

## In Dreams

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# **In Dreams**

by [De Orakle \(Delphi\)](#).

## Summary

Set post-novel, two months after Father Hadden has entrusted Weiland to Shile for an apprenticeship of "lying and cheating, and stealing."

*He dreamed that he was once again a wolf in the forest, low to the ground, moving soundlessly through the underbrush. His stomach was full. He paused, and at that moment knew that he was dreaming.*

*Always, when Daria had cursed him with his wolven form, he'd had the mind of a wolf: simple, in the now. It was only afterward that the panic and guilt would set in.*

*But now, he knew his hunger to be sated, and his mind spiraled helplessly as he desperately tried to recollect upon what...whose flesh he had satisfied his appetite. His enhanced and distorted animal senses cast out in all directions, searching for the remains of his kill.*

*The sharp tang of human blood assaulted his nose, bringing saliva to his mouth even as his stomach recoiled in horror. Inching forward, the leaves crackling under his callused paws, he focused on the ravaged corpse suddenly right before him.*

*Throat torn out. Rich blood still seeping down pale skin to be absorbed by the fertile earth. Most of the flesh had been stripped from the bones, a few juicy morsels still clinging to startling white.*

*The torso had been rendered unidentifiable, mangled so that not even gender was apparent, but the head was intact. Wide eyes frozen in fear stared him down, set glazed in dead tissue. Accusing.*

*The dark eyes and hair, the high cheekbones—the face was unmistakable. With sinking dread, acid burning in the pit of his stomach, he knew that he had killed Shile. His best, his only friend. And even with his human consciousness, he could not bring himself to care as his hunger flared again.*

*He savored the scent of blood and meat and eyed the remaining flesh on Shile's face and chest. He licked his chops. He licked them again.*

Weiland bolted awake, hands flying to cover his mouth in protective instinct. He trembled. It took several moments before he tentatively lowered his hands, slowly becoming aware of his surroundings. Even in the shadow-strewn night, the low stone walls of Shile's cottage were recognizable.

He settled his breathing by reminding himself that he was safe here, no longer in Daria's sprawling townhouse nor under her sadistic control. He was human.

Curling his legs up, Weiland moved unconsciously closer to the hearth—out of habit more than need for heat, considering the fire was unlit on this warm summer night. When Weiland had first come to stay, Shile had offered to get him a proper cot, but years of fighting to protect his choice sleeping spot among Daria's creatures had ingrained in Weiland the inability to sleep, however lightly, anywhere else.

As his mind cleared, the young man tried to push the dream away. It was far from the first of such nightmares, but since he'd moved in with Shile, his sleeping mind had usually only

taunted him with memories of Daria's "punishments." Pain, imagined, he could take, for the sensation faded as soon as he awoke.

But this...it had felt so real...

A chilling thought gripped him. What if he had...

No, it was impossible. Unlike Daria's other creatures, he had been human-born, he had no animalistic instincts to overtake him. But the taste of blood lingered on his tongue.

Heart pounding, Weiland moved unsteadily to his feet, bracing himself on the mantel.

He couldn't hear Shile's breathing.

His feet whispered softly against the cool wooden floor, automatically avoiding the creaky board in the middle of his path. The ornately-carved bed loomed large in the main room of the cottage, and Weiland had still not allowed himself to breathe as he reached its side.

Craning his neck in the dark, he peered through the shadows at the form that he desperately hoped was sleeping.

Open, dark, unblinking eyes met his gaze.

The world tilted sharply to the right as Weiland staggered back, his mind reeling. The blood in his mouth, those staring, accusing eyes...

What had he done?

Before his head could connect with the hard floor, a strong hand grabbed his wrist. His arm was nearly pulled from its socket as he was yanked onto the soft mattress.

"What the hell are you doing, skulking around in the middle of the night, boy?" Shile's voice was thick with sleep, and though his dark hair was rumpled, his eyes were completely awake.

Relief poured through Weiland's frame, mixing uneasily with the surge of adrenaline from Shile's unexpected ambush. He scrambled off the bed, back onto his feet.

"I thought I had killed you!" Weiland whispered harshly in a rush. He chose to blame the waver on the slight echo of the room.

"What?" Shile was used to strange outbursts from his young charge. Years of only speaking when addressed had left Weiland with a clumsy tongue, and he was only now learning to say what was on his mind. "Did you have a nightmare?" he ventured.

A confused look passed over the boy's sensitive features, and hesitantly, he nodded. "I could taste the blood, after I woke up. And you were looking at me. Like you did when you were dead."

Shile sat up and patted the space on the bed beside him. "Sit down," he said, trying to keep his tone neutral. Too gentle an inquiry tended to raise the hackles of Weiland's pack

mentality, but too forceful only served to remind the youth of his former status.

Weiland sat gingerly at the edge of the bed, his entire body tense as if expecting punishment.

Slowly, his movements deliberate, Shile raised his hands to Weiland's trembling mouth. He brushed his finger against Weiland's lower lip and wasn't surprised when he brought it back with a trickle of blood. "You bit your lip, that's all," he gentle assured his friend.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to wake you," Weiland said softly, still visibly shaken. He ran his tongue over his lip, assuring himself that the blood was in fact his own.

