

# FAE DECEPTION

## THE KINCAID WEREWOLVES



L.E. WILSON





ALSO BY L.E. WILSON

**Deathless Night Series (The Vampires)**

Blood Hunger

Blood Vengeance

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Blood Betrayal

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**The Kincaid Werewolves (The Werewolves)**

To Covet The Fae

Fae Encounter

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**The Sergones Coven (Dragon Shifters/Vampires)**

Fire of the Dreki

Blood of the Master

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## CHAPTER 1



Muzzle tinged red with the fresh blood of a deer, Lucian rounded a curve of the mountain trail. Evergreen trees towered over him, obscuring the moonlight and filling the air with the strong, damp smell of pine. He padded over to the ledge and looked down. Beneath him, a few modest properties snuggled up to the base of the mountain. Far enough away from each other to afford privacy, but close enough to feel secure in having a neighbor within walking distance. The scent of their fires tickled his nose, and every now and then he saw a human pass in front of one of the lit windows of the houses, oblivious of the creatures in the dark watching them from above.

He envied them sometimes. Humans. They had no fucking idea of the dangers happening all around them or the things they shared their world with...or the creatures that protected them from some of those dangers. There were times Lucian wished he could throw the unknown into their faces, just to bathe in their shock. To see their happy little lives get tossed upside down.

But what purpose would that serve? It wouldn't make anything better for him or his kind. If anything, it would make it worse. Because humans, as history has proven time and time again, don't

acclimate well to anything considered “other”. They either enslave things that are different from them, or hunt them for trophies to hang over their mantles. No doubt they would do the same to things like him, in their “appreciation” for that protection.

With one last look, he decided it was time to go home. The others were waiting for him, and despite his frustration with them, his sense of duty to the pack weighed heavily on his shoulders.

An emotion he recognized well, but couldn’t name, tore its way through his chest as he started to turn away from the cozy scene below. But before he could leave, movement in the trees far below caught his eye. Sitting back on his haunches, Lucian tilted his head and watched through the mist floating midway down the mountain as a girl burst from the woods directly below him and ran across the stretch of cleared land toward a small, white house in the distance.

Two figures emerged a few steps behind her, their excited grunts and hisses reaching his sensitive ears over the girl’s heavy breathing. Her pursuers ran with an awkward lope, their bodies twitching so hard one of them stumbled and fell. Lurching to its feet, it quickly caught up to its friend again.

*An olc.*

No, worse.

Soul suckers.

Baring his teeth, Lucian threw himself over the side of the drop off. The way was steep, and he half ran, half skidded down the mountain, landing hard on his haunches when he reached the bottom. He used the momentum to spring after the things chasing the girl, covering half the distance between them with one leap. The smell of rotten meat soured the cold air as he neared, confirming he’d been right. These two were Dark Fae, overripe with dark magic and crazed with the hunger for humans. If he didn’t catch them before they reached the girl, they’d suck out her soul and leave her corpse for the crows.

Lucian pushed forward, weighing his options. There was no way he could take them both down from behind in enough time for her to get to the house. And even if she managed to make it, it wouldn’t

matter. Once they knew where she was, a few walls never stopped these things. Though a little sheetrock and paint did wonders to hide the scent of humans if the crazed ones didn't know they were in there.

Unfortunately, these two would know exactly where she was hiding.

Making a decision, Lucian lowered his head and lengthened his stride. When he reached the *an olc*, he pushed hard off the ground with his back legs, leaping over their heads and landing directly behind the girl. He caught a whiff of honey flowers right before he spun around to face them. The scent lingered in his nose, sweetening the air with a memory that danced right on the edge of his thoughts, but he had no time to nail it down.

Disgust rolled through him as Lucian faced off with the two Faeries, their sour scent overpowering everything else, and the wisp of memory blew away with the stench. He bared his teeth and growled in warning to distract them from the hunt. It was enough to give the things pause in the face of this new threat. In their efforts to slow their momentum, they stumbled over their own feet and each other so as not to run into him, and Lucian took full advantage of their surprise.

With a vicious snarl, he clamped his jaws around the bony thigh of the one closest to him and tossed it out of the way before going after the second. The diversion gave him time to remove its head before the first one launched itself back into the fight, wrapping its stinking limbs around Lucian from behind and sinking its teeth into his shoulder.

With a grunt of pain, Lucian leaped off the ground and flipped over in midair, landing on his back with the thing beneath him. The impact jarred them both, and Lucian let out a yelp of pain as he felt its teeth tearing through the skin and muscle of his shoulder.

Scrambling to his feet, Lucian bared his teeth. Wasting no time, he pounced on top of it before it could get up, tearing into putrid muscle and petrified bone, ripping it apart with his powerful jaws. When it stopped moving, he stood watch over the remains, just to be sure,

before he released his jaws and spit out the shoulder and a piece of an arm, gagging in disgust.

Tremors of adrenaline ruffled his fur as he caught his breath, ears pricked for any indication there were more of these fuckers, or worse, that the human neighbors had noticed the ruckus. He heard nothing but his own breathing, and that of the girl.

She stood about twenty feet away, hair dripping with the rain that had begun to fall during the fight and which was quickly turning into a right downpour. She blinked against the wind and rain as she stared at him, her stunned expression frozen in a mixture of disbelief and horror. Her scent blew to him on the cold breeze, and Lucian stilled. It filled his nose, teasing the back of his throat as he inhaled the smell of honey flowers deep into his lungs, knowing he should flee, but unable to force his paws to move.

