

CHANGE A CHANGELING - COMMUNION OF ALL CHANGELINGS

PART 2 - SURREPTITIOUS BEAUTY

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Author Note: Please check out my main site at www.cpbunnyart.com for downloads of more samples of my stories. **Coming soon are:** character profiles and original hand-drawn artwork to 3D models of the characters. (Hoping to find talented people to help make this story into a comic or manga and/or an animated feature.) Enjoy!

CHANGE A CHANGELING (CAC) FANTASY SERIES :: This saga is of three generations of troubled forbidden lovers and their offspring's hardships against hateful prejudice and injustice. The main story is about a young hybrid Fay warrior prince named Alayer (Alastar's grandson & King Sovereign's third son) discovering a dire painful secret about himself that was hidden from him most of his life.

Follow along on his journey to witness how he becomes to be in fierce loyalty to the White Fire and suffers painful hardships while searching for the cure from his mortality. Witness his fevered hunt for the precious truth in worlds where the truth is smothered underneath mountains of lies and ludicrous deception proudly parading as the new "truth" that all must either accept or be destroyed.

The powerful Neverborns are the self-appointed rulers in the world where Alayer must find the Source of the White Fire power lent to him during his time of great need. His own world is barren of the truth of that source and the next one he searches is nearly a wasteland for what he seeks and desperately needs to become a real Immortal.

However, the truth of where to find the Source is there, yet dangerous dark forces of the Neverborn are ready to do anything to stop Alayer and anyone else searching for the Source at all costs. Will Alayer find this mysterious Source of the White Fire and never have to fear death again? Read to find out.

{Just when you thought you could go on living forever, you discover that you are destined to die.}

(There is also a pretty disabled unicorn filly, iridescent of mane and tail, that Alayer saves from hungry Troles (gnome/troll hybrids). He nearly loses his life for helping her and both are saved by Leporidae, the enormous rabbit/hare doe warrior, whose husband was eaten by the Troles years ago. Alayer sees this unicorn, named Nabi, as his best friend and he deeply cares for her, the sweetie mute filly that speaks volumes through her sparkling green eyes.

Alayer's human friends, Ann and her cousins, Stefan and his little sister, Sarah, try to help Al with his quest against the curse. Although, jealous Stefan turns out to be more an enemy than a friend.)

My new art can be seen first on my eBay auctions at stores.ebay.com/cpBunnyart

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Thank you and I hope you enjoy the story below.

CHAPTER 1

Ann Silvermen made haste as she pulled her champagne colored Chevy sedan into the parking lot of Scaling Heights High School. She was running a little late thanks to a slow-moving vehicle on the single lane back roads she had to take to get to school. Such had to happen on her first day of twelfth grade too. She finally was a senior and next summer, she would graduate and enroll into college. She hoped she could get into the college of her dreams, Firebird University, and become a veterinarian, since she adored animals, especially horses.

Eventually, she found a parking space in the packed lot quite a distance away from the entrance of the school's front double glass doors. In a rush, she glanced in her rearview mirror, swiping her fingers through her long, strawberry, blonde hair before gathering up her things and leaving her car. She straightened out her white blouse and smoothed her floral printed skirt, which had bunched up while she was driving. Her cyan blue eyes checked her watch with the well-worn leather band upon her wrist. She gasped when she learned that she had less than five minutes to get to her homeroom.

She raced into the building, huffing and puffing to make it in time to her home room, which was not easy to get to since the school was massive. Why the parking lot was on the side of the school furthest from the classrooms was beyond her.

Her best friend Sally, who seemed to appear out of nowhere, grabbed her arm and began talking so fast in an excited voice that Ann could barely understand what she was saying. Sally had always been a high-strung girl with her addiction to sugar. She often dyed her platinum blonde hair a different color each month or so. Even during summer vacation, Sally displayed rainbow hues on her tresses to surprise her friends. She didn't just change her hair colors monthly, she also put in crazy accessories of all kinds from ribbons, bows and tinsel, to loads of glitter to match either the current holiday or her mood.

With her aunt and uncle allowing her to do as she pleased, Sally had neighborhood parties with designs that she enjoyed the most. When a holiday rolled around, that girl was ready with the appropriate themed party at either her relatives' large house or at various social meeting locations such as the mall or her favorite place, the laser tag arena.

"Sally! Slow down!" Ann told her, watching her hyper pal bouncing off the walls and her brown eyes bugging out from crazed exhilaration.

"What is it? What's the matter?"

“There’s a new guy coming to our school! He’s in our homeroom! You gotta see him!!” Sally squealed wildly, her dyed teal green braid flapping as she hopped about.

“Ohhh...! He’s unbelievably *hot*! He’s a real vampire!” she gushed. Ann still had some trouble making sense of her sped-up high-pitched swooning.

“Wait, wait! Hold on here. Did you say this new guy is a vampire? A real vampire?” Ann asked, very intrigued.

Ever since she was young, Ann adored the supernatural and many various magical creatures. In her room there were many posters plastered upon the walls of beautiful, white unicorns and mysterious, regal dragons in various art styles. Most were realistic-looking works of art, thanks to very talented artists and skillful digital manipulation. She loved how an ordinary photograph of a horse could easily be transformed into a pegasus, or a fanciful unicorn, with computer software.

Since her father was a successful horse rancher, she had plenty of equine themed goodies from decorated lamps, pillows, bedding, stationery, and so on. While she was a horse crazy teenager, she also was crazy for anything of the Fay. Too many people thought that vampires were undead monsters, essentially fancy, aristocratic zombies, but not her. She saw them as part of the Fay, a special class of beautiful mysterious creatures of the night. Movies made them out to be blood-thirsty wicked fiends that only wanted to harm and destroy people, especially the damsels enchanted by them.

