

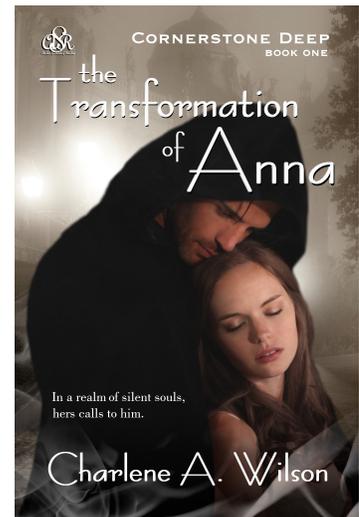


The Transformation of Anna

For centuries, Cole Shilo has harvested the homeless, wiped their memories, and delivered them as servants to the nobles of Cornerstone Deep. When Cole is sent to harvest a second-class woman who has broken curfew, he expects no different. But Anna Sinclair's soul calls out to him. Soul mates aren't possible on Cornerstone Deep...

Are they?

"My life is a mirage of endless time. But you engulf me, rivet my mind, encompass my soul."



Excerpt

Anna weakened beneath Cole's touch. Her mouth relaxed, face stilled. He rose from the tender moment startled by his actions. They were entirely uncalled for, unexpected, yet he couldn't deny the pleasure it brought.

He stared at her as she wavered with the effects of empty thought. This girl had indeed sought refuge from her life's experiences. By her complete surrender, he had no doubt she'd wished for the chance to forget many times—a common occurrence among the homeless. He allowed the spell's sparkling enchantment to fade. No further need for it with this one. This harvest was complete.

As she opened her eyes, he gazed deeply into them to offer hope and set the desire to take pride in her service. *"Your life will find meaning."*

Her gaze wandered amongst them. James, his strong stature evident beneath his cloak, would intimidate many without the effects of the charm. Though distinction trimmed his features, she seemed to be taken by his dimple-kissed cheeks and brushed her own.

Leaning her head a little, she studied Vincent. Smaller in build, he still radiated strength. His deep onyx eyes held his defined brow low. Square jaw set, he looked as if vengeance ruled his

Charlene A. Wilson

Creating a world where dreams become reality

CharleneAWilson@live.com

www.CharleneAWilson.com

core. His untamed locks fell in loose waves past his cheeks. A radiant glow encircled his clenched fists as they clutched his cape.

Cole watched as her gaze returned to him. His lips tightened together as his jaw tensed. She scanned his long hair as if to see how far it fell down his back.

When her gaze met his, he had to touch that angelic face. He raised his hand, but caught himself and straightened to his full height, squaring his shoulders. *What was that pull to touch?* It was unsettling. He clasped the edge of his cloak and turned.

Leading the way back down the alley, James and Vincent fell into step behind Cole. Anna gasped, then followed.

The litter from the empty street scurried from their path. Night birds sang from high on their perches, a melody odd in the darkness of the empty streets.

A vagabond sat beside the center fountain. Cole pulled Anna to him and wrapped an arm around her waist. He lifted his cloak with a furl and took on the Smoke of Night before the man could catch their approach.

Giggles and thrills flew through his senses as the young woman's emotions reacted to the disembodiment. He smiled to himself. Most accompanied him with calm acceptance. This girl seemed to embrace the experience.

As they reached the wide steps to the Grand Marshal's estate, Cole pulled at their elements to solidify. Anna held to him, her arms wrapped around his neck. Her warm breath puffed against his ear as he grabbed her waist so she wouldn't fall. *Was she holding me the whole time?*

He eased her down his chest until her toes touched the ground and arms left his shoulders. Running his palm down his shirt to regain his dignity, he strode past the border hedge onto the grounds. He glanced over his shoulder and she drew her hands to her bosom, innocence echoing from her heart.

Luminescent bobbles peaked from beneath bulbous shrubs, lighting the footpath with a radiant glow. Cole looked at the frontage of the imposing mansion. Three stories of white brick stretched out on both sides of a montage of stained glass that arched around the receiving hall doors. He'd never appreciated the over-indulgence of this Grand Marshal, known for his eccentric views and tastes. He seemed more eager to flaunt his position than most.

As they neared the gaudy threshold, he reached ahead and knocked twice with a heavy drive. The left panel opened and a lanky man peered out. His basset hound visage immediately woke at their presence.

