



# TAKEN TO THE GRAVE

MIDNIGHT STAKES BOOK TWO

MELANIE DAVIES

# Taken To The Grave

Midnight Stakes

Book 2

**Melanie Davies**

# Taken To The Grave

Midnight Stakes Book Two



Melanie Davies

Taken To The Grave

Copyright © 2023 Melanie Davies

ISBN: 9798862811025

All rights reserved. Printed in the United Kingdom. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles or reviews.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organisations, places, events, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

For information contact:

[meldavies@meldaviesbooks.co.uk](mailto:meldavies@meldaviesbooks.co.uk)

Cover Design: GetCovers

Character Design: Mel Davies

First Edition: October 2023

For Further immersion, be sure to check out the guide at

[www.meldaviesbooks.co.uk](http://www.meldaviesbooks.co.uk)

*To my best friend Alastair  
This is for you.*

# Contents

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Spell Pronunciation](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Melanie Davies](#)

[Join My Reader Group](#)

# I



I groaned loudly, while watching as she flew through the air and landed gracefully onto another rooftop, my legs ached and protested as they knew I had to follow. I had to keep up with her. Hayley had demanded I start training again after the events with Angelique, including Sophia's death, and well, my ass getting kicked daily by Darius. I knew she was right.

My best friend didn't want to see me die, her words exactly. Which, of course, spiked a huge bit of confidence in me. She said, I couldn't just rely on magic alone as one day I might not have the energy or the skill level to defeat an enemy, and she was right, again. I hated admitting when she was correct, but it had been about three months since those events, and Hayley had really stepped up as the family's leader. No longer did she hide in the city or keep an apartment of her own, but rather she stayed with us in the new manor house, Angelique's old hideout, and our old home was used purely for training exercises.

Quite frankly, I think we were all a little grateful we didn't have to live there anymore. There were too many awful memories that haunted the walls, and a fresh start was definitely something we all needed.

"Come on! Move it!"

Hayley shouted from across the space, where I had stopped to catch my breath.



“Hay! My legs are going to fall off if we keep up this pace.”

“You need to man up a bit.”

Darius appeared beside me. I had no idea he was joining us for our training session today. I watched Hayley fight back a smile when she saw him leap across to meet her and take her into his arms, and when he kissed her gently on the cheek, I rolled my eyes at how gross their puppy love was, even if I was jealous deep down.

“Jack, come on, this is the last one I promise.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard that before.”

Building up the courage and momentum was going to be difficult; I was spent and ready to climb into a hot bath with a book and a glass of red wine. She had ruined me, and my body was at its breaking point. Perhaps some magic wouldn’t go amiss here, just to give me that little boost that I so desperately needed to get me through this last little bit. Closing my eyes and calling out to the elements, mostly air, I felt it join me, surrounding my body in a beautiful blue glow, and a smile hit my lips as I welcomed its energy and strength. Sure enough, I took off running and leapt across to the roof that they stood on, patiently waiting. The air flowed around me and helped me feel as if I were flying. I was happily enjoying this moment, while the magic and I were one.

“You know that’s cheating.” Hayley laughed a little, crossing her arms.

“It’s bloody well not, you’re just jealous you can’t do that.”

Rolling her eyes at me, she took Darius by the hand and started walking towards the opposite edge before letting go, and my heart flew into my chest as she took a swan dive off. What the actual fuck was she doing? And without a single thought, I threw up my hands and begged air to grab her, to bring her back up safely. Sure enough, she floated back up with a very smug look on her face, and was placed back down on the ground.

“You know, magic isn’t always going to be around to save you, Jackson, and one day someone may fall from a roof, and you won’t be able to save them.”

“Well, today is not that day. And don’t ever do that again.”

Punching my arm lightly, Hayley then linked hers into mine. I could feel how she was lighter, happier. I knew Darius had something to do with that, but did she seem different, or was she just her old self? The Hayley I knew before she became the boss lady.

“You guys should think about heading back. Haven’t you got some big meeting in the morning?”

Darius broke my attention as he lit a cigarette, and I felt the sigh rumble through Hayley’s body. Although we appeared to have three quiet-ish months, with barely any vampire or werewolf attacks, the council had demanded a meeting. The death of Sophia hadn’t been fully investigated, and neither had the whole issue with Eric. I knew Hayley wanted to put it all to rest, but I also knew she was enjoying her peace and quiet a little too much.

“Are you coming with us, or heading home?”

Hayley left my side, and I could feel the sudden cold as she took Darius’ hands and walked a little further away from my earshot. I enjoyed seeing her happy and finding her person, but it made me lonely. I hadn’t opened my heart to anyone since Alex. Our romance was cut short after he was taken from me by a vampire.