Ann never bought into that and although she watched such vomit-inducing terror flicks from Follywood, she was often disappointed. She had yet to see a movie about vampires that showed them as she believed they truly were, as the handsome creatures of the Fay. Unfortunately, she had no proof on what she felt strongly about and her cousin, Stefan, hated to hear about anything remotely supernatural. He never believed in any of that ridiculous unscientific garbage.

“Oh, you’re just teasing me. He’s not a true vampire.” Ann felt silly to have believed her friend, who exaggerated often. She was known to guzzle down can after can of sugary soft drinks daily. So, it wasn’t hard to see why she was so hyper.

“But he looks like one! I bet he drinks blood, just like the vampire in that movie we watched last Friday. You know, where the incredibly hot vampire guy kisses the girl and then, he bites her and she marries him, because she turns into a vampire too,” Sally gushed, brainwashed by Follywood that their slop of movies was the best kind of ‘romance’ available. Ann uttered a gagging noise as she made a disgusted face, shaking her head.

“Ugh, Sally, no! Those movies are about the common cliché vampires. They make them out to be undead, sex-crazed maniacs that want to suck people dry of all their blood, unlike real vampires and I really hate that! And besides, that movie we saw last time was one of the worst yet,” Ann retorted, but her friend was already lost in her mindless thoughts.

Sally contentedly fantasized about the new guy romancing her in a risqué manner, then savagely biting her neck. Somehow, she believed that it would feel good, then she would marry him, grow bat wings and they would fly happily into the night.

“*Ohh*, yes, please, take me away...” she drooled, smiling like a silly fool. Ann shook her head sadly, feeling sorry for her friend. The bell rang then and both girls panicked. Sally hurried away to their homeroom and Ann followed her quickly. They seated themselves where they were assigned and Sally was very jealous to learn that her best friend got to sit directly behind the new vampire guy. Still, she was happy for her, since she was sure that Ann would report to her whatever fun interactions she had with that incredibly hot vampire.

Ann had taken a good look at the handsome new guy before she sat down. He gave her a foreboding glare that sent excited shivers through her. He certainly was indeed attractive-looking, unbelievably so actually. His long hair was pitch black with blood-red streaked highlights throughout and tied into a loose ponytail reaching down to the middle of his back. He had a well-structured, balanced face with ghostly pale flesh, just like a real vampire.

She wasn't able to see if he had fangs, but she had seen his bright crimson-red eyes, which were strikingly frightening, yet so alluringly majestic. She wasn't too sure, but it seemed like his pupils had slits coming out from the top and the bottom of their black spheres, something like how a cat's eyes were, but different.

‘Those are some contacts,’ she thought. His pointed long ears looked genuine with his left ear being completely pierced up its bottom length with various types of golden earrings from studs to a long dangle, which was encrusted with tiny, glittering gems.

She wondered how many times he had to get plastic surgery to look the way that he did. He was so perfectly shaped in practically every way. But yet, there were no scars and no imperfections whatsoever. It made her wonder.

And then there was his makeup, elegantly airbrushed to his skin. He was wearing thick black eyeliner with dark bluish-gray and red eye shadow. There also was red pigment subtly brushed from the far corners of his eyes down his high cheekbones to his jaw. Ann wondered how he did his makeup so beautifully and her mind kept telling her that he must be one of the Fay. Only they could wear face paint that flawlessly without looking like a hideous, scary clown, unlike many girls and some guys in her class.

He had a strong Gothic theme going on with his black leather pants and onyx tank top with dark fishnet material covering his muscular arms entirely. He had on short, black, fingerless gloves and his black painted nails almost seemed like claws with how long they were. His knee-high, black, leather boots were covered in shining silver buckles and straps. With his long-pointed ears, red eyes, and pale flesh, perhaps he was a true vampire. Ann immediately felt her hopes fly sky high after seeing all this wonderful evidence.

All she needed was his confession that he was an actual vampire and then, she could present him to her skeptic cousin, Stefan, and hopefully he would see that the Fay were not imaginary, like he

always thought. As exquisitely beautiful as this new guy was, he wasn't the only Gothic person in the school. As long as Ann could remember, there had been several small groups of Goths throughout the high school years. She was on good terms with them all, especially the more occult ones, despite her cousin Stefan's warnings to stay away from such 'freaks'.

They were all nice, understanding people as long as you respected them as one should with anyone. Even though she wasn't Gothic herself, Ann often defended them. She often told others that someone being Gothic didn't mean that they were weird, bad, or even evil. They were just people expressing themselves, just like this new guy was. And she could sense that he was very angry and hurting in some way. His eyes screamed volumes of that when she had looked into them. There was no mistaking that. He was like a shadowy, picturesque enigma that she wanted to know more about and find out why he was in so much mental pain. Ann was ready for a challenge, no matter how dangerous.

The tall, wiry, thin lady standing in front of the board was the same teacher Ann had last year. Everyone knew her since ninth grade, Ms. Mothbyrd. She expected them all to be respectful to each other regardless of animosities, which there was a lot of in this particular school. Whenever there were disruptions, she'd practically ignore it and carry on. She hardly enforced any discipline, but she did report any issues to the principal, Dr. Ron Wright. And the teenagers knew this after some examples had been made.

Soon enough, the students learned to pretend to behave. Otherwise, Dr. Ron, as he preferred to be called, would strip away the activities they liked best to punish them, and other disciplinary actions that no one often spoke of for some reason. The students took their problems to the streets instead.