"Good evening, sirs." The servant quickly stepped back and opened the door wide. "I'll fetch the sire."

"Yes."

Anna's gaze bore into Cole at the word. Heat flushed his cheeks and he stepped inside before his brothers noticed.

A screen of sparkling crystals adorned the left wall, neighbored by onyx pillars. To the right, a rash of brass hair lines cascaded the pane between two doors like a million squirming worms looking to invade the upper rooms. Sculptures of oversized silver swans stood at each side of the wide staircases, reflecting the multitude of embedded lights in the domed ceiling.

Charlene A. Wilson

Creating a world where dreams become reality

CharleneAWilson@live.com

www.CharleneAWilson.com

Black veins in the white marble floor continued up the divided staircases leading to the enormous stained-glass window at the center of the back wall.

The sire's deep voice rang from the left wing hallway. Cole straightened as he neared.

"Sir Cole. It's good to see the three of you here." His gaze gravitated to Anna and a wash of satisfaction covered his face. "The addition, I see."

"As per your bid, she will comply completely. The harvest was a solid take." He looked back at the lawmaker. "I see she pleases you."

Dressen smiled and withdrew an envelope from his vest. "Oh, yes."

Holding up his hand, Cole shook his head. "I believe the fee is double for this one. Your requirements were very specific. Far beyond that of a Grand Marshal's standard order. So much so, a special spell was created to ensure satisfaction."

The sire chuckled and his smile tilted as he pocketed the payment. "Very well. I'll have the funds delivered in the morn. The Wizards of Shilo Manor continue to exceed their reputation. You are true Reapers."

The nickname wedged in Cole's gut. It screamed mockery to their position as Sentinels in this realm. Noblemen had always known they could manipulate the elements purely by their nature and advanced heritage. Yet this generation insisted on labeling them as a demon child at play. *Reapers. Wizards.* It knotted his stomach.

Intent on making the visit as short as possible, Cole turned his attention to Anna. "*Lord Dressen is now your keeper.*"

Her regard shifted from him to the Grand Marshal and with it the adoration that had poured from her.

To Cole's surprise, he regretted the release to Dressen's care. Countless subjects had been harvested for service to the lords. The assignment of a keeper was an essential step. Why, then, would one more be any different? He reminded himself they had just completed another task, fully satisfying the order.

Dressen waved away the hound-faced servant and dismissed them himself. "Thank you, Sir Cole. It's rare to find such dedication to quality. You have never failed to produce astounding results." He grasped the handle and his gray eyes sparkled. "I must admit, I find your natures very compelling. Meridian must be an amazing dimension."

Underlying meaning seeped through Cole and he straightened to temper a scowl. "Thank you, Lord Dressen. We're pleased you find our work satisfactory."

Dressen shook his head. "Silent on the matter as ever." He chuckled. "Well, do watch for an invitation to my forthcoming celebration. I would be honored to have you present."

"Of course." Cole turned and crossed the threshold to avoid further remark. As the door closed behind them, Vincent's chiseled features contorted into rage.

Cole furled his cloak and took on the Smoke of Night before a confrontation could erupt. The last thing he needed was the runt's temperamental tantrums.

Vincent billowed like the crest of a storm as they flew over the dark city. His brothers' emotions melded to his; James' concern and confusion, and Vincent's pure fury. Small jets of lightning darted through their mass and Cole knew it was directed solely on him.



AUTHOR INFORMATION

Charlene A. Wilson

Charlene is an author of tales that take you to other dimensions. She weaves magic, lasting love, and intrigue to immerse you into the lives of her characters.

She began writing in her early teens when her vivid dreams stayed with her long after she had them. The characters and worlds were so amazing, she brought them to life through her books.

Charlene resides in a small community in Arkansas, USA, with her two beautiful daughters, husband, and a very chatty cockatiel named Todder.



Author Links

Author site: <http://CharleneAWilson.com>

Blog: <http://bit.ly/CharBlogs>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/CharleneAWilsonFan>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/AuthorCAWilson>

Goodreads: <http://bit.ly/CharleneAWilsonGR>

LinkedIn: <http://bit.ly/CharleneAWilsonLI>

For media interviews, visit CharleneAWilson.com or email her direct at CharleneAWilson@live.com.

Thank you for reading.