

THE TURGURLAN CHRONICLES

THE CURE

Book Two

By

Eileen Sheehan

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NOTICE: Portions of this book may be too graphic or explicit for the sensitive reader. It is intended for the mature reader.

This eBook contains a sneak preview of book 3 "Vampires and Werewolves".

Table of Contents

[One](#)

[Two](#)

[Three](#)

[Four](#)

[Five](#)

[Six](#)

[Seven](#)

[Eight](#)

[Nine](#)

[Ten](#)

[Eleven](#)

[Twelve](#)

[Thirteen](#)

[Fourteen](#)

[Fifteen](#)

[Sixteen](#)

[Seventeen](#)

[Eighteen](#)

[Nineteen](#)

[Twenty](#)

[Twenty-One](#)

[Twenty-Two](#)

[Twenty-Three](#)

[Twenty-Four](#)

[Twenty-Five](#)

[Twenty-Six](#)

[Twenty-Seven](#)

[Twenty-Eight](#)

[Twenty-Nine](#)

[Thirty](#)

[Thirty-One](#)

[Thirty-Two](#)

[A Sneak Peek at Vampires and Werewolves](#)

[Other Books by Eileen Sheehan](#)

[About the Author](#)

ONE

Bruce stretched his leg muscles, hoping to relieve some of the pain that seemed to radiate clear to the marrow of his bones. When he'd agreed to allow me to give him a crash course in martial arts self-defense, he had no idea how physically challenging it would be.

He always prided himself in his well preserved and athletic body. He'd been a valued player on his college football team and continued to play with a local group of Owego residents on weekends just for fun. He was also an adept and avid hunter. Even so, his body was screaming in shocked surprise at the number of muscles he possessed that hadn't seen action; possibly ever.

The floorboards of his cabin's porch creaked under his weight as he paced back and forth; partially out of impatience while he waited for me to return with the newlyweds, and partially to keep his muscles from tightening up any more than they already were.

Our good friends and my fellow escapees from vampire captivity, Shen and Dao-Ming, were married while visiting her mother in China. We'd debated whether or not their going was a wise decision under the present circumstances. We weren't out of the woods with these vampires and a plan for stopping them needed to be formulated, but, after all that had happened, no one could deny them a short trip back to China to assure Dao-Ming's mother that she was fine and to

allow her to bask in a little motherly love. While there, they felt an overwhelming need to marry while in the comforting embrace of their loved ones. Since Bruce and I were in need of healing both body and soul, we sought the peace and quiet his cabin offered while we waited for them to return.

Although my body had been put to the test during our vampire encounters -it had been broken in some spots and severely beaten in others- I'd healed with remarkable speed. I attributed it to my desire to get back out there and finish what we'd started. Now, not even a month later, my wounded ankle and the fractured rib cage were as good as new. It was a classic example of mind over matter.

I carefully worked Bruce's black SUV through the deep ruts that thick tires and melting snow caused in the long dirt drive leading to his cabin. Spring was slow to come to the Southern Tier of New York and even slower on its wooded hillsides. Even so, the sun managed to peek through the tree tops just enough to work its magic on the brilliant white blanket of twinkling snow and, little by little, it was being whittled away; allowing tiny buds to peek through.

Bruce looked quizzically past me, only to find his SUV carried no other passengers.

Barely waiting for me to park, he bellowed, "I thought you were bringing the newlyweds. What happened?"

I eased my foot over a large puddle as I balanced my body while closing the door behind me.

“You really need to figure something out with this drive if you plan on spending a lot of time up here. This is bad,” I grumbled with annoyance.

“Never mind that,” Bruce scowled, “Where are Shen and Dao-Ming? What happened?”

“I don’t know,” I replied. “They weren’t on the plane. I checked with the airlines. Man, are they tight with their info. It took me hours before I finally found someone who’d tell me that they put their tickets on hold.”

“Are you kidding me?” he said incredulously.

“I don’t get it. I’m hoping to hop online and find an e-mail waiting for me explaining it all,” I said as I held my blackberry up over my head and rotated my body. “I haven’t been able to get enough reception with this stupid thing all day. I knew I should’ve met them at JFK instead of agreeing to a connecting flight in Syracuse. These mountains are cell phone nightmares.”