"Class, we have a new transfer student with us today," the soft-spoken teacher said, gesturing for the vampire-looking guy to stand up and face the class. Reluctantly, he did so, very irritably.

"Let's all welcome Alayer Fay."

Ann was certain with a name like that, this Alayer *had* to be part of the Fay when his last name was indeed "Fay"! She couldn't wait to tell Stefan of this, even if he had ear plugs handy whenever she approached him. He was something like a brother to her and she would eventually get him to hear her out. She had a baby brother too, well, he was her half-brother.

Adorable and sweet, Jacob was much too young to know what she would be talking about, though she told him things anyway. She planned to expose him to all kinds of wonderful, magical Fay material as soon as he could talk.

She looked at Alayer, standing before the class in his awesome beauty. Some gangsters in the back whistled and hooted at him in an insulting manner and the majority of the class snickered. Ann noticed Alayer's clenched fists trembling in rage and she indignantly turned in her chair to glare at her ignorant classmates disapprovingly.

She narrowed her eyes even more when she saw that Sally was laughing too. Ann scowled at her friend, who shrugged her shoulders nonchalantly. What kind of person was she anyway? First, fawning over a new, good-looking guy only to laugh at him later, because some of their classmates thought he was weird by being different?

Ann remembered how they treated the last Gothic person. Her name was Zella and they teased her mercilessly, calling her a dark witch, throwing rubber spiders at her, and the gangsters even beat her up from time to time. She didn't crack from the bullying that she received and was now the unofficial leader of a close-knit circle of Gothic teenagers that did charity work for seniors.

The strawberry blond wondered what kind of social torment this poor, new guy would have to go through. He was already getting some now even. By the looks of him, he seemed as if he was going to erupt like a volcano at any second.

Angrily closing his eyes, Alayer turned around and sat down stiffly. It took every ounce of his strength not to attack those who demeaned him. It really did. Oblivious as always, Ms. Mothbyrd started to take attendance.

Ann felt very badly for the new guy and waited eagerly for her chance to talk to him, which didn't come until lunchtime, outside in the school's courtyard. Sally was able to forget about Alayer's attractive vampirism, when the captain of the football team, Dan, asked her out on a date. She had been dreaming for Dan to ask her out since the tenth grade.

So, she abandoned Ann to sit alone on a picnic bench, one which was conveniently nearby the one Alayer was using to read extremely thick volumes. By using her eagle eyes, she could read that most of those tomes were spell books of fifty shades of black magic. Ann was glad not to have Sally around, since she felt that she was a traitor of some kind, by being unkind to Alayer.

He had to be of the Fay to read such books; she was sure of it. She mindlessly ate her lunch as she watched him like a hawk for a long while, admiring how incredibly handsome he was. Some of the mean girls in her school were making fun of her within earshot, but she didn't pay any attention to them.

Ann was just too enthralled to stop looking at this lovely vampire guy. She sighed, now staring through half-lidded eyes, not really noticing the very annoyed look he gave her then. Suddenly, he slammed the book he was reading shut forcefully with a loud bang and packed up his tomes in his black duffel bag. Throwing the bag's strap over his right shoulder, he started to leave then.

Waking up, Ann stumbled over her own feet to chase after him, not caring about the mean girls' insults and demeaning laughter. She had to hurry since this guy could cover ground really quickly.

"Wait up!" she cried, trying to catch up. Instead of slowing down, he went even faster and went around a corner of the school to another part of the vast stretching courtyard. As she got there, he was nowhere in sight. What the...?

For a while, Ann searched for him without success, when some of the mean girls came up to her then, giggling.

“What’s so funny?” Ann demanded hotly.

Yazzy and Jazzy were two of the meanest and richest girls in the whole school. They were cruel and heartless, and enjoyed putting others down, especially those they deemed poorer than them. Even though Ann’s father was well-off financially, Yazzy and Jazzy’s mother was one of the elite, super rich people seen in gossip magazines and high society journals. The mean sisters were always showing off how filthy rich they were, by flaunting their overpriced designer clothes and expensive jewelry every day at school. Each sister had their own private yacht and their mother bought them an island to go to with the many boyfriends they cycled through monthly.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Jazzy said in her usual monotone voice, her hands on her bony, exposed hips. Her cold blue eyes were narrowed, but her lips were curled into an evil grin. She had on one of her many designer outfits on that looked like a chemical factory had exploded on the fabric. Her short black hair was slicked tightly to her head with it parted in the middle with pungent, smelling gel. Ann wrinkled her nose at the horrid stench. Yazzy kept snickering, her dyed fluorescent green hair blowing in the wind, also wearing a splattered-paint outfit, designed by Pierre Farcé.

“Duhh, can’t you tell? That hot vampire guy is totally running away from you, because of your disgusting horse manure smell!” Yazzy shrieked, her green eyes crazed as she laughed like a hyena. Ann had to stop herself from punching their lights out. Her father warned her to quit using her fists to resolve conflicts. He couldn’t keep on affording the lawsuits.

Instead, she seethed and walked away as quickly as she could before she lost control as she did many times in the past. She thought those girls would have learned by now not to tease her. Especially after the times when she had rearranged their faces before. Maybe they knew she wasn’t allowed to beat them into a pulp anymore and that was why they freely attacked her now.

Lunch was over and it was time to go back inside the school to be indoctrinated once more. The things they taught there were often times insane, particularly that ‘happy’ math. Wow, was it really out there on the crazy meter! It took a billion times longer to do than the kind of original math that her parents learned way back in the day. Calculators were her friends, unlike the new method of doing math the school was forcing upon them now.

