I shall be a housekeeper. So I must be content."

"I see," Paula said cautiously. "And my husband did approve of you for the position. I suppose he is aware of your capabilities."

"He heard of me through a mutual friend," Melissa Henry told her. "And knowing I needed help he was anxious to give me the work. I wanted to come here." The pretty girl’s full crimson lips offered a smile. "You see, I have been in Collinsport before."

"Oh?" This caught Paula’s interest. "When?"

"A very long time ago," Melissa was quick to say. "No one would remember me. But I have carried memories of the village with me and I’ve always had an urge to return."

"Have you recognized anyone or any places in the village?"

"I’ve met no one I knew before. At least not yet. But various landmarks are familiar to me. The old chapel at the head of the hill and Collinwood."

Paula’s brows raised. "You have been in Collinwood?"

"Long ago," the sultry Melissa said with a twinkle in her glistening black eyes. "It is a wonderful old house. And the history of the Collins family is directly linked to the history of the village itself."

"I know that," Paula agreed. "I was a Collins before I married. One of a distant branch of the family, I may hasten to explain."

"How interesting!" Melissa commented with a mocking air.

"Have you met the present owner, Michael Collins?"

"He wouldn’t remember me," the dark girl said with a hint of caution in her manner. Paula realized she hadn’t received a proper reply to her question.

"Did my husband give you any message for me?" Paula asked. "I wonder when he intends to arrive home?"
"Not for a few more days," Melissa said. "He asked me to tell you that his business in Boston hadn't been fully completed, but he'll wind it up by the end of the week."
"I see."
Melissa smiled. "He wanted me to get here without any loss of time so he had me come ahead. I understand you have no help."
"Just Lizzie," she said. "But I hope we will soon have some others. Lizzie can give you an idea of your duties and if there are any other questions you may ask me."
"Thank you," the dark girl said politely.
"I have been ill since my husband's departure," Paula went on. "This is the first time I've been able to leave my bed. So I trust you will forgive me if I leave the details of settling you in with Lizzie."
"I understand," Melissa assured her. "And I trust that you have recovered fully."
There was the hint of a bantering manner in the way this pretty girl conducted herself with her. As if she was mocking her and knew much more of what was going on in the great gloomy house than Paula could guess. A shocking thought crossed Paula's mind. Could this attractive female be a love of her husband's whom he'd brought to the house to torment her? She dismissed the idea as too wild and cruel even for Chris. But she was to consider it again later.
Now she said, "My indisposition was of a transitory nature and I believe I understand what caused it."
Melissa seemed secretly amused. "In that case, you can guard against its striking you down again," she suggested.
"Yes, I intend to do that," Paula said dryly, wondering if the girl knew what she was hinting. That her suspicions were that Christopher had given her some sort of poison or powerful drug.
She left the newcomer in Lizzie's hands and went back to her own room. The short interview had exhausted her, which was a proof of how weak she was after her siege in bed. She wanted to rest now so that she would be on her feet and able to talk to Barnabas when he came that evening. Lizzie had claimed he'd called faithfully night after night, so there could be little doubt that he'd visit her again.
Lizzie brought her dinner up to her on a tray and set it beside her bed. The blonde girl still appeared to be concerned about the new housekeeper. "Believe me, ma'am," she said, as she arranged the tray, "all is not what it seems to be with that one."

"What room did you give her?" Paula asked.

The pretty maid looked indignant. "She wanted a room here on this same floor with you and the master! Imagine her nerve! Well, I soon put that out of her head. I told her that Peg had slept in the room next to mine and she would have the same one near the kitchen. And no other!"

Paula smiled faintly as she sat propped up against the pillows, sipping her consommé. "I'm glad there is someone in the house with a firm hand," she told the maid. "You're doing very well."

Lizzie looked pleased. "Thank you, ma'am. But I doubt if I can keep that hussy in line."

"Please, Lizzie, we don't know whether she is that. We must be charitable."

"I have little charity for the likes of her," the pretty blonde girl declared scornfully. "She doesn't know her place at all. Would you believe she actually sat down at the piano in the living room and was going to play it?"

Paula raised her eyebrows. "Does she play?"

"I didn't give her any chance to prove it," Lizzie declared. "I let her know this wasn't her house to do as she pleased. You are here to work and keep things in order, I said, not to enjoy them!"

Paula sighed. "I admit this Melissa is a strange type. I'll be glad when my husband comes home and I can question him about her."

"I would if I were you," Lizzie agreed as she passed her the plate with some filet of sole with a little potato scallop. "You know she's been here in Collinsport before though not at Cranshaw."

"Yes, she told me that."

"'I must go take a stroll to the cliff' was one of the first things she said," Lizzie recalled with annoyance. "And I told her the cliff would keep. And I let her know that even if she was housekeeper and I the maid, she wouldn't ride high over me!"

"I'd say there was little danger of that," Paula smiled. 99
“Did she take all your rebukes in good part?”

Lizzie stood there speculating with a tiny frown. “Well, she took them but she does it in a funny sort of way. As if she was laughing at you when you weren’t looking. As if she might be playing some kind of nasty trick on you that you didn’t understand.”

“I know what you mean,” Paula said glancing up at her.

“She’s a sly one. I wouldn’t put anything past her.”

“We must try and get along with her. At least until my husband comes home,” Paula declared. “Then we’ll decide whether to keep her or not.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Lizzie said. “Will you be well enough to see Mr. Barnabas if he comes tonight?”

She nodded with a knowing little smile. “Don’t you think I should? He’s been so kind and faithful in his calling on me.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the girl said. “Mr. Barnabas is a fine person.”

Paula couldn’t resist going on to ask, “Does he still visit you, Lizzie?”

The pretty blonde girl’s face turned a deep scarlet. “Ma’am, I should never have told you about that. My boyfriend would have my life if he thought I was seeing Mr. Barnabas on the sly.”

“You may depend on my not saying anything, Lizzie,” she assured her. “I just wondered.”

The girl looked embarrassed. “He does come and talk to me fairly often. He’s a wonderful gentleman who has been all over the world. And the things he tells me about Paris and London fairly make me want to go there.”

Paula smiled. “Perhaps you shall one day. I might decide to make the trip and take you as my personal maid.”

Lizzie looked entranced and excited at the idea. “Would you really, ma’am?”

“I can’t think of anyone I’d prefer having more,” she said.

Lizzie left in a jubilant mood at the prospect of seeing some of the rest of the world. Paula waited a moment before rising to wash and dress for the arrival of Barnabas. It was clear that he was still seeing Lizzie and undoubtedly finding some of the blood he needed. Yet,
as he'd promised, he'd not harmed her in any way. She looked well enough and seemed to have no idea of what was going on. The hypnotic spell Barnabas held over her would answer for that.

Daylight was fading as she stood before her mirror in a plain cut dark satin dress which was one of her favorites. She selected a pearl necklace to wear with it and was adjusting the last of a pair of pearl earrings when a knock came on her door. Taking a swift final glance in the mirror, she decided she looked well considering the illness she'd known.

Moving quickly to the door she opened it with a smile and Barnabas was standing there in the hallway. He eyed her with approval.

“You're beautiful tonight,” he said entering. “And I was expecting to find you still in your sickbed.”

She shrugged as she closed the door. “I made a rapid recovery this morning. Thank you for coming so faithfully, Barnabas.”

His melancholy face showed concern. “I felt you should have had a doctor. But I hesitated to call one on my own. What do you think was wrong?”

Her eyes met his. “I know what was wrong.”

The heavy arched brows raised. “Oh?”

“Chris gave me some sort of drink the night before he left. It was either poisoned or drugged.”

Barnabas frowned. “I warned you. You must be even more careful.”

“I don’t know what his intention was,” she said. “But he has sent us a very strange new housekeeper. Have you seen her yet?”

“No.”

“She’s young and beautiful,” Paula told him. “It’s possible you may have met her before. She claims she has made at least one other visit to Collinsport.”

The sallow face with the high cheekbones registered interest. “What is her name?”

“Melissa Henry.”

“It’s not familiar.”

“She’s not the servant type at all. She’s young and beautiful in a dark, foreign way. And she has a kind of unusual accent. But most of all it’s her manner that con-
fuses me. She seems to be mocking me all the time.”

Barnabas smiled wryly. “She’s certainly not the buxom, matronly regulation housekeeper then.”

“Indeed she isn’t,” Paula said, gazing at him earnestly. “In fact, I’m forced to wonder if this isn’t some girl my husband has more than a casual interest in, and whom he’s decided to install here deliberately to annoy me.”

“He’s capable of almost anything,” Barnabas admitted. “Even that.”

“At any rate, there’ll be a showdown when he comes back from Boston.”

“High time,” Barnabas said. “I say you should go to your Uncle Michael.”

“Just give me a little longer,” she insisted.

He smiled at her in reproval. “Delay could turn out to be dangerous for you,” he said. “Especially as I’m sure he suspects we had a hand in getting rid of Abel.”

“How can he know that?”

“He knows that I had a strong motive for doing so,” Barnabas reminded her. “And that you were a friend of the murdered Joseph Sharon.”

“Poor old Mr. Sharon,” she murmured.

“And poor Rachel,” Barnabas reminded her. “I don’t want you to be the second Mrs. Christopher Jennings to suffer a violent end. This girl he’s just brought here could be the woman slated to follow you as his third wife. I’d say her coming places you in new peril.”

Her lovely eyes showed fear. “You really believe that?”

“It sounds very much like it.”

“And he hates you so,” Paula said, worried. “If he knew who and what you are he’d find some way to destroy you.”

“My enemies have tried to do that for more than a hundred years,” Barnabas said lightly.

She studied his handsome, serious face with troubled eyes. “But you are vulnerable, Barnabas! Your need for blood and the fact that you have to remain in your coffin between the hours of sunrise and sunset. I worry that he or someone acting for him will break into the old house and do something to you!”

He looked bitter. “Drive a stake through my heart? That’s the usual way of dealing with persons like myself,
afflicted with the vampire curse. I dare say he’d try it if he was sure. And if he could manage to get by my man, Davis. Which I doubt. Davis can be a formidable fighter when the need arises.”

“I only hope you are safe.”

“There is no such thing as safety,” Barnabas declared. “But I believe I have a reasonable margin of protection in the precautions I take and the veil of secrecy in which I live.”

“If only the curse could be removed,” she said.

Barnabas gazed down at the silver wolf’s head of his black cane. “I think only Angelique, the witch who brought me to this, could successfully remove the curse.”

She frowned. “Angelique was the one who was so jealous of you and Josette.”

“Yes.”

“And it was she who summoned the bat to bite you and change you into a vampire,” she recalled. “But she must be dead these many years.”

Barnabas gave her a meaningful look. “Witches do not die,” he said. “They may vanish to return again at some other time or place but they do not perish.”

“Not even when they are burned at the stake?”

“Only then,” Barnabas acknowledged. “And Angelique was not burned at the stake.”

“I see,” she said slowly. “So there is the possibility that you may one day encounter her again and somehow make her break the spell?”

“That is my hope,” he agreed. “She is all evil. She would not do it willingly. But I might find some way to persuade her.”

“I wish very much that it may happen,” Paula said, looking up at him fondly “Even though it might mean I’d lose you as my friend.”

“You’ll always be sure of my friendship,” Barnabas promised her. And he took her in his arms and kissed her gently, the cold touch of his lips no longer repulsive to her. She accepted the kiss gratefully, knowing that it expressed his deep feelings for her.

When he let her go, she said, “If anything really upsetting happens on Chris’s return I’ll go straight to Uncle Michael.”

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“Do that,” he urged her. “And now I must go. This is your first night of being yourself again.”

“I’m perfectly well,” she said. “I’ll see you to the door.”

Against his urgings not to she went downstairs with him and as far as the hall door. He said his goodnight and opened the door, only to discover the newcomer, Melissa Henry, framed in it. She was standing on the top step, outlined against the starry sky. She wore a scarf around her shoulders and her black eyes took them in with one of her usual mocking glances.

Barnabas seemed stunned to silence. Paula quickly spoke up, “This is our new housekeeper, Miss Melissa Henry. Melissa, our neighbor, Mr. Barnabas Collins.”

The dark beauty entered the hallway and gave Barnabas a teasing smile. “I believe I have seen you before,” she said.

Barnabas frowned. “Really?”

Melissa turned to Paula. “I do not mean exactly that. What I’m trying to tell this fine gentleman is that I’ve seen his likeness in a painting. A painting that hangs in the outer hall of Collinwood.”