“I hear ya,” he said as he reached into a small portable cooler, produced two bottles of beer, and handed one to me. “Do you think they’re okay?”

“I sure hope so,” I said as I tipped the bottle to my lips and allowed the cool, carbonation to pour down my throat.

“Should we go back to my place in town?” he asked.

“Is your computer hooked up?” I replied with a scowl. “I don’t know if I’ll get reception with this thing in town either.”

“What do you have your mailbox with?” he asked.

“G-Mail,” I said with curiosity. “Does it matter?”

“Okay then. We’re in business,” he said with a smile.

I handed my empty bottle to Bruce and picked my way back through thick slush to my SUV. I was anxious to get to a computer and see what message, if any, Shen might have sent. I was concerned about his last minute change in flight. I was against his trip to begin with. It was too dangerous. Now, all I could do was hope their flight change was for family reasons and not because they were discovered and were trying to fool the enemy.

The desert heat assaulted Shen as he stepped out of the airline terminal to hail a cab. He was back in Las Vegas, the city of sin.

Only a few months ago he’d fought for his life alongside Bruce and me against the cannibalistic vampires who’d held him captive, while keeping him in a drug induced state that stripped him of his own will as they forced him to breed on command. His body shuddered involuntarily as the still vivid memories of the traumatic ordeal flashed through his mind.

He moved through the crowd in a robotic fashion while his eyes scoped it warily. We’d destroyed the mutant-vampires who’d held us captive and we were sure the ones who managed to escape weren’t cannibalistic mutants and

couldn't walk in the light of day, but until we found those demons of the night and destroyed them as well, they'd be a constant threat to us and those we held dear.

He'd given it considerable thought while resting in China. Tatyana and the baby were the key. Find them and we'd find the vampires. He was certain of it.

The baby was half-vampire and would turn if encouraged. Dracula's first born, Dragomir, wanted to take the infant back to Dracula immediately after his birth, but Tatyana had cradled her newborn half-vampire, half-human brother and fled during the confusion. Shen was certain Dragomir would search for the baby. Yes, Tatyana and her baby brother were the key to finding and destroying Dragomir and his clan before they found and destroyed us.

His sources had contacted him while he was still in China to tell him they'd spotted Tatyana working in a small out of the way casino in Las Vegas. Shen immediately changed his travel plans with Dao-Ming and had hastened to Las Vegas. He promised Dao-Ming that, as soon as he accomplished securing Tatyana's safety with Bruce and me, he'd return to China for her and they'd come back to the states together. He had no intention of letting her travel alone again.

In his haste to leave, he neglected to inform Bruce and me of his change in plans. He decided it was probably just as well. He knew we'd have insisted on joining him and he wanted nothing more than to grab Tatyana and the baby and

slip in and out of “Sin City” as quickly as he could. He didn’t plan on being there long enough to justify us coming. As soon as he reached the hotel, he’d fill us in on what was happening and what flight we could expect the three of them to fly in on.

TWO

Tatyana smiled as she made her way down the alley to her efficiency apartment that was recessed in the back of the small, out of the way Las Vegas motel. It took some time for her to relax and settle in with Charles, but, after many restless and fearful nights, she finally felt like she and her infant brother could relax and begin to enjoy life.

She was starting to trust people again. That was a luxury that she hadn't known since her mother, Anouska, decided to leave Russia with her and her two siblings. Anouska had put her faith and trust in the wrong people to help them get to the United States safely and those people had placed Anouska, Tatyana, and Osip in the hands of that despicable mutant-vampire, Wadim.

Tatyana scowled as she remembered the tortuous years she'd spent living in Wadim's mutant-vampire den that was hidden behind a magic veil in the midst of Fremont Street. Nothing stuck more vividly in her mind than the night of Charles's birth. She'd watched her mother die at the hands of vampire hunters and stood in head on confrontation with her brother, Osip, who hadn't been as lucky as she to have escaped being turned into one of those monstrous beasts.

Osip and Dragomir, Dracula's eldest son, wanted to take Charles back to Count Dracula to be raised as one of

them. She'd defied them vehemently and clutched her newborn brother to her breast.