Ann noticed how Alayer refused to do things the teachers wanted him to do when it came to such nonsense like the ‘happy’ math. He did it like how Ann remembered her father teaching her when she started first grade and he rejected doing it in any other way as they were forcing the other students to do.

So, he got unsatisfactory grades constantly for not obeying like a good brainwashed slave, er, well-mannered unquestioning ‘student’. But somehow, after Dr. Ron had a talking to the teachers

with Alayer, his grades were changed to outstanding ones. Many of the other students gossiped that Alayer was Dr. Ron's pet and he was allowed to break the rules.

Soon enough, he wasn't expected to do any schoolwork, yet he did anyway, with real correct answers. Although, none of the students' work papers were really checked for flaws, only the quantity of work mattered and if they followed the strange rules completely.

While Ann enjoyed looking at the back of Alayer's perfectly-shaped head and his beautiful, shining hair every morning in homeroom, she really wanted to talk to him still. She could try to talk to him in homeroom, but she didn't want the other students listening in so, she waited for her chance to speak with him privately. He often got into fights with the Riff-Raff gang, a group of scantily dressed misfits that Dr. Ron also had pardoned. He allowed them to just be there, even though they caused nothing but constant trouble nearly on a daily basis.

September was over and October was beginning. The air was oddly warm for this time of the year and on a spring-like day, she did what she usually did and that was to sit at any bench that was close to where Alayer was during lunch. She learned not to stare at him for too long from times before, since he would just get up and leave, often disappearing for the rest of the lunch period. She lost out on many opportunities to try and speak to him that way.

So, she kept her cyan blue eyes to herself, most of the time, as she worked up her nerve to converse with him. She had a new habit of carrying a large tall book about horses with her so she could peek over the top of it to see Alayer. He had gone through many spell books and from the expression on his lovely face, he was beyond frustrated and she noticed a new look on him. He appeared deathly afraid and that he was about to lose it soon, like he was going insane.

Then, his eyes locked onto hers and his fretful appearance was clouded over with his usual angry expression. But this time, it seemed somewhat hateful. He gathered up his belongings as Ann quickly hid her face behind her *Wondrous Equines* book, figuring he was going to leave and disappear for the rest of the lunch period again.

But to her surprise, she heard him walking over to her and then, she felt her heart jump into her throat when he placed his well-manicured index finger inside the middle of her book and pulled it downward away from her face. She looked up at him, not knowing what to expect, other than him maybe telling her off. Instead, he glared at her for a moment before he sat down across from her, setting his duffel bag on the grass at his feet. The strawberry blonde took a quick visual drink of his alluring beauty and interesting attire. It was impossible not to, especially when he was this close to her now.

He was wearing a black, tight T-shirt with red jagged marks all over it and the long sleeves looked like he had shredded them with razor blades. Yet, it was done in a fashionable way. His dark gray jeans appeared like they received the same treatment as his sleeves, all ripped up in various places, also done stylishly. He had on different black boots covered in leather straps with metal buckles and splattered with what looked to be red paint, she hoped.

Ann felt embarrassed, but very excited as well. She shyly looked away, then back at him, starting to feel a bit nervous and worried now. His multiple golden earrings in his left ear twinkled in the sunlight as he narrowed his angry eyes even more so.

“You seem to enjoy staring at me,” Alayer said, his voice so wonderfully masculine and captivating. “Let’s see how much you like it.”

Ann backed up a little when he suddenly got into her personal space. With their faces only inches apart, he stared intently at her with his wickedly awesome eyes set within his handsome, serious face. She frowned a little, even though she was glad that he was finally talking to her.

“I never once got into your face like you’re doing to me now,” she complained, acting annoyed when she was secretly pleased to be this close to him regardless.

“Oh yes, you did. I *hate* it when people stare at me, so that’s exactly how I felt when you kept gawking at me all those times before. I’m *not* some sort of ornament you can ogle at...” he said, hinting that he was very insulted and why.

Ann understood what he was getting at and bit her lip, feeling very ashamed. She realized she had done him wrong by admiring him like he was some lovely object, not a real person with feelings. She should have known better after seeing the misery in his eyes many times before.

“I’m *so* sorry, I didn’t realize I was being that rude...! I won’t do it anymore,” Ann said, meaning it.

“Really, honest!”

Alayer gave her a distrustful glare, but he got out of her face and sat back down. He started to pick up his duffel bag to leave, when she blurted out, “Wait!”

“What?” he snapped, frowning.

“Please, don’t go. We, uh, we can be...um, friends!” Ann hated how stupid she sounded saying that.

“I don’t need *friends*,” he said in a low disgusted tone, turning away again.

“No, wait!” she cried, grabbing his left hand. He stared at her as if she had rabies and freed his hand quickly and roughly, but still she didn’t give up.

“Please, let me help you! I can see you’re hurting inside; something is wrong. I want to help you, please...”

Alayer stood there, wondering if he should trust this girl with his horrible dilemma of his mortality. His father told him to not trust outsiders whatsoever and especially to never go to the city where such outsiders were abundant. The teenager left home to live on his own, against his

father's wishes, but he had no choice. He was on a mission to rid himself of the human curse, which was an undeniable death.

Ever since he found out that he was cursed, his world was turned upside down permanently. He delved into a deep depression that left him very angry and full of painful sorrow. How he feared death with all his heart. He was struggling to find the cure for his curse by searching all the spell books that he could find at this unique school, the local libraries, and on online, yet there was nothing he found that could undo the dreaded mortality decay inside his soul.