Finally, after long minutes that felt more like days, she pushed her hair out of her face and wiped her eyes, her movements jerky and hesitant. From this distance he could see the freckles spattered across her cheeks, white with terror, and the shock of blue-green color in her eyes. Lucian realized too late, as usual, what he had done. There would be no explaining away what she'd just witnessed, especially when he would have to shift back to do it.

Moments like these were the times he envied the bloodsuckers their ability to fuck with the memories of humans.

Angry with himself for jumping into the fire without thinking of how it would burn, and unsure what to do now that he had, Lucian began to pace back and forth with nervous energy. His mind spun with different ways he could fix this mess he'd caused as he kept one eye on the girl, constantly gauging her reaction. The heavy rain soaked his fur, but he barely felt it. All he could think was he needed to leave. Run away. Eventually the details of her memory would fade, and her tales of a giant man/wolf would seem less and less believable, even to her own ears.

The headless bodies, however, would be a wee bit harder to ignore. "I know what you are."

Lucian tilted his head at the first sound of her voice. Though it was



a bit on the shaky side, the dulcet tones rippled over his fur, easy as a warm summer breeze. Gooseflesh rose on his skin as her words sank in. But, she couldn't know what he was. Not truly. It wasn't possible unless she was "other", like him. And if that were true, she wouldn't have been running from the soul suckers. Or living here.

No. She was human.

His steps picked up speed. Back and forth. Back and forth. In his gut, the instinct to escape waged a fierce battle with the inexplicable need to remain near this human girl.

Her voice gained strength. "And I know you can understand what I'm saying. So, thank you. For helping me." She paused. Looked to the side before bringing her gaze back to him. The directness of it made him uncomfortable, and utterly aware of her. He must look a monster to her. Not truly a wolf. Not truly a man.

But, if she was frightened of him, she certainly hid it well. "If you promise not to eat me, I can look at that shoulder wound for you."

Even in this form, his nostrils flared with her scent and his body hardened with eagerness. An image of the two of them lying skin to skin with his face buried between her legs pushed out every other rational thought. Lucian shook his head hard, scattering the fantasy and focusing back on the here and now.

Could it be possible this human really knew about his kind? It wasn't completely unheard of, but it was very rare. Few humans who did were allowed to remain living, for the safety of his species and others like him.

Without Lucian being aware, his pacing brought him closer. He caught another whiff of that enticing scent again, stronger now. Flowers dripping with honey. Bog stars. The white flowers that grow in the north. Flowers and warm female.

The scent made his mouth water. He could see now that she was not as young as he'd first thought, but a woman full grown into her thirties, at least, though the unassuming way she carried herself—and the freckles—had thrown him off at first. Her arms were wrapped around her waist against the cold, pushing her breasts up out of the low neckline of her short-sleeved shirt. A woman's full hips filled out

the loose pants she was wearing. They were too long for her legs and too tight around her hips and belly, and the dark plaid design reminded him of a pair of his own PJ's. Perhaps she had a male in that house, waiting for her, and those were his pants she was wearing. But if so, why was she out here alone, running around at night in her—or his—sleeping clothes?

"My name is Keelin," she said. "Keelin Doran."

Though her voice still trembled just a bit, she stood her ground as he came closer yet. Lucian's steps gradually slowed until he came to a stop directly in front of her. His nose was at a level with her breasts, and the urge to take that final step forward and bury it in that soft sweet warmth was nearly irresistible.

"Please." Her eyes, so big in her wee face, begged him. "Let me help you. And maybe, in return, you can tell me what the hell to do with this—" She glanced around at the body parts lying behind him. "—mess in my lawn."

*Tell me what the hell to do...* His hackles rose. The only way he would be able to *tell* her anything was if he wasn't a wolf. Och. She wasn't telling tales. She knew exactly what he was. He glanced over at the bloody arm lying nearest him. Lucian had nearly forgotten about the soul suckers, so caught up had he been with the woman. Aye. The lass was right. He couldn't just leave bodies strewn about her lawn. Catching her eyes with his, he lowered his head once and raised it again, hoping she would understand.

With a nervous shift of her eyes, she nodded back. "Good. Come on inside."

She turned to lead the way into her house, head down to shelter her face from the rain and arms wrapped tight around her middle against the cold. Her hair, longer than he'd first assumed, nearly reached her waist. And as he followed the length of it down her back, it was hard to get up the will to follow her, so much did he appreciate the view of her walking away. But, eventually, he managed to put one paw in front of the other and padded along behind her, eyes on her sweet arse, barely resisting the urge to take a bite from the mounds of flesh. Not to hurt her. Only hard enough to get her attention.

A growl of a different sort rumbled through his chest at the thought.

Keelin glanced back over her shoulder, eyes alight with worry. Lucian ground his jaws together and looked away. She followed the direction of his stare for a moment, brow furrowed as she tried to see what he was growling at through the rain, then she turned and climbed the few stairs up onto her porch. At the back door, she turned to him. "Let me grab some towels before you come in, if you don't mind."

Lucian paused just outside the door, rain pouring down on his head and back. With a small, apologetic smile she rushed into the house, closing the glass door but leaving the storm door open.

While she was gone, he took the opportunity to change back. The process went quickly, now that he was calm, though no less painfully. He'd find out pretty damn quick if she'd meant what she'd said when she'd told him she knew what he was.

Keelin returned, her eyes lowered to watch her footing and her arms full of towels. When she looked up, one hand reaching for the door handle, she let out a startled scream to find him crouching naked in the rain with his hands covering his nether regions.

Lucian stood without thinking, both hands up to shush her.

