

“Wolf of the Present” Sample

Hanging up the phone, Mark wrapped the towel around his waist and stepped out of the bathroom. Nicole’s suggestion he go home and relax was a good one. He felt at least a little more collected than before. The shower did him good. Cutting through the living room on his way to the bedroom, Mark stopped at the sight of Meghan standing at his mantle, looking at one of the many sketches he drew of her.

Meg tilted the picture in her hands, watching the play of light on the drawing. It looked real, almost like a photograph. Glancing up at the other ten or so sketches of her on the wall in front of her, Meg put the one in her hands back in its place. “Did you do these?” she asked without looking at Mark.

“Yes,” he answered softly, almost afraid she would disappear again if he spoke any louder.

“They’re amazing.” She found herself unable to look away from his work. She never knew he was this talented. There was apparently a lot she didn’t know about him.

“They don’t do you justice.” Mark looked down to the floor, feeling slightly vulnerable at having his work observed like this. He felt as though his soul was being bared before her. Maybe it was. Maybe it was time. “I read some of your poetry the other day. I hope that’s alright. It fell out of a folder when I was cleaning up at your apartment. It was good, disturbing in a dark, depressed kind of way, but very good.”

“You liked it?” She never let anyone read her poetry, so she wasn’t used to getting any kind of feedback, positive or otherwise. It was somewhat rewarding to think he actually thought she was good. Considering the depth of talent he displayed in a

simple drawing, his approval of her writing was high praise. Unused to any kind of praise, she didn't quite know what to say.

“Yes. Do you write often?”

Meghan shrugged. “When the mood strikes me. I find it's sometimes easier to get my thoughts out on paper. That way, I write them down and put the pages away, and no one ever has to know what I was thinking. Do you draw often?”

“Sometimes, when I'm inspired.” He let his answer hang in the air, his many drawing of Meg speaking for themselves.

“And you were inspired . . . by me?” She didn't know why she was pushing the topic. She wanted to know what he could see in her that would move him to such a degree. She wasn't that special or particularly beautiful. Why would he spend this much time and effort on drawing pictures of her?

“You've been on my thoughts often as of late. Sometimes it's easier for me to get my thoughts out on paper, too.”

Meghan tried to let his words sink in, but she couldn't make any sense of them. For some reason, she couldn't focus. She felt sluggish, like a fevered mind trying to comprehend the passage of time. She wanted to pursue the current conversation but her mind wouldn't cooperate. Remembering what she wanted to say earlier, before she saw the drawings, Meg looked over at Mark and noticed for the first time his state of undress. His still damp skin glistened in the dim light. His many muscles were clearly visible for her to admire at her leisure, and she did. “I heard you on the phone. Was that Nicole calling to tell on me?”

He didn't try to deny it. Meg already knew the truth, anyway. "She's worried about you. We all are." He looked up, meeting Meg's eyes. Her entire demeanor changed from a moment before. It was a little disconcerting. He was beginning to feel close to Meg with the open and honest conversation they were engaged in. He didn't feel that sense of closeness, now.

Meghan laughed and walked over to the window. "That's a joke. All of a sudden, everyone's worried about me. Well, I'm doing fine on my own. I don't need everyone's concern." Turning back to Mark, she walked over to stand directly in front of him. Her breath was almost touching his skin. "Surely you feel something other than concern for me," she asked suggestively, taking in a slow breath by his neck, tickling the skin there. Before he could respond she pushed him back into the chair behind him and propped one leg up next to him. With her hands still pressed against his chest she leaned in close, arching her back just enough to get his attention. "Tell me what you feel right now."

Mark sucked in a breath and tried to collect his restraint. It wasn't easy. "This isn't the time."

"When could be better? You're here. I'm here. What else do you need?" Running her hands up his chest, Meghan leaned her head in close, rubbing her nose along his neck. "I know you want me," she whispered slowly, giving attention to every word. "You want me to cover you like a warm, moist blanket, soft and pliant, touching, caressing your throbbing flesh, matching you stroke for stroke." She flicked a finger lightly across his neck to punctuate the last three words. Listening to the way his heart beat sped up, she smiled. She couldn't hear his thoughts, but there was no mistaking his reaction. She was

affecting him. Right when he would have responded, she kissed him hard and put her hands back on his chest, pushing him back.

Mark struggled to catch his breath, taken off guard by her ferocity and voraciousness. He was so distracted, he didn't register at first that they were no longer in his home. Opening his eyes he struggled to look around. Meg didn't make it easy. She persistently demanded his attention, whether he wanted to give it or not. The weight of her body on his and her warm lips peppering his face in moist kisses made her all the more difficult to ignore, but he knew something changed. He could feel stone at his back and as she moved around on top of him he caught random glances at many dim lights above them. But he couldn't tell any more about their new environment than that. Finally, with cheeks flush with passion and excitement, Meg sat back on her heels. Only then did Mark recognize the pavilion from Meg's fantasy world. Although the structure was unchanged, the atmosphere was very different from the last time he was here. The twilight sky was gone, replaced by dark storm clouds and random flashes of lightning. Rain poured down around them, beating loudly against the ground and stone and gathering into puddles everywhere. It was a far cry from the magical, safe place she showed him before. All was dark and menacing, now.

Meg braced her hands on his shoulders again and pushed him back to the stone floor. The look in her eyes made her intent clear. She wanted him, here and now, and she meant to fulfill that desire. Mark closed his eyes and took a fortifying breath. He wanted her too, but not like this. As she kissed him again, he forgot his reservations and contemplated the feel of her body against his, the press of her thighs and the gentle touch of her soft breasts against his chest, the warmth of her breath against his skin. Everything

about her, everything she did threatened to replace his normally rational mind with impulse and desires he usually kept buried far beneath the surface. Much more of this and he wouldn't be able to stop her. He wouldn't be able to stop himself.

The storm raged around them, a dark symphony of destruction. Mark pushed past his haze and focused on a single thought. There was no music playing. They were at Meghan's special pavilion, a place where music always played for her, as she asserted was also common in her daily thoughts, and there was no music. That, more than anything else, drove home for him the understanding how confused she was. Meghan wasn't herself right now, and until she was thinking more clearly, he couldn't let this go on. That thought firmly in mind, he reluctantly pushed her back and sat up. He forced his breathing to slow and watched as the pavilion faded back into his living room. Opening his mouth to speak, it was quickly captured again by Meghan's mouth. After a moment, he regained his control again and grabbed her hands in his, pushing her back away from him. "This isn't you."

He saw the anger gather in her eyes a moment before she stood suddenly, almost tipping the chair with him still in it. "I am tired of everyone thinking they know me better than I do." Growling in frustration, she clenched and unclenched her hands several times before calming down. "Fine, if that's how you're going to be, I don't need any of you. I don't need anyone."

"Meg, wait." Standing, he placed a hand on Meghan's arm.

"No." Meg threw off his hand and took a step back. "You've made your feelings perfectly clear." Turning her back to Mark, Meg walked away, throwing her hand up in a wave. "Later," she said casually, no hint of her anger left in her voice. Stopping at the

front door, Meg spoke over her shoulder. “Oh, and Mark, don’t follow me.” With that, she left.

Clenching his jaw and hands, Mark picked up a glass on the table and threw it against the wall with a crash. He put a hand to his head as he struggled to calm and focus his suddenly jumbled thoughts. A powerful haze came over his mind, his emotions rushing to the surface with a sudden intensity. Yelling his frustration to the empty room, Mark fell to his knees, slowly giving in to the madness.

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