Was he not looking in the right places? There had to be a cure! There just had to be! Maybe, he should let this girl help him after all. He sorely needed it.

"Alright, I do need help...badly," Alayer admitted reluctantly, sitting back down and putting his duffel bag on the picnic table.

Ann felt hope flood over her as he pulled the zipper on his bag open and out he took a spell book that he had read twice just to be sure that he didn't miss anything important. It was just as uninformative as all the others.

"What I'm looking for is extremely important to me. I'm looking for the cure for the curse of mortality. But nothing I've read so far has any answers," he said, expecting her to laugh just like the others who had asked him why he was reading such books in the first place. But she surprised him.

"Really? My cousin Stefan is trying to do the same thing, though he's more of a science person, than a warlock, like you," she said, noticing the immediate offense in his expression.

"You think I'm a warlock?" Alayer said, frowning.

"Well, aren't you?" Ann was taken aback, feeling confused. "I mean, these books you're reading, they're books usually warlocks and witches read. Aren't they?" His disdainful stare made her feel less confident of what she thought was true.

"Why don't you try knowing me before you label me?" He should have known better than to ask for help, but then again, he had no choice since his own research was coming up with nothing.

"I *do* want to get to know you," Ann shot back, getting a little angry herself. "If you'd stop being so touchy, maybe I could..."

"Alright, fine. I'm sorry!" he snapped, making her think that he wasn't really that apologetic. His expression softened a little when he went on.

"It's just...I'm in dire straits here and I desperately need to find that cure. I was told that there is only one and I need to find it quickly." Alayer stared at his open hands, seeing them as useless.

“I just don’t want to die…” he whispered to himself, squeezing his eyes shut in frustration and turning away. Ann put her hands into his, causing him to look at her with a hurting, distrustful look.

“I can help you, really,” she said, softly. Her kind, blue eyes were so comforting to him somehow and then, a strong yearning to accept her friendship gnawed at him.

But a painful memory from his past made him disregard that longing. Her kindness must be a trick! Plus, entertaining any relationship with her would only distract him from his goal. He clenched his teeth as he recalled his past memory with Cassandra and jerked away from her in embarrassment.

“I’ve got to go,” he said abruptly, shoving his book back into his bag and pulling the strap over his shoulder. He practically ran away from her then.

Ann watched him go, feeling so sorry for him. She had been right. He was hurting inside and now, she had a few pieces of the puzzle made from his soul. She wished he would afford her some more of his time so she could really help him.

It was obvious that he didn’t trust her and he was very afraid of dying. Ann’s view on death was that it was something that everyone had to do, despite what Stefan thought. He was sure that science would make mankind into new immortal beings through soul transfers into computers and robotic parts. But none of those methods were true immortality in the end.

She was certain that wasn’t what Alayer was looking for though. Still, she would introduce Alayer to her cousin just the same. She missed talking to Sarah, Stefan’s little sister, who was a fantasy fanatic even more than Ann was. She decided to go over to her cousin’s house after school and called him on her phone before she got into her car in the parking lot. When Stefan answered, she told him about Alayer and how he wanted to be immortal. At first, Stefan thought she was making a joke and then, he realized she was serious.

“He’s not one of those crazy magic people, is he?” Stefan asked, as he typed away at his computer. He could not stand magic or anything associated with it whatsoever. People into magic irritated him something fierce and he’d rather not be bothered with warlocks, witches, and the like.

“I don’t think so. I thought he was, but he got really insulted when I called him a warlock,” Ann said, watching the school buses leaving. She saw Sally in one of the buses going home, waving crazily at her. She reluctantly waved back.

“Why would you even call him a warlock to begin with?” Stefan was suspicious since Ann wouldn’t go around calling anyone such if they didn’t seem like one.

“What does he look like?”

“Why does that matter?” she asked, getting a bit annoyed by his strange tone.

“You said you called him a warlock and I want to know why you would say such a dumb thing to him, unless he did look like a crazy magic person. You mentioned that he was reading a lot of books, but which ones?” Stefan asked, when Sheba, the family cat whose fur was pure white, rubbed against his legs, purring up a storm. He bent down in his chair to pet and scratch her fuzzy head. When he didn’t present a treat for her, she then went to his little sister’s room for proper attention.

“They were all magic and occult books,” she admitted, making Stefan immediately judge Alayer as a dim-witted, crazy magic person, whom he wanted nothing to do with. He didn’t care what he looked like now, but he had an idea.

“Don’t bring him over,” was Stefan’s curt, cold response. Ann felt herself growing angry with her cousin. Alayer needed real help here and Stefan refused to hear him out, because of the books Alayer read. It felt so wrong not to help someone in need and she let him know it.

“Stefan! How can you allow your prejudice to stop you from helping someone out? This guy needs help badly! He’s really hurting! It won’t kill you to be friendly for once to someone outside your MENSA circle!” Ann seethed, clutching her phone tightly.

“Besides, I can tell Alayer is intelligent by the other books he reads. I’m sure he can read Latin and Greek, so he can’t be a dumb magic guy, like you think all magic people are.”

“Just because he can read foreign languages doesn’t mean much. Many people can do that. I really don’t want to meet him, so don’t bring him over. I’ve got a lot of homework to do.” He disconnected the call and went back to typing away at the computer trying to finish his essay.

Ann narrowed her eyes angrily when her cousin hung up on her without even saying goodbye. She would show him and bring Alayer over to Stefan’s house anyway. She wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer. She believed helping someone out in great need trumped over a certain cousin’s close-minded discrimination. Besides, she still wanted to visit Sarah and give her the latest Pretty Magical Pony sticker book, which featured plenty of fanciful unicorns and ponies in it. Even though Sarah was twelve, she loved the Pretty Magical Ponies franchise, just as many adults did.