Keelin's eyes dropped to his manly parts. Her mouth fell open, then snapped shut again with an audible click as she quickly looked up at his face.

Yanking the door open, he grabbed a towel from her arms, shaking it out before wrapping it around his hips to hide his nudity. He scowled at her forced expression, schooled into a careful mask despite the flush in her cheeks. "Dinna be so surprised. It's cold an' raining. Ye'd be much more impressed if it was the middle o' summer." With the towel wrapped securely around his waist, he looked up in time to catch her averting her eyes. "I'm sorry. I dinna mean tae sound so crabbit, or tae startle ye. I just thought it would be better tae get the shiftin' done when ye weren't around tae witness it. It can make anyone a wee bit squeamish, even a brave lass like yerself."

The lass in question took a step back, putting some space between

them, but otherwise gave no indication that she knew who he was or where he'd come from.

Perhaps he'd misunderstood? "Ye did say ye ken what I am. Is that no' true?"

She took another step back. Lucian followed, only enough to close the door to prying eyes, but didn't get any closer. The lass was feart. That much was obvious. Despite her brave words just a short time ago. "Ye said yer name was Keelin. Keelin Doran, ya? Tis a fine Irish name for a bonnie lass." Lucian grimaced. He was blethering on like an idiot, but thought if he just kept talking, eventually she would snap out of whatever had a hold of her and they could get on with things. "My name is Lucian. Lucian Kincaid. I was no' actually born a 'Kincaid', but I took the name when I was adopted into my pack. My family. I was verra grateful—"

"You're a werewolf. A shifter."

So, the lass hadn't lost her wits after all. "Aye. That I am."

## CHAPTER 2



Keelin knew who this wolf was the moment she came out from the spare room and saw his red hair and handsome face, and she was now very glad she hadn't told him more than her name.

This was Lucian. One of Cedric Kincaid's pack. After the war his hatred of the Fae had become notorious. As had his fighting skills. Which she'd just seen firsthand. He'd taken out those two sick Fae with hardly any effort at all. They'd had no chance against him.

However, if what she'd been told about him was true, she couldn't blame him for his feelings. She'd heard rumors that the *an olc*, the Dark Fae, had killed his family. And after everything that had happened to her lately, she wasn't very fond of that particular tribe of Fae herself. As a matter of fact, she strove to live a life as anti-Faerie as possible, for as long as she could.

And now, standing in her quaint country kitchen with this particular wolf, her heart fluttered in her chest like a bird captured within her ribcage. Or, maybe an entire flock. Not because his immense size took up most of the room—which it did. Or because of his stunning good looks—although he was certainly a sight. But for reasons she, being who she was, had no right to feel. Keelin's eyes traveled from the top of his red head, down over his muscular shoulders and arms,

rippled abs, lean hips, strong hands, and long, powerful legs. Even his feet were attractive, as far as feet went. Yes, this was a male who would send many a female's hearts all a flutter.

*And if that's what he looked like shriveled up from the cold...*

No. Fear was not the reason Keelin's heart was racing.

His stormy blue-grey eyes narrowed in on her face, lit with intelligence that was way too sharp for her liking. "Ye said something about fixin' up my shoulder, lass? I would appreciate it, if ye were still up tae doin' it. Help it heal faster."

Keelin could've smacked herself in the forehead. Why the hell had she offered to do that? It had been a reflex. Sometimes her soft heart got her into situations better avoided. Like the current situation, for example. "Uh, yes. Yes! I'm sorry. You just caught me by surprise. I hadn't expected you to be...uh." She waved a hand in the air, taking in his state of undress, and overall humanness. Smokin' hot humanness. "Let me go get my first aid kit." She hurried from the room, calling back over her shoulder. "Have a seat. I'll try to find you something to wear, too." Because Lucian Kincaid in nothing but a towel was wreaking havoc on her libido, and she needed to keep her wits about her if she was going to get through this night unscathed.

She returned a short time later with her kit and some clothes she'd grabbed out of the spare bedroom where she'd packed them away. Just a pair of jeans and a plain white T-shirt, but it was something. They'd belonged to someone very dear to her, and as she handed them over, Keelin had a hard time keeping her voice from catching on a burst of emotion. "You're probably a little tall for these, but at least you won't attract undo attention."

He searched her face for a long moment, but all he said was, "Thank ye, Keelin. I hope they won't be missed by the owner."

He ran the syllables together in her name, pronouncing it in a proper Irish accent like her mom always had, unlike Americans, who said each syllable distinctly, making it sound like "keening", only with an "L". She cleared her throat. "No. No, they won't be missed." Taking a breath, she pulled out one of the chairs that surrounded the small,

round table in the breakfast nook. "Why don't you sit and I'll look at that bite."

Setting the clothes on the table, Lucian held his towel closed as best he could and sat. He did it out of deference for her, she knew, as shifters were not normally prone to modesty. But though he managed to keep most of himself hidden, it didn't cover the long length of thigh, lightly dusted with dark red hair and thick with muscles that flexed as he moved.

Keelin quickly averted her eyes and focused on the back of his shoulder. The bite was bad, even for a supernatural creature like a werewolf. It looked like the Faerie had bitten near down to the bone and managed to tear some muscle away when he was dislodged. As she got a clean cloth and wet it at the sink, she tried to think of something to say to fill the awkward silence. "So, where did you come from?" Her hands trembled under the running water. She willed them to be still, but her thoughts ran amok. Had he been watching her? For how long? When did they find out she was here? Did they know who she was?

"I was out for a run, and happened tae see ye run out from the trees, those fookers on yer tail."

She came back to the table. He could be lying. "You were down here? Near humans?"