Although she despised the vampire slayers for killing her mother, she was grateful for the mayhem that followed her death. It caused Dragomir and Osip to abandon their quest for Charles and flee for their lives.

Seizing the opportunity, she ran with all of her might before anyone could stop her. She was thankful that she'd spent so many years wandering the maze-like corridors and knew them better than any other resident, including the recently deceased Wadim.

Charles was still half human and he deserved a chance to live like a human. She'd heard of others like him who'd managed to lead a normal human existence with the only exception being that their aging process was slowed down drastically. This would mean he'd have to endure the heartache of watching those he loved die as he lived on, but surely that was better than living as a blood sucking creature of the night.

She'd just finished her shift at the casino. Tips were better than normal over the last week and she looked forward to paying Maggie the money she owed her for rent, as well as for babysitting Charles.

A day didn't go by that Tatyana wasn't grateful for having met Maggie. Their paths crossed only days after her escape from Wadim's den. She was homeless and hiding in an abandoned car behind the motel so that the meager

funds she'd managed to steal over the years from vampires coming and going in the outer world would last as long as possible for the formula and other necessities she'd need to buy for Charles. Maggie was taking a short cut one afternoon when she spotted them napping in the back seat. After much coaxing on her part, she managed to get Tatyana to abandon their make-shift home and move into two adjoining rooms that were in the back of her humble motel.

Tatyana didn't know what would've happened to them if Maggie hadn't stumbled upon them that day. The woman was a saint. She'd not only settled them into their new home by turning the two rooms into a small make shift efficiency, but she also lent Tatyana money for food and a new outfit so she'd look good for the interview she'd arranged with a friend of hers who managed a small casino on Flamingo Blvd.

Within a week of meeting Maggie, Tatyana was settled in her new home with a new job and a new hope for the future.

Since she was always on premises, Maggie offered to watch Charles while Tatyana worked. Keeping her pride intact, Tatyana insisted on not only paying Maggie back the money she'd provided for her urgent needs, but also for the care she was providing for Charles.

She was about to make the final payment to Maggie for the money owed her. It gave her a sense of pride and freedom like she'd never known.

Her broad smile disappeared as she entered her efficiency and discovered Shen sitting on her sofa with Charles on his lap. Her eyes searched the room quickly for more unwanted visitors. She found only Maggie leaning against the wall on the far side of the room, looking uncertain about what was happening or what to do.

With surprising speed, Tatyana crossed the room and scooped Charles from Shen's unsuspecting grip. He shook his head in awed admiration at the young Russian woman's agility and speed while he watched her place her infant sibling in Maggie's waiting arms.

"What do you want?" Tatyana demanded in a thick accent that was emphasized by her anger and concern.

"To talk; only to talk," Shen replied.

He watched Tatyana warily. He'd seen her in action during their raid on Wadim's den so he knew how adept she truly was in martial arts. Combine her skill with fear and desperation and she made a formidable opponent. He'd also never fought a woman in true combat and he didn't want to start now.

"Talk about what?" she asked.

Her body visibly readied for action as she slowly inched her way in his direction. She was fully aware of how skilled he was, which was why she didn't attack immediately and kick him out of her house.

“You are not safe here. It is only a matter of time before they find you. I want you to come back with me,” he explained.

“Back? And where is back?” she asked with disdain.

“I am sorry. I forgot that you did not really know much about us,” he said. His warm smile didn’t soften Tatyana to him like he’d hoped. “New York. I want you to come back with me to New York where we can protect you and your ... uh...”

“Brother? Where you can protect me and my brother?” Tatyana snorted with disdain. “I do not need your protection, thank you.”

She rotated her neck and shoulders. It was a busy night at work and she suddenly felt the burden of the long hours on her body. All she wanted to do was to take a hot shower and go to bed. She looked at Charles wistfully. He was wide awake and ready to play. Even if this intruder left, there’d be no sleep for a while.

“Please go now,” she said.

Tatyana turned her back on Shen, emphasizing her dismissal.

“I beg you to reconsider,” he said. “We know these vampires. You are not safe on your own and we cannot risk them getting their hands on the baby.”