Paula explained for Barnabas. “I believe I told you about Miss Henry visiting Collinsport. I should also have mentioned she stopped by Collinwood.”

Melissa eyed Barnabas roguishly. “I was only there very briefly. But your portrait made an impression on me.”

“I find that interesting,” Barnabas said in his calm manner. “I’m happy to meet you, Miss Henry.” And he turned to Paula again, “I hope you keep well, Mrs. Jennings. Perhaps some evening when the weather is good you’ll come and pay me a visit.”

“I’d enjoy that,” she said as she stood by the door.

Barnabas bowed to them both and then walked out into the night. Paula watched after him a moment and then slowly closed the great oaken door. She gave her attention to Melissa, who was still standing there.

“Did you have a nice walk?” she asked.

Melissa smiled mysteriously. “I enjoyed it. I went to the cliff. I’ve wanted to go there ever since I arrived.”

“It has a tragic history.”
“I don’t think so,” the other girl argued. “I like to stand there and hear the waves break against the rocks and gaze down at the angry water. Those who threw themselves from the cliff were weaklings suited to their fate. You have heard about the wives of the fishermen who gathered there to see if their husbands would return from the storms at sea? And of the Phantom Mariner who appeared whenever a wife, mother or daughter lost a loved one?”

“I have heard the legend,” Paula admitted.
“What makes you so sure it’s only a legend?” Melissa Henry wanted to know.

Paula shrugged. “I have never believed in ghost stories.”

Melissa smiled grimly. “The lives of all of us are ghost stories,” she said. “You should think about that.” And with a final mocking smile she left her and walked down the hall to the servant’s quarters.

Paula stood there uncertainly a moment, suddenly realizing that she had pushed herself far in consideration of how ill she’d been. Also she couldn’t understand the attitude of the dark-eyed stranger whom Chris had sent to become housekeeper at Cranshaw. There was something mysterious and sinister about the young woman. Just now she’d been almost defiant in her mention of ghosts and her visit to the cliff.

Mounting the broad front stairway, Paula felt tiny and lost in the high cavernous hall with its gloomy shadows and grimy atmosphere of long ago elegance. And she began to fear that Melissa had not come to Cranshaw to be a housekeeper at all. It seemed that Chris had deliberately sought her out and sent her to be his new conspirator in his criminal wolf cult activities. He’d lost Abel, so he’d looked for someone else to assist him in his evil doings. She suspected that had been his sole reason for going to Boston.

No doubt he had sent the girl first for some ulterior purpose which would after a while become clear. For the moment it was enough to know that Melissa was almost openly defying her and behaving as she liked. Without a question this could become worse when Chris returned and the dark girl had him to stand behind her.

Wearily letting herself into her bedroom, Paula began
to prepare for the night. She wondered what reaction Barnabas had to the newcomer. He’d shown little surprise when Melissa had claimed to have seen the painting of him at Collinwood. Of course, he’d realize the dark girl would have no idea of the age of the painting. That it was more than a century old. He’d left quickly after the meeting, suggesting that Paula come to visit him. This struck her as odd since he’d not mentioned it before during the evening. Could he now have a special reason for wanting her to come to the old house? A reason linked with the brief conversation between him and the sultry dark beauty from Boston. With these troubling thoughts utmost in her mind, Paula finally fell into a restless sleep.

CHAPTER NINE

When she awakened it was to a tumultuous roll of thunder. She sat up quickly with a frightened expression on her pretty face as a shaft of lightning showed menacingly through her window. And after a moment the thunder came again, louder and nearer this time.

Paula disliked electrical storms and this seemed to be shaping up into an especially bad one. Her first impulse was to put on her robe and go downstairs, where Lizzie might also be awake. There would probably be windows to close and other precautions to make against the disturbance and Lizzie was most dependable in these things. But then the idea of the long journey in the darkness discouraged her. She decided to remain in bed and hoped the storm would soon abate.

Between rolls of thunder she thought she heard sounds of someone moving about in the adjoining bedroom. At once she began to wonder if Chris had returned. It was
possible he had come on the night boat. She strained to make sure if she'd really heard anyone and again in a lull in the storm the creak of a floorboard in the other room came clearly to her.

Lightning bathed her anxious face in its cold blue as she called out, “Chris! Are you in there?”

There was no reply. She called again and still no answer. Now fear of the storm began to shift to fear of the unknown presence silently threatening her from her husband's bedroom. It had started to rain and the thunder was moving further away. But there were still occasional brief flashes of lightning.

Paula stared at the door linking the two bedrooms. It was closed and she couldn't remember if she'd locked it or not. Surely if it was Chris in there he would have made some reply. He couldn't be so cruel as to ignore her in this fashion.

Swallowing hard she cried out his name again, “Chris! Are you there?”

Still there was no answer. The rain lashed against her window and she sat tensely staring into the shadows and wondering what she should do next. She was too frozen with fright to try leaving her bed and escaping from the room. And yet she knew there had to be someone in the other bedroom. Twice she had heard sounds that must mean someone was stirring in there.

And then from across the darkened room there came the faint but unmistakable creak of the door between the bedrooms being opened just a little. Cold terror shot down her spine! Her eyes widened and fixed on the area of the door. The creak came again as the door was edged open a little more. And then it burst open all the way and a flamboyant Melissa stood there in a flimsy dark negligee with a lighted candle in her hand. She wore her usual mocking smile.

Paula stared at her. “What are you doing here?” she demanded.

Melissa continued to smile and said nothing. She kept the candle at shoulder level in her left hand so that its flickering glow brought out all the loveliness and also the craftiness of her olive-skinned face. Paula then saw that Melissa held something in her right hand—something that
glittered when a stray fleck of light from the wavering candle flame caught it. A knife, perhaps?

Paula's throat tightened. "Miss Henry!" she cried in the most urgent tone she could summon. "Stop! Have you gone mad?"

Melissa's smile continued to mock her, and Melissa came slowly towards the bed. Paula was certain she was dealing with an insane person. There could be no other explanation.

Melissa was within a couple of feet of her bedside when the burst of pale blue light showed by the window. Paula thought it was a weak flash of lightning at first, but then from the corner of her fear-stricken eyes she saw that this light was static. It hadn't moved since it had appeared. It floated in the darkness, an orb of pale blue.

A glance in Melissa's direction showed the dark girl reacting to this eerie happening in a most emphatic manner. The mocking smile had vanished from her pert face and she was staring horror-stricken at the blue ball of light.

Then an astonishing thing happened. Melissa gave a scream that was partly a cry of panic and partly a bitter venting of frustration. And with her long, black hair streaming after her she turned and ran from the room. It all occurred within the space of seconds and Paula watched in shocked silence.

With Melissa gone, Paula turned her attention to the blue orb of light which had produced the powerful reaction in the girl. The ball of pale blue was still hovering in the same place, but it was gradually fading, and as Paula stared at it in fascination it finally grew fainter and fainter until it was no more.

Paula couldn't begin to guess what the meaning of the blue light might be. But Melissa surely must have recognized what it was and been terrified by it. She had lost little time in leaving.

A knock on the corridor door caused Paula to tremble. "Yes?" she called out apprehensively.

"It's only me, ma'am," came the answer from the other side of the door in Lizzie's familiar voice.

"Do come in," Paula invited her.

The door opened and the blonde girl entered in a plain
white robe. She was carrying a candle and came over to Paula. "The storm was so violent I worried about you."
"Thank you, Lizzie."
"You’re all right, then?"
Paula nodded. "Yes. A strange thing happened in here. I don’t know how to explain it. I wish you’d stay the rest of the night with me. You can share my bed. There’s lots of room."

Lizzie looked puzzled. "Yes, ma’am," she said. She didn’t ask for any explanation, but she must have been curious as to what had taken place.

Paula was grateful for the girl’s company although sleep did not come to her until long after Lizzie was breathing in the soft, regular fashion of one slumbering deeply. The night passed without any other sinister occurrences and gave way to a warm, beautiful spring morning. The morning was so delightful that as soon as she’d had breakfast Paula decided to go for a walk.

She put on a light coat and wrapped a scarf around her head to protect her hair against the slight breeze. Then she set out for the beach. The tide was out and there was plenty of room to stroll along its sandy expanse. The events of the night still troubled her and she moved slowly with eyes that took in little around her. The ocean was placid and the roll of the waves as the tide was beginning to reverse was still subdued.

It had seemed wise to say nothing to Lizzie about the appearance Melissa had made in her room and of the odd blue ball of burning light which had panicked her into retreat. Lizzie was already in high dudgeon over the dark girl and this could only have made things worse. But Paula still wondered what it had meant.

She kept thinking of Barnabas and felt sure that he wanted her to call at the old house to see him. She would have gone at once but she knew it would be useless. She’d only find a corpse sleeping in a casket. Barnabas would not stir into activity until after sundown so she must patiently wait until then. The hours would pass slowly for her.

Before she knew it she was quite a distance from Cranshaw and moving onto the Collinwood estate. She meant to turn back, but curiosity kept her walking straight on un-
til she came to the dock area. With the tide out only the far end of the wharf was in water, and standing there on the wharf was a tall, familiar figure. It was her Uncle Michael, leaning heavily on his hickory walking stick. As she approached he saw her and at once came hobbling laboriously to join her.

The first impression she had of him was that his aristocratic old face was thin and haggard. His large white mustache seemed enormous now that he had lost weight, but his eyes had lost none of their keenness.

As he came up to her he greeted her with, “You foolish girl! Why haven’t we heard from you?”

Paula offered a pitiful little shrug. “I didn’t want to bother you, knowing how you felt about Chris and my marriage to him.”

Her uncle scowled. “He’s a scoundrel! I blame myself for ever allowing you to become friendly with him. You must know by now he is not what he pretends.”

She found her pride intervening to stop her making a completely truthful statement of her feelings. She said listlessly, “I’ve tried to make the best of things.”

“And look at you!” the old man declared angrily. “You’re as pale as a ghost and you look like a timid, frightened rabbit.”

She mustered a faint smile. “Come, Uncle Michael, you’re making it worse than it is.”

“Nothing could be as bad as the truth,” her uncle told her. “Your Aunt Sally is in her bed ill and I think a good deal of it is because of her worrying about you.”

“I’m sorry,” Paula said sincerely.

“You should be willing to do more than be sorry,” Uncle Michael said. “You should return to Collinwood, admit you’ll never be happy with that Chris, and allow your aunt and me to take care of you.”

“I’ll think about it,” she said.

Her Uncle Michael gazed balefully down the beach in the direction of Cranshaw. “Have you heard that wolf howling here at night?” he asked. “Do you realize the stories that have been circulating around the village about the doings of your husband and that so-called wolfman, Abel?”

“Abel will trouble no one any more,” she pointed out.
“Never be sure of that,” her uncle said. “And your husband is still free to continue his villainy. You have not seen the degradations I have. It was my painful duty to examine the body of Joseph Sharon. I saw what had been done to that poor old man. His throat was literally torn open!”

“Please, Uncle!” she begged as the memory of that white skull-like face returned to haunt her.

“Joseph Sharon talked to me about your husband before he was murdered. I can tell you that he believed Chris murdered his first wife and planned to treat you the same way.”

“I know,” she said. “He came to tell me.”

“And you didn’t listen to him?” Uncle Michael asked, incredulous.

“I’m not positive he was right.”

“Poppycock!” Her uncle exploded. “Your common sense should tell you by now that everything he claimed was true.”

She met her uncle’s scornful gaze with a mildly defiant one of her own. “I have to do this my way,” she reminded him.

“Then do feel free to come to us at Collinwood any time,” her uncle pleaded.

“I will.”

Uncle Michael regarded her sadly. “And yet you have cut yourself off for a man inferior to you in every way. A man touched with a curse that he cannot or will not control. Face it, Paula. This husband of yours has tainted blood. He is insane!”

She wanted to end this discussion of Chris so she said, “I have met your visitor, Barnabas Collins.”

Her uncle touched a finger to his white mustache. He looked slightly discomfited. “How would you meet Barnabas?”

“He was more friendly than you,” she pointed out. “He came to visit us at Cranshaw.”

Uncle Michael bristled, leaning heavily on his cane. “Don’t expect me to do anything like that.”

“I don’t.”

“Barnabas is free to do what he likes,” Uncle Michael said bitterly. “I make no judgment of his actions. He is a
very retiring man but a gentleman. He has nothing in common with your Chris Jennings.”

