



Thirst No. 2: Phantom, Evil Thirst, Creatures of Forever

By Christopher Pike

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What Alisa has desired for five thousand years has finally come true—she is once again human. But now she is defenseless, vulnerable, and for the first time in centuries, emotional. As she attempts to reconcile her actions as a vampire with her new connection to humanity, she begins to understand the weight of life and death decisions. Can Alisa resolve her past and build a new identity, or is she doomed to repeat her fatal mistakes? From the paranormal series that netted more than 500,000 copies after its initial publication in 1994, this stylish, repackaged bindup is ideal for today's vampire-savvy teen audience.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Christopher Pike is a bestselling author of young adult novels. The Thirst series, *The Secret of Ka*, and the Remember Me and Alosha trilogies are some of his favorite titles. He is also the author of several adult novels, including *Sati* and *The Season of Passage*. *Thirst* and *Alosha* are slated to be released as feature films. Pike currently lives in Santa Barbara, where it is rumored he never leaves his house. But he can be found online at Facebook.com/ChristopherPikeBooks.

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ONE

Someone knocks at the door of the Las Vegas home where I stand. It is late evening; the living room is dimly lit, four walls of blurred shadows. I don't know who this person is. For that matter, I'm not sure who I am. I have just awakened from a dead alchemist's experiment. My mind is foggy and my nerves are shot. But before I embarked on the experiment, only hours ago, I was a steelwilled vampire -- the last vampire on earth. Now I fear -- and hope -- that I may once again be human. That I may be a young woman named Alisa, the humble offspring of a five thousand- year-old monster called Sita.

The person continues to knock.

"Open the door," he says impatiently. "It's me."

Who is me? I wonder. I do not recognize the voice, although it does sound familiar. Yet I hesitate to obey, even to respond. Of those few I call friends, only Seymour Dorsten is supposed to know I am in this Las Vegas home. My other friends -- well, a couple recently perished in the Nevada desert, in a nuclear blast. A lot has been happening in the last few days, and most of it has been my doing.

"Sita," the person outside the door says. "I know you're in there."

Curious, I think. He knows my ancient name. He even says it like he knows me. But why doesn't he tell me his name? I could ask him, but some emotion stops me. It is one I have seldom known in my five thousand years.

Fear. I stare down at my hands.

I tremble with fear. If I am human, I know, I am practically defenseless. That is why I do not want to open the door. I do not want to die before I have had a chance to taste mortality. Before I have had the opportunity to have a child. That is perhaps the primary reason I employed Arturo's alchemetic tools to reverse my vampirism -- to become a mother. Yet I am still not a hundred percent sure the experiment has succeeded. I reach down with the nails of my right hand and pinch my left palm. The flesh breaks; there is a line of blood. I stare at it.

The wound does not immediately heal.

I must be human. Lord Krishna save me.

The knocking stops. The person outside takes a step back from the door. I hear his movements, even with my mediocre human ears. He seems to chuckle to himself.

"I understand, Sita," he says. "It's all right. I'll return soon."

I hear him walk away. Only then do I realize I have been standing in the dark with my breath held. Almost collapsing from relief, I sag against the door and try to calm my thumping heart. I am both confused and exalted.

"I am human," I whisper to myself.

Tears roll over my face. I touch them with my quivering tongue. They are clear and salty, not dark and bloody. Another sign that I am human. Moving slowly, striving to maintain my balance, I step to the living room couch and sit down. Looking around, I marvel at how blurred everything is, and wonder if the experiment has damaged my eyesight. But then I realize I must be seeing things as a human sees, which means to see so little. Why, I can't even distinguish the grain in the wood panel on the far wall. Nor can I hear the voices of the people in the cars that pass outside. I am virtually blind and deaf.

"I am human," I repeat in wonder. Then I begin to laugh, to cry some more, and to wonder what the hell I'm going to do next. Always, as a vampire, I could do anything I wished. Now I doubt if I will ever leave the house.

I pick up the remote and turn on the TV. The news -- they are talking about the hydrogen bomb that exploded in the desert the previous night. They say it destroyed a top-secret military base. The wind was blowing away from Las Vegas so the fallout should be almost nonexistent. They don't say anything about me, however, even though I was there and witnessed the whole thing. The experts wonder if it was an accident. They don't connect it to the mass police killings I committed in Los Angeles a few days earlier. They are not very imaginative, I think. They don't believe in vampires.

And now there are no more vampires to believe in.

"I beat you, Yaksha," I say aloud to my dead creator, the vampire who sucked my blood five thousand years ago and replaced it with his own mysterious fluids. "It took me a long time but now I can go back to an ordinary life."

