

1037

WWW.NOVELWORM.COM

She moaned feebly. Her vision dimmed again, and she faded into unconsciousness...

Fresh pain quickly brought her around. Her body jerked upward and flopped back as something tugged at her chest. Her eyes flickered open.

The werewolf had severed her other breast with his talons; it sat in a bloody heap on the leathered palm of a huge paw. He held it out to her, taunting her, so she could get a good look at it.

Then he raised the bloody lump of flesh to his mouth and plunged his fangs into it. WWW.NOVELWORM.COM

Brianna turned her head to one side and threw up blood.

She lay back sobbing, drifting toward unconsciousness. The beast had made good on his promise. She was still alive; he leaned down within inches of her face, her shredded breast clenched between his bloody fangs. Then he bolted it down and let her own blood dribble into her open, gasping mouth.

She swallowed, finally clearing her throat enough to speak.

"Get it... o-over with.... you b-bastard!" she sobbed. "K-kill..... me...."

His deadly grin returned. He flexed his talons in her face; then he dug in deep at the notch of her collarbone and clawed her open down the front, only stopping after he slashed through the splintered remains of her pubic bone. She gasped; then a wet shriek of agony bubbled from her lungs. Blood streamed from her mouth, geysered from her throat, splashed over her savaged torso. It spurted from her belly in a torrent. Her limbs twitched uncontrollably. Her breathing was a liquid, reedy whistle; waves of dizziness and nausea flooded over her.

Brianna's mind struggled to comprehend the horrible magnitude of her injuries. Her entire body was afire with flames of agony that never quite consumed her, but always tortured her, like the fires of hell. Her screams grew ragged and weak as he brutally yanked entrails from the bloody cavity he had carved. He reached down and spread apart her ribs; they gave way with a sickening 'crack,' opening upward like a clamshell, exposing her shredded lungs and intestines. WWW.NOVELWORM.COM

She began to shiver, feeling cold and clammy. She was in deep shock now, her body's systems shutting down as essential life forces were shunted to sustain the heart and brain even as the beast continued to maul her. She could feel what little remained of her life spinning away, like water swirling down a drain. She watched in horror as the werewolf plunged his shaggy arm into her chest cavity and ripped out her heart. It was still beating when he stuffed it into his mouth and bit into it.

'Good bye, Mom. Goodbye, Dad,' she thought. 'I'll always love you guys. Stevie.... I'm so sorry we didn't....'

A brief lance of agony tore through Brianna's eviscerated body; then, to her joy, she saw the flood of brilliant light return. The gruesome image of the werewolf devouring her heart faded away. She had always thought that dying would be terrifying and dark, like watching a picture on a television screen fade to black after the set had been unplugged -- not this bright, joyous light. Her eyes suddenly cleared with the final understanding that her death was at hand. She was not afraid.

"Yes," she whispered, a smile on her torn, blood-flecked mouth. "Yes. This time, I'm coming to stay...." WWW.NOVELWORM.COM

The werewolf finished swallowing Brenna's heart, then glowered at her slaughtered remains in confusion. She might have been smiling; it was impossible to tell because she no longer had a face, but the bloody gash of what had been her mouth seemed to have turned up at the corners when the light went out in her eyes.

He tore out her liver and greedily devoured it. He needed the nourishment. He was weary, even a little weak; the Changing always took quite a bit out of him, and as if that hadn't been enough, the gunshot wounds had exacted a very heavy toll as well. He had expended a lot of energy regenerating lost blood and muscle and organs, and then he had Changed again so he could run her down and kill her.

She had suffered unbelievable agony; he had made her pay in full for shooting him. The lower part of her body lay in a few inches of shallow water; a crimson stain spread out from between her skinned legs like an oil slick, and the torn sac of her uterus floated on the surface. The two halves of her rib cage had been stripped of skin and flesh, and pointed toward the sky. Flies already buzzed over the grisly chasm he had carved down the front of her body.

The beast buried his bloody snout in her open stomach, growling softly in his throat as his fangs sheared through more viscera. He ripped out a coil of intestine with a jerk of his head and drew it slowly into his mouth, like a long strand of spaghetti.

Suddenly, his keen ears pricked forward. He heard the annoying rasp of a motorcycle as it bounced up the trail. It would be here shortly. And in the distance, he could hear wailing sirens coming up the road.

The werewolf snarled in frustration. He would have liked to finish his gory meal, but there wasn't time. It wasn't that he was afraid of the men who would come, but he didn't want to risk being shot again so soon after being blasted by the .45. They wouldn't be able to kill him; however, if he was hit and Changed back into human form, they'd see his face, and he might not be able to slay them all. In a fit of mindless rage, he dismembered Brianna's corpse, sank his fangs into her neck and tore out her throat. He watched her horribly mauled head roll free of her torso.

The motorcycle was getting closer. The beast bent down and tore one last huge chunk of entrails from Brianna's body. Then he raced over the ground and ran straight up the side of a tall tree, climbing the vertical trunk as easily as if he were sprinting over flat terrain. He hid himself in the thick foliage at the crown and devoured his handful of organ meat. He waited and watched.

The motorcyclist was a tall, slender man with curly black hair and a black beard. The werewolf could hear his anguished screams over the roar of the motor when he spied the girl's butchered remains. The engine died as he ditched the bike. He rushed over to the edge of the lake, crying her name over and over. He went down on his hands and knees and threw up.

Then he rolled over on his back, weeping and screaming hysterically, beating his fists against the sides of his head

The creature peered down at the shrieking man thirty feet below, wondering how he had even recognized the young woman. Probably the bloody scalp. It would be so easy to go down there and kill him, but the sirens were much closer. He didn't need a confrontation just now. He set off through the trees, running across the limbs with the agility of a leopard, flinging himself from tree to tree. He considered doubling back to feed on Janice's carcass for a while, but ruled against it. Again, too risky. He'd had no choice but to kill close to the hotel when the Change had unexpectedly seized him on the balcony, but it would be unwise to push it. He decided to head back to his room, where he could revert to his human form and rest awhile before tonight's hunt.

He launched himself into a huge oak and skated down its trunk in a controlled slide. Then he landed on all fours and bounded down the path.