“Come on, then.”

“Oh – Darius isn’t coming?”

“Nah, not tonight. He thinks it wouldn’t be a great idea with the oldies if a hybrid was staying with the clan.”

“He’s not wrong, they would definitely have a problem with that.”

Watching as Hayley forcefully opened the rooftop building’s door and walked into the darkness, I felt a sudden chill down the back of my neck and goose pimples appeared.

Since Serena or Lady Elizabeth, her true name, gifted me with new powers, I was still getting the hang of being able to feel the earth more, and any changes that my senses would pick up on.

“You coming?” Hayley shouted from the darkness, and I quickly followed.



BY THE TIME we reached the clan’s new home, the patrol was already out on guard, and Molly was still awake when I reached our makeshift lab. I could see the dark circles under her eyes, and her short, pink pixie cut had grown out a little giving it an untamed appearance. She was cursing at a surprising level, and appeared to be rather stressed.

Glancing at my watch and reading it was almost four a.m., I was surprised to see her still working. She was usually the first one to bed and the first one to rise, but she looked as if she hadn’t slept in days.

“Molly, you alright, babe?”

She ignored me, or perhaps didn’t hear me as I leaned against the doorframe with my arms crossed, watching her as she rummaged through stacks of papers and other folders.

“Babe, what’s wrong?”

She continued to mutter and curse under her breath, and as soon as I put my hand on her shoulder, the scream that erupted from her mouth even caused Hayley to suddenly appear.

“What - What’s happening!?”

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!! Where the fuck did you come from?! You almost made me pee my pants, Jackson!”

Molly was dressed in something that should have stayed in the 80’s, the bags under her eyes had seen better days, and judging by the amount of empty coffee cups around, she had been working on something for a few hours. Or at least since we left for the city.

“Molly, what’s going on?” Hayley asked, placing her hand on her shoulder.

“Oh, uh – nothing.”

“It doesn’t look like nothing, babe,” I stepped forward. “The entire lab looks like a tornado ran through it. What have you been working on?”

“Umm...”

She lowered her eyes to the ground, and Hayley gave me a look of ‘I’m going to leave this one to you.’

“Get some sleep, pixie, we need you sharp for tomorrow’s meeting.”

Hayley was out the door as fast as she arrived, and I could feel Molly’s tension lower suddenly. Maybe she didn’t want to answer my question with our boss in the room? Perhaps it was a top-secret project? Which would be strange as Molly normally told me everything she was working on.

“Now, are you gonna talk to me, or do I have to force a truth potion down your throat?”

“When Sophia was murdered, and we were put in that weird sleep thing... I have been wracking my brain trying to figure out what kind of spell it was. It’s something I honestly have never come across before. Until now.”

Lifting up a rather large, dusty, and old book from under the counter, and then slamming it down on the table, she looked over at me. The crest of Lady Elizabeth’s family was pressed firmly in the middle, an arrow, and a star sitting proudly. Molly quickly flipped open to the middle pages and went searching, skimming through until she stopped at a tea-stained page.

“The sleep-like-death spell – it says here that it infects its host with a sleep that can almost be mistaken for death. Elizabeth created it when her sons were taken to the tower, and they all sought sanctuary and safety in the church. She feared the worst and came up with a spell that would make her children and herself appear dead, so they would be taken to a

burial ground, and there she would wake up, as would her children, and they could escape.”

I took a seat on one of the lab stools, already knowing this was going to be a long night and my bath and glass of wine would have to wait. She looked at me with her bright blue eyes, begging me to give her input, but I had no idea what any of it meant.

“Okay, so?”

Her eyes widened a little and then her face turned stern, as if she was mad at me for not already knowing whatever this was.

“Soooooo, I think Serena, or Lady Elizabeth, put us under that spell so when Angelique’s men came here they ignored us. They thought we were already dead.”

“Alright, well, that makes sense, yeah. But, that doesn’t explain why Sophia wasn’t put in this sleep.”

“Most likely the spell only works on her direct line of descendants, which I believe is only myself and you. I mean, I’m sure there are others in the world, but at that moment, it was just us in the manor.”

“Perhaps, but it doesn’t explain why you’ve got yourself so worked up.”

She lowered her eyes again, it was her tell-tale sign when she was nervous to say what was on her mind. Molly and I had grown up together, I knew almost all of her tells, the same as with Hayley.

“Out with it, Mol.” Crossing my arms, I waited patiently for her to build up the courage.