Over the past few months, Shile had been very careful in how he handled the young man entrusted to his care. Weiland shied away from physical contact, having never received anything but pain from everyone he had ever known. He was a beautiful youth, never embraced in passion—but more often, he appeared a neglected child, never touched with love. Tonight, he was an uneasy juxtaposition of the two, and Shile couldn't stop himself from reaching out to soothe that painful loneliness. Weiland's...and his own.

Weiland started as the thief's broad hand settled on his bare shoulder, but even as his body returned to its natural rhythm, he couldn't bring himself to pull away.

"It's all right, Weiland. Everyone has nightmares sometimes, even me. I know you'd never hurt me."

"How do you know?" was the quick reply. "I've killed before, I could kill again."

Shile searched his mind for a reassuring answer and finally settled on the truth. "Because you're my friend. And I'm yours. I trust you, and I hope you trust me. Or at least, I hope you will trust me someday. It's all right if you don't right now. But I do trust you, and I know you. You're not an animal anymore. You're a man. A good man."

Weiland was silent. He turned to look at Shile, his eyes wide and heart-breakingly vulnerable. Gone was the icy, detached veneer that the boy often projected, and Shile felt every protective urge in him rise to the forefront.

"Look, it's late. We have some work to do in the morning. I want to take you to check out the Bellings mansion before we invite ourselves in tomorrow night. Sleeping on that hard floor's no good for you. Why don't you stay here with me?"

There. It had been said. Shile waited, hoping he had sounded matter-of-fact—that his own desire for the company hadn't been too obvious.

Weiland's hawk-thin shoulders rose sharply in an indifferent shrug; his eyes were veiled. He hesitantly slipped under the thin quilt and then curled up with his back to Shile.

The thief smiled in the dark, letting out the breath he hadn't realized he was holding as the soft mattress sagged slightly under Weiland's weight. Silence, bordering on awkward, filled the room. Both of them lay there in the quiet, each trying to regulate his breathing into a

parody of sleep. Shile racked his brain, trying to think of words of comfort, an opening to conversation, anything.

He opened his mouth. Closed it. Opened it again.

"What is it?" Weiland asked tersely.

"Huh?"

"You keep flapping your gums like a fish. I can hear it."

"It's nothing. Get to sleep."

"Sorry," said Weiland softly.

"Don't apologize, just try to sleep."

"Sorry."

"Look," Shile snapped, "day in, day out, you apologize for everything. I don't need you apologizing for apologizing." He punctuated this by slamming his head back on the pillow.

Silence. Then very slight tremors shook the bed. Weiland had curled completely in on himself, lying in a fetal position, his breathing muted.

A rush of guilt welled up in Shile's chest. He had enough trouble coping with the boy during the day and wasn't equipped to deal with this in the middle of the night. His hand hovered scant inches above Weiland's bare shoulder, unsure as to whether his touch would be welcome.

"I'm ..." Weiland whispered, trying hard to convey his deference without uttering an apology.

"No, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. You didn't do anything wrong." Shile laid his hand against the younger man's heated skin, his fingers flexing against the twitching muscles in some attempt to soothe their distress.

Weiland leaned back ever so slightly into the touch. He was so tired, and the simple contact felt so sweet that he put aside all thought of appearances and let a tiny sound of contentment escape his throat.

Encouraged, Shile let his hand gently stray along the curve of Weiland's arm, under the blanket, to rest on the crook of his elbow. Weiland rolled over on his back, staring straight up at the ceiling. As Shile raised himself up on one elbow, leaning over Weiland, his hand continued its sweeping strokes across an impossibly smooth chest to the opposite shoulder.

Weiland lay perfectly still, but his muscles were slowly relaxing under Shile's gentle ministrations. Strong, callused fingers kneaded gently at the juncture of his neck and shoulder, digging into aching tendons. A delicious shiver passed through both as Shile's touch skittered softly over Weiland's neck, the palm of his hand finally resting flat against the youth's unbearded cheek.

Weiland squeezed his eyes shut as if expecting a blow. Shile's stomach knotted at the implications of what the boy had suffered through, but he was determined to teach his charge how to accept what healing he could offer. He slowly ran his fingers through pale blond locks, letting the silken strands trickle over his skin. It was finally growing out after years of Weiland keeping it sheared painfully short and was now long enough to show promise of a curl.

A bass rumble sounding suspiciously like a purr began deep in Weiland's chest, and without warning the boy rolled over, throwing himself against Shile. A pale arm lay across his chest, gripping his side tightly, and a slightly bent leg insinuated itself between Shile's thighs as he was pushed onto his back, teetering precariously near the edge of the bed.

Shile tightened his arms around the boy as a damp mouth—and a possibly damp cheek—and pressed into the crook of his neck. He kept up a soothing rhythm of strokes against Weiland's back, tracing vertebrae and sinewy muscles. Weiland pushed his face against him harder, having given up all traces of fierce independence, and wiggled even closer against his friend.

It was then that Shile realized, truly realized, that both of them were stark naked. As he was used to living alone and Weiland had been raised always shifting between wolfen and human form, neither had any qualms about sleeping in the nude. However, sleeping *togethert* stand to be touched, however casually.

Said boy was currently drooling onto his neck, and a thoroughly annoying whistling snore was starting to come out of his mouth.

He had never been happier in his life.

Closing his eyes, Shile waited for dawn.

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