“Barnabas knows the village well, for a stranger,” she said, wanting to test her uncle. To discover whether he knew the secret of the handsome man doomed to wander the world as a vampire.

Uncle Michael shrugged. “He heard a great deal about Collinsport from both his father and his grandfather. They had visited here.”

“I see,” she said quietly.

“If you had married someone as fine as Barnabas I wouldn’t have worried,” her uncle said angrily.

She gave the old man a rueful smile. “I’m sorry I’ve brought you so much worry, Uncle Michael. Give my love to Aunt Sally.”

He looked forlorn. “You will come to see us soon?”

She nodded. “Yes.”

“I shall count on that,” her uncle said. “Is it true that Chris Jennings has been absent in Boston?”

“He has. He should be back tonight or tomorrow night at the latest.”

“Why not come up to Collinwood with me now?” the old man pleaded.

“Not yet,” she said, holding back. “I want to have another talk with him first. If we are not able to settle our differences, then I shall come to Collinwood to stay.”

Her uncle looked happier. “The sooner you come to that decision the better for all of us,” he said.

Paula lingered only a moment or two more talking to him and after an awkward goodbye began to walk back. When she’d gone a way she turned and looked to see if her uncle was still on the wharf. He was. He stood there a frail old figure leaning on his cane. She felt terribly sorry for him and for the unpleasantness she had brought into his life.

Turning to continue her journey along the wet beach, she considered what he’d said about Barnabas. It was evident that he had no idea the Barnabas he was entertaining was the same one who had left Collinwood more than a century ago. He was unaware that Barnabas was a vampire and a prey to the unfortunate tendencies of the walking dead. She hoped that nothing would happen to divulge
these shocking facts to the old man.

And this brought her back to her husband, because Chris hated Barnabas and was party to some knowledge about him. If Chris could manage it he would do Barnabas all the harm he could.

What would happen next at Cranshaw? What crisis would she be faced with when Chris returned? Was there even a small chance of saving the marriage she’d so recklessly plunged into against all advice? These and other questions tortured her. And there was Barnabas. Whether she wanted to admit it or not, she had fallen in love with him. Yet, both were chained in different ways so any future for them seemed hopeless. She still was bound to a cruel and even criminal husband while Barnabas was the victim of an evil curse which doomed him and any who would love him.

To add to these complications there was Melissa. Paula had not yet fitted her into the ugly jigsaw puzzle of her husband’s wicked scheming. But she knew that Melissa must be a part of it all. Last night she’d been shocked when the girl had come so stealthily into her room. And she still believed Melissa had a knife in her hand. Would the girl have attempted to plunge it into her if she’d not been halted by the eerie appearance of the ball of blue light. She thought so.

And what did the blue light signify? This perhaps was one of the most tantalizing questions of all. Paula might have considered it an illusion, something she’d imagined, if Melissa had not also obviously seen the pale blue ball and reacted to it in such a startling way. Again she felt that Barnabas might be the only one who could answer these questions for her and she was impatient in the knowledge that it would be pointless to try to see him until dusk had come to free him.

She continued to walk along the lonely beach in the direction of Cranshaw. As she rounded a tall section of jagged rocks she was suddenly faced with an unexpected sight. A hundred yards distant two people stood on the beach in earnest conversation. She could hardly believe her eyes. One of them was Melissa and the other was her husband! Chris, who at this moment was still supposed to be in Boston!
They hadn’t seen her, so she hastily ducked behind the shelter of the rocks to watch them and be unobserved herself. They continued in animated discussion and she stared at them with many misgivings. So her husband must have returned last night on the boat from Boston. Apparently he’d not wanted her to know he was back. Why? What underhanded scheme was he working on now? She didn’t dare guess, but she knew she could not continue home the beach way. There was too much risk of her running into them or being observed by them. So she carefully retraced her steps until she found a place along the cliffs where there was a path. She took this and soon reached the lawns of Cranshaw. As she neared the house she paused to stare down at the beach. But Melissa and her husband were no longer there. She was not surprised.

When she went inside she found Melissa standing in the living room staring rather moodily at a brass ornament on the table before the window. It was a Chinese Buddha probably brought back by Captain Cranshaw from one of his many voyages to Asian waters. Staring at the preoccupied girl from the hallway Paula was once again impressed by her startling beauty.

She moved hesitantly towards the archway and said, “Weren’t you down on the beach a few minutes ago?” Melissa abandoned her study of the brass figure and turned to her with an expression of astonished innocence. “No, Mrs. Jennings, I have been in the house all the time.”

Paula hadn’t expected her to admit anything. She said, “Then you must have a double. I was certain I saw you there and you were talking to some man.” “Oh?” Melissa showed no particular reaction to this. She could be amazingly cool when she liked. “In fact I thought the person you were with was my husband.” “But Mr. Jennings is in Boston.” “That’s what I thought,” Paula said grimly. “Still, it looked very much like him on the beach just now.” Melissa gave her one of her mocking smiles. “Then it seems you were seeing two doubles not one.” Paula felt she hated this saucy girl who had insinuated herself into her home and was now deliberately lying to
her and carrying on with her husband. She said, "Does that seem likely?"

Melissa’s even white teeth gleamed as she continued to smile. "In this world the most unlikely things happen."

"I am bound to agree with that," Paula said wearily. It seemed hopeless to fight the wickedness of these two banded together against her. After she’d seen Chris again, surely it would be best for her to give up the struggle and accept her Uncle Michael’s invitation to return to Collinwood.

"For instance," Melissa said as she went on in her mocking fashion, "it would seem quite impossible that I should see the portrait of a man during one of my visits here and then meet him in person some time later. Yet this did happen last night when you introduced me to Barnabas Collins."

"It was a coincidence," Paula said quietly, not eager to bring Barnabas into their conversation.

But Melissa had other ideas, it appeared. "Such a handsome man," she said, with a knowing gleam in her black eyes. "Not the kind any woman is liable to forget. Don't you agree?"

"I'm not sure I've noticed," she parried.

"Come now, Mrs. Jennings," Melissa teased her. "You're not all that unobserving. You and he are relatively close friends."

"He has visited us as a neighbor," Paula said cautiously.

"And made an excellent drawing of you," Melissa said with an insinuating smile.

Paula frowned. "Who told you about that?"

The lovely dark girl shrugged. "I can't think. Lizzie, perhaps."

"I doubt it," Paula said firmly. She was enraged that this stranger should know so much about her and her affairs. It was clear Chris had done a lot of talking and not the sort of talk one usually engaged in with a housekeeper.

"And yet, I found Barnabas Collins a rather tragic figure," Melissa went on.

She stared at her. "What do you mean?"

The girl made a careless gesture with one of her slim, lovely hands. "He is so melancholy. It is in his eyes and
then there is that sallow cast to his skin. Can he be healthy?"

Paula felt a tiny panic rise up in her. How much did this girl know about Barnabas? She said, "I have never heard him complain about his health."

"Perhaps he has reasons not to."

Paula frowned. "Such as?"

"Some men are so proud. They want us women to think they are veritable giants where health and well-being is concerned. Barnabas Collins clearly thinks a great deal of you and so he would be loath to confess any weakness to you."

"I think you are taking a great deal for granted," Paula said hotly.

Her anger in no way bothered the lovely dark girl. Melissa arched her heavy eyebrows. "Oh?"

"It is my understanding you are here to be the housekeeper. Thus far you are behaving like a guest."

The mocking smile returned to the girl's face. "I have decided I don't want the position. I'm taking the liberty of remaining as a kind of guest until Mr. Jennings returns. Then I will inform him of my decision."

"I see," Paula said, staring hard at her. So it had come out at last. From the beginning she'd known the girl was not what she pretended.

"It would be wrong of me to remain in your service since you don't like me, Mrs. Jennings," Melissa said.

"I don't like you," Paula agreed. "But I'll warrant you never did come to Cranshaw with the idea of being a domestic."

Melissa smiled slyly. "Then why have I come?"

"Only to cause trouble," Paula said.

"Your husband invited me."

"I think we both understand the reason for that," Paula answered angrily. "And when he chooses to let me know he has returned I'll ask him to send you packing. If he doesn't do it you and he may have the house to yourselves." With this declaration she wheeled around and strode out of the living room towards the stairway.

"I wouldn't be hasty, Mrs. Jennings," the girl called after her in a taunting fashion.

Paula was already partway up the stairs and she pre-
tended not to have heard her. The interlude had been a dreadful strain. Together with the revelation that Chris was back at Cranshaw and was keeping his presence hidden from her, it was almost more than she could bear. When she reached the privacy of her room she threw herself on the four-poster bed and sobbed into the pillow.

She was still there when a timid knock came on the door and Lizzie entered the room. The blonde girl came to her solicitously and asked, “Are you feeling all right, Mrs. Jennings?”

Paula raised herself from the pillow and quickly dabbed a tiny hankie to her tear-stained eyes. “Yes. I’ll be fine. I had a scene with that woman downstairs. It upset me.”

Lizzie nodded understandingly. “I heard some of it, ma’am. She’s a real bad one.”

“If you heard her you must know she’s no longer making any pretensions that she came here to take over the position of housekeeper.”

“I never did believe that.”

Paula sighed. “When my husband presents himself to me I shall tell him to order her out at once. If he refuses I’ll leave.”

Lizzie looked distressed. “If you go, ma’am, I’ll be giving notice.”

“I can’t advise you to remain in such a situation,” Paula said rising. “I don’t know what might happen here.”

Lizzie said, “It all began with Abel. He and Peg. They started the evil here. And it’s still going on. This morning I found that Melissa sneaking about in the cellar. I asked her what she was doing down there and she said she was exploring. Then she laughed in my face.”

“In the cellar?”

“She was in the empty storage room,” Lizzie said. “No one ever goes there.”

“I know,” Paula said. And she remembered the stone-lined room which she’d visited with her husband and Barnabas. And Barnabas had shown them the location of a hidden chamber beneath the room and explained it was where Captain Cranshaw had expected to store his treasure. She recalled the special wall stone which controlled the secret entrance in the floor of the storage room. Chris had even gone down into its murky depths.
Lizzie said, "I told her to get out of the cellar and she did."

"I'd pay no attention to her," Paula advised. "I have a feeling Mr. Jennings is encouraging her in all this mischief. If so, there's little we can do about it."

"I'll make her behave properly until the master tells me otherwise," was Lizzie's stout comment. "And they'd better not try to harm you."

Paula smiled wanly at her. "Thank you for your loyalty, Lizzie. It has been the thing that has sustained me most during these dreadful days."

"You can count on me, ma'am," the girl assured her.

Paula knew that she could. She suspected that Barnabas had helped instruct the girl in how to protect her. Lizzie was much more under the control of the handsome vampire than she guessed. And she served as a link between Barnabas and the happenings at Cranshaw.

Thoughts of Barnabas brought the drawing to mind. She went quickly over to the dresser drawer where it was hidden and took it out to look at it. She was relieved that it was safe and after studying it with gentle eyes she carefully put it back in its hiding place.

The day dragged on. She had dinner served on a tray in her room. She wanted no more meetings with the hateful Melissa. And Chris had still not chosen to show himself. When she finished her meal she changed her clothes and waited until the sun began to set. Then she could make the short walk across to the old house at Collinwood.

She managed to leave Cranshaw without being seen by anyone and hurried across the lawn to the road and then the footpath leading to the adjoining estate. It was just beginning to darken but she felt no fear along the treelined path. She had become familiar with it now and she had no reason to suspect she might be followed.

When she reached the old house the windows were shuttered and the door closed. She mounted the stone entrance steps with an apprehensive feeling. What if Barnabas should suddenly vanish and leave her alone to face her desperate problems? She knew this could happen one day. Nervously she rapped on the door. It seemed an
endless time before she heard shuffling footsteps approaching inside.

The door was slowly opened and the broad, beard-stubbled face of the mute Davis showed itself. He stared at her without betraying any expression. She wondered if he recognized her.

“Mr. Barnabas,” she said. “I must see him.”

The big man frowned and slowly shook his head.

Paula became fearful. “Please!” she begged. “He’ll want to see me. Tell him it’s Mrs. Jennings.”

Still the big man showed no reaction other than to stand there staring at her glumly.

“Where is Mr. Barnabas?” she demanded growing more desperate every moment.”

Davis opened the door wider and stepped out. Then he pointed in the direction of a field with a sloping hill and trees beyond it. He made a grunting sound.