"No' exactly. I was up on the ridge."

His answer distracted her from the way the ends of his red hair curled on his nape. Softness and strength. Her hand paused just above his wound. "On the ridge?"

"Aye."

"And you jumped over?"

"Aye." This last came out on a sigh.

Remembering what she was supposed to be doing, she gently wiped at the blood covering the skin just above his shoulder bone. "You could've been hurt a lot worse than this. Not that I don't appreciate you running to my rescue," she was quick to add. "But it probably wasn't the smartest thing you've ever done."

He flashed her a devastating smile over his good shoulder. It held

a hint of malice. Toward her? Or the things he'd killed? "No chance o' that, lass. And yer wrong. I've jumped from places much higher 'n' steeper. Yer wee hill was nothing. Like skiing down the kiddy trail of a mountain." He winked and faced forward again as she dabbed away the blood. She tried to be gentle. Big, strong wolf or not, it had to hurt like a bitch. But to his credit, he didn't so much as flinch.

"This looks like it needs a few stitches if you want it to heal without leaving an ugly scar."

He glanced back at her, brows down low, shadowing his bright eyes. "Can ye handle a few stitches, lass?"

"I don't think I have much of a choice," Keelin muttered. "You'd heal badly before we got to a hospital." The bleeding was already coagulating. If stitches had to be done, they needed to be done now. "Let me go see if I can find a sturdy needle and some thread." She patted him on the uninjured shoulder. His skin was hot. Was that normal? "Be right back. Don't go anywhere."

She hustled back to her own bedroom this time and went directly to the closet where she kept a bag packed for emergencies, and where she had a travel sewing kit stuck into the top outside pocket. Her house was outside of a small town, the mortgage under a different name so it would be easy for her to up and leave when the time came. And though she loved living in the mountains of the cold northwest corner of the U.S., she knew that time would come. Someday. And when it did, she would be ready. And she wouldn't shed a tear for the life she had to leave behind. As a matter of fact, it would be a relief, if bittersweet.

Keelin looked around her cozy bedroom. She wasn't quite ready to leave this life yet, but now that she had been found, it seemed that time was upon her. Taking a deep breath, she mentally prepared herself for what she would need to do. She just needed to get through this night.

Shaking off the melancholy, Keelin hurried back to the male who waited patiently where she'd left him, one hand resting on his tense thigh and the other still gripping the towel where it came together at



his waist. She had a feeling he didn't take well to finding himself at such a disadvantage.

"I'm so sorry," she said, actually slapping her forehead this time. "I just realized I never even offered you something to drink or anything." Unfortunately, it was the hand that held the little plastic sewing kit. "Ow!"

Lucian chuckled as she rubbed the sore spot. "Let's just get this over with, an' then ye can fetch me a glass o' whiskey. If ye happen tae have some."

"I do. But are you sure you don't want that whiskey before I start? I have to admit I've never done this before."

"Nothin' tae it, lass. Just pretend yer mending a sock. Or a piece o' leather hide."

"A piece of leather hide," she mumbled. "Yeah. Okay. I can do that."

He glanced over his shoulder again, gray eyes shining with confidence in her. "Ye'll do fine, Keelin. I trust ye completely."

"Well, that makes one of us." She smiled at him with an air of calm she didn't feel as she sanitized the needle and thread with rubbing alcohol. The blood didn't bother her. It was the idea of purposely causing another creature pain she couldn't handle. Even if it was for their own good. "Well, at least it's an interesting way to meet someone new, isn't it?"

His shoulders shook as he let out a bark of laughter.

She took a deep breath. "Okay. Hold still." Her hand was surprisingly steady as she pushed the edges of the bite together and poked the needle through his skin. He was right. It *was* like sewing through leather. Warm, supple, smooth, leather.

Lucian didn't so much as twitch as she jabbed him with the needle. "So, how do ye ken?" he asked after a moment. "About what I am."

Keelin knew the question was coming, and yet, somehow, he still managed to take her by surprise. "Um. Well? Living up here in the mountains, you run into all kinds."

"Ye wouldn't have run in tae someone like me. Not without a verra good reason." He paused, and his shoulder muscles stiffened beneath her hands. "Have those things been here before?"

*Things*. Not Faeries. She shook her head, even though he couldn't see her. "No. Nope. That's the first time I've seen them here."

"Yet, ye dinna seem shocked tae see them. A little shook up, but no' shocked." He twisted his head around, eying her. "Ye dinna seem shocked now."

Keelin stared into those gray eyes, knowing where he was going with this, but unable to bring herself to lie. "I'm not shocked. Surprised, yes. *And* a little shaken. But not shocked." She paused, the needle hovering above his wound. "I'm very glad you showed up when you did."

He went back to staring at the wall, and Keelin breathed a soft sigh of relief. "So, ye ken what they are?"

Keelin resumed sewing his wound closed. "Yes. They were Faeries. Well, one of the tribes. Not all of them turn into those things."

He was silent for so long, she thought that would be the end of it, but the twenty questions continued. "What were ye doin' in the woods, lass?"

She winced for him as she pushed the needle through a particularly tough spot. "I was taking a walk." That much was the truth. She often took to the woods to clear her head, no matter the time of day or night.

"At this time o' night?"

"Sure." She kept sewing, trying to think of something else to talk about that would distract him.

But she wasn't quick enough.

"Do ye always take walks in the woods at these ungodly hours? In the rain and the cold?"

Keelin was really beginning to wish she'd just let him run back up the mountain. "Uh, no. Not always. But sometimes. I had a hard day, and needed to clear my head. And it wasn't raining when I left."