Those magical pony cartoons had sophisticated storylines that all ages could enjoy from four to a hundred and four. Ann liked that show too, as there was nothing childish about it. She would stop by soon her cousins’ home soon, but only if she could convince Alayer to go with her first. She hoped that she could get closer to him since she really did like him and she wished she could end his pain and suffering by helping him find what he was desperately seeking.

Ann was optimistic that she could still find him even though school was over. While most of the students raced at top speeds to get back home after school, Alayer usually would linger in the library reading until they kicked him out. They hadn’t locked up the school doors yet, so Ann hurried back inside and searched the vast library. Some students labeled nerds and geeks were sitting at the reading tables, but Alayer wasn’t with them, as he sometimes was.

She briskly walked past the many aisles of shelves, checking them with quick glances until she, at last, found him. He seemed disturbed to see her approaching him then. He shut the book he was skimming and put it back on the shelf.

“Alayer, I’m so glad I found you!” Ann exclaimed happily, grinning.

“I’m not,” he replied, turning away from her. He lifted his duffel bag off of the floor and onto his right shoulder. He started to walk away to leave, and as he expected, she followed him. He disliked her coming to him constantly, since she made him feel nervous and not to mention, very distracted. He still could not get the image of her kind blue eyes staring at him out of his mind. They were so calming and, he hated to admit, very alluring. He couldn’t afford any time for romance, especially when he hadn’t found the antidote for his cursed mortality. And after what happened to him two years ago, he was still in mental pain.

So, he tried to avoid Ann before he was too smitten with her to care about the cure anymore and be made a fool once again. He had hoped being unfriendly would drive her away, but it seemed to do the exact opposite.

“Come on now! Don’t be like that!” Ann cried, chasing after Alayer and walking side by side with him. He was too tired to go any faster and sighed, glowering at her. Why did she have to keep on tempting him like this? It wasn’t like she wore skimpy clothing, but her well-defined figure was hard to ignore, even though she wore fairly modest outfits. She was nice to look at with her pretty face and flowing strawberry blonde locks. He couldn’t help, but feel attracted to her.

But he wanted things to be much more than just being drawn in by superficial chemistry. He followed his heart before and it lead him to ruin. So, he wasn’t going to fall into that same trap again. He didn’t really know her all that much and she didn’t know him well enough either. There was no sense in starting a relationship, if she wasn’t what his soul hoped her to be.

And he might not be the right guy for her as well. Only time would tell either way, but he disliked being constantly enticed by her. If only his stupid hormones would leave him be, things might be a little easier.

“I said I wanted to help you and I’m going to,” she promised, ready to extend her offer. “I can take you to my cousin’s place and he can help you find the cure. And then, I’ll drive you home-” she began, but he cut her off quickly.

“Never.”

Miffed, Ann set her jaw, but she didn’t give up. She went on about how beneficial it would be for him to visit Stefan’s place and read his books too. Alayer said nothing and approached a black Ford 4x4 truck that his older brother was letting him borrow. He opened the driver’s side door and threw his heavy duffel bag in the passenger seat. He quickly sat down and fastened his seatbelt.

Ann had to give up her attempt to convince Alayer to visit Stefan's place when he started the vehicle and drove off. The only nice thing about that was he did actually say goodbye at least, unlike her cousin, Stefan, who liked to hang up on her now.

"When are you going to put your barriers down?" Ann wondered out loud, going to her champagne-colored Chevy sedan then.

She thought that maybe she should back off for a while, not wanting to stress him out, though she had a bad feeling that she probably already did. She drove over to drop off the pony sticker book for Sarah and she stayed there for a little while. The two cousins had a snack of apples and carrot sticks in Sarah's fantasy themed pink and blue bedroom. The walls had posters of unicorns in regal, majestic poses from leaping and running and a few boy band singers. Her computer's desktop wallpaper was, of course, a white unicorn with a multicolored mane and a glowing golden horn.

Ann sat cross-legged on her cousin's rainbow-shaped carpet, that had clouds attached to its ends, as her mind wandered off. She couldn't help, but to daydream of Alayer, adoring his intense beauty and rich alluring voice, while glossing over his unfriendliness. She sighed, her eyes half-lidded.

He was just so different from any of the other guys at school, not to mention the most handsome. It was almost like he was made from an angel; he seemed that perfect and ever so mysterious. She really wanted to not just be his friend, but to win his heart as well. While enjoying her pretty pony book, Sarah noticed her cousin acting strangely and wondered if she was fantasizing about a cute guy at school. She had just turned twelve at the end of September and in one more year, she would officially be a teenager, just like Ann. She felt old enough to converse with her cousin on the subject of interesting guys.

"Ann, who are you thinking of? It's your boyfriend, right?" she asked, curiously as she set down her sticker book. Ann blushed hard, embarrassed. How she'd really like Alayer to be her lover, though she felt that was not really possible at this point.

"You are! I bet he's really nice. What does he look like?" Sarah inquired, excitedly, flipping back the long thick strands of her light brown hair. She had on a T-shirt with a pegasus on it and stone-washed blue jeans. Her brown eyes shone as Ann described to her Alayer's awesome incredibility.

"Oh, *wow!* He does sound *hot!* I can't wait to meet him!" Sarah cried, swooning. Her cousin shook her head, now mentioning how so very unfriendly he happened to be.