Paula remembered the family cemetery was located at the bottom of that field. She gave Davis a glance of gratitude, then turned and quickly went down the steps and across the open field towards the ancient, railed cemetery. As soon as she reached the crest of the hill and could see the cemetery with its iron fence and gray, tilted tombstones, she spotted the tall, erect figure of Barnabas standing meditatively amid the somber surroundings.

She felt a stab of pain in her heart. Sympathy for the tragic Barnabas filled her. How he must be torn between the desire to live and his link with all who rested in their graves in this isolated spot. For they had been the people of his world. He was a lonely figure, cursed and doomed to continue wandering pointlessly. Yet she felt he had found love again in her and she cared deeply for him. Surely they could somehow overcome the problems that beset them and find a happy life together.

Fairly running down the steep hill towards the cemetery she arrived there breathless and filled with emotion. She threw herself in his arms and said, “Barnabas! I’ve found you!”

He closed his arms around her gently and they kissed. After a moment he let her go and with tenderness in his deep-set eyes, said, “I hoped you would come.”
"I thought that was what you wanted."

"It was."

She smiled sadly. "When I got to the old house and found you were not there my heart almost stopped. I worried that you might have left for good."

He shook his head. "I'd never do that without telling you. I counted on Davis to direct you here."

"He did. But not for a few minutes."

"At least you are here safely," he said. He made a rueful gesture towards the old gravestones. "And you find me among my friends. I often come here when I'm troubled and lonely."

She stared up at him with fond eyes. "I don't connect you with such a place. I think of you as alive. My champion."

"I wish I could be more successful in the role," Barnabas told her.

"You have been wonderful," she insisted.

"Still I'm bound by the grave," Barnabas said unhappily, "I should long ago have been resting here in my coffin."

"Don't talk that way," she said with troubled eyes. "You frighten me. And I need your help so badly now. I don't know what to do about that Melissa."

A strange expression came over the serious, handsome face of Barnabas. "Ah, yes, Melissa," he said. "I have something to tell you about her. A warning to offer you."

Her face shadowed. "What sort of warning?"

"I believe that Melissa is no ordinary human being," he said slowly and with deep conviction. "I'm almost certain she is a witch."

A moment of shocked silence passed as Paula attempted to comprehend what she'd just heard. They stood together in the fading light under the shelter of a tall birch tree, the graves of long-dead members of the family all around them. She studied his solemn face with growing horror.

"Melissa a witch!" she gasped.

"I recognized her at once," Barnabas said. "Just as she recognized me."

"But how?"

"I know her." He paused for a second. "This is going to
be a shock to you. The girl you have at Cranshaw is Angelique."

"Angelique!"

"Yes, Angelique who placed this curse on me. Angelique who has always been a trouble-maker. And who has come back now for Heaven knows what kind of evil."

Paula brushed a hand across her forehead. "I can’t believe it."

"It’s Angelique all right."

"But how?"

"How did Chris manage to find her and bring her here?" Barnabas said. "I’m not sure. Angelique, like myself, is a wanderer through the ages. But she is not confined to a coffin during daylight as I am. She has the ability to assume many guises. Any role is possible for her. It is her macabre humor that has let her come back here exactly as I knew her. She’s deliberately flaunting herself before me. Chiefly because she must be jealous of you."

"My husband is back but he’s keeping away from me. I saw him on the beach with her. Later she denied that either of them had been there."

Barnabas nodded. "That sounds like her. And I’d gather that your husband is mixed up in black magic himself. I’ve suspected from the beginning that he was the priest and Abel the acolyte."

Paula listened with growing amazement. "So that is why she has mocked me. I’m dealing with a phantom creature."

He nodded. "And you are married to worse. Chris Jennings is a werewolf."

Her eyes went wide with terror. "How can you know?"

"I have means not understandable to you," Barnabas assured her. "So he is also a demon of the night. That is why he has been able to join forces with Melissa. They will make a great team."

"What about me?" she asked. "I’m his wife."

Barnabas sighed, his handsome face barely visible in the gathering darkness. "I believe that in due time they will try to destroy me and eliminate you."

"What can we do?"

"We must play the same game," Barnabas told her.
"We will have to seek a way to destroy them. And it may not prove to be easy."

She moved close to him and pressed her face against him. "I'm so frightened!" she said.

His arm circled her in gentle comfort. "And I am frightened for you," he admitted. "Yet I think we can defeat their evil. I only wish you had more friends to call on."

"Uncle Michael has pledged his help."
"He's an old man and not too well."
"And Lizzie is loyal to me."
"And she has placed herself in great danger through her loyalty," Barnabas worried.
"Should I remain at Cranshaw, knowing this?" she asked.
"At least until you see Chris and find out what he has to say," Barnabas said.

She suddenly remembered and, looking up at him, said, "I do have some guardian on my side. A weird thing happened in the thunderstorm last night."
"Yes?" Barnabas showed interest.
"Melissa invaded my room. She looked madly avenging, and I'm sure she had a weapon in her hand. She came directly to my bedside. I called out to her to halt but she paid no attention. I'm certain she planned to strike at me with a knife."
"What prevented her?"
"Something really eerie took place. Just as she reached me, a blue mass of light formed just inside the room's window. I thought it was lightning at first. Then I saw it was an actual ball of pale blue light and seemed to float and hover in the air near my bed."
"Ah!" Barnabas said with satisfaction. "And what did Melissa do then?"
"She seemed to be terrified. In fact she turned and fled."
"I can believe that," Barnabas said in a relieved tone.
"So you are not alone in this."
"What do you mean?"

He smiled. "You were saved by a materialization of a friendly spirit. To be exact, the spirit of Josette. Josette who loved me and threw herself off the cliff because of heartbreak and misunderstanding caused by Angelique.
Josette has always hated Angelique. And she has come back to fight her in this."

"Do you really believe that?" Paula asked.
"I'm positive of it," Barnabas said. "And I feel better about your remaining at Cranshaw. The power of Josette is that of pure love. Strong enough to protect you from almost anything."

"The blue light faded after Melissa ran off," she remembered. "So now it comes down to a battle between good and evil."

"It has always been that," Barnabas assured her. "You must not let on to Melissa that you know she is a witch. Nor that I've told you she is really Angelique."

"It will be hard not to reveal my knowledge," Paula worried.

"You can be as crafty as those two," Barnabas said.
"I should have guessed he was deep in this werewolf business when I saw him with the wolfskin belt," she mused.

"That is his means of transformation," Barnabas said. "It is a fairly common one."

"How can he return to human form?"
"Removing the belt and plunging himself into icy water."

Her pretty face was anguished as she stared up at him in the darkness. "Is there any cure for his condition?"

"Temporary cures are saluting the werewolf with the sign of the cross, or calling him three times by his baptismal name. Three blows on the forehead with a knife or to have three drops of blood removed from the underarm are also said to be effective. The only sure cure is to have the victim kneel in one spot for a hundred years."

"You're saying there is no cure!"

"Your husband indulges in this black magic because it pleases him," Barnabas said. "There have been men and women like him down through history. After a time they lose their desire to be freed of their evil condition, and they consort with others like themselves. That is why he has joined with Melissa or Angelique or whatever you want to call her."

"Angelique is her name of course," Paula said. "But I shall always think of her as Melissa."
“So let us refer to her only as Melissa then,” Barnabas suggested. “It will make things easier.”
She shook her head. “I’m afraid to go back to that dreary old mansion.”
“I’ll see you safely there,” Barnabas said. “And we’ll begin making our own plans.”
Barnabas escorted her back almost to the front door of Cranshaw. He waited to kiss her a tender goodnight. Then he said, “I wish we could leave at this moment and never have to be separated again.”
“We could,” she said, her eyes shining.
He shook his head. “We’d regret it if we did. You’d soon weary of my spending my days in a casket, a cold, motionless cadaver.”
“Don’t say it!”
“We must face it,” he said. “I could bring you no lasting happiness.”
“Unless you are freed of the curse,” she said. “Perhaps she will free you. I can plead with Melissa, if you like.”
“That would be a waste of time,” he told her. “She is heartless and she would bar any of your attempts to save me.”
“Let me at least try,” she pleaded.
“No,” Barnabas said firmly. “I must handle this in my own way. And you play the innocent. At least as long as you are able.”
With that final admonition he sent her into the great dark house.
When she went in she discovered the only room downstairs that was lighted was the living room. Tall lamps served to give it a soft glow of yellowish light. And as soon as she entered she found her husband standing in the doorway of the murky room, waiting for her.

Now that she knew what he was, what his evil nature had brought him to, she could almost see the likeness of a wolf in him.

“I’ve been waiting for you,” he said in his unpleasant voice.

“I wondered when you’d reveal that you had come home,” she said with a small defiance.

He smiled coldly. “I came home this evening.”

“Before that,” she insisted.

He shrugged. “Let us not begin with an argument.”

“Truth might spare that.”

Chris came over to her. “And I have offered you no kiss of greeting. Forgive the oversight.” He started to take her in his arms, but she pushed him away.

“No,” she said. “None of that!”

“Oh?” he regarded her nastily. “I suppose that is because you have been with him. Just come from his arms. How does it feel to be fondled by a dead man?”

“I don’t find Barnabas repulsive to me as you are,” she said, meeting his gaze with a calm one of her own.

“Pretty talk from a wife!” her husband said angrily.

“I hope that I will not long be your wife,” she replied.

“As long as I wish it,” Chris threatened.

“How can you expect me to remain in this house after bringing that girl here?”
He grinned in his unpleasant way, and even his teeth were wolf-like. He said, "Melissa? Didn't she tell you? She's going to be our housekeeper."

"She told me she had changed her mind."

"Well, what does it matter," he said. "The truth is I need her here and she will be employed by me."

"What for?"

"I have an active interest in certain rituals," her husband said calmly. "It so happens that Melissa is versed in witchcraft and the lore of the area. She is going to make notes on the subject for me. Together we shall compile a history of black magic in this section of New England. Our witches may not have been as active or famous as those in Salem, but we had them just the same."

"It is this dabbling in evil that has destroyed you," she said.

"I was deep in the study of witchcraft before we met or were married," he said smugly.

"You didn't let me guess that."

"Was it any of your business?"

"I could have been spared this," she said. "Seeing you descend into the depths of evil."

"It's because you do not understand. Perhaps Melissa and I can initiate you into the beauty of true darkness. You might come to feel differently. Want to join us?"

A chill shot down her back at the greedy look of expectancy on his face. He wanted to consume her very soul now, possession of her body was not enough. He wouldn't be satisfied until he'd degraded her to his level. Never before had she been so terrified by the evil in him.

Shrinking back from him, she began to mount the stairs with her hand groping for the rail and her eyes still fixed on him. "No!" she said in a tense whisper. "No! I'll play no part in your rituals."

His eyes were cold and his smile fixed. "You may change your mind. We need an innocent like you. Such unspoiled creatures are hard to find."

Paula looked down at him with horror etched on her pretty face as she slowly ascended the stairs backward a step at a time. When she was almost at the top she turned and ran the rest of the way. His jeering laughter followed her.
She raced down the dark hallway to her room and threw open the door. It was only to face a new threat and horror. A woman with streaming yellow hair, bloated face and sightless eyes, came toward her with plump hands outstretched and moaning miserably. Paula shrank back in terror and fled on down the corridor. But there was to be no relief.

From the darkness at the end of the hall a grotesquely ugly old woman suddenly greeted her. The withered face and half-shut eyes wore a malicious smile and the old woman hooted oaths at her and spat full in her face. Paula lifted her hands to protect herself from the filthy spittle. Weeping, she turned and stumbled back along the dark passage.

She’d only gone a few steps when one of the side doors flew open and out sprang a tall, hideous creature with madly rolling eyes and a tongue that lolled grotesquely from a loose slavering mouth. The monstrous thing had thin, filthy hands with long nails that reached out to claw Paula’s face.

Paula screamed and staggered back. She pressed her hands to her face and tottered around in the darkness close to collapsing. How could she hold onto her sanity while enduring all this? And then she remembered Barnabas had warned her that Melissa could assume any shape or identity at will. At the same moment mocking laughter rang out at her from the head of the stairs.

She removed her hands from her eyes to stare down the murky shadowed hallway and see Melissa, in all her evil beauty, standing there arms akimbo, regarding her with satisfaction. It had been Melissa exerting her powers which had exposed her to the waking nightmare. She stood there trembling and trying to find the strength to go on to her room. She finally did. Although she didn’t look back, she had an idea Melissa, weary of her sport, had vanished.