He was quiet again. Long enough that she hoped he'd lost interest in this line of questioning for real this time. But he was persistent. "Ye never answered my first question, lass. How do ye ken about shifters? And the things ye found in the woods. How do ye ken about them?"

Keelin admitted to herself she'd made a mistake. She should've

acted more shocked. But at the time, she hadn't even thought about it. She'd reacted honestly, like she always did. "My mom was a Wiccan. A witch. The good kind, ya know? She knew things other people didn't. She could see things." Well, that much was true at least. Although Keelin had no idea if Wiccans were Seers or not. But it sounded plausible.

"Human Wiccans dinna normally have tha' type o' sight."

Maybe not. "Well, my mom did." *Fake it till you make it, Keelin.* "Anyway, she knew about you guys. And she passed that knowledge down to me."

"Why?"

Keelin stopped what she was doing, thread pulled halfway through the loop that would form the end knot. "Why?" she repeated.

"Aye. Why would she share this knowledge with ye? A young girl."

"I'm not so young."

"Yer young enough. And were probably more so at the time she told ye. Most parents try tae protect their young from monsters, no' tell them they are real."

She finished tying the knot and snipped off the extra thread. Then she stood back, admiring her handiwork, trying her best to keep her breathing and heart rate calm. "Yeah, my mom was a bird of a different feather." The line of stitches looked good. And with his advanced healing powers, he'd be able to remove them later that day.

"A bird o' what?"

Keelin swabbed the wound with some alcohol and covered it with a bandage. Probably overkill. It's not like it would get infected. But she needed to keep her hands busy and her mind distracted. "It's just a saying," she told him. "Meaning she wasn't like other parents."

"Aye. I ken tha' much already." He tried to twist his head around to look at her handiwork. "All finished?"

"Aye," she teased. Then she pointed down the short hall toward her room. "The bathroom is down there, first door on your right, if you'd like to take a look and get dressed while I put this stuff away."

Lucian stood, gathering up the bundle of clothes with one hand

and hanging onto his towel with the other. "I dinna suppose ye have any shoes tha' might fit me?"

Keelin raised one eyebrow. "Maybe some flip-flops? I'll look."

"Thank ye, lass. For the clothes, 'n' for stitching me up."

She smiled. "You don't have to thank me. You did save me, after all. It's the least I could do."

With a tight smile and a nod, Lucian wandered off to find her bathroom. Once he was gone, Keelin took a deep, steadying breath and began to gather up the odds and ends of her sewing kit and put it back together again. Back in her room, she shut the door and sat down on her bed with her head in her hands.

What the hell was she doing? What was she going to tell him? Because she knew for a fact that wolf was not going to go on his merry way before he got answers from her. And not just any answers. Answers he would be satisfied with. And she didn't have any of those kind of answers.

One thing was for sure. If she sat here wallowing in indecision, he'd come looking for her, and if he found her like this it would make him suspicious for sure. Standing up, she took another fortifying breath and went to the room next door to see if there was a pair of shoes that would fit him. She found a pair of slip-on Nike sandals and brought them out to the kitchen.

He was already dressed, standing in front of the sink, staring out the window. Keeping watch over her backyard? The clothes she'd loaned him didn't fit him well. They were, in fact, too small. The T-shirt stretched tight over the wide breadth of his shoulders and back, and the jeans were bulging at the seams and only made it down to the tops of his ankles.

They'd been a little too long on Brian.

Lucian turned from the window when she walked in. The light above his head caught the pale strands in his hair and the lines of stress around his mouth and eyes. "Ye did a fine job with the stitches, lass. Thank ye, again."

Keelin frowned. "You took off the bandage?"

"Aye. How else was I supposed tae see?"

He was so serious, she had to laugh. Then, to her surprise, he smiled too. The first true smile she'd seen from him. Some of the tension left the air.

"So," He leaned back against the sink and crossed his arms over his chest. Even in ill-fitting clothes, he was an imposing male. "Are ye gonna stop with the games 'n' fess up the answer tae my question? Or have ye gonna keep lying tae me?"

The air left Keelin's lungs and the smile slipped from her face. Thoughts bumped around in her head, one excuse after another. But in the end, she knew none of them would fool him. She raised her chin and opted for the only answer she could give him. "I'm going to have to choose the second option."

His eyes darkened.

"I'm sorry," she told him. And she was, truly. "But I can't say any more. For my own safety. And yours." Keelin suddenly realized she was freezing. She'd never bothered to change out of her wet clothes. Gooseflesh covered her skin and she started to tremble, small tremors that gradually escalated to a full-blown case of the shakes.

Lucian was beside her in a heartbeat, wrapping his big arms around her and holding her close to his heat. And wow, was he hot. Literally. This was something her mom had never bothered to mention. Or maybe she hadn't known this fact about shifters.

"It's okay, lass," he said. "Dinna fash yerself. It's all over now."

Keelin gripped the back of his shirt, unable to keep up the pretense while wrapped in the protective embrace of a stranger. "No, it's not," she whispered into his chest. "It hasn't even begun."



## CHAPTER 3



Lucian tightened his arms around the lass as she shook violently in his hold, the feel of her soft curves chasing away the ugly thoughts he'd been having about exactly *whose* clothes he was wearing. Och. It shouldn't even matter to him. What did he care who she was shacking up with? But, it did. It bothered him a great deal. This wee human made him ache in ways he hadn't felt in a long, long time with one glance of her large, lonely eyes. Not since Sara. The she-wolf who'd ruined his life, and his relationship with his best friend.

