



# Nocturna

## SKERI LAKE

MORTUI VIVOS DOCENT. THE DEAD TEACH THE LIVING.

# NOCTICADIA

KERI LAKE



NOCTICADIA  
Published by KERI LAKE  
[www.KeriLake.com](http://www.KeriLake.com)

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**Warning:** This book contains explicit sexual content, and violent scenes that some readers may find disturbing.

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# PLAYLIST

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- *Memento Mori* - Nathaniel Drew X Tom Fox
- *Goodnight Baby* - Tarune
- *Achilles Come Down* - Gang of Youths
- *Please* - Omido, Ex Habit
- *You, The Ocean and Me* - Thalles
- *Without You* - Lana Del Rey
- *Glass In The Park* - Alex Turner
- *Sleepwalk* - MOTHICA
- *bad idea!* - girl in red
- *Feel Real* - Deptford Goth
- *The Secret History* - The Chamber Orchestra of London
- *Two Evils* - Bastille
- *Bloodstream* - Stateless
- *The French Library* - Franz Gordon
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- *Crave You* - Robinson
- *Crush* - Sebastian Paul
- *Misery* - Michigander
- *October* - Broken Bells
- *Sextape* - Deftones
- *I Would* - Coin
- *Romantic Homicide* - d4d
- *nostalgia* - Teodor Wolgers

- *we fell in love in october* - girl in red
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- *Cinnamon Girl* - Lana Del Rey
- *Make Me Feel* - Elvis Drew
- *Old Letter* - Imaginary Poet
- *Run* - Coin
- *Without You* - Omido, Bibi Silvja
- *Reflections* - Toshifumi Hinata
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- *Tell Me The Truth* - Two Feet
- *RU Mine* - Arctic Monkeys
- *Fuck Em Only We Know* - Banks
- *Knee Socks* - Arctic Monkeys
- *Not Just A Girl* - She Wants Revenge

## AUTHOR'S NOTE & TRIGGERS

W elcome Fellow Nocticadian,

Thank you so much for taking a chance on my book ❤️ I hope you enjoy Professor Bramwell and Lilia's story. Before you slip into this world, I just want to mention that a number of elements featured throughout the book are completely fictional, including the organism, Professor Bramwell's medical condition, and the species of moth. In order to remain consistent with the pathology, the medical conditions/symptomatology described are also fictional. I've included a glossary, for quick reference.

In addition, I took liberties with Professor Bramwell's background and profession as well as the laboratory in order to fit the story I wanted to tell. I fully acknowledge his lab would never pass the accreditation process.

This is a dark gothic academia romance. Therefore, you can expect subtle supernatural elements, a dark and atmospheric setting, a slow burn romance, a moody and Byronic/morally gray male lead, and sprinkling of mystery. Like most of my gothic romances, this is a standalone, and since I'm not planning to write additional books for this couple, I decided to hold you captive in this world a little longer.

A word of caution ...

This book contains a number of potentially triggering situations. You can find the full list of trigger warnings-with spoilers-on my website:

<https://www.kerilake.com/nocticadia-full-trigger-list>

## GLOSSARY & TRANSLATIONS

- \*Casteyon** – An element found in the black rock caves on Dracadia island
- \*Jestwood Plant** - A plant native to Dracadia which is considered poisonous in high doses
- \*Nocticadia** – The name given to the Midnight Lab that studies Noctisoma, specifically
- \*Noctisoma** – Long, black worms that are parasitic in insects, but will infect other species. Their natural host is the Sominyx moth.
- \*Sominyx Moth** – A nocturnal species of moth found only on Dracadia Island and the natural host for Noctisoma
- \*Stirlic Acid** - An antiseptic discovered by Dr. Nathaniel Stirling, made from the Jestwood plant that was used in gruesome experiments on patients
- Tapetum Lucidem** – A light-sensitive biologic reflector system in invertebrates (not typically present in the human eye, but is described as a symptom of Noctisoma in the book)
- \*Vonyxsis** – The darkening of veins that appears as black lines on moths and humans infected with Noctisoma
- \*Zigliomyositis / Voneric's Disease** – A rare congenital neuromuscular disorder named after a famous painter who was diagnosed with it.

