



## The Watcher Series Extras: 1.4

### Reemergence

*SPOILER ALERT: Best not read until you have*

*completed chapter 7 of The Unintended, but best to have read The Nexus.*

## Southern Oregon

### Rosemond ☞

I hated growing old. I sighed and rocked my chair as I looked out at the gardens, watching as the heat rose from the soil in small waves, almost looking like a hallucination. The heat felt good, easing the aches and pains in my body. My eyes drifted to my hands, which had once been so beautiful, and now betrayed my age. I rubbed at the dark spots as if they would smudge away. A breeze wafted over the back porch, ruffling the wisps loosed from my upswept hair and carrying smells that stirred memories.

Rollicking laughter broke out from inside the house, and a slow smile spread across my face. Having my family here for my birthday, though it wasn't my real one, made my chest tighten with emotion. I had turned ninety-eight exactly one month ago. My husband and I would have had a secret celebration somewhere, like we had for his birthday—paying homage to who we were before we had to give up our names and birthdays time and again. Curse him for passing before me. He had gifted me with a life of peace I had not thought possible. I wiped at the tear that streaked down my cheek.

I started rocking again, realizing I had stopped with the memories of my last night with—I stopped myself. Noise from within the house drew my attention, so I peered over

my shoulder through the window. My granddaughter and her husband had brought up their neighbors this time, Amanda and Eric. They were best friends, and I had always adored them; the house certainly felt right brimming with people—with life. Their son, Joshua, had my great-grandson, Cameron, over his shoulder, and was galloping around the room. My great-granddaughter, Aleria, was taking advantage, tickling her brother with each pass.

Having Aleria here was like looking in a mirror at me from so long ago. I turned away from the happy commotion and looked back to the gardens. Both my daughter and granddaughter had escaped without inheriting my gifts. But when my great-granddaughter's eyes had grown lavender, I worried. Thankfully, I had not yet seen any of the signs; many of the Lux hadn't until they were a little older. There was a deep gnawing in me, wondering if I should have been training her...but I hadn't had a vision in many, many years. Maybe the power in my veins had run dry along with my descendants. I desperately hoped so—for their protection.

A bird squawking from its hiding place delivered me from my musings. The temperature was already dying down, and the shadows were growing deeper, although little time had passed. I wasn't sure why I was struggling with sadness. Almost a century of life spread out, filled with stories I could never share with any of them. Silence their only protection. A familiar feeling crept up my tired spine and settled into my ancient bones. I could not help but have my thoughts settle on George.

I glanced back inside the house for a moment at Joshua. Suddenly, the resemblance was utterly obvious. Remove George's British reserve and place him in this century, and you would have the beautiful boy in my living room. Joshua was a little taller and narrower, but the overall impression was the same. The dark wavy hair and thick lashes surrounding soulful eyes. There was a simmering strength in him.

I eased forward in the rocking chair and carefully stood to my feet. I held the rail as I moved towards the steps, wanting to get away from the bittersweet memories that were threatening to overtake me. I was startled to find Joshua standing in the doorway. I glanced away and wiped my cheek surreptitiously once more, then looked back at him, smiling as best I could.

“I was wondering if you were ready for our turn in the garden?” Joshua asked pleasantly. His eyes lingered on my cheek a split-second too long to have missed my tears.

I cleared my throat. “I would be delighted, Mr. Copeland.”

He offered his arm. I looped my left arm through his and held onto his elbow with my free hand as we traversed the steps. We walked in silence for several minutes.

“You are a sweet boy for indulging me this way,” I complimented, patting his elbow and looking ahead. I glanced up at him when I felt his eyes on me.

He looked down at me earnestly. “I enjoy our walks.” Then he shrugged. “I’m a teenager. I know how to disappear if I don’t want to do something. Of course, you can’t tell my parents that.”

I grinned; his candor was refreshing. “It is in the vault,” I replied tapping my temple lightly.

Joshua smirked, and then his face grew thoughtful. “How did you end up in Oregon? Your accent...you say some things like a New Englander.”

“I do?” I asked, feigning ignorance, realizing I had become careless in my old age.

“You pointed out some herbs using the ‘h’ sound. If you were from the West Coast, the ‘h’ would be silent.”

“That’s astute of you.”

Joshua shrugged again. “You know how you can tell if someone is from Southern California as opposed to Northern?”

“No,” I smiled.

“The freeways. Someone from SoCal will say, ‘I’m going to take *the* 101. NorCal will say, ‘I’m going to take 101.’ SoCals always add a ‘the.’” He paused. “So, you didn’t answer me. How did you end up in Oregon?”

I took a deep breath, contemplating what to say for a moment...wondering how much of the truth I could divulge. Faking my death and changing my identity a dozen times while being pursued by evil wouldn’t suffice... “There was a boy. Or maybe I should say boys...and some trouble... and I moved west to get away.”