"That doesn't mean much, Ann. He's just playing hard to get, because he knows he's a prize. He's not going to let just anyone capture his heart. You gotta show him that you're the one for him! You'll regret it forever if you don't keep trying," Sarah advised, learning this information from her "Deemed a Teen" magazines.

“I don’t know,” Ann said, feeling a bit subdued from Alayer’s rejections. “I think I’m only annoying him now. He keeps running away from me.” She hated to admit how he kept doing that now whenever she tried to talk to him.

“I think I better leave him alone for a while,” Ann said, more to herself than to her cousin. Sarah nodded, not wanting to push the issue after seeing how crestfallen Ann was. She hardly looked like that, so she decided to change the subject.

“Let’s watch the new Pretty Magical Ponies movie. It’s so perfectly awesome! They have ponies from the sea in it this time! I have it on Blu-ray in the living room,” Sarah suggested and Ann smiled, agreeing that was a good idea. She would go crazy, if she kept dreaming about Alayer, who seemed very unattainable. But she would be there for him in a heartbeat, if he asked for her help.

Days went by, then a week passed, followed by another week. Ann noticed Alayer becoming more and more unwell by the way he dragged himself from class to class, and how fatigued he seemed. One day during lunch, she peeked at him over her horse book from time to time, and then she realized that he had fallen asleep while reading another thick grimoire.

The Riff-Raff gangsters noticed it as well and they went up behind Alayer, snickering quietly. The gang consisted of six members so far. Spencer, the leader of the gang, who was a medium built thug with scruffy brown hair and blue eyes. Notoe was a tall, wiry guy with spiky, blue-dyed hair and owl-like green eyes and he was the gang’s weasel-like second-in-command.

Then, there was Polly and Jerry, the two slinking lovers. Jerry was a skinny teenager with hazel eyes who always had his greasy, black hair sculpted to his skull with gel. Polly was the only female gangster with dyed hot pink hair and orange contacts. It was unknown what her natural hair and eye colors were. Cliff and Tom were the ‘muscles’ in the gang, both being twin brothers and heavy-weight school wrestling champions. They were both large, big-boned guys with nearly identical short blond crew cuts and beady, little blue eyes. They enjoyed stripping cars for their parts to sell for extra cash. Bending car fenders was a fun pastime for them.

The Riff-Raffs were not the type of troublemakers that the other students wanted to stand up to and so, they ruled the school to some extent with their reign primarily governing the streets. Only one stood up against them and that was Alayer, making him their number one target.

They had been watching him constantly, waiting for a perfect moment to attack him. Discovering him asleep at lunchtime immediately prompted the thugs to strike.

Ann witnessed in shock as the gangsters yanked Alayer from his sitting position by his shoulders, flung him to the grass, and mercilessly pummeled him with their metal adorned, knuckled fists and heavy punk styled metal-tipped boots.

They were getting revenge for the times Alayer refused to pay their ‘protection’ money fees and stopping their mayhem within the school and on the streets when they shook down others for their fees. Since he was an excellent fighter, they couldn’t beat him to make him pay, but they could ambush him while he slept and that was exactly what they did.

“Stop it!!” Ann yelled, standing up fast, when some of the Riff-Raff gangsters began to shriek and scream in pain. She saw that Alayer was awake now and he had somehow cut them at various places deeply, yet she didn’t see a knife or anything sharp that he could have used.

“*Arrugh!*” screamed Spencer in pain. “You freaky Geek Goth! You totally knifed us! You bastard!”

“Someone call 911! Jerry’s bleeding like crazy here!” Polly shrieked, holding her gangster boyfriend. Both of his ankles and shins were shredded and he could no longer stand.

Cliff and Tom didn’t fare too well themselves. Tom had his left arm sliced open and his entire right calf ripped while both of Cliff’s knees spilled forth streams of blood.

Notoe had his forearm cut, though it wasn’t a very deep wound, since he jumped away in time. Polly had hung back during the attack, while she cheered on her pals. Only she and Notoe were without serious injuries, but the rest of the gang needed immediate medical attention.

Blood quickly stained the grass and the walkways of the courtyard. Alayer stood up with his hands covered in blood, growling, thoroughly agitated and very enraged.

“Next time you sacks of filth try to sneak up on me, I will do a lot more than just cut you!” Alayer snarled, fed-up with this stupid gang harassing him so often. If he wasn’t so tired, he would have taught them a lesson that they would never forget, should they live through it, that is. He wiped the blood dripping from his nose and leaking from his mouth, glaring at them venomously.

“You accursed punks won’t ever get one red cent from me! I will *never* pay your idiotic protection fees! If you don’t back off, you *all* are going to need protection from *me!*”

“Big talk, Geek Goth!” Spencer jeered, while Notoe called for the paramedics. “I’m gonna get you expelled for attacking us with a knife! Then, we’ll really make you sorry!”

“You attacked *me* first!” Alayer shot back, not intimidated whatsoever. “And I don’t carry weapons! Search me if you don’t believe me!”

“What is going on here?” asked a chilling voice. The students looked at their principal Dr. Ron. He was dressed in a lavender-colored business suit with matching pressed pants and brown Italian leather shoes. His tie was a deep red color with faint designs of upside-down black stars. As a breeze blew, his golden, wavy bangs danced about his strong, handsome face. He had his long hair tied in a ponytail this day. Ann always felt creeped out by their principal for some reason. There seemed to be something not quite right about him.

“This freak Goth attacked us with knives!” Spencer cried, pointing at his gang’s wounds and his own injury. Dr. Ron looked to Alayer with a blond eyebrow raised, his intelligent golden-brown eyes questioning him.