**\* Fictional element of the book**

Translations

*"Voulez-vous boire un verre, mademoiselle?"*

Would you like another drink, Miss?

**“Si vous comprenez, retrouvez-moi dans le placard dans dix minutes.”**  
If you understand, meet me in the closet in ten minutes.

**“Je comprehends. Et je décline votre offre.”**  
I do understand. And I decline your offer.



## Prologue

*Dracadia Island*  
October 12, 1753

Lord Adderly had seen plenty of death in his lifetime. As commodore for the Royal Navy, its cloying scent had clogged the back of his throat more times than he could recall. He'd felt its cold vaporous breath skim across his flesh, with a longing that would have made most men shiver.

Lord Adderly did not fear death. Some had even dared to accuse him of welcoming it.

Yet, as he stared across the turbulent stretch of wintry sea, toward an ominous black smoke that rose from the surrounding fog, a shiver of dread coiled down his neck. The order to have his men row back from whence they'd come sat heavy on his tongue, when, in the distance, the island's shadowy silhouette split through the mist—an arched rock formation which loomed on the horizon like a sleeping dragon.

Halfway between the coast of Massachusetts and French-settled Acadia, the small Dracadia Island had long been a source of contention—a stretch of land that one could argue had belonged to the British. It hadn't been until most of the Acadians had mysteriously abandoned the island that it'd been annexed as a province of Massachusetts. Lord Adderly had led the charge

himself, prepared for battle, in the event the French returned to reclaim the village of Emberwick on the north end.

It had never come to pass.

The British who'd settled there instead had eventually come to suffer a series of misfortunes, and had fled the island, leaving Dracadia abandoned once more.

Of course, rumors had spread. Some had blamed the indigenous Cu'unotchkhe tribe, who'd sequestered themselves in the southern mountains, for having roused their heathen gods. Whatever the cause, speculations of bad spirits and inexplicable maladies had kept most from the enticement of land ownership on Dracadia. As a result, the island had failed to house any more than the heretics who'd been exiled there. The worst offenders of the holy doctrines.

Lord Adderly did not avert his gaze from the path ahead as the shore broke through the fog and the water grew shallower. Over the devastated landscape, black birds clustered in thick flocks. Murders. The ravens, whose presence had long stirred fears of evil. Lord Adderly had watched their kind follow men to war with the promise of carrion. The circling birds could only be an omen.

A sign of death.

“Dear God,” Lieutenant Christ said, where he sat beside the commodore. “Is it the savages, My Lord?”

“No.” While the commodore answered assuredly, the truth was he didn’t know. He’d fought all sorts of savages, and while they battled with unconventional fervor, they were hardly inherently evil.

“Rumors speak of sharpened black stones for teeth, and eyes like wolves in the darkness,” Christ prattled on.

“Perhaps you give equal merit to stories of sea monsters and sirens.”

“Of course not, My Lord. But the men who speak of such things are of sound mind. Good Christian men.”

The commodore had little doubt of their integrity, but to offer the truth behind their voyage would have sparked panic.

Perhaps even mutiny.

For, unbeknownst to Lieutenant Christ, they had been summoned there by correspondence from the church, after several clergymen had failed to return with three accused witches. Under the care of Dr Jack Stirling, the three women had been ordered to trial in Massachusetts proper. There’d

been suspicion that the good doctor had gone mad, possessed by the very demons he had been charged to bleed out of the women months ago. The commodore had heard horrific stories of patients with black veins, who'd been left to hang, bleeding, by their feet. Those whose mouths and eyes had been sewn shut, and tongues removed. The commodore and his men had been sent to investigate the claims, and given the sinister warnings in the distance, he feared what they'd find there.

Closer, the boat tottered across relentless waves, and as shadows lifted to reveal the charred husks of trees, Lord Adderly inhaled deeply, swallowing back the greasy scent of burnt meat on the air. The familiar scent of death.