“I think, well... I’m almost ninety percent sure that whatever the spell is, it...,” she bit her bottom lip so hard it almost drew blood, “the bracelets you made me, you know, keep the darkest parts of me asleep, I, um, I think they’re awake.”

I had no control over my body as I jumped from my seat, and took both of Molly’s wrists in my hands. Still there were

the golden bracelets engraved with a magic locking spell, and I looked up at her as she appeared to be more concerned and worried than I had ever seen her before.

“It would take some serious mojo to break this spell, more than just a simple ‘dead sleep’ spell. Explain to me why you think it happened.”

“I have gaps, Jackson, gaps in my memory. I go to bed, and then I wake up in random places.”

“How many times has this happened?”

“Um... since Hayley saved us pretty much, after Lady Elizabeth left us.”

I could feel my heart racing in my chest as her words settled inwards, this had been going on for months, and I was too busy to see? I was too busy to notice that my friend needed me. How had she even got past the wards? I would have been woken by the spells breaking, wouldn't I?

“Alright, Molly, we will start running some tests. Maybe see if something else is going on? And I will redo the spell on your bracelets, and hopefully that will help you get some rest. I will ward your room as well tonight and keep watch, just in case.”

She let go of a sigh and wrapped her arms around me, hugging me tightly as if I had cured everything. I hadn't, but I knew she needed some reassurance, and we, as a family, would do everything we could to help her.



Knowing Molly wouldn't feel completely comfortable and safe within her room, I opted to sit on a very uncomfortable chair in front of her bedroom door and keep watch, even when Hayley offered to do it. However, she needed to be sharp, and recently, she had finally been able to sleep wonderfully. I wasn't ready to disturb that routine now.

So, instead, I sat there guarding Molly's door with a large cup of coffee and the book that Lady Elizabeth had written, her grimoire filled with her ancient spells. After respelling Molly's bracelets, using up some energy from a nearby crystal to do so, I was spent, but I needed to stay awake. I could rest once the meeting was over.

Flicking through the first few pages felt as though I were reading her diary. It was written in beautiful calligraphy, and it reminded me that they really knew their penmanship back in those days. It made me slightly want to learn how to write like this. Maybe one day.

Lady Elizabeth, wrote of her journey across the magical planes of our world, the world you could only see if you were gifted with the sight. She mentioned many times, page after page, about the darkness, the chaos magic that would take over if you let it. It was a type of magic that had the power to control your every thought, every movement, every single part of you. You must always be in the light to beat it.

We had never come across anyone with such power, or at least there was no documented history of someone, and if there

were, Lady Elizabeth would have removed them from this world. That was her job, she protected the balance.

It was just past eight when the household staff and the morning guards woke up, and started doing their duties, while I still sat in my awful chair and had flipped through almost half of the book. It was mostly filled with spells I already knew, aside from some surprising ones I had never heard of, along with the history of my lineage.

“Thought you could use one of these.”

Hayley handed me a cup of coffee as she joined me, dressed and ready for the big meeting, and funny enough, wearing her normal attire and not a dress. She had made it perfectly clear that she was no longer dressing as some fancy lady, but rather just as herself, the leader of this clan.

“Thanks! Have the council members started to arrive?”

“A few are here already, one from the French Quarter and the other from the Spanish group. Still waiting on Britain, Germany, and uh, Russia, I think. Not sure who else has confirmed they’re coming.”

“Are you prepared?”

“As prepared as I’ll ever be. Any issues with Molly?”

“She appeared to sleep through the night, or at least she didn’t try to sleepwalk. I will go in and check on her shortly.”

“No, you will go get a shower, while I check on her. I need you fresh as a daisy.”

She was right, I was smelling a bit ripe, and I needed to shift this sleepiness off me. I could rest once the meeting was done, and could semi-restart the day.

Heading to my room on the highest floor of the manor was a trip in itself, but I enjoyed the quiet, and the view of the city was the best from up here. Plus, I had access to the roof to escape when everything got too much.

The new powers I had been given were great, even fun, and the fact I could play around with the elements and create things right out of the ground was exciting, but it came with its



limits. Magic took from your life force. You could train to your heart's content and build up your stamina every day, but you would still become drained, eventually. Using things that helped give you energy helped, such as crystals, the moon, the sun and if you connected with anyone, you could share your energy.

Taking my room key from the necklace around my neck, I unlocked my door and was greeted with the sweet smell of floral candles and the dusty smell of old books and parchments. This was my safe haven, my own space away from the world of vampires and things that went bump in the night.