He furrowed his brow. “Trouble...” He chewed on the word for a moment and then seemed to choose his words carefully. “Like scandal?” He paused, “It was easy to have your reputation ruined back then, wasn’t it?”

I smiled at the fact he had picked up on the trouble being scandalous. “Yes. Divorce, pregnancies, and broken engagements could ruin a person when I was young. The world was...different...but inherently the same.”

“What do you mean?”

“We may have traded horses for motorcars and telegraphs for cell phones, but the desire for power never changes.”

“You remember those things? Telegraphs and horses?” Joshua asked hesitantly.

“I don’t suppose there would be a more exciting time to live. I have watched the world transform before me. We had money, so I don’t recall being without a motorcar, but I remember them sharing the road with horses when I was a small child. Not in the cities, but in the country. We had neighbors that had a moving company. They could move whole houses with their team of horses. You would be astounded by what people could do even without modern technology.”

“I can hardly imagine it. I thought living without a microwave was rough.”

I chuckled. “We had a country home with no electricity. We cooked like people did for centuries—over the fire.”

A moment later, a sensation I hadn’t had in years began at the crown of my head—feeling like icy fingers creeping through my hair and pressing into my scalp. I gasped and tried to press forward to the bench that lay not too far ahead. In the past, I had learned to control my visions...kept myself from losing consciousness, but I was out of practice. And this one was no normal vision. I was vaguely aware that Joshua had spun in front of me and was holding my upper arms. My knees gave out, and the last thing I saw was Joshua’s terrified face. At my age, he must have thought I was going to die in his arms.

Suddenly, I was driving a large truck and having a hard time staying on the road. My vision was blurred, and I glanced at my lap. There was an open bottle of whisky; I...no...he snatched it up and took a large swig, half of it spilling down his chin. Tears were plummeting down his cheeks. He felt utterly lost. I saw what he was going to do. He was on Highway 1 and was going to end it. Drive through the guard rail not far from here and plunge into the ocean. As he swerved around a hairpin curve, the bottle dumped onto the floor, and as he started to reach for it, headlights washed through the front windshield. The moment the truck smashed into the small sedan, I saw Amanda and Eric’s faces locked in horror.

I was thrown to a new location in my vision. I opened my eyes and could see red and blue light flashing through the closed blinds. I sat up and peered through the slats. Police cars were lined in front of Eric and Amanda’s house. My heart started hammering. I looked around the room and realized I was in my great-granddaughter, Aleria. She slid out of bed and trotted down the hall to her parents’ room. “Mom...Dad...I think something is wrong. Police are out in front of the Copelands’ house.”

Anne, my granddaughter, sat up abruptly and rushed towards the front door as she shrugged into her bathrobe with her husband, Connor, on her heels. Before they could reach the door, there was a knock. Aleria hung back in the hall, watching her parents open the door. There were two uniformed police. The one in the lead was holding what Aleria recognized as Amanda's sparkly, blue cell phone. He cleared his throat, "Mr. and Mrs. Hayes?"

"Yes?" Connor replied.

"Do you know where I can find Joshua Copeland, son of Eric and Amanda Copeland? There was no answer on his cell phone." The officer held up the phone.

My granddaughter's voice was hoarse. "It's late back East. He is away at school in Philadelphia—Penn State."

"You were both listed on her phone under 'In Case of Emergency.' I am afraid there has been an accident. Do you—"

"Are they okay?" Anne interrupted.

He hesitated. "We really need to speak with their son."

Aleria slid down the wall and landed on the floor. Tears started to well up, and her throat became choked. She felt it. They were both dead. Silent sobs started convulsing throughout her entire body as she tried to keep silent and not draw attention. When she tuned back into the conversation, she heard her mother's words coming out in a sob, "...*both* of them?"

Darkness filtered over my vision yet again as I felt anger and hurt so deep it crept through my veins like a disease. I was a man, holding someone in his arms. A shiver ran through me. I wasn't in a man, I was in a *vampire*. I could taste her blood as he gulped it down greedily, wanting to make her pay, and not for something she had done but to satiate

something else. She cried out for help, and he felt amused. He hadn't bothered to glamour her, he didn't plan on letting her live that long. He was purposely being reckless. Why?

The silhouette of a young man stumbled into view in the mouth of the alley. He was answering the girl's cry for help, and I felt myself cry out when I recognized Joshua. His bravery would end him.

It was apparent that the vision was coming to an end, but I was torn from the scene in the alley to one last location. I was inside another man...he was strong. Worry was swirling in his gut, although he kept his body relaxed as he drove his vehicle down a dark, country road. I caught a glimpse of the tattoo on the inside of his left forearm, and I recognized it instantly—he was a Slayer. He sighed. “Are you going to tell me what happened?”

There was silence. I desperately wanted him to turn his head.