Six of his men jumped from the boat, dragging the small vessel through the shallows, and once ashore, Lord Adderly set foot on the unhallowed grounds to which he'd sworn never to return. He swept his gaze over the impossible destruction, contemplating what, in God's name, could have accomplished such a feat.

An entire island burned to ash.

The fog around them thickened, and Lord Adderly frowned as it settled between them and the seared forest.

Lieutenant Christ strode up alongside him. "Forgive me for saying so, My Lord, but I've no inclination to venture beyond the shore."

"Hold your tongue," Lord Adderly spoke low. "Lest you long to invite mutiny."

"My Lord!" one of his men shouted, and the commodore turned to see him pointing toward the trees.

Lord Adderly followed the path of the man's finger toward shadows within the fog. A figure moving toward them. The sharp clank of his men readying their weapons echoed around them, but when the white vapor parted for a young boy, perhaps only twelve years of age, Lord Adderly stepped forward. "Lower your weapons."

Dressed in the robes of a young acolyte, the boy stumbled toward them, his skin covered in black soot and robes stained with what was undoubtedly blood. Before reaching the commodore and his men, the acolyte tumbled to the sand.

As Lord Adderly strode toward him and lowered to one knee alongside the boy, Christ knelt at the boy's feet, where small bleeding wounds on their

tops suggested they'd been impaled by something sharp. "Careful, My Lord. We've no idea to *what* he's been exposed."

Cuts, bruises, and patches of glistening flesh where skin had been peeled back marked signs of unspeakable abuse.

The sight of him brought the commodore's own son to mind, and he fought tears as he took in the acolyte's condition. "What happened here?"

"Blackness," the boy whispered on a ragged breath. "The sky ... turned to blackness. All of them burned."

Lord Adderly brushed the sticky, blood-stained hair from the boy's face. "Who did this?"

Through the exhaustion that darkened the boy's eyes lay a flicker of fear. "They commanded the flames. And the flames did their bidding."

"Who commanded the flames? Witches?"

One slow blink, and the boy exhaled. When he breathed in, his chest rattled like coins in a tin cup. "Not witches. Worms. Black worms, spilling from the mouths of madness."

A hush fell over the men, the boy's words raising the hair on the back of the commodore's neck.

Christ moved closer and, leaning in, whispered, "The boy does not seem well, My Lord. He is speaking of evil."

Ignoring his lieutenant, the commodore placed a hand on the boy's bony shoulder. "You are the only one left?"

"All of them burned."

Lifting his gaze to Lieutenant Christ, the commodore kept his voice level in spite of his nerves. "We'll take the boy and return to the ship. Now."

"You cannot leave." A wet, barky cough sent a trickle of blood from the acolyte's mouth. "They will not allow it."

The commodore frowned at the boy and pushed to his feet. He ordered two of his men to carry him back to the ship.

"My Lord!" the coxswain cried out with an edge of panic, and the commodore turned to see him stumbling through the sand toward them. "The boat! The boat is gone! It's gone!"

"Fear not, My Lord." Over the din of panic, as the other men caught on to the bizarre disappearance, the boy's weakened, almost ghostly voice reached the commodore's ears. "Your boat was never there to begin."

"I do not understand your words, boy."

“You and your men … arrived with the priests … days ago.” Heavy wheezing filled each pause, as the boy seemed to struggle with breath.

“You are sick with delirium. I was summoned here by correspondence from the church itself.”

Eyelids hooded, the boy’s dry and cracked lips stretched to a slight smile. “You are dreaming now. But soon, you will wake to the sound of crackling fire, and find you and your men tied to stakes. Your flesh will be seared. And your pain and misery will echo for eternity.” The boy’s eyes fluttered shut, and he let out a hiss of air, before his body turned limp in his officer’s arms.

Cold dread clawed at Lord Adderly’s belly, the scent of burning fat and skin clogging his throat again. He closed his eyes, finding solace in the pitch blackness, and when the first sounds of agony pierced the air, he dared not open them.