Sitting on the edge of my bed, I let out a huff of tiredness, and would have loved to lie back and close my eyes, even if it were for just a few minutes, but I knew Hayley would kick my ass if I was late. I couldn't allow sleep to take over, not yet.

A photograph of Alex and I sat on the bedside table, our last happy moment together memorialised forever. He had his arms draped across my shoulders, with his beautiful blue eyes and brown hair and stunning smile. He was kissing me on my cheek as I placed a hand on his arm. Hayley told me she staked the vampire that took Alex from me, and even though I knew the creature was gone, the pain of his death still lingered.

He was truly my best friend, someone I never thought that would go for a guy like me. A *witch*. It did take him a while to get used to the world we live in, but despite being a human, he took it all in and never once complained about the world I showed him, even if it was scary for him at times.

Life seemed more silent with him gone, despite the attacks and the near-death experiences we all had over the last three months. A part of me wished I could tell Alex everything while we laid in bed together. Discussing the world, talking about Hayley's new boo, and the rest of the changes that had happened.

Life just wasn't the same anymore.

Finding the strength and energy to shower and get ready was a challenge in itself, but I did it anyway and I was soon

ready to head downstairs to attend the God-awful council meeting we were all dreading.

Entering the main hall of the manor brought back some serious memories, as the last time I was in here was against my will. I had avoided this place since we moved here. Feeling a shiver run down my spine, I headed towards my seat next to Hayley who stood waiting with her arms crossed over her chest. Only a few council members had arrived so far.

“See if this was Sophia, they’d have all been here bright and early,” she huffed under her breath.

“They will be here, don’t worry. They were the ones who demanded this meeting anyways.”

She huffed again, taking a sip of her drink, and sat down then her foot started to tap against the floor. One thing I disliked about Hayley was how impatient she could become. I understood why she was annoyed, but she needed to chill a little.

To help her, I sent a bubble of calming waves towards her via our energy line, then I watched her shoulders relax and her feet stopped tapping. I could feel her looking at me from the corner of her eyes, I glanced away and took a sip from my glass, she wouldn’t curse me for helping her, at least not in front of guests.

Hayley and I still had our connection somehow, perhaps it was due to the magic she used during her capture with Darius? Or were we just stronger together and thus our connection stayed?

Soon enough, everyone arrived after making us wait another half an hour and by that point the French, Spanish, and British council members were getting angry, so when Germany and Russia stepped in almost as if they were lifelong friends and not enemies we all let out a sigh of relief. Now the fun began.

“So, care to explain to me, Miss Helsing, how a senior member of your household wound up dead? Or the head of your fleet was captured, tortured, and had his throat slashed?

Are you incapable of keeping your household safe?" The French leader demanded, arrogance flowing from his words.

"Not to mention the original house being set on fire, and now we are made to meet in this *hovel!*" shouted the Spanish leader.

"Gentleman, I can assure you that I am perfectly capable of keeping this family and house safe."

"That begs the question though, Miss Helsing, there have been many 'accidents' since you took leadership."

"Yes, none of this would have happened if Nathaniel was still leader."

Now that was a nerve that was bound to be hit, and at the sheer mention of Hayley's father sent a wave of tension down our bond. I wanted to step in instantly, fight in Hayley's corner, but I knew not to, this was her battle and only when she gave me the signal would I say something. Her father, although a great leader of our clan, was nothing compared to Hayley. She may have been stubborn and hot-headed at the beginning, but she was now turning a new leaf and accepting her leadership role far better than I could have ever imagined.

"My father did not face the same battles as I have in the years since I have become leader. Sophia's death was tragic, and I, as do many, feel her loss deeply. As for Eric's, well he was not tortured or captured in the slightest. He entered Angelique's home and bed freely."

She paused for a moment gathering herself, we had not discussed Eric's betrayal in great lengths, as much as I would have liked to. Burying him on the family's plot was the last thing Hayley wanted, if anything she wanted his body to be thrown into a ditch, but after much convincing, she agreed he could be buried in the Van Helsing graveyard.

"Eric and Angelique were lovers, but she used him to get to me, and thus he paid the price. He was no longer loyal to this family or clan and if she didn't kill him, I would have done it myself."

Abruptly standing from the table, she relaxed her shoulders and looked at each and every council member, staring them down.

“We have taken up residences here for the foreseeable future, this stronghold is far greater than the one we had previously and is impenetrable from outside forces.”

Then it was as if fate had stuck her middle finger up at us. The security alarm suddenly went off, and I could hear Hayley mutter under her breath in frustration.

“Well, we still have some kinks to work out.” I stepped in as I could see her face turning a little red.