Paula locked both the corridor door and the door to her husband’s room, knowing it would do her little good should they decide to make an attack on her using their sorcery. But it was a gesture. She found it ironic that in the beginning it had been Chris who had locked the door on his side. She had not known his secret then.

She wondered if she would be able to sleep. The phan-
toms Melissa had conjured to frighten her remained in her mind vividly in all their obscene horror. She'd almost dropped off when from directly under her window a wailing wolf cry was raised to the moon. And then a second eerie howling to mingle with the first. It went on for several minutes. Paula clasped her hands to her ears.

Somehow she got through the night. In the morning there was a drizzle of rain again, and when Lizzie brought her breakfast up to her the blonde maid was full of gossip. She told her as she sat out the tray, "You know the master is home."

"Yes, I know," Paula said, slipping her robe on.

The girl gave her a forlorn look. "Terrible things are going on here, ma'am," she said. "If it weren't for you I'd pack my bags and run."

"I appreciate that," Paula said with a wan smile as she sat down to the breakfast tray.

"He and that Melissa are working together in some awful business," Lizzie went on.

"Why do you say that?"

"I told you about that one being in the storage room," the maid said.

"Yes."

Lizzie leaned close to her conspiratorially. "Well, they were back down there last night when you were out. I watched them from a corner of the cellar. They opened up the storage room and found a stairway in its floor and went down there. They are making some sort of heathen temple down there. They took down what looked like a kind of altar and candles and all manner of things."

She frowned. "Down to the hidden room?"

"Yes," the girl nodded. "And I heard them talking. And they were laughing and talking about it being safe. That Melissa said something about no one hearing screams from down there. They made my flesh creep!"

Paula studied her with worried eyes. "You're quite sure they didn't see you?"

"They didn't, ma'am."

"I hope not," she said. "It would be dangerous for you if they thought you knew any of their secrets."

"I understand, ma'am," Lizzie said. "And I know what's going on. It's some sort of black magic."
“You’re very likely right,” Paula agreed. “I’d like to have a look at that secret room.”

Lizzie gave her a knowing look. “You could if I watched for you. I could warn you if anyone was coming.”

“Do you think we dare?”

“They aren’t around the house right now,” Lizzie said. “At least they aren’t in the downstairs part. There’s a door from the kitchen to the cellar. We could use those back steps. They’d need never know.”

“I’ll come down as soon as I’ve finished breakfast,” she promised. “If the coast is still clear I’ll go look at that room.”

It was half an hour before she arrived in the kitchen. Lizzie was working at the stove and came quickly to her. “It’s still all right, ma’am,” she said with some excitement. “They haven’t come down here yet.”

Paula nodded. “You stand at the door of the storage room and you can signal me from there if you hear anyone coming down into the cellar.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the girl agreed.

Paula led the way down the well-worn stone steps from the kitchen to the main cellar. The cellar was damp and cold and she gave a small shiver as she crossed it in the direction of the storage room. The door to it was closed but not locked. She stationed Lizzie at the open door without a candle. A light would only be a giveaway if anyone should come down. Then she proceeded into the hidden room with the candle held high and found the stone with the indented lines and pushed it hard. After a moment the secret trapdoor in the floor dropped open.

She had never been down to the lower depths of the hidden room before. Now she stood at the top of the narrow, steep stone steps and hesitated little. But she could not take much time. There was none to spare. With a deep sigh she began to descend the steps slowly. She was startled to find the hidden room much damper than even the cellar level. It was not a large room, longer than it was wide, and its stone walls glistened with damp and mildew. She held the candle up to see what they’d been doing down there. Sure enough, they had been installing some sort of altar.

A dark velvet cloth with some weird designs on it had
been hung against the rear wall and a simple wooden table, draped with the same kind of velvet, stood in front of it. On the table were set out a number of small containers carved from ivory or designed from sea shells. These seemed to contain various powders. There was a pitcher and two long vicious curved knives on the table. That was all!

The evil duo were preparing for some wicked business. There was no doubt of that. The place had not been completely decorated yet, but from their remarks she guessed they wanted to conduct their rituals where they could neither be seen nor heard. Where not even shrieks or screams could be heard! What better place than this hidden chamber in the bowels of the earth.

She stood there in the nearly complete darkness and all at once she was conscious of a pulsating, roaring sound from close by. At first she thought it might be imagined on her part but as she listened carefully she came to realize that it was the sound of the ocean as the tide came in. It echoed distantly even through the stout walls of the hidden room. It was likely the room was below the level of the beach and the waves might even be pounding against its walls. It was a strange, unsettling sound.

Since she’d seen all there was to see she realized she should be on her way. Melissa and Chris could show up at any time. She climbed the rather slippery steps as fast as she could and then went over and manipulated the stone that closed the trapdoor. When that was done she joined a frightened Lizzie in the doorway of the storage room.

“You got here just in time,” Lizzie whispered. “I think they’re on the front steps now, coming down.”

Paula knew that Lizzie was referring to the steps that led from the front hallway to the cellar. They were located a distance from them but not all that far. Quickly she snuffed out the candle, leaving them in total darkness.

Paula said, “We’ll have to find our way back to the rear stairs as fast as we can.”

“I know the way in the dark,” Lizzie said, taking her hand. Paula let the blonde girl go first.

The voices of Melissa and Chris could now be heard clearly from the other end of the cellar. Paula groped along with Lizzie going ahead and guiding her. They had
almost reached the safety of the steps when Paula stumbled and fell.

"Who's that?" Chris called.

Lizzie hastily helped her to her feet and shoved her towards the steps. "You go. It won't be so bad if they find me."

Paula hesitated only a moment and then she did what the maid had suggested. It wouldn't complicate things so much if they only discovered Lizzie in the dark cellar. The blonde girl had various errands down there and so they couldn't make any complaint about finding her there.

Paula had no sooner reached the safety of the kitchen then she could hear the angry murmur of voices from below. She went across to the rear door and waited. She heard only one person coming up the stairs and when the kitchen door opened it turned out to be Lizzie. The blonde girl pressed a finger to her lips to warn her to be silent. Then the maid closed the door after her and sped across the room.

"It's all right," she whispered. "They made a fuss about me being there but I told them I'd gone down after pota¬toes. They didn't guess there had been anyone with me or that we'd been near their secret room."

Paula looked at her with troubled eyes. "I hope they won't hold it against you."

"I fooled them," the maid said gleefully. "But you best get away from here. If they came up and found you in the kitchen they'd guess the rest."

"Yes, you're right," Paula agreed.

She went up to her room and put on her rain cloak. She had an urgent desire to get out of the dreary old mansion in spite of the rain. So far it was only a drizzle. And she'd far rather brave the weather than face long hours in Cran¬shaw with the evil pair. She even considered going over to Collinwood and seeing her uncle. Her aunt was ill and it would be a kindness to spend a little time with her.

So far she'd avoided going there for more than one reason. She knew they would try to coax her to remain with them and they might accidentally pry some informa¬tion from her about Barnabas. Now things had gotten to such a desperate state she was willing to take a few risks.

With this decided she left the house and made her way
to the beach in the drizzle. It was when she reached the beach itself that she noticed the tracks on the higher level where the tide never reached. The tracks were plain enough and of a pattern to leave no doubt in her mind. They could only be the paw marks of large dogs or wolves! And she didn’t have to guess to know whose tracks these were. It seemed that both Melissa and Chris were transforming themselves into the evil gray demons of the night. Together they had raced along the beach.

She followed the tracks for a distance and then they vanished as if the two had headed up the cliffs. So Melissa was as enthusiastic about the werewolf cult as Chris. No wonder the vengeful witch exerted such a spell over her husband. And where would their evil lead next? Chris had made it all too plain that he would like to trap her in their weird fantasy world of horror. Once she was dragged into that secret room and stretched out on their altar for those ancient and obscene rites who knew but what they might actually manage to possess her soul?

She walked in the drizzle terrified by the possibilities. She pictured herself as a zombie-like creature without a mind, save to do their bidding. She had heard such stories and been hesitant to accept them. Now she was faced with the reality.

She was anxious to tell Barnabas about the secret room and the use the two were making of it. He had shown the room to Chris in the first place without knowing her werewolf husband would visualize it as a spot where macabre rituals dedicated to Satan might be held. A spot from which the screams of the tortured would be muffled from the outside world!
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Before she knew it she was mounting the path up the cliff that led to Collinwood, and within a few minutes she had crossed the wide lawn and was standing on the front steps. When the door opened in answer to her knock, it was her Uncle Michael who stood there. The old man’s haggard face brightened.

“So you have finally come,” he said, reaching out to embrace her.

She accepted his kiss and said, “I’m sorry, Uncle Michael. I can only stay a few minutes.”

The thin face with the white mustache showed regrets. Then he shrugged and showed her into the hallway. “I must be satisfied that you have come at all,” he said.

She paused in the hallway before the portrait of Barnabas. Gazing at it, she said, “It’s very good, isn’t it.”

“Yes,” her Uncle Michael agreed. “Barnabas Collins of that day was much like the Barnabas we have visiting us now. Both handsome fellows.”

Paula turned to him with a smile. “I agree,” she said.

Her uncle looked smug. “It so happens you have arrived at a most fortunate moment. There is another handsome man here who is very anxious to see you.”

Paula moved away from her stand before the portrait of Barnabas and studied her Uncle Michael’s smiling face with perplexed eyes. “I’m afraid I don’t understand,” she said.

The old man linked his arm in hers and led her toward the living room moving slowly in his arthritic manner. “You’ll soon know who I’m talking about,” he promised.

And so she did. As they entered the big, elegantly fur-
nished living room of Collinwood she saw a young man standing before the fireplace. When he recognized her he came hurrying forward to greet her with a pleased smile on his frank, attractive face.

Taking her hands in his, he said, “Paula! How good to see you!” Blond and tall, he was Brian Glason, the Boston representative of the Collins business interests. Paula had dated him both at Collinsport and in Boston with some regularity, but after meeting Chris she’d stopped seeing him. He favored tweed suits in light gray and was wearing one now with a crimson cravat to give his attire some color.

Her eyes were bright as she looked up into his friendly face. “I had no idea you were in Collinsport,” she said.

Brian said, “You uncle called me down on business. I should be going back tomorrow.” He scanned her with appraising eyes. “You’re as lovely as ever. Though you look a little tired.”

She felt self-conscious because of the attention she was receiving. “I haven’t been my best lately,” she said. “I think it’s the weather.” She turned to her uncle, who was standing in the background. “How is Aunt Sally? I should go up and see her.”

Uncle Michael’s thin face showed satisfaction. “Let me go up first, Paula,” he suggested. “I’ll prepare her. And it will give you two a little time to yourselves. You must have a lot to talk over, eh?” He eyed them knowingly. “A lot of explanations that are long overdue.” With a friendly nod to them the old man hobbled off.

They stood facing each other awkwardly for a moment after they were left alone. Brian’s pleasant face had clouded over. She at once got the idea he knew a lot more than she’d guessed.

She said, “Did my uncle send for you on my account?”

Brian hesitated and then with a resigned shrug said, “There’s no point in not telling the truth. Yes.”

Paula turned away from him and stared down at the rich carpeted floor. “I’m so embarrassed,” she said in a small pained voice.

Brian came near and touched her arm. “But you mustn’t be!”

“What did my uncle tell you?”

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He sighed. "A lot of things."
"Such as?"
"That Chris is a complete rotter! Your marriage has been a dreadful mistake. That he actually fears for your safety."

She remained standing with her back to him and her head down. She did not want him to see the tears that were brimming in her eyes or the despair on her face.

In a low voice she said, "He had no business to do this. I was wrong to come here today. Otherwise we wouldn't have met."

"On the contrary," Brian argued. "When you arrived your uncle and I were discussing how I'd get in touch with you. I had decided to make a formal call at Cranshaw if that was the only way. Your coming here was providential, I'd say."

"I appreciate your interest, Brian," she said, her back still to him. "But it's not any of your business now, is it?"

"I disagree," he said, "because I love you and always have. I say your welfare and happiness are very much my business."

Now she turned to him again with her tears fully formed and trickling down her cheeks. "Oh, Brian!" she said in a tone of utter hopelessness.

He took her in his arms. "It's not that bad," he told her. "It can't be. I'm going to remain in Collinsport until I've cleared this up."

"It's impossible," she protested. "Beyond anything you can do."

Brian touched his lips to her forehead. "I disagree. Your uncle has complete confidence in me and you should have some too."

"My uncle doesn't fully understand what's happening," she said in despair.