However, wee or not, Keelin was hiding something. He'd felt it in his bones even before she'd admitted as much. But with a few whispered words into his borrowed shirt, she had him wondering who—or what—she really was.

She burrowed into his chest, and he relaxed on the next breath. This trembling female couldn't possibly be one of them. If she were, she would've used her Faerie magic to take out the things chasing her tonight. She wouldn't have needed him to intervene. She wouldn't be living here all on her own, among humans.

Still, a sour taste filled his mouth.

*It hasn't even begun.*

He kept his arms around her sweet curves, still wet, but warmer

now from his body heat. "What do ye mean, lass? Those things are gone. Ye saw for yerself."

She stiffened in his arms and tried to pull away. Lucian released her, ignoring the way his body tried to follow her all on its own. Catching himself, he took a step back, frowning to hide his discomfort. It wasn't like him to be so soft when it came to females. He'd offered her comfort without thinking twice about it, and was loath to remove that comfort, even at her own insistence.

Keelin gave no indication that she thought his reaction odd. Her awkward laugh appeared to be aimed more at herself as she shook her head. "You're absolutely right." Then she scrubbed at her forehead with her fingers. "I'm sorry. I think the day is catching up to me is all."

Again, he got the feeling she was dancing quite a fancy jig around the real issue. The entire night just didn't add up to him. Not the part about the crazy Fae chasing her—although their drug of choice *was* humans, but what were they doing here?—or the part of how she'd taken it all in stride, more or less, and this being the first time this had happened. Supposedly. "Why do I get the feeling yer hiding more from me than yer tellin'?"

She shrugged, and looked him straight in the eye for the first time since she'd seen him. "Why do you care?"

The question was an honest one. She wasn't trying to be crabbit about it. And Lucian realized she was right. Why *did* he care? "I dinna ken. But I do."

"Look," she continued, wrapping her arms around her waist. "I appreciate your help. More than you know. But there's nothing here you need to worry about. Truly. I'm fine now. Thanks to you." She smiled at him. A true smile that lit up her bonnie face. And later, lying in his own bed, Lucian would swear the heavens had opened up for a quick second before it was gone again. Keelin wasn't what one would consider a beauty, but her features were arresting in their purity, with a dash of sin that wouldn't let him take his eyes away. The curves of her body made perfectly for his hands.

She heaved a tired sigh. "Honestly, I just want to go to bed."

His cock jumped violently. Lucian snarled, more at himself than at



her innocent words. Keelin expressing she was tired was *not* an invitation to join her, and he'd throat punch any eejit who took it as such. Including himself.

Shocked at his body's reaction, Lucian put a little more distance between them. He didn't know what the fuck was wrong with him tonight. Except that the thought of leaving this lass here alone, unprotected, filled him with foreboding. "I can stay, if ye'd like. No' in the house, o' course, but nearby, somewhere outside. I can keep watch for ye."

She immediately shook her head, her long hair brushing her shoulders and arms. He noticed it was lighter than he'd first thought, a tinge of red tinting the blonde strands as it dried. Her sweet scent wafted over to him, filling his lungs. It was tainted slightly. With fear?

"No. I couldn't ask you to do that. And it's really not necessary. I'll be fine." She paused, and mustered up another smile. "But thank you. Again."

That was his cue to leave. Yet, still, he hesitated. "I'm just no' comfortable leaving ye here alone. There might be more o' those bloody things out there."

"Well, if there are, I doubt they'll find me in my bed, right?"

How did she know that? "Aye, that's true. So long as they did no' ken where tae find ye in the first place." The infected ones, for whatever reasons, couldn't seem to sniff out their prey behind closed doors. Only if they ran into them out in the open. Unless, of course, they knew they were there. Then they would crash through brick and steel in their efforts to get their fix.

"Then, see? I'll be perfectly safe. Or as safe as any of the humans who live around here."

Try as he might, Lucian could think of nothing to say that would make her change her mind. For sure, he didn't even know why he was trying. This woman and her problems were not his concern. He needed to leave her be. "Aye. You're right. I dinna ken what I'm thinking." He took the shoes she was still holding. "Thank ye for the loan of clothes. I'll be sure tae get them back tae ye."

She unwrapped one arm and waved her hand in the air like she

was trying to chase away bad memories. "That's not necessary. But if you could help me take care of the bodies out back, I'd be forever grateful."

"Och. O' course. I almost forgot. Dinna fash yerself, lass. I'll get rid o' them for ye afore the sun rises."

She was already walking toward the door. "I'll help you."

"Keelin."

She pulled up short at his tone.

Lucian joined her at the back door and made an effort to go easy on his tone of voice. "Go get some rest. I'll take care o' the bodies. Ye will no' even ken they were here. I promise ye."

He thought she was going to argue with him some more, but after an indecisive moment, she gave him a grateful smile. "Thank you, Lucian."

"Aye." He paused. "And dinna worry about any more unwanted visitors tonight. I plan tae stick around for a while an' keep an eye on things. Just in case. And dinna argue with me about it." Only to be assured there were no more soul suckers running amok on his mountains.

She looked up at him with eyes that raged with every shade of blue and green in the ocean. "You don't have to do that."

"I ken I dinna, but I will. I would no' feel right just leaving ye here without making sure ye were safe." To his utter amazement, he found those words to be true. With what he hoped was a reassuring smile, he slipped on the sandals and went out into the cold night, then stood on the small pack porch, waiting until she locked the door behind him.