“You know them?” she said with emotion. “Did I hear you correctly? Do you forget that I lived amongst those vile creatures for five years of my life? Five very long years. Every

day I wondered if that was the day they would come for me. Every day I watched as they sold, violated, or ate someone who only the day before I had broken bread with or maybe conversed in quiet conversation about life before they were captured. What can you possibly tell me about a vampire that I do not already know?" Tatyana's chest heaved in frustration. "It is I who knows them. Now go."

She'd endured enough from her unwanted visitor and readied herself for battle. She knew Shen was good, but it looked like he wasn't going to take "no" for an answer. If a battle was inevitable, she might as well get it over with. With any luck, she'd be the victor.

Shen stood up slowly. It was obvious he was in danger of having to defend himself against this Russian tiger. His unhappiness was clearly displayed on his face. Tatyana's foot surprised him when it flew toward him with lightning speed and slammed into his jaw. Only an expert observer would have noticed when he shook his head to clear it, since his move to recover was masked by his immediate motions of defense. Tatyana struck again, but this time her efforts were blocked. He was now on guard and ready for her.

Her frustration mounted as Shen continued to block her moves, but made none of his own. She circled him while she aggressively looked for an opening to take down this high and mighty martial arts master once and for all.

Shen did everything he could not to move into actual combat with her. That wasn't why he sought her out. He

could understand her lack of trust, but he needed to somehow make her understand that he was on her side. His mind raced for the right words. Before he could come up with any, she was back on the attack.

Maggie gasped as she watched the battle ensue. She hurriedly put Charles in the crib she'd provided and rushed to the kitchen area in search of a weapon to help Tatyana battle him with. When Shen had knocked softly on the door not an hour ago, he'd introduced himself as Tatyana's friend. It was clear that she'd been duped.

She'd never really asked Tatyana the facts on how she and her infant become homeless. Tatyana told her only what was necessary. She'd assumed that Charles was her son, until Shen referred to him as the Russian beauty's brother. Although Maggie believed in honoring a person's right to privacy, she felt it was now time to learn just a little more about the woman she'd taken under her wing; for safety reasons, if nothing else. After all, unless her hearing was off, they'd debated over who knew the vampires better.

Vampires?

If the situation hadn't seemed so grave, Maggie would have marveled at the continuity of the statuesque movements between Shen and Tatyana. They looked like they could have been rehearsed. It was obvious that Shen was more skilled than Tatyana, but her friend was holding her own. She guessed that if given the right opportunity, Tatyana had enough skill to seize it and become the victor.

The smash of a lamp as it hit the floor jarred Maggie into action.

“No you don’t!” She cried. “Not in my motel!”

It was time to do something, but, just what to do was the puzzlement. Noticing a cast iron frying pan on the portable burners, she dumped the dinner she’d heated for Tatyana into the sink and moved closer to the fight. Tatyana and Shen had all but forgotten her presence, so it was easy to sneak up behind him and bring the pan down hard on his head. He crumpled to the floor like a rag doll.

The room was instantly still.

Tatyana glanced down at Shen before moving past Maggie to Charles, who was crying uncontrollably. Picking him up protectively, her deep set eyes glowered at Shen as she cradled her young sibling in her arms. She was out of breath, exhausted, and oh so grateful to Maggie.

Maggie moved to Shen’s still body and studied the ever increasing bump on his head. She touched it gently and a small amount of blood oozed out.

“Oh no! What have I done?” she whispered.

Her voice trembled with adrenaline as fear over her actions set in.

“He will be fine.” Tatyana muttered.

Maggie found Tatyana’s coolness and apathy shocking.

“I hope you’re right,” she said. “Shoot! I didn’t mean to hit him that hard. It’s just that...,” She looked at Tatyana

long and hard, “You and I need to have a little talk. It’s time you filled me in on some things.”

“Okay, but first, what about him?” Tatyana asked. “He cannot stay here. I do not want him here one minute longer.”

Tatyana’s voice was venomous.

Maggie looked at Tatyana long and hard. Did she even want to know whatever it was that Tatyana was about to tell her? Probably not, but she needed to know. So, the sooner they got this man out of there and back to his hotel room, the better.

She heaved a sigh before saying, “Let me make a phone call.