

Calm Waters

The streets are dark and foggy, the cobblestones and even normal sidewalks treacherously slippery, the air thick with the watery, icy mist hanging low over the city. That moist mist has a way of entering you. It clogs up the chest and makes it hard to breathe. But I can't stop prowling the streets.

No matter how cold or wet it gets, I can't stop walking, searching, looking for the right person to save. To dispatch to a better place. To kill.

It's a compulsion I've tried to fight many times for many years. There were times when I tried locking myself in and throwing away the key, chaining myself to the radiator on cold, dark, silent nights when so many lost souls—souls in need of saving—take to the streets in the dead of night. I've even tried going very far away. But the night always calls me too loudly and with a voice I can't ignore.

The lonely, lost souls that wander the streets late at night aimlessly, going in circles, looking for something they can't find on their own, need a shepherd.

I am that shepherd.

I am the one who brings them home.

The home they seek but won't ever find without my help.

They won't need to lose themselves in the night anymore, not after I show them the way.

There goes a lost one now. So pale that his face glows almost as bright as the full moon. And it's just as soft at the edges as the real moon.

He doesn't belong on this plane of existence. That's why he's lost. That's why he wanders the slippery streets at two in the morning, the collar of his long black wool coat raised so it covers even his ears as he hunches his shoulders into it to hide from the cold. Hiding from the cold night that he wants so desperately to take his problems away.

His coat is buttoned up tight and his hands are deep in the pockets, his steps fast and hurried. But I know he's not on his way to anywhere.

He comes this way at this hour three to four times a week. Just walks in circles around this block until he gets too tired to keep going. He's running from something that he keeps returning to anyway. He is lost. He needs me to show him the way.

I never hunt the ones that own the night. Those who drink and are merry and stay out until the morning sun rises. Or those that walk the streets looking for work. Or the ones rushing to and from their graveyard shift jobs. The night is their domain as much as it is mine, we share it.

I hunt the ones who come into the night to escape. Those who come into the night begging it to take their problems away.