After checking around carefully to make sure he wasn't being watched by anyone other than Keelin, Lucian gathered up the body parts. With a torso over each shoulder and a head in each hand, he jogged to the tree line and found a trail that would take him back up to the top. He hid the corpses in a clump of ferns, then found a sturdy branch to sit on. The tree was a good vantage point and afforded him some shelter if the rain came back—which it did, about two hours later. Despite the thick cover, he was quickly drenched. But a little rain never deterred him from his duty.

He kept watch until a few hours before dawn, and when he was assured there were no other soul suckers in the area, he gathered up the Fae corpses and hightailed it back through the mountains. He made it to the apartment building the pack shared just as the sun was peeking up over the horizon. The complex backed up to the protected lands of the mountain range, and provided plenty of cover for the werewolves to sneak in and out on occasions just such as this.

Questions tumbled over each other inside his head, mostly about Keelin, but he let them spin. He didn't want to think about why he'd felt the need to protect a female he'd just barely met. It would only lead to answers he was positive he didn't want to hear and wasn't ready to acknowledge.

Duncan met him on the elevator, dressed in sweats and running shoes. One eyebrow went up as Lucian stepped through the doors with the bodies. "Fun night ye had, eh?"

Och, he was not in the mood for Duncan this morning. Then again, he never really was. The wolf was a royal pain in the arse. Always nipping at his heels like an overgrown Chihuahua. Never leaving him alone. "Is Cedric awake?"

"I wouldn't ken. I slept in my own bed last night, as I do every night, and was just goin' out for a run."

Lucian rolled his eyes and continued down the hallway. "I'll just go see for myself, then." He heard Duncan following him and spun in a circle as he walked to scowl at him. "Dinna ye say something about a run?" At Cedric's door, he tucked one of the heads beneath his arm and gave a right firm knock.

"Aye. And I will. But I dinna wanna miss *this* story."

Cedric opened the door right away, wearing nothing but black boxer briefs with a wadded up T-shirt in his hand, long hair yet to be pulled back into its customary ponytail. His icy blue eyes took in Lucian, the bodies, and Duncan in one fell swoop, before he stepped back and swung the door open wide. "Leave those things in the bath if ye dinna mind, Lucian. I dinna want Faerie guts all over my new floor. I'll make us all some coffee." Without a second glance, he shut the

door behind them and made his way over to his recently updated kitchen, pulling the white T-shirt over his head as he went.

Lucian dumped the bodies in the guest bath, then washed his hands. His skin itched to be covered in his own clothes, and not because the ones he wore were too tight and too short, but because the thought of wearing another male's clothes—another male who meant something to Keelin—made him want to rip them from his body. But Cedric would want to hear what happened first, so he settled with cleaning up as best he could and then followed the smell of strong, freshly-brewed coffee back out to the kitchen.

To his credit, Duncan said not a word about the ill-fitting clothing as he passed. "Are ye all right, lad?"

"O' course," Lucian sneered. He detested being called "lad". "There were only two o' them fer Christ's sake."

Cedric brought him and Duncan a steaming cup of coffee and then settled into his favorite oversized armchair with his own. He took a loud sip, closing his eyes and making an appreciative noise.

Lucian sat on the couch, Duncan beside him, as he waited.

Pushing his long, wavy hair out of his face, Cedric said, "All right, now that I can think straight, tell me what happened tae ye."

Lucian did, starting with the scene he'd come upon when he'd stopped at the top of the mountain cliff. He skipped over any details of what happened between him and Keelin he didn't need to know, only telling him her name and the main points of their conversation. He finished it up by saying she was a good, brave lass who'd fixed up his shoulder and loaned him some clothes.

"But she wasn't at all feart, ye say?" Cedric asked him when he was done.

"Not like ye would expect. She told me her mum was a Wiccan, 'n' a Seer, 'n' that she was the one who told her about the other creatures o' the world when she was a wee lassie."

"Creatures like us, ye mean?" Duncan said.

"Aye. 'n' the Faeries." He couldn't stop his upper lip from lifting in disgust.

Cedric set his coffee mug on the end table and sat forward in his

chair. "So, let me get this straight. Ye saw a wee lass run out o' the woods when the moon was high, followed by a couple o' crazy ones, and ye did no' ask her what the bloody hell she was doing walking in the woods at night?"

"Och. O' course I did!" Lucian told him. "She claimed she likes tae go on late walks when it's quiet."

Cedric picked up his mug and stared down into his coffee. "What did ye say her name was?"

"Keelin Doran."

The pause was so brief Lucian almost didn't notice it. Almost. "That's a fine, Irish name."

"Aye," Lucian said. "That's what I told her." He glanced between Cedric and Duncan. "Why do I get the feeling there's more tae this lass than she's letting on? What are ye no' telling me?"

Duncan shook his head. "Yer imagining things."

"Are ye quite sure she said nothing else?" Cedric asked. "Ye dinna see anything unusual while in her home?"

"No, Cedric. Nothing. Though I do wonder why a sweet-smelling, bonnie lass like Keelin is living all alone in the middle o' fookin' nowhere."

"Sweet-smelling, ye say?" Duncan grinned at him.

But Lucian wasn't about to take the bait. "Aye. Like bog stars."

Cedric cleared his throat and nodded. "All right. Off with ye, then. Get a shower 'n' some sleep."

"What about the bodies in yer bath?"

"I'll have Prince Nada come 'n' fetch them. He'll want tae hear what happened." Cedric got up and took his empty mug over to the sink. "Come back down here after yer rested up, Lucian. 'n' I'll fill ye in on whatever I find out."