Brian took a linen handkerchief from his jacket pocket and offered it to her. "First, dry those tears and then sit down and tell me the whole story."

There was such a fund of calm strength in the tall blond man that she benefited by his advice. To her own mild surprise she found herself drying her eyes and seating herself on the divan before the fireplace to tell him all the monstrous facts about her marriage to Chris Jennings. The
drizzle of rain outside made a suitable bleak background on this morning of revelation.

Brian frowned as she finished her account of what life at Cranshaw was like. “It’s completely fantastic!” he exclaimed.

She looked at him forlornly. “I didn’t expect you to believe it.”

“I know most of it must be true,” he said. “If not in the way you have described, at least in that spirit. These people are dabbling in witchcraft and black magic. Whether the supernatural is involved or not makes little difference. If their minds are twisted enough to believe they can become wolves at will, it means they are capable of behaving like mad animals in their insanity. This story of your husband’s that he is collaborating on a history book of witchcraft with that Melissa is nothing more than an excuse for his evil debauchery.”

“I’m sure that is so,” she said.

Brian’s pleasant face showed worry. “There are small cliques of people all over the world who venture into this midnight of the supernatural. You have been unfortunate enough to become involved with one of them.”

Paula bowed her head. “How could I have been so stupid?”

“Chris had the charm of the completely evil individual,” was the opinion of the young man at her side. “You had no way of knowing what that charm concealed until after your marriage.”

“It began when we arrived back here at Cranshaw,” she agreed.

“You have to leave him, Paula,” Brian told her.

“I realize that,” she said unhappily. “I don’t know how or when. He is bound to deny any story I tell about him. He doesn’t want to let me go.” She looked at the young man with fear in her eyes. “He wants to convert me to their dark ways. To make me a sacrifice on that altar in the hidden room.”

Brian showed concern on his strong young face. “You should not set foot in that house again.”

“There are many reasons why I must,” she argued. “I don’t want to take the cowardly way out. And there is Lizzie to consider. She has remained on in the house because
of me. And Barnabas thinks the time has not come for me to leave.”

Brian frowned. “This Barnabas! He seems to play a major part in your account, but you’ve told me very few facts about him.”

Paula didn’t reply for a moment. It was true that while she’d mentioned the part Barnabas had played several times in saving her from her husband’s evil actions she’d carefully not revealed the full truth about him. She had no intention of betraying his secret to this young man or her uncle. She would protect Barnabas Collins at all costs. And for a reason she could not divulge to Brian. She was in love with Barnabas.

She said, “There’s not much I can say about Barnabas except that he’s been a good friend. He is reticent and not in good health. He insists on privacy. During the daytime he reads and writes. Only in the evenings does he show himself.”

Brian got up to pace slowly before the fireplace. “Your uncle seems to like him. And he has told me much the same thing about him. Yet, I sense there is a lot that hasn’t been said.”

Paula began to feel concern for Barnabas. She said, “I don’t think you should worry yourself about him.”

Brian paused to face her with a meaningful look. “You say that, but you obviously have let him play an important part in your decisions. You are taking his advice to remain on in that house against what seems to me, all good sense.”

She made a small gesture of futility. “It’s hard to explain,” she said. “But Barnabas understands the nature of the evil that Chris and Melissa represent. Perhaps better than any of us.”

“How is that?” Brian gazed at her directly.

She faltered under his searching glance. “Because he is familiar with the cults of Satan worshipers,” she said. “And because he hopes to somehow destroy the powers possessed by those two.”

Brian stared at her. “You seem to have a great deal more confidence in him than you have in me.”

“Not really,” she said rising and going to where he stood. “I know you to be good and strong and kind. I
can't hope to explain how I feel about Barnabas. But I must do as he says in this.”

Disappointment showed in the young man's face. “I believe your Uncle Michael took too long to call me in. Once again you've given your heart to someone else. You've fallen in love with Barnabas Collins.”

She shook her head. “Please! I don't want to talk about it.”

He gazed in silence at her with unhappy eyes. Then he said, “All right. We won't talk about it. But I'm remaining until I know you're free from the terror in that house. And I'll also want to satisfy myself that you've fallen in love with a proper man this time before I'll consider giving you up.”

Paula was touched by the young man's unselfish declaration, yet she was unable to deny that she loved Barnabas. And again she became panicky that in Brian's efforts to find out all about Barnabas he might stumble upon the fact that he was a vampire. Brian would never understand the nature of the melancholy, handsome man who lived on, tormented by the baleful curse, and he might want to destroy him along with the others.

The situation became less awkward when her Uncle Michael returned to the living room with the word that Aunt Sally was waiting to see her. She spent most of the afternoon with her ailing aunt. Then, at the insistence of her uncle, she went downstairs to have dinner with him and Brian. Little was said about Barnabas at the table, for which she was grateful, but her Uncle and Brian did openly discuss what she should do to break her marriage to Chris.

Uncle Michael spoke from his place at the head of the long, white-clothed table in the paneled dining room. “I say you should remain here and send for your things. Let Chris Jennings come here and complain if he likes. I'll have some things to tell him!”

“I agree,” Brian spoke up, he was seated across from her.

“No,” Paula said firmly. “I can't do that. I must go back if only for Lizzie's sake. I will take no such action without first discussing it with Barnabas.”
Her uncle frowned. "I had no idea you and Barnabas were so friendly."

"You know that we have met occasionally," she reminded him.

"Yes. But he is after all a stranger here. Why should you listen to him rather than Brian or me?"

Brian's face was grim and rather pale. He turned to the old man and said, "I think her reasons for listening to him are valid enough, sir. But I have no way of knowing whether this Barnabas Collins is a truly responsible person or not."

"He's a recluse," Uncle Michael told the young man. "But I will vouch for his character."

Brian smiled bitterly at her at this point and said, "I guess we must let you make the important decisions yourself. All we can do is give you our support."

She was grateful to Brian for his decision. But she was also uneasy. She had been away from Cranshaw for a longer period than ever before. Chris was bound to know she was visiting Collinwood and this would enrage him. She could count on a scene when she returned and perhaps find herself plunged into actual danger.

All she could think of was getting away from Collinwood and seeing Barnabas. It was dusk now and he would be out of his casket and resuming the half-life to which he had been doomed. She wanted to talk to him before she went back to Cranshaw to face Melissa and her husband. As soon as dinner ended she excused herself and went up to bid her Aunt Sally goodbye.

When she came down ready to leave she discovered a sober-faced Brian waiting for her at the bottom of the stairway. He said, "Are you going to the old house now?"

"Yes. I must see Barnabas."

He eyed her earnestly. "Nothing I can say will change your mind about remaining here?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Your uncle wants you to stay. So do I."

"I know," she said wearily. "And perhaps I will do that sooner than you expect."

"But it depends on what this Barnabas advises?"

"Only in part."
"I’m afraid I don’t believe that," Brian said. "And I warn you, if anything should happen to you I will consider this Barnabas mainly responsible."

She parted from the young man with a feeling of alarm. What he had said constituted a veiled threat against Barnabas in the event she suffered any evil at the hands of her husband and Melissa. She wanted to tell him how unfair this was. But she couldn’t without explaining Barnabas’ secret. And this she would not do!

Stepping out into the fading light of the spring evening she found it cold after the all day rain. She pulled her cloak closely about her and adjusted the cowl so that her hair was given the best protection. She started along the path towards the old house but had barely passed the barns when she saw Barnabas’ familiar figure coming towards her.

As he emerged out of the shadows she saw that he was hatless despite the damp and cold. He came up to her with an expression of surprise on his lined face.

"Were you a guest at Collinwood this evening?" he asked.

She nodded. "I was there all day."

"Isn’t that unusual?" Barnabas suggested.

"Yes," she admitted. "I went there to visit Aunt Sally briefly because she’s been ill. There was a guest who knew me. My uncle persuaded me to stay. I shouldn’t have. Chris will be furious."

"That’s very likely," Barnabas agreed with a thoughtful expression on his handsome, sallow face. "Who was the visitor at Collinwood?"

She knew she was blushing. "A Brian Glason. He is a business associate of Uncle Michael’s."

Barnabas studied her. "But more than that?" he suggested quietly.

"We were friends once."

"I suspect he is in love with you," Barnabas said. "And your uncle had him come here to rescue you from Chris Jennings."

"You shouldn’t worry about it, though. I’ve told him you were helping me." Suddenly she remembered. "Oh, Barnabas, I forgot. Chris and Melissa are setting up some kind of altar in that secret room under the cellar."
"Oh?" he said, more pleased than surprised. "So Chris took the bait."

"You knew they would set up an altar there?"

"No, but if they did, I thought that might be a good place for one. Besides, it verifies everything, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose it does," she said. After a pause, she said, "Oh, Barnabas, I do love you."

He reached out a hand to touch her arm gently. "Nothing would make me happier under different circumstances," he said. "But you know how hopeless things are for me."

Paula spoke up eagerly. "Perhaps I can make a bargain with Melissa. I'll let her have Chris if she'll remove the curse from you and make it possible for us to marry."

"Don't count on Melissa," Barnabas warned her. "She already has Chris as a partner in evil. She need make no deal with you. And she still hates me and is jealous of me because I preferred Josette to her in that long ago day when all this began."

"Then what are we to do?"

"If you are wise you'll look to this young man for your future. Once I have found a way to get rid of Chris and Melissa you'll be free to lead a new life."

"And what about you?" she asked him.

He gave a deep sigh. "I shall continue my journeying," he said sadly.

"Alone! Through hundreds of years! I won't let you," she protested.

It was growing darker. He bent close to her and touched his cold lips to her forehead. Then he gently linked his arm in hers. "Let us walk as far as the cliff together," he suggested quietly.

She was in no mood to argue further. His complete resignation to the hopelessness of his own fate had sent her into a mood of bleak despair. All during her ordeal at Cranshaw she had been bolstering her courage with the hope that he might soon rid himself of the curse to live a normal life. Now he seemed ready to endure his sentence of living death.

They strolled silently past the great bulk of Collinwood standing out against the sky and sea. The tall birch trees at that end of the lawns were not in full leaf yet and their
spectral black and white branches twisted against the night like skeleton arms. In the distance a lighthouse cast its roving beam across the dark waters at regular intervals. And far to the right she could see faint pinpoints of light that marked the tiny windows of Cranshaw.

She did not know whether it was her mood or not but the night appeared filled with ominous forebodings. The air was tense with an eerie silence. As they reached the path along the cliff, the pound of the waves on the shore below seemed magnified by the utter quiet of everything else. She gave a tiny shudder.

Barnabas gave her a side glance. “What now?”
“I have a strange feeling that something awful is about to happen,” she said.
“You are a creature of moods,” he said.
“I mean it,” she insisted. “I had the same horrible feeling when I left Cranshaw today. I think it was finding out about that weird altar they’ve set up in the hidden room. Their evil rituals down there in the darkness.”
“It wasn’t a pleasant discovery,” Barnabas admitted. “I wonder what old Captain Cranshaw would think if he came to life to find the use his treasure room was being put to.”
“Things have gotten much worse since Melissa showed up,” Paula complained.
“She was never a good influence on anyone,” the man at her side said. “And Chris Jennings is a menace in himself.”
“I wonder what they plan to do down there in that room.”
Barnabas gave her a sharp look. “You’d be better off not to find out. Take my advice and keep out of the cellar area. There are dangers there which you cannot guess.”

They had reached the peak of the cliff, the highest point overlooking the rocky beach below. She knew it was here that the unfortunate Josette had long ago killed herself for love of Barnabas.

Barnabas stood very erect staring out at the sea and the roving beam of the distant searchlight. He seemed lost in thought, swept away to another time, remote from her.
She gazed up at him. "What are you thinking of, Barnabas?"

He kept looking straight out towards the ocean. "I'm remembering Collinwood and its people over the many years," he said. Then breaking his melancholy mood, he said, "We must wind up the business at Cranshaw. You must have your freedom from Chris Jennings."

"He hates you so," she told him. "It frightens me."

"The truth is, he fears me," Barnabas said grimly. "I believe I have powers to match any he and Melissa can conjure up."

"And there is the spirit of Josette. She saved my life that night Melissa wanted to kill me."

Barnabas nodded. "We mustn't forget Josette."

At that moment Paula became aware of footsteps approaching along the cliff path. Startled, she turned to see a tall figure nearing them in the darkness. A moment later he came close enough for her to identify that it was Brian Glason. Her heart began to pound at the thought of the two men meeting, both loving her.