“These disgusting thugs ambushed me when I was asleep! They threw me to the ground, kicking and punching me with brass knuckles and steel-tipped boots!” Alayer angrily explained, shaking with fury.

“There, there, *nephew*,” Dr. Ron said soothingly to Alayer, touching his shoulders and resting his hands there.

“This is all a simple misunderstanding, isn’t it?”

Ann watched intently as the principal appeared to be hypnotizing the Riff-Raff gang and Alayer into calming down and soon, they all began to act like nothing happened despite the bloodshed. Then, Dr. Ron took Alayer by the shoulders and guided him back into the school, leaving his duffel bag behind.

“Hey, wait a minute!” Ann called out, but she was ignored. She shook her head as she looked at the pacified gangsters.

She couldn’t understand it. The Riff-Raff gang was patiently waiting for the paramedics to arrive as if they were hanging around for a bus, even though most of them were bleeding like crazy. They were calm and even looked happy too. It was super weird, but what was weirder was how Dr. Ron had such a special interest in Alayer. She wished she knew why. Soon, an ambulance arrived and the gang still behaved as if nothing dire was going on and that they were going on a fun field trip instead of the hospital. The paramedics looked at them as if they were insane and took the gangsters away.

Ann decided to get Alayer’s duffel bag and keep it safe, but when she grabbed it, the weight of the books caused them to spill out on the grass since the zipper was opened. She began stuffing the books back in, when she noticed Alayer’s wallet laying open with his driver’s license displayed.

She tried not to look at it, but the address on the license was not far off from her own home. Of course, she wouldn’t drop by his place without his permission, but at least, she knew where to go when he needed her. She noticed the birth date as well, which read, *October 31, 2001*.

She found that to be really interesting since she was born on a holiday too. Celebrating Independence Day and her birthday on the same day was always exciting. But what was more exciting was that Alayer’s birthday was on Halloween, one of her top favorite holidays.

She had to get him something and wondered what it should be. Then, it hit her and she knew what the perfect gift would be for him. Unfortunately, she didn’t know the cure for the curse of mortality. But if she could find it, she was certain that Alayer would stop playing so hard to get

and be his true self. Ann could tell something was holding him back from being more kind to her. It was like he was purposely being unfriendly, to protect something.

He had to be hiding a big secret to act like that and she kept feeling that he had to be part of the Fay. Of course, he would never tell her should he truly be one of them. Though she had an idea of how to prove it. Any piece of silver or iron jewelry should help with that.

“What are you, like, doing, Manure Girl?” Yazzy asked, her loud squeaky voice spooking Ann to shut Alayer’s wallet and stuff it in the duffel bag in a rush.

“Nothing and I’m not *Manure Girl*,” Ann tried her best not to get violent, but her ire was rising quickly.

“I saw you looking at that Alayer guy’s wallet,” Jazzy said, her monotone voice was as dead as ever. She shook her head to get her newly dyed purple bangs out of her blue eyes. “I’m gonna let him know you were messing with it.”

“Yeah! Totally you were trying to steal his cash! I saw you do it!” accused Yazzy, pointing a long red painted nail at her. “Doesn’t your dad give you any allowance or do your stupid horses eat all your money doing nothing, except make more manure? Like, ew, horses are so smelly and dumb!” She began to laugh evilly.

Jazzy joined her sister in her wicked laughter, which sounded much like a sugar-high witch and a dead-voiced zombie giggling.

Ann wanted to swing the heavy duffel bag at their skulls, but she knew she couldn’t do that. Besides, the duffel bag belonged to Alayer and she didn’t want to ruin his books whacking them against those Rich Witch sisters’ stone heads.

“I didn’t do anything with his wallet!” Ann shouted, realizing she shouldn’t have said that with other students listening in. They began to whisper amongst themselves against Ann negatively.

“Like, you are such a liar! I saw you take his cash!” Yazzy squawked, hands on her hideous hips. “Thief! You stole from the vampire Goth! You are so dumb, dumb, dumb! He’s gonna suck you dry for messing with his stuff!”

“Yeeeah, you’re done for now. He’s so going to kill you, for sure,” Jazzy drawled on.

“Uh-huh! Look at what he did to those Riff-Raff losers! I can’t wait to see him cut you up! Totally wicked!” Yazzy high-fived her sister as they smirked, snickering.

Ann narrowed her eyes and stormed off into the school to find Alayer and give his duffel bag back while Yazzy and Jazzy mercilessly taunted her and accused her of being a thief.

‘Just great, now the whole school will think I went through Alayer’s things on purpose and stole from him!’ she thought, feeling a little worried on how he might take the news. Everyone knew what a short fuse he had and what if this misunderstanding caused him to hurt her?

She didn’t really know him after all. She was only aware of his pain, but not what kind of a person he truly was. What if he did murder people for crossing him? Had she been playing with dangerous fire all this time and had only been lucky so far?

Ann had to find Alayer immediately and tell him what had happened herself before anyone else told him a twisted, jaded version of the events. Being honest upfront like that should show him that she was someone he could trust, at least, she hoped that he would see it that way.

- **CONTINUED IN "CAC : Part 2 - Surreptitious Beauty"** -

Will Ann be able to convince Alayer the truth about her handling his wallet? Will she succeed in uncovering the mystery surrounding Alayer? Is he really one of the Fay and is he a real vampire or not? Will he find the cure for his mortality? Will Ann win his heart? What is up with Dr. Ron?

The answers to these questions and *a lot* more will be in Part Two of "Change a Changeling: Surreptitious Beauty", to be published in late 2018!

If you want to be put on the waiting list and/or want to be contacted when new content is up, please email: cpbunny@jps.net

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