Duncan also took his cup to the sink. "I'm gonna go ahead 'n' go on that run, then. Dinna kill anymore *an olc* without me, Lucian. 'n' aye, get that shower. Ye reek like a dead fish." With a wide grin, Duncan clapped him on the back and went out the door.

Lucian followed him out, taking the stairs up to his apartment rather than ride in the elevator with Duncan. He did reek. But not of

fish. He smelled like those fucking Faeries. He would have to soak these clothes in bleach before he took them back to Keelin.

And take them back himself he would. Though it would be just as easy, and far safer, to find out her address and mail them to her, it didn't feel right to him. He wanted to check on her. Other than his obvious—and startling—attraction, something was nagging at him about that woman. And he was going to find out what it was.

Once he was clean and in his own jeans, hiker boots, and a green, button-down flannel shirt, he skipped the nap and headed straight back to Cedric's. Lucian didn't know exactly what it was that drove him, but there wasn't a thing he wanted discussed about Keelin without his ears being in on it.

At Cedric's, Lucian rapped twice on the door and waited for the alpha's command to enter. He hurried inside to find not only Prince Nada, but Princess Duana sitting on the couch across from Cedric. He had to bite back a growl at the sight of the Dark Fae princess before anyone noticed. Aye, she was bonnie enough, with her white skin and dark hair and curves, but it wasn't enough to make him trust her. She was *an olc*, a Dark Fae, an evil Fae. Not that the Good Fae were much better, as far as Lucian was concerned. Both tribes were devious, and they never fought fair, using their creepy Fae magic to get the advantage, even though they were nearly as strong as the wolves and could put up just as good of an honest fight.

Unless you got them close to iron. Aye. Iron took the piss right out of them.

At that very moment, Prince Nada stopped talking and looked right at him, a funny little smile slowly curving the corners of his mouth. With his long, white hair and fancy suit and cane, he reminded Lucian of a wizard in a movie he'd watched once. And just like in the movie theater, his hackles rose as he got the impression the prince knew exactly what he'd just been thinking.

Cedric spotted him hovering on the edge of the room and waved him inside. With a side-eyed look at the prince, Lucian made his way over to stand beside Cedric's chair. "What did I miss?"

"Ye did no' miss much," Cedric told him. "I just finished telling the

prince 'n' princess what you found last night. They're in my bath, by the way," he said to Prince Nada. "I was thinking ye would want tae see them afore I got rid o' them."

"And you would be correct, sir," Prince Nada told him. The princess, on the other hand, did not seem so eager. He patted her shoulder. "You stay here, dear. I'll deal with this. We wouldn't want to upset your delicate sensibilities." He didn't see the amused look the princess gave him as he grabbed his cane and walked briskly toward the bathroom. "Didn't have much of a chance, did they?" he called.

"No' against my Lucian, no'," Cedric responded with a note of pride in his voice.

*My Lucian.* It was the first time Lucian had ever heard his alpha refer to him as such. And with such pride. His chest swelled at the compliment even as his face heated.

"Maybe Lucian can help me carry them out of here," Prince Nada said as he came back. "I'd prefer not to soil my suit."

Lucian gazed down at the clean clothes he'd just put on and ground his jaw.

The prince nodded at Duana when she looked up at him from her seat. "It's as we feared, dear."

Her expression didn't change, but her eyes were colored with betrayal when she turned back to Cedric.

"Dinna look at me like that, princess," he told her. "Lucian did right tae kill them. Ye ken tha' as well as I do."

"I don't 'ken' any such thing. As you well know," she spit.

"Put yer claws away, kitten. There no' much tae do about it now. The girl would've been killed before Lucian could've caught them alive, even if he'd tried tae. We cannae allow tha'."

"Because humans are so much more important?"

"Aye," he responded. "They are important. Just as important as any o' us."

His answer seemed to surprise her.

The prince pulled Lucian's attention away from their conversation. "Come help me, lad. Please."

But Lucian was already shaking his head. He already knew how

the prince was planning to dispose of the bodies: by whisking them out of here through space and time to the gods only knew where. And he wanted to take Lucian with him. “No, I dinna think I will. I willnae be going with ye unless ye want me tae take them out the same way I brought them in.”

“Lucian, go with the prince,” Cedric ordered.

“I will no’, Cedric,” he ground out. There was no way in bloody hell he was letting that Faerie whoosh him from one place to another. “But I’d be more than happy tae take them out on my own two feet.”

Cedric stood from his chair, and the timbre of the alpha weighed heavy on Lucian though his words were kind. “There’s nothing tae be feart o’, Lucian. I’ve done it myself many times now. Just go. I need ye back here.”

His bravado was bullshit. Lucian knew Cedric hated it as much as he did. Though he had to clench his jaw to keep his mouth on lockdown before it got him into trouble—again—Lucian gave him a curt nod and brushed past the prince to go get the bodies.

He was going to have to bloody shower again.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



L.E. Wilson writes Paranormal Romance with Bite (because Vampires!) starring intense alpha males and the women who are fearless enough to tame them — for the most part anyway. ;) In her novels you'll find smoking hot scenes, a touch of suspense, some humor, a bit of gore, and multifaceted characters, all working together to combine her lifelong obsession with the paranormal and her love of romance.

Her writing career came about the usual way: on a dare from her loving husband. Little did she know just one casual suggestion would open a box of worms (or words as the case may be) that would forever change her life.

Peach tea and her tiara are a necessary part of her writing process,

though sometimes you'll find her typing away at her favorite Starbucks. She walks two miles to get there, to make up for all of those coffees. On the weekends she likes to hike, garden, cook vegan food, and have date nights with her favorite guy.

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