Brian came up to her and said, "I'm sorry to intrude. But I've been worrying about you getting home."

"It's all right," she assured him. "I'd like you to meet Barnabas Collins. Barnabas, this is Brian Glason."

Barnabas moved forward to give the young man's hand a cordial shake. "I heard that you were visiting," he said. "And I have heard about you, Mr. Collins," the young man said gravely. "You have come here from England."

"The home of my branch of the family," Barnabas said. "Do you like it here?" Brian wanted to know.

"I find many things familiar," Barnabas said. "I have listened to so many accounts of the place from my father and grandfather who also made visits here."

"I've seen the portrait of one of your ancestors in the hallway," Brian told him. "It's remarkable how much resemblance you bear to it."

"I'm familiar with the painting," Barnabas said lightly. "We Collins men all have strong family features that extend through generations."

"That must be the case," Brian said. "The likeness is startling." Then to Paula he said, "How do you plan to get
back to Cranshaw now that it’s dark?”

Before she could make any reply Barnabas spoke. He said, “I’m seeing her home. I know a shortcut through the woods.”

“I see,” Brian said quietly. “Then there’s no need to worry. I’ll say goodnight.” With that he bowed and turned to walk back along the path by which he’d come.

Barnabas waited until the young man was out of earshot and then he said, “I like him.”

“He’s all right,” she said, wanting to dismiss the subject.

“He has the right instincts,” Barnabas said. “I suppose he’s jealous of me. I should have relieved his mind by telling him the truth.”

“Please!” she protested. “Take me back to Cranshaw.”

“It is past time,” Barnabas agreed and they turned and started to retrace their steps.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The journey through the woods seemed endless to her. Several times she heard stirrings in the underbrush as if some animals might be following them stealthily. She mentioned it to Barnabas but he told her to relax. That was impossible in her present state. She was unhappy at the state of things between her and Barnabas. At last they emerged from the path and he saw her the usual distance to the old mansion.

Then he said, “My plan isn’t complete, but it will mean my having to hide somewhere in the house.”

“I think I can find you a hiding place in the attic,” she promised.

“We’ll decide on where later,” Barnabas said, kissing
her goodnight. "Now you'd better hurry inside and face
the music."

She left him reluctantly. "I'm not really prepared," she
said. But she went without turning back. She was now
about two hundred feet from the rear door of the old man¬
sion.

Alone, she realized how dark a night it was. There was
a light at only one window in the rear of the house and it
did not shine out enough to help light her way. She began
to feel nervous at once and wished that Barnabas had seen
her right to the door itself. She knew he must be watching
but this did little to protect her from the dangers she could
encounter on the balance of her walk to Cranshaw.

And now she thought she heard a heavy breathing to
the left of her and her whole being chilled. She prayed that
she was wrong, that it was a trick of her imagination. But
again she heard the impatient, panting sound. She glanced
apprehensively in the direction from which it came and
was certain she saw something moving towards her from
the shadows.

She gave a loud cry of fear and began to run the
balance of the way to the rear door. At the same instant a
wolf with gray hackles high and red eyes burning sprang
out of the darkness after her. The wolf was at her heels.
She could hear its snarling and the snapping of its teeth.
She began to scream repeatedly.

The rear steps were almost within her reach, but the
wolf-like creature was gaining on her. Just as she came up
to the steps another smaller wolf pounced out of the
darkness to take a stand between her and the door. It
crouched and showed yellowish fangs as it growled low
and viciously. It was more than she could bear.

She came to a tottering halt caught between the two
monstrous creatures. And the larger of them leaped up at
her. She felt its paws on her shoulders and its hot breath in
her face as its wild snarling grew louder. With a final terri¬
fied scream she stumbled to the earth of the yard. Fists
raised protectively, she fought back as the vicious animals
tore at her clothes.

She rolled on the ground, caught between the greedy
fangs of the two merciless and completely maddened
animals. Her frantic cries for help were drowned by their
snarling and her efforts to save herself growing more fee-

ble.

She knew that in a moment or two she must faint and
then it would be over. The ferocious wolves would tear at
her throat as they had with all the others. She had vague
visions of Chris and Melissa behind the yellow-fanged
muzzles as her voice broke from the straining of her
screams. And then when she had reached her lowest ebb
she became aware of a new factor in the melee.

Something was attacking the wolves and diverting them
from her. The larger of the two wheeled around to snap
savagely in the air at what appeared to be a monstrous
bat. But the bat came swooping down at a new angle to
strike the mate, who let out a surprised whining yipe of
pain. Again and again the huge bat moved in to deliver
punishment to the wolves and then flew out of reach to
completely frustrate them.

The battle went on for what appeared to be an eternity
to her but which could only have been a matter of minutes
before the defeated wolves beat a retreat howling in pain
and fright. She struggled to her feet and weakly made her
way to the rear door. Her clothes were torn and she was
badly scared but otherwise she seemed to be unhurt.

Her hand was on the doorknob when the huge bat
which had driven the wolves away swooped down on her.
She cried out feebly and raised a defensive hand as it came
near. And then in the next moment the bat had vanished
and Barnabas was standing beside her.

“I’m sorry I frightened you,” he apologized.
“It was you!” she gasped. “You drove them off!”

He nodded grimly. “I told you I have some resources.
Assuming the form of a bat happens to be one of them.”

“Then it must have been you who appeared the night
our carriage was stuck in the mud,” she recalled. “I con-
sidered it a warning.”

“I meant it to be,” he said. “I was suspicious of Chris
Jennings even then.”

She gave him a pitiful look. “Barnabas, how can I re-
main here? You had better see me safely back to Collin-
wood.”

He studied her with concerned eyes. “I will do it if you
wish,” he said. “But I would rather handle this another
way. If you can gather enough courage to see it through."

"What are you thinking of?"

"I'm thinking that if we don't finish Chris Jennings and Melissa now they'll continue to threaten the countryside with their midnight ravagings and they'll continue to menace you wherever you may go."

"So?"

"You remember that night on the beach," Barnabas said, his deep-set eyes fixed on her in a hypnotic gaze. "The night that Lizzie was the bait that led Abel into a trap and his destruction."

"Yes."

"Now it is your turn to be the bait," Barnabas told her. "I know it places you in great danger. That in some ways it makes no sense. But the stakes are as high as the risks. I believe we can bring your husband and Melissa to their doom."

She said, "Would that mean freedom from the curse that she placed on you?"

"Who knows?" he said. "It might."

"Then I'll endure anything," Paula said. "Take any risk."

"You're sure?"

"Yes."

"Good," he said with one of his melancholy smiles. "I guarantee there will be no other attack on you tonight. And within another twenty-four hours your ordeal should be at an end."

"Suppose they attack me in the day when you're not able to help," she said.

"They are creatures of the night," Barnabas said. "Whatever they may begin during the daylight hours cannot be finished until darkness."

She studied the calm, sallow face anxiously. "When will I hear from you?"

"I will come here at dusk tomorrow night," Barnabas said. "That should mark the time of crisis. Go inside now and up to bed. I will wait to make sure you are safe."

They exchanged a brief parting kiss and she went into the dark kitchen to the hallway and the stairs leading to her room. The only lights were in the hallway and in her own room where Lizzie had placed a lamp on her dressing
The sight of the lamp reminded her of the blonde maid and she wondered why Lizzie hadn’t heard the struggle in the yard. Surely she would have shown herself if she had. Lizzie would not have left her alone to the mercy of the wolves. She decided the pretty girl must have been away from the house on a date with her young man.

She locked the doors and prepared for bed. She hadn’t even been scratched in the hectic battle with the two wolves but her dress had been torn beyond repair. She was still dazed from the experience and the way Barnabas had chosen to come to her aid. She wondered what the handsome vampire had in mind to combat her husband and Melissa. She was certain he had a plan and that her being in the old mansion was vital to it.

No sooner had she put out the light and got into bed than the weird howling began almost directly under her windows. The wolf cries rent the night air with their mournful laments. The very sound of them made her blood run cold. She pictured their threatening fangs and the wild red eyes. The wailing went on for some time before a cloak of silence came over the night and she dropped off to sleep.

Sunshine streaming in her window woke her up. A glance at the clock told her it was later than she usually wakened, and she realized that Lizzie had not come up with her breakfast tray. Or, if she had come and knocked, Paula hadn’t heard her.

Rising, she quickly bathed and dressed. There was still no word of Lizzie, and she really began to feel worried. When she had fixed her hair Paula decided to go downstairs and try and find the girl. Everything was ominously quiet in spite of the lovely day outside.

She slowly went down the stairs to find the hall empty. Nor was there anyone in the living room. She walked along the shadowed hall to the kitchen and when she opened the door to it she was surprised to see no one there. This was always Lizzie’s domain in the mornings. The table was bare and when she went over to the cookstove it was cold.

Paula stood there in consternation. It could only add up to one thing. Lizzie had endured the madness of the old
house as long as she could. Her nerves must have underrun her loyalty and caused her to leave without warning her. That was why she'd not appeared last night when the wolves had attacked.

Paula felt strangely depressed. She had felt she could count on Lizzie no matter what, but surely this had been expecting too much. She herself had begged Barnabas to take her back to Collinwood. Only the fact that he wanted her to stay had made her remain, but she began to worry that it was a mistake.

With a heavy heart she prepared her own breakfast. When it was ready she sat down at the kitchen table to eat it. She was finishing her tea when the kitchen door slowly opened and Melissa entered.

The dark girl gave her a contemptuous glance. “So now you will have to look after your own meals?”

Paula rose. “Do you know what’s happened to Lizzie?”

Melissa smiled mockingly. “You have lost your friend.”

“Have you done something to her?” Paula demanded, her anger rising.

The girl looked her up and down. “Your time for playing the lady of the house has ended.”

“We’ll see about that,” Paula said with quiet anger.

“We’ll see about a lot of things,” Melissa sneered. “You really think that you will find love with Barnabas Collins! You are a fool!”

Paula said, “He knows you. He recognized you as Angelique.”

Melissa laughed shrilly. “Did he? And will that do him or you any good? The curse is as strong today as on the day I placed it on him.”

“So you do admit it!”

“How not?” Melissa said arrogantly. “He managed to save you last night, but you’re not going to be so lucky now.”

For the first time Paula’s anger began to give way to fear. “You can’t do anything to me,” she said defiantly.

Melissa’s eyes mocked her. “You will find out. Just as the villagers will discover Lizzie’s body in the woods where a mad dog finished her.”

Paula backed away toward the door leading to the hall, horrified. “You did kill her, then!”

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“She knew too many of our secrets,” Melissa said. “Just as you do. So we had to take care of her.”

She shook her head in disbelief. “I can’t believe you are such fiends! To cold-bloodedly murder that poor innocent girl!”

“Chris and I are not dedicated to good deeds,” Melissa mocked her. “You shouldn’t be too astonished.”

“I’m not astonished,” she said. “I’m sickened.”

She was indeed, feeling as if she might throw up. Fright and revulsion had brought on a dizziness and nausea. Melissa came slowly towards her, her black eyes bright with malevolence.

“And now it is your turn.”

“No!” Paula cried out, and turned to flee along the hall to safety.

But Chris was standing there blocking her escape. He was smiling evilly, and looking more wolf-like than ever.

He seized her roughly by the arms. “No chance to escape this time, Paula.”

“Let me go!” she cried as she struggled to free herself.

But he was too strong for her. Melissa had come forward with some heavy cord with which she tied first around Paula’s wrists behind her back, then tied her ankles. The cord bit into her flesh and brought first pain and then a burning numbness. Chris dumped her callously, cruelly onto a kitchen chair.

Then he looked down at her with a malicious smile. “Too bad you’ve had to be so stubborn, Paula. I had hoped you’d make a more willing disciple. It would have been easier for all of us.”

“Join you and that creature!” Paula said. “I’d rather die.”

Melissa, standing by with a hand on her hip, gave her a scornful look. “Too bad you haven’t that choice.”

Chris turned his attention to her. “Melissa is right. No needs to kill you. We have other plans. Some good ones, I’ll guarantee.”

“You’re not frightening me,” she informed him, though it wasn’t strictly true. She was badly frightened but she still had confidence in Barnabas and what he might be able to do to protect her.

“We’re planning a rather special ritual today,” Chris
said, his mad talk oddly rational. "And you shall play a
principal part in it."

"After that you won't offer us so much trouble," Melissa added.