“Trust me, council, Miss Hayley is the best leader we have seen in a very, very long time,” spoke one of our guards who was here on behalf of a witness.

Many fell silent as we waited for the alarms to finish and because no one raced into the room, I assumed it was just a false alarm once again as we were testing out our defences. Hayley began to fidget with her necklace, the one Darius had given her, and I knew she was fighting her instincts to lose her shit, perhaps she needed to go hunting or hit the gym to release some of the anger she had brewing.

“Now, if that is all, will you excuse me? I have a house and family to protect.”

Before anyone could interject, Hayley left the table and headed out the door, leaving myself and the council sitting there wondering what was next.

“Jackson, can you promise us the previous incidents won’t happen again?” spoke the French leader.

“I can assure you, council members, what happened was a pretty random and out of the blue issue. Hayley and myself have everything under control, that I can promise you.”

Leaving the room, shortly after Hayley had, felt like a deep breath of fresh air and I was grateful when I found her hiding out in the gym and not beating up some poor, senseless vampire.

“You know, if you punch that thing any harder, it will most likely come flying out of the ceiling.”

I sat down on the weight bench as Hayley continued to pummel into a punching bag that had seen better days. Our gym had been just thrown together when we claimed this place as our home, it was clearly used as some sort of library before as many of the bookshelves, now empty, still littered the walls.

Molly had claimed most of the books and had taken them to another part of the chateau. It amazed me how massive this whole building was, it wasn't just some small manor like our old home was where we had to put up makeshift buildings to house more recruits. This place had the space and more.

“They just piss me off,” she said, throwing another punch.

“I know, babe, but don't let them get to you.”

“They would never have questioned my father and his choices, and yet here they are, asking me redundant questions,” she paused, holding the bag, “I am a good leader, better than I had been and they can't see that. They just see me as the girl I was before.”

“They do see it, or at least a few of them do. I wouldn't worry too much, they will be gone in the morning and won't be back for another several months, if not a year.”

“Until some new bullshit bad guy comes out of hiding.”

“And if that happens, we will deal with it.”

Sensing her finally starting to calm down, she took a seat next to me and rested her head on my shoulder. I missed moments like this. Hayley was my best friend, my sister, and my person. We hadn't been able to spend much time together the last few months. With the move, the clean-up mess, and my training, we were losing touch with one another.

“Are you seeing Darius tonight?”

“I don't think so. I might see him later on patrol, but we made no plans. He knew today was going to be a busy day.”

“Shall we patrol together then?”

“As long as I can get a few beers first.”

“Deal.”

# 3



Asking Molly to come only felt right as she was always hiding away in the lab, or in her room, and she needed to get out of this place. A change of scenery would do her some good. It pleased me to see her waiting at the bottom of the staircase for me in a pair of black leggings, a scarlet crop top, and a leather jacket. Her pink hair was up in two small space buns, and she looked awesome.

“I’m glad you decided to join us.”

“As long as you keep any vamps away from me, we’re good.”

She smiled as she linked her arm in mine, and we went to the front entrance to meet Hayley who was tapping her foot as she waited. Hay was wearing almost the same outfit as earlier, just a grey tank top this time.

“About time, we’re going to miss all the good targets if we don’t get going.”

“I will be surprised if there are any. You haven’t staked a vampire in what three weeks?”

I asked as we left the door and headed to my car. It would be a long distance to walk into the city as we were on the outskirts, leaving driving as our only option. It just meant I wouldn’t be drinking, which was fine, but slightly disappointing.

“Max can drive us in, we can ring him later to pick us back up.” Hayley ordered as Max, one of the household staff, held up my keys for us. “Sound good, Max?”

“I can of course, ma’am.”

“Did you just ma’am me?”

“I, uh – sorry, Miss.”

Rolling her eyes at poor Max, she jumped into the passenger seat of the car and I opened the back door for Molly to climb in first, then I slid in beside her. Max was visibly shaken up by having Hayley sit next to him and drove like a grandma, but we eventually got to the city.

“Thanks, Max. I will ring you when we are ready to be collected,” I said, tapping him on the shoulder.

Following the girls as they walked towards a new nightclub, I kept my eyes moving for any possible danger. RavenBlacks clubs had started to pick up well, since Angelique was gone and her goons had left town.

*The Thirst*, what an ironic name for a club, and it always made me laugh a little whenever I saw it. The owner certainly had a sense of humour. Hayley had mentioned she had vetted the owner already, and all seemed to be in order. I think she was just grateful for somewhere new to hang out.

