
DIESEL'S KEEPSAKE

Celtic Demons - Book Three

JILL SHANNON



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or
the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Acknowledgments

I hope you all enjoy Diesel's Keepsake. I put a little about myself in this book, although, only my family will know which parts. I want to thank my family and especially my husband. Without their patience and support, I wouldn't be able to do what I love to do and that's writing.

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I love you all, thank you,

Jill

Chapter 1

Ciara O'Malley tossed her cellphone on her desk, frustrated with her online search. Since moving to the Myrtle Beach area three months ago, all she had been doing was organizing her new condo and working. She had had no time for herself. Now that she had the time, she couldn't find a BDSM dungeon accepting new memberships.

Glancing at the paperwork on her desk, she spotted Colton Thorne's business card. He was the realtor who helped her find her townhouse. He had mentioned some in their brief talks about the clubs in the area, never specifying if any were BDSM clubs, but he seemed to know his shit. Picking up her cellphone, she dialed his number. When she got his voicemail, she left a message.

"Mr. Thorne, it's Ciara O'Malley. You helped with finding my townhouse. While you were here, you referred to the clubs in the area. Would you have any knowledge of any exclusive private adult clubs?" Ciara hoped he would understand the underlying meaning in her words. "If you have a free moment, please call me to discuss it. Thank you and goodbye."

Ciara dropped her phone on her desk and glanced up at

the clock on the wall. Seeing she still had another five hours to go on her shift had her groaning deep in her throat. Tonight, had been her slowest night since she had accepted the position. When the opportunity arose to move to another state and run her department, she couldn't refuse. Ciara had taken the increase in pay and a change of scenery as an added sign that she needed to make some changes in her life, thinking the night shift would be slow, peaceful, and less stressful. Yet, since she had arrived here, each night had been busier than the last. Now, tonight, when she had some time to herself, she couldn't find what she needed.

Ciara took a moment to think about the biggest reason she needed this change, the passing of her grandmother, her last link to the only family she had known. Her grandmother Ethel had been her biggest supporter. Anything Ciara had ever wanted to do, her grandmother had always been there cheering her on. She had been the one who taught Ciara to be kind, but not a pushover. She made Ciara take self-defense classes—so she wouldn't have to worry about her as much, her grandmother had told her. Ethel taught her how to cook, clean and bake. Gram would pull her piggy jar out for them to play poker, and on other nights, they'd play solitaire and cribbage. And as the two played, her grandmother would relay tales of her childhood. Gram told Ciara about the trouble she used to get into as a young girl and the lives she had saved in the Great Depression. The stories opened Ciara's eyes to the real world, prompting her choice of profession. Ciara believed everyone needed an ending to the story of their life. She wanted to make sure their families had all the answers to tell it. Ciara had listened as her grandmother weaved her tales of family members Ciara never knew, sucking each story in like a sponge so she could one day pass them on to her children and grandchildren, thus keeping her grandmother's memory alive.

The ringing of the phone pulled Ciara from her thoughts.

As she picked up the receiver, her gentle sounding voice filled the room. "Good evening, coroner's office. This is Ciara, how can I help you?"

"Hey, Ciara, it's Jacob. I'm really glad you're working tonight."

"What's up, Jacob?"

Jacob was the Patrol Captain in the area. Standing at six-foot-four, with sandy blond short hair and brilliant green eyes, he was an imposing figure, with linebacker shoulders, a barrel chest and a trim waist. He was the perfect specimen of a bodybuilder. Ciara had met him on her first day and had felt an instant connection with him. She felt like they had been friends forever.

"The van should arrive soon." There was a pause before he continued. "I really hate to do this to you, but the body arriving is top priority. As much as I'd like to think there was no foul play, in my heart I feel there's something not right."

"Why do you say that, Jacob?"

"Her age. She's too young to be on your table. If you could move her to the top of your list, I would owe you big time."

Her stomach had dropped with his words, but Ciara could hear the compassion and doubt in his voice. "Who is the deceased?" She wondered at the age of the female about to be a body on her table. Also, his request for special treatment told her that he knew the victim. Normally, high priority cases meant the department would be under scrutiny from the media, not to mention her superiors.

"Isabella Diaz."

Ciara heard a touch of disappointment in his voice. "Any special reason you believe she needs to be a priority?"

"You know how high-profile cases bring out the media and the crazies? Well, the twist in this case is that everyone in town knows her. Isabella is the daughter of Javier Diaz and sister to Diesel Diaz. She was also an advocate for the homeless."

Jacob left the names hanging as if she should know who they were.

"And?"

"And?" His voice rose in a questioning tone. "You don't know who they are?"

"I'm afraid I don't." She added, "I don't get many visitors in the medical examiner's office." She chuckled at the thought.