“I came so close to hurting her,” the voice rasped.

Protectiveness unfurled inside the Slayer, layered with a thick, emotional edge. He cared deeply for whomever they were speaking about, but he didn't utter a word. He was drawing out the other speaker with silence.

“She wasn't herself. She wouldn't have pushed me like that if she had been. I know that.” There was deep sorrow in his familiar voice.

“She needs you...now...more than ever. It is time for you to return the favor. The weight of finding out what she is could destroy some people.” He finally glanced at the passenger. Joshua—it was *Joshua*, and it was readily apparent that he wasn't human. He had survived, but at what cost? And why would he be in the company of a *Slayer*? Additionally, this Slayer felt a kinship with Joshua.

“I would give my life for Ali if it would save her. She's all I have.”

The Slayer let out a slow breath. “Retrieving the documents will take a couple of days. Get your head straight; when we return...be there for her. We did not show her all of the translations we completed. When she learns to control the power within her... she can change *everything*.” An image of Aleria shivering in the rain rose in his mind, and of him wrapping a towel around her and giving her comfort. I liked this Slayer, he was different.

Joshua broke into his musing. “Gabriel, I—”

“You are in the prophecy, too.”

“I-I am?” Joshua questioned in shock.

“I do not know that much now, but it is unmistakably you.”

“How could some prophet from thousands of years ago know about *me*?”

“It mentions a potential mate of the Nexus who was ‘orphaned’ and ‘turned by darkness yet follows the path of angels.’”

Joshua sighed, and fell silent for a long moment. “Gabriel, I want to—”

I tried to hang onto the vision for just a moment longer, but failed.

My eyes fluttered open as the vision receded. I realized I was propped against Joshua on the same bench I had been trying to hurry to before, though my aged body hadn’t allow me to walk to quickly enough. Joshua must have carried me the rest of the way.

“Oh, thank God,” Joshua gasped. I believed he had been literally praying.

A wry grin quirked up my lip. “Not dead yet.”

He let out a chuckle that was choked with emotion. “I thought—”

I raised my hand and cupped his worried face. I shouldn’t have touched him so casually, but he reminded me so much of George at this moment. “My dear, sweet boy. I still have a couple of years left in this body. I can feel it.” The fears on his face seemed to ease. I dropped my hand to my lap and drew in a deep breath.

“Do you want me to help you back to the house? Should you rest?” he asked.

There was a tremor in my voice, “I promise you, I am not ill...I...have...” I looked him straight in the eyes as I continued, “gifts, and I have been terribly, terribly wrong.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Not too long from now, you are going to go through great tragedy. I wish I could do something to help you avoid it. I *need* you to be strong. There will be more than one calamity to befall you.”

The afternoon sun illuminated his eyes, making them look like emeralds. Joshua looked at me doubtfully, but continued to listen.

“Aleria is special.” I wiped a tear that decided to betray me. “I was *so* wrong. I should have done so much for her already. She will be in your life after the darkness has settled. Hang onto your history, to your humanity. You will need one another. The two of you have a connection.”

Joshua pulled back infinitesimally.

“Not romantic...but you sense it, do you not?” I didn’t want to scare him or put undue pressure on him about the obvious romantic feelings I knew were in his future.

The wariness was still apparent in his eyes; I must have appeared a mad woman with my rush of words. He pursed his lips, seemingly reluctant to answer. “Yes,” he whispered. “But I don’t know how to describe it.”

“You leave for home tomorrow, and there is no proper way for me to share all of this with you. I can promise you that I *am* in control of my mental faculties. I *need* you to hear me.”

We both heard the sound of feet on the rock pathway and looked down the trail. Anne was approaching with two glasses of iced tea in hand. I smiled at my granddaughter.

“Hi, it’s warm, and you guys have been gone a long time. Thought you might like something to drink.” When she reached us, ice clinked as she passed us the glasses, the condensation already running down the sides.

“Thank you,” I smiled.

“Yes, thanks,” Joshua agreed.

“Is everything okay?” Anne asked.

I looked at Joshua. This was his chance to escape if he didn’t believe me. I held my breath during the long pause before he replied.

“Great. It’s nice out...nice company, too.” He looked at me and winked.

Anne looked at him for a beat or two longer than necessary. She was out here to rescue him I decided. She finally shrugged. “Okay, we are going to fire up the BBQ in a half hour. Maybe you can both work your way back towards the house then? We just prepped some hors d’oeuvres.”

“Sounds delightful,” I answered.

Anne turned and headed back towards the house.

I twisted back towards Joshua. “Do you trust me? Are you ready to hear what I have to say?”

He was thoughtful for a moment. “Do you ever feel it...in your soul when something important is happening...even while it is happening?”

I nodded in agreement.

“This is one of those moments, isn’t it?”

“I am afraid so, my sweet boy. I am afraid so.”