Entering the nightclub, multi-colored strobe lights took me by surprise as heavy club music flooded the room with bodies that collided and danced in a violent manner. This was already a place I could easily fall in love with. It was euphoric. Hayley and Molly made their way to the bar, and instantly ordered a couple of shots. Hayley looked up towards my direction, and started waving me over. Once I managed to get through to join them, she handed me two shots, and ushered for me to down them.

The liquid burned as it went down, but there was that intoxicating feeling that made you want to do it again immediately after. Hayley seemed relaxed and I knew it was because of the air around us. The room felt as if it were on fire, and filled with nothing but good vibes.

“I’m gonna go dance.”

She shouted in my ear, and grabbed Molly by the hand. Off they went, laughing and smiling. I tracked them, watching as



everyone cleared the way, and let them through. Hay had a way about her, and I was sure everyone knew who she was, one way or another.

“Want another?”

“Huh?”

Turning back to the bartender, I gasped. He was tall, blonde, and had the broadest shoulders I had ever seen. And he was staring at me as if I were a ghost. He held up the bottle of vodka and mimicked pouring another shot for me.

“Another shot?”

“Eh – yeah sure. What are you trying to do, get me drunk?”

“It’s my job,” he replied with a wink as he poured another, then left to serve someone else.

Something about the bartender made the hair stand on the back of my neck, as I watched him intently. His smile was almost too dazzling and white, and when he ran his hand through his hair, I swear I felt my stomach do a flip. Shaking my head and forcing myself to look over towards the girls, who were perfectly fine and dancing to the music, I could feel burning in the back of my head.

Turning back, I caught his eyes and he smiled at me, and then quickly went back to cleaning glasses. His shirt was rolled up on the sleeves, exposing his perfectly muscled forearms, and something inside me clenched at the sight of them.

It had been a very long time since I looked at another guy, or even thought about another guy that wasn’t Alex and now, I could feel my mouth watering as I continued to look. My eyeline dropped as he turned away, allowing me to stare at his round ass as it sat perfectly in his black trousers.

I needed another drink if I was to keep staring.

“What are you looking at?” Hayley appeared leaning against the bar, and followed my eyeline. “Or should I ask who?” She smiled, and licked her lips.

“It’s nothing.”

I looked away from her as the waitress joined us. She cleaned up our shot glasses, and then placed six more down on the bar.

“They’re from the owner, Miss Van Helsing. For you and your guests,” she said with a smile before she walked away.

“Who’s the owner?” I asked, downing my two shots.

“Just some big, hot shot businessman from across the pond. He wanted to invest in up-and-coming cities.”

She held up a glass towards the balcony, where the bartender had managed to get up to, by the time we had finished our drinks. I suddenly wanted to leave this place, the air around me feeling charged, electrified and overwhelming.

“I’m going to get some air,” I shouted as the music grew louder.

I made my way through the crowd, and as soon as I pushed open the entrance doors, the cold breeze caught me, and I felt my heart slow to a steady beat. Hayley seemed to be *too* relaxed to me, and I had lost sight of Molly as I made my way out, which made me slightly nervous. Something was off.

“Jackson.”

Darius. His voice broke through my train of thought as he placed his hand on my shoulder. I hadn’t realised the world was spinning. He gripped his hand tighter to steady me, and he looked at me with those dazzling blue eyes. It made me a little jealous of what he and Hayley had.

“You alright?” he asked, with some concern behind his voice.

“Yeah, yeah, I just needed some fresh air. It was getting a little crowded in there,” I paused, and he loosened his hand. “I thought you were busy tonight?”

“I was, but something feels off with the bond. Is Hayley with you?”

“You can feel that, too, can’t you?”

Now my suspicion was real, it wasn't just something my own mind was making up. Something *was* off about this place, as well as with Hayley. I had forgotten that Darius was able to feel everything she felt, as per the soulmate bond. Whatever she was feeling had clearly set the alarm bells off for him to show up here.

"Is this place new?" He asked, making his way to the front door.

"Yeah, Hayley approved it a few days ago, or something."

"Can't you feel that?" He questioned, placing his hand on the door.

"What do you mean?"

"Jackson, there's a ton of magic here. I'm surprised you can't sense it."

I could sense something, but magic wasn't it. What was this place? And how was it emitting magic I couldn't feel? My mind ran through a million different questions, and I subconsciously kicked myself for not realising sooner. This place hadn't felt right from the moment we arrived.

I pushed open the door with Darius behind me, the music blasted and the smell and lights filled my entire senses. I couldn't see Hayley or Molly, but I knew Darius would be able to find her, somehow. The bartender was back in his original spot, and caught my eye as I headed towards the bar, hoping to spot the girls on the way.