"Sorry, I forgot how new you are to the area. Javier Diaz is the leading defense attorney in the area, and his son Diesel is a member of the Celtic Demons Motorcycle Club. He recently received his patch, after healing from the torturing he went through a year ago for the club. Since then, they have revered him as a hero."

"So why does Diesel," she hesitated, mulling his name over in her mind and questioning who would name their son Diesel, then continued her question, "concern me?"

"He's going to want answers and being a member of the Celtic Demons makes her death club business. I'm just giving you the heads-up. Diesel's likely going to camp out in your lab until the results of your findings come back."

"Well, I'm glad it's a slow night. As soon as the body arrives, I'll get started on it right away. This way Mr. Diaz will be able to sleep in his own bed." She heard Jacob chuckle.

"That's why I like you, Ciara. You make life so much easier," Jacob commented.

"Let me get going so I'm prepared for the body when they arrive."

"Ciara?"

"Still here, Jacob."

"If at any time you feel uncomfortable, I'm just a phone call away."

"No worries, Jacob. I know how to take care of myself. But thank you just the same."

"Okay, Ciara. Call if you need anything."

"I will. Be safe out there, Jacob."

Ciara hung up the receiver and picked up her cellphone. She opened her search engine and entered Diesel Diaz. Jacob had piqued her curiosity while he was feeding her bits of information about the man. This would allow Ciara to fill in the blanks. The page came up, listing many stories, so she chose the one at the top. The first thing she noticed was that the article was written over a year ago. *'Motorcycle Club holds annual fund raiser in honor of their newly patched in member.'* She scanned the article quickly. She learned that although the fundraiser was in Diesel's honor, the money was donated to the children's burn/scar unit, in the same hospital where Diesel had been a patient. The article continued, *'In attendance were Diesel's father Javier and his younger sister Isabella.'* It went on to mention his father was a defense attorney and owned his own firm. His sister, a junior at Webster University, was pursuing a master's degree in counseling, with an emphasis on addiction and recovery. Ciara thought to herself, "His sister would have been graduating this year. What a tragic loss." She was finishing up the news clip, which revealed little information, when she heard the buzzer for the back entrance, letting her know the van had arrived. She shut down her cellphone and went to the wall panel to open the bay door, allowing the van to pull into the loading dock area.

She was standing on the loading dock by the time the van had parked. She watched as the two men exited the vehicle. Seeing it was Sam and Brian put a smile on her face. They were two of the most easy-going men she had ever met. In fact, if she didn't know them, she would never guess they transported dead bodies for a living. However, tonight when they emerged, they were not so jovial. Ciara knew immediately that they both either knew Isabella or knew of her. Having her own recent experience with losing someone she cared for, Ciara related to their feelings. They met her at the

back of the van, their heads bowed in reverence. "I'm sorry for your loss. How did you know her?" she asked.

Sam raised his head. "We watched her grow up." He gestured toward Brian as he opened the doors of the vehicle. "My wife was one of her teachers, and Brian's wife taught her the piano." Sam turned teary brown eyes toward the van. "She was the prettiest, most carefree child, with the biggest heart."

Brian slid the tray out, preparing to transfer the body to the gurney Ciara had waiting. He quickly wiped the tears with the back of his hand. Brian's watery eyes met Sam's as they moved the black body bag to the gurney. When they were finished, Brian told Sam, "I'll bring her back. You grab the evidence bags and sign them over to Ciara's possession. I don't want any loopholes for the son of a bitch who did this." Brian then turned, placing two hands on the gurney, and walked the body through the sliding doors and into the morgue.

Ciara had also brought a cart to place any evidence bags on. She pulled it to the side door of the van and watched as Sam shifted the sealed brown bags to the cart.

When he finished, he pulled a clipboard holding the chain of command form from its resting place. Removing the pen from his pocket, he signed the document and then passed it over to Ciara, completing the conveyance of evidence per the CoC.

Ciara handed the clipboard back to Sam after removing the document. Glancing toward the door, she asked. "Sam, why does Brian think someone else was involved in Isabella's death?" Her attention turned back to Sam when he answered.

"Because Jacob said there was another set of footprints in the sand where they found her."

"Well, couldn't the footsteps belong to the person who called it in?"

"Maybe, but she was a tiny thing. These steps belonged to someone bigger." He looked into her whiskey brown eyes.

"Besides, Isabella wouldn't do anything to harm herself. She had everything going for her. An excellent family, a job waiting for her when she graduated and she was always happy. Suicide just wouldn't make sense, Ciara."

"Well, Sam, we will soon find out what happened to Isabella Diaz." She began pushing the cart toward the sliding door as Brian came walking back out, pushing the now empty gurney. "Take good care of her, Ciara, her family deserves answers," Brian told her in passing.