Paula stared up at the two in horror. They were going
to go ahead with their grisly plans before nightfall. Bar-
 nabas would not be able to rescue her this time. By dusk it
would be too late!

In a forlorn effort to bluff them, she said, "You dare
not harm me! If I disappear, people will start asking ques-
tions. You'll not only have Barnabas to deal with, you'll
have my Uncle Michael and others."

Chris exchanged amused glances with Melissa, both
seeming so sure of themselves. Then he gave Paula his full
attention again.

"Barnabas is not in too happy a position," he told her.
"When Lizzie's body is found today there will be suspicion
pointed at him."

"Why should there be?" she demanded. "You killed
her."

Chris smiled coldly. "So you say. But you must know
that Barnabas has been visiting the girl. I have not. I'm
married."

Paula said nothing, but she began to see that Barnabas
could surely be in a desperate spot. He had visited Lizzie
almost nightly and if they had sometimes ventured into
Collinsport, people would be bound to remember seeing
him with the murdered girl.

Melissa's eyes were bright with evil as she jeered at her.
"I think she's beginning to understand."

Chris nodded. The two of them were standing there
gloating. Then he went on. "Barnabas has to have blood
to survive. Lizzie was not the only village girl who suf-
f ered the vampire's bite on her throat. Now it will all come
out. With the discovery of Lizzie's body the villagers will
be looking for a scapegoat and Barnabas is almost bound
to be their choice."

Paula listened with growing terror. "No! Barnabas
would never murder anyone."

"I won't debate that," Chris said calmly. "But the
villagers will be in no mood to worry about the difference
between the red mark of a vampire's kiss on a lovely

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throat and the same throat ripped open by ruthless fangs.”

Melissa nodded. “So Barnabas will be too busy looking after his own safety to worry about you.”

“And as for your uncle,” her wolf-like husband went on urbanely, “he’ll be baffled but not able to understand a certain change that will come over you.”

“Tell her about it, Chris,” Melissa urged him. She moved closer to him and the lovely, olive-skinned face radiated an evil delight. Paula could understand why Barnabas despised the beautiful witch and had so little hope of any generosity on her part.

Chris said, “I wish you could fully participate in the ritual we plan, Paula. But you will be unconscious for a good part of it. It goes back to the so-called Dark Ages when man was much more subtle in many ways than he is now.”

“You’re not scaring me,” Paula said. But he was. She could see that these two partners in murder were obviously demented. There could be no appeal to their reason.

Her husband smiled. “You underestimate me, Paula dear. You always have. When you emerge from the ritual you will still be my lovely wife. But you’ll be more than that. You’ll be my slave. I will only have to order and you will do my bidding. Your mind will be dead while your body lives on to give Melissa and me perfect freedom. To the outside world you and I will be living happily together here as man and wife. Melissa will be accepted as our good friend.”

“I’ll never obey you,” Paula said, but her voice was thin and quavering.

“When the scalpel used in the ritual has penetrated your brain you’ll have no choice,” Chris said calmly. “Your uncle may wonder why you have lost your desire to communicate with him, but he will never find out the truth. You’ll not be able to tell him in your mindless state.”

“Why not take her down there,” Melissa said with sharp impatience. “We should be getting started.”

“I agree,” Chris said, and went to Paula and lifted her in his arms.

She squirmed and twisted in a fruitless attempt to free herself. She even tried to bite him, but he held her in such a way that she couldn’t. He carried her down the steep
stone steps to the cellar with her screams echoing futilely in the darkness.

Marching swiftly across the main area of the murky cellar he deposited her on the floor of the storage room. It was all a shadowy blur but she was able to make out the trapdoor in the floor so she knew the entrance to the secret room was open. Chris set her down with more gentleness than he'd shown above when Melissa was present.

Standing over her, he said, “You can still save yourself the ritual if you’ll become my willing accessory. I would rather have it that way.”

She stared up at his shadowed figure. “Don’t let Melissa sway you. She will bring destruction on you both. Let me go.”

“Only if you’ll join with me in what I must do,” he said. “You mean this wolf cult business?”

“Yes.”

“No,” she protested. “I can’t do that!”

Chris said coldly, “Why can’t you accept that in me when you have been able to fall in love with a dead man? A vampire like Barnabas apparently appeals to you more than I do.”

“Barnabas is the victim of a curse. He has no wish to be evil! But you do!”

Her husband’s eyes burned in the shadows and she was reminded of the wolf that had attacked her the previous night. “You’ll have no interest for Barnabas or anyone else when we’ve finished with you!” he said, and strode out of the room.

She lay there helpless and in pain from her tightly bound wrists and ankles, but the misery of her body did not nearly equal the despair of her spirit. She felt there was no hope for her.

She expected Melissa and Chris to return at almost any minute, but time passed and they did not come. She lay there staring into the darkness, hearing weird rustlings, even the curious squeak of some rodent who viewed her motionless form from a safe distance. Her terror increased and she wondered why they were delaying and what they would do to her when the final horror began.

She worried about Barnabas and how he would fare,
and she mourned the loss of beautiful Lizzie, who had been so true to her. The knowledge of her brutal murder increased her hatred of her husband and Melissa. The dampness seemed to penetrate into her bones and she became aware of a distant roar and thought at first it must be in her own mind until she remembered hearing the pounding waves from the hidden room. It was an echo of the same sound she was hearing now. Yet it seemed magnified.

At last she heard footsteps crossing the main cellar and a moment later Chris appeared with a candelabrum in his hand. The flickering tongues of its three white candles dispelled the gloom.

Chris's gaunt face showed strain. "We have had visitors," he said. "Lizzie's murder caused more excitement than we expected."

"I hope they realize you did it," she said.

He shook his head and smiled grimly. "No. But I was worried for a while. It made it necessary for Melissa and myself to put on a suitable show of grief and spend some time answering the authorities' questions. I was careful to point out the friendship between Barnabas and the girl. And how odd I thought it to be."

Paula closed her eyes. "I want to hear no more about it."

"I wanted to explain these long hours of delay," her husband said. "We'll be down for the ritual shorty. In the meanwhile you may as well enjoy some light." He sat the candelabrum down a short distance from her, and she listened to his footsteps retreating again.

Paula stared at the three candles. The points of light fascinated her after her long ordeal in the darkness. She realized she must have been a prisoner in the cellar much longer than she'd thought. Chris had said that hours had passed, and he had looked much more gaunt and weary than she'd ever seen him before. She suspected that he'd had more trouble getting rid of the village police than he'd let on to her.

It was too much to hope that they would pin their suspicions on the evil two. Not when Barnabas was there to make such a convenient suspect. What if they went to the
old house and managed to get in while Barnabas was still resting in his casket? The thought made her frantic. Surely Davis would keep his master safe until he was able to act and speak for himself. Otherwise Barnabas might be exposed to the world for what he was.

She was thirsty and her head ached abominably, but all sensation had gone from her hands and feet. The cruel bindings had cut her circulation to a danger point. She knew she was weaker and more helpless than when she’d first been brought down there.

Then, in the distance, she heard the voices. Melissa and Chris were talking in low murmurs which she could not clearly hear. A moment later they came into the room. Chris had the wolfskin band strapped around his waist and Melissa had a similar one. Melissa was holding Chris’s hand lightly in hers and she paused to give Paula a smile of triumph as they passed.

Paula watched as they descended the steps to the hidden room, and she waited for what would happen next. These two insane people were clearly capable of any monstrous act. After a while the smell of incense touched her nostril and she saw its powdery smoke issuing up through the trapdoor. Next, the chanting began, the voices of the two mingled in a weird high-pitched intonation.

She listened and the cold hand of terror touched her spine. How long before they would come for her? How long until she would be stretched out on their altar waiting for the touch of the scalpel to change her into a mindless zombie?

Her frantic thoughts were intruded on by the sound of someone in the cellar. She couldn’t believe her ears. Staring toward the entrance door she suddenly saw Barnabas appear. He made a signal for her to be silent. The incense was pouring up from the hidden room in great gray clouds and the chanting below had become maniacal. Paula had a dreamy feeling and knew it must be caused by the incense. It contained some powerful drug. She began to wonder if it was really Barnabas bending over her or if he was a dream figure.

"Just a moment," he told her, then moved quickly to the wall and touched the stone that controlled the trap-
door. She watched with fascinated eyes as the door slowly creaked upward until the floor was level stone again. But Barnabas had not finished. He moved a distance along the wall and pushed on another stone. It swung to reveal a small dark aperture. Barnabas reached in and began turning what seemed a kind of valve. He worked at it for several minutes before he moved the stone back in position again. Then he came to her and began untying the cords that bound her.

As he worked, he said, “I just barely got here. We’ll have no more trouble from them. That valve I turned just now was Captain Cranshaw’s special device to guard his treasure. It floods the room below with sea water.”

She stared at him. “Then they are finished.”

“They should have drowned by now,” Barnabas said, removing the last of the cords. “Do you think you can stand?”

“I don’t know.”

“Let me help you,” he said, and assisted her to her feet. She would have collapsed at once if he hadn’t supported her. Realizing her state, he said, “I’ll carry you upstairs.”

A warming surge of relief and happiness swept through her as Barnabas carried her across the dark cellar in his arms. Pressing her head close to him, she asked, “How did you get in here?”

“I broke a window,” he said. “My chief difficulty was in escaping from the old house at Collinwood. The villagers are blaming me for what happened to Lizzie.”

“I know,” she worried.

“I had to become a bat again while Davis attempted to hold them off,” Barnabas said. “I came straight here.”

In the big living room of the old house, he placed her on the divan and arranged a pillow behind her head. He stared down at her worriedly. “I’d better get a doctor for you.”

“Not yet,” she said, studying the handsome, melancholy face anxiously. “What’s going to happen to you?”

“I’ll have to disappear until this uproar is over,” Barnabas told her. “Once I’m out of the way they’ll look for someone else to blame.”

“It was Melissa and Chris who did it,” she said. “How will we explain about them?”

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"There's a bad storm outside," he said. "Heavy rain and gales. I'll lose one of the small boats and leave the oars in it. They'll find it and get the impression they were somehow caught out in the storm and drowned out there. At least you're safe from them now."

"Thanks to you," she said softly, and she reached up for him to take her in his arms. "Barnabas, I want to go with you."

He shook his head. "Not now. Not with things as they are." But he knelt down beside her and touched his lips to her forehead. "That young man I met on the cliff. I'm sure you could be happy with him."

Her eyes were wide with despair. "No, Barnabas!"

His handsome face was sad. "I'll always think of our time here together. We'll never be apart in our memories."

"I can't leave you like this to wander alone," she protested, clinging to him.

"We'll meet again one day," he said. "I'm sure of it. Now, I must go. They could come here looking for me. I'll see that your uncle gets word you are here and need him."

Before she could make any further protest he had swiftly gotten to his feet. He paused only for a moment in the doorway to turn and raise a hand in a graceful gesture of farewell. The picture of Barnabas, handsome in his black caped coat with the rain still streaming down his dark hair, would always remain etched in her mind, for it was the last time she was ever to see him.

She managed to get up from the divan and take a few stumbling steps, but he was already gone. She fell into a nearby chair and, covering her face with her hands, began to sob.

She was still in the same chair, alone in the darkness of the great room, when Brian Glason arrived. He lifted her in his arms and took her out to her uncle's waiting carriage. From there they drove back to Collinwood and to the doctor whom her Uncle Michael had called.

Brian held her close to him as the carriage bumped along the uneven, rain-saturated dirt road. The rain lashed against the carriage windows and she was reminded of that other night. The first night she had arrived at Cranshaw. How different everything had been for her then.
How much had happened since!

Brian's arm was tight around her. "You'll never go back," he said.

"No," she agreed in a weary whisper. "I'll never go back."

"Your uncle will arrange for the divorce proceedings," Brian went on. "There'll be no trouble securing your freedom from such a brute as Jennings. And then we can plan our future together."

"Too soon," she whispered. It would be a long while before she could think of bestowing her heart on anyone but Barnabas. She would not give up hope yet. Brian did not know a divorce was no longer necessary because her husband and the evil Melissa were now floating corpses deep in the sea-filled hidden room.

But it was Barnabas who held her thoughts still. Barnabas starting out on another lonely journey on this rain-lashed, black night. What did she have left to remind her of their love?

Then she remembered. The sketch he'd made of her. It was still at Cranshaw in her dresser drawer. She would send Brian back for it tomorrow. She would always treasure it, for in it she would live on as Barnabas had seen her. It would always be her link with him, and in his eyes her image would never fade!
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