"Thought I scared you away." Those white teeth again flashed a smirk at me. He was quite the flirty bartender, but now was definitely not the time for that, if I was even open to it.

"Have you seen my friends? The girls I arrived with?" I asked, ignoring his advances.

"Yeah, the boss wanted to see them on the balcony."

He pointed upwards, and I could hear a growl coming from Darius as he spotted Hayley and some guy that was clearly

trying to steal a kiss. He, of course, had nothing to worry about. She would knock him over the railings if he even tried.

Making our way up the stairs, a security guard tried to stop us, but Darius shoved him out of the way. His head knocked into the wall, and he slumped to the ground. I stepped over his unconscious body to continue to the top level. Molly was sitting next to an older man, giggling like some schoolgirl, and I watched him place his hand on her knee, and start making his way up her thigh. Hayley, however, was clearly uncomfortable and kept her distance from the ‘kissing’ guy.

“You girls alright?” I called out, as Darius crossed the floor and stood by Hayley, making a show of marking his territory.

“Yes, we were just saying how lovely this place was,” Hayley said, looking at me with her ‘I’m going to kick his ass’ eyes.

I didn’t know if she was talking about Darius or the other guy at this point. He laughed, and tried to take Hayley’s hand, but she wasn’t having any of it. In a second, she twisted his hand, almost bending it completely backwards and breaking it.

“I think we should be going now,” Darius whispered to her, as he tried to guard her back.

“Good! Take your bitch, and get out!”

The man shouted back. Obviously he had no idea who Hayley was. She kneed him in the balls, then smacked his head against her knee as he bent over clutching at himself. All hell broke loose then. Multiple bodyguards appeared out of nowhere, and tried to grab us. Molly cowered behind the sofa, there was nothing she could do. Her magic wasn’t as defensive as ours because her bracelets kept it under control.

A green beam shot out of my hand, and a blue one out of the other, hitting the two guys who were ready to pounce on Molly. Rushing to her aid, I lifted her up and guided her to the staircase. We needed to get out of here, and fast.

The music had already stopped, and most of the humans left in the building were screaming and running in every

direction. But I noticed not everyone was fleeing. Werewolves were here. One of the man's bodyguards shifted into a werewolf, and I felt Hayley's anger flash through our connection. I'm sure Darius felt it, too, as we both caught each other's eyes.

"Oh, fuck! Ok, Molly, we really have to go. Now!"

Vampires were one thing, but werewolves were a whole different ball game. They had their own rules, and one bite could easily turn a human. God only knows what would happen if a witch were bitten. There were no documented cases, and I hated to find out what would happen to a hybrid. Hayley could get attacked by one, even scratched or bitten, and all she would need is some major rest, but luckily, she wouldn't turn.

Once a human had shifted, though, it was game over. There was no shred of that person anymore, it was just pure animal instinct and rage, and a lot of it. Molly gripped my hand tightly as we weaved our way down the stairs and towards the doors.

"Not so fast."

"*Fuck sake,*" I thought as I turned around to find three standing behind us.

Tonight was going to get interesting. I would need to use all my training thus far if we were to get out alive. Placing myself in front of Molly to guard her, I took my stance and readied my magic inside me. I felt the light fill me up, and the vibrations ran through my veins. I just have to get us out of here alive.

But nothing happened. They just stood there like a statue, as a bell suddenly rang through the club. I looked up at the balcony to see that Hayley and Darius had also stopped fighting, and the guy from behind the bar clapped his hands, looking dead straight at me.

"I suggest you all calm the fuck down. This is my club, and I won't have it destroyed by a huntress and her pets. Either knock it off, or get the fuck out."

His club? I thought the guy Hayley was upstairs with was the owner? She had held up her drink to him earlier. I felt her confusion run down through our bond as she looked at the bartender the same way I did. What in the actual hell was going on?

Soon enough, the bodyguards, or whatever they were, disbanded and went back to what they had been doing. The music started to blast through the speakers once again, and many humans came back through the entrance doors, pushing us out of the way.

“I think it’s about time we leave.”

Taking Molly’s hand, I escorted her outside and waited for Hayley and Darius to join us. I wasn’t going to stay any longer than I had to.

By the time Hayley and Darius appeared, Molly and I had already called Max and we were just sitting in the car waiting. I was becoming impatient. What was taking them so long? And what was worse, when they finally made it to the car, Hayley informed us that she was going to go back to Darius’s place, and would see us in the morning. She took Darius’s hand, and they started walking away.