"I will, Brian," Ciara responded. Stopping just inside the doors, Ciara stood and watched the two men return to the van and get in. They both had their heads down, feeling their loss. As they drove away, Ciara gave a slight wave of her hand, saying, "Don't worry, gentlemen, I will find out what happened." Her voice echoed in the empty space.

Ciara locked the garage doors and pushed the cart back to the morgue. She moved it off to the side and prepared to start the autopsy. After changing into her scrubs and assembling all the instruments needed, she unzipped the black body bag. Shifting the body from the gurney to the table, she placed Isabella's head on the headrest, smoothing her jet-black hair away from the young woman's face saying, "Tell me what happened, Isabella." Ciara took a moment to look at the young woman lying before her. Picking up the remote on her cart of instruments, she hit the play button and soft music filled the morgue. Next, her fingers reached for the buttons on the fixture over the body on the table, to turn on the voice recorder. Finally, she picked up the camera to take additional photos of the body. Once she was ready, she began speaking. "Today is March tenth, two-thousand twenty, this is Doctor Ciara O'Malley, the medical examiner of Horry County and I will be performing the autopsy of Miss Isabella Diaz, age twenty-four."

"Hey, Doc, you starting without me?" 'Josie' Josephine Lopez burst through the swinging door.

Ciara, startled by Josie's appearance, jumped. Dropping the camera and placing one hand over her heart with the other one grabbing the table. Ciara rasped out, "What the hell, Josie? You were supposed to be off tonight." Reaching up, she paused the voice recorder. Josie was Ciara's intern. At five-foot-four, with multicolored hair and trim body, Josie was a ball of energy.

Josie began putting her gear on to prepare for joining Ciara. Snapping her glove into place, she approached Ciara and Isabella. Looking down at the beautiful woman, she whispered, "She was my friend. The minute I heard what happened, I knew they'd bring her here." She glared into Ciara's whiskey-colored eyes. "Ciara, this woman is the reason I am here today." Ciara gave her a puzzled look. Bowing her head, she continued, "If Isabella hadn't found me on the streets four years ago, I wouldn't be here today. She helped me get sober." Josie glanced up to see Ciara's reaction to her statement. When she said nothing, Josie went on to explain. "Isabella brought me into her home and helped me detox. She was by my side the entire time. When I needed help getting into this internship, she supported me with that. So, you see, if not for two very different circumstances, I literally would not be here." Josie pointed down to the ground with both hands.

Ciara was a little stunned by Josie's admission. The woman Josie exhibited was jovial, energetic, and confident. Not exactly how she pictured someone in recovery. *But everyone makes wrong assumptions about people*, Ciara thought to herself.

Before Ciara could say anything, Josie blurted out, "Please, Ciara? No one knows about my relationship with Isabella."

Ciara knew in her head that it was wrong to allow Josie to stay, but in her heart, she knew the girl had only the best

intentions. "You may stay, but you cannot stay in this room. You can watch through the glass in the gallery."

Josie gave Ciara a quick hug. "Thank you, Ciara."

Ciara waited until she heard the door close and saw Josie perched in the gallery window before turning the voice recorder back on and picking up the camera. For the next five hours, Ciara shut out the rest of the world. Her focus was on finding out what happened to Isabella Diaz. She took samples of tissues, blood, and processed a rape kit. She set the last stitch on Isabella's chest and removed her gloves as the sun was rising to start a new day. She was removing the rest of her gear when she heard the buzzer for the front entrance. Ciara glanced at the clock, seeing it was six o'clock in the morning. She turned her gaze toward Josie with a questioning face.

Josie moved to the speaker, pressing the intercom button. "Do you want me to see who it is?"

Ciara placed a sheet over Isabella, then moved toward her office to check the camera at the entrance. Josie followed behind her, looking over Ciara's shoulder as she pulled up the screen.

"It's Diesel," was all Josie said.

Ciara felt a raw desire flood her body as she looked at the man on the screen. Her quick intake of breath had Josie looking her way.

"It's okay, his bark is bigger than his bite." Josie assumed that Ciara's reaction was to the size of the man standing outside.

However, it was quite the opposite. Ciara's eyes scanned Diesel's body, from his dark, trimmed hair and beard to the tips of his boots. She stood in silent wonder, and when his intense eyes glanced up at the camera, Ciara backed away from the screen.

"Seriously, Ciara. You have nothing to fear. I'm sure he's

just here to get answers. Do you want me to let him in?" Josie asked as Diesel rang the bell again.

Ciara needed to pull herself together before speaking to Mr. Diaz. "Yes, Josie. Please bring him into the gallery. I need him to I.D. the body. Then I'll talk to him in my office." Ciara watched on the screen as Josie granted Diesel entrance into the building. She followed their progress to the gallery. She waited a few minutes to allow Mr. Diaz time to adjust to the fact that when she opened the curtain and pulled back the cover from her body, his life would never be the same.