Yet my memories are not ordinary. My mind is not either, although I suddenly realize I am having trouble remembering many things that hours ago were clear. Has my identity changed with my body? What percentage of personal ego is constructed from memory? True, I still remember Krishna, but I can no longer see him in my mind's eye as I could before. I forget even the blue of his eyes -- that unfathomable blue, as dear as the most polished star in the black heavens. The realization saddens me. My long life has been littered with pain, but also much joy. I do not want it to be forgotten, especially by me.

"Joel," I whisper. "Arturo."

I will not forget them. Joel was an FBI agent, a friend I made into a vampire in order to save his life. An alteration that caused him to die from a nuclear bomb. And Arturo, another friend, a hybrid of humanity and vampires from the Middle Ages, my personal priest, my passionate lover, and the greatest alchemist in history. It was Arturo who forced me to detonate the bomb, and destroy him and Joel, but my love for him is still warm and near. I only wish he were with me now to see what miracle his esoteric knowledge has wrought. But would the vampire blood-obsessed Arturo have still loved my human body? Yes, dear Arturo, I believe so. I still believe in you.

Then there was Ray, my Rama reincarnated. My memories of him will never fade, I swear, even if my human brain eventually grows forgetful. My love for Ray is not a human or vampire creation. It is beyond understanding, eternal, even though he himself is dead. Killed trying to kill a demon, the malignant Eddie Fender. There are worse reasons to die, I suppose. I still remember more than a few of them.

Yet, at the moment, I do not want to dwell on the past.

I just want to be human again. And live.

There comes another knock at the front door.

I become very still. How quickly frightened a human can become.

"Sita," this person calls. "It's me, Seymour. Can I come in?"

This voice I definitely recognize. Standing with effort, I walk to the front door and undo the lock and chain. Seymour stands on the porch and stares at me. He wears the same thick glasses and hopelessly mismatched clothes of the high school nerd I met in a stupid PE class only a few months before. His face changes as he studies me; his expression turns to one of alarm. He has trouble speaking.

"It worked," he gasps.

I smile and open the door all the way. "It worked. Now I am like you. Now I am free of the curse."

Seymour shakes his head as he steps in the house and I close the door. He liked me as a vampire, I know. He wanted me to make him a vampire, to poison him through the metamorphosis, an act that was strictly forbidden by Krishna five thousand years ago. Now Seymour is upset. Unable to sit, he paces in front of me. There are unshed tears in his eyes.

"Why did you do it?" he demands. "I didn't think you would really do it."

I force my smile wider and spread my arms. "But you knew I would. And I want you to be happy for me." I gesture for him to come to me. "Give me a hug, and this time I won't be able to squeeze you to death."

He hugs me, reluctantly, and as he does so he finally does shed his tears. He has to turn away; he is having trouble breathing. Naturally his reaction upsets me.

"It's gone," he says to the far wall.

"What's gone?"

"The magic is gone."

I speak firmly. "It is only Yaksha's blood that has been destroyed. Maybe you don't like that. Maybe your fantasies of being a vampire are ruined. But think of the world -- it is safe now from this curse. And only you and I know how close it came to being destroyed by it."

But Seymour shakes his head as he glances at me. "I am not worried about my own personal fantasies. Yeah, sure, I wanted to be a vampire. What eighteen-year-old wouldn't want to be one? But the magic is gone. You were that magic."

My cheek twitches; his words wound me. "I am still here. I am still Alisa."

"But you are no longer Sita. The world needed her in order to be a place of mystery. Even before I met you, I knew you. You know I knew you. I wrote my stories late at night and your darkness filled them." He hung his head. "Now the world is empty. It's nothing."

I approach and touch his arm. "My feelings for you have not changed. Are they nothing? Good God, Seymour, you speak to me as if I were dead."

He touches my hand but now it is hard for him to look at me. "Now you will die."

"All who are born die," I say, quoting Krishna. "All who are dead will be reborn. It is the nature of things."

He bites his lower lip and stares at the floor. "That's easy to say but it's not easy to live through. When you met me, I had AIDS. My death was certain -- it was all I could see. It was like a slowmotion horror film that never ended. It was only your blood that saved me." He pauses. "How many others could it have saved?"

"Now you sound like Arturo."

"He was a brilliant man."

"He was a dangerous man."

Seymour shrugs. "You always have an answer for everything. I can't talk to you."

"But you can. I'm a good listener. But you have to listen as well. You have to give me a chance to explain how I feel. I'm happy the experiment has succeeded. It means more to me than you can imagine. And I'm happy there's no going back."

He catches my eye. "Is that true?"

"You know it is true. There is no more vampire blood, anywhere. It's over." I squeeze his arm and pull him closer. "Let it be over. I need you now, you know, more than I needed you before." I bury my face in his shoulder. "You have to teach me how to be a nerd."

My small joke makes him chuckle. "Can we have sex now?" he asks.

I raise my head and plant a wet kiss on his cheek. "Sure. When we're both a little older." I shake h...

Users Review

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