Angry and annoyed from waiting, Max drove us back to the manor in silence. Molly put her head against my shoulder resting her eyes, but I couldn’t shake this feeling. Something was bugging me about this whole night. Something was *very* wrong.

Hayley had said she met with the owner of the club already. Was that all just a lie? Was the bartender really the owner, and the one Hayley met just a decoy? Nothing made sense. Why would they lie about his identity? And the fact that they had werewolf bodyguards, that was worrying. Hayley shouldn’t have been thinking with what’s between her legs, and actually came home with us to help research, and maybe make a plan or something.

“Max, how much longer?”

“We will be arriving shortly, Mr. Gates.”

Sighing, I started to stare out the window, just watching as the world went by. Molly began to twitch next to me, and I thought perhaps she was dreaming.

I didn't see it coming.

The world around me began to spin, almost in slow motion as I fell from my seat. Or was I floating? I couldn't be sure.

I could hear my own heartbeat, it was steady—slow. Almost too slow.

It may have only been a few seconds, but it felt as if we were spinning for hours.

Until we hit something. Hard.

The air was taken from my lungs.

And as we hit the ground, I heard the glass shatter and the metal bend.

I could only cough, as breathing hurt my lungs, and my vision blurred. I could almost make out the shapes of Max and Molly, or was it just Max?

“Ma – Max?”

Breathless and feeling as if my lungs were filled with something other than oxygen, I tried to gather some strength and lit up a small flame on my hand. We were upside down; my seatbelt was the only thing that was holding me in place. Max wasn't moving, and Molly wasn't in the car anymore.



“Molly!” I finally managed to shout, but there was no answer.

Adrenaline was already beginning to run through my body, covering any pain I had. I had to get out of the car. I had to find her. What if she was badly hurt and needed medical help? *Oh God*. If only Hayley had come back with us, she would have been able to get us out of this mess.

“Shit, *shit!*”

The area around us was in complete darkness, and no one would even be able to see us. I was pretty sure we were no longer on the road, and probably in some ditch somewhere. I had no idea how far we flew. What did we hit? Did we even hit anything?

My mind raced with questions, and panic began to set in. All I wanted tonight was a drink with my friends and to dance a little, I didn’t want a bar fight or a car crash. What the fuck was even happening?!

“Is anyone in there?!”

A voice shouted from somewhere, and they scared the crap out of me. It wasn’t a voice I recognised, and fear began to rear its ugly head. We were just sitting ducks here; any number of creatures could show up, and try to take advantage of this situation. Should I stay quiet, or should I answer back? I argued with myself internally.

“I’m here to help!”



The voice shouted again and every instinct in me told me to stay quiet, but I just couldn't. What if they were good?

"I'm here!" I shouted back, worried who my rescuer was going to be.

For a few seconds, there was nothing but silence. Finally I heard someone sliding down something, or were they climbing? I wasn't completely sure, but then a small light shone down inside the car. It was just the light on their phone, but I couldn't make out their face as the light blinded me.

"Are you alright?"

"My – my friends, are they..?" I trailed off.

"I can only see the guy here."

"No, there was a girl."

"Sorry, I didn't see any girl."

*"Shit."*

"I'm going to try and get you out, can you put your hands on the roof? I'm going to come in, and unbuckle you. Is that ok?"

With a closer look at my rescuer, I had to stop myself from shouting and moving away. It was the bartender, of course. As if this night wasn't already weird enough.

"Please, try to stay calm. I don't want you to be stuck here."

His voice was soft, almost gentle, and I didn't even question his orders. He sounded as though he knew what he was doing. As he leaned in, I could smell a mixture of his aftershave and the club on his skin. His hand patted around my hip for a second, searching for the buckle before he finally found it. When he unbuckled my seatbelt, I started to fall, but as if he had lighting speed, he pulled me out of the car and I found myself in his arms.

Putting me down a second later, I felt the world spin upright, and my lungs began to breathe normally again. He didn't say anything, just waited patiently for me to gather my

bearings as I looked around. I brought up another small light in my hand with my magic, and then threw it up in the air so it hovered above us. It lit up the road better so we could both see around the car.

“Did you see what hit us?”

“Sorry, I didn’t see the crash.”

“Then how did you know there was one?”

He pointed at the tire marks on the road, the aftermath of a tree being hit, and other things in complete disarray. Anyone who had seen any film with a car accident happening would have been able to see the signs here.

“I just need to find my friend.”

Closing my eyes, I searched through our bond, hoping I would be able to pick up on Molly’s energy, and yet, there was nothing. It made me question two things. First, was she actually dead? Or, did someone take her? Was she even still here in the vicinity?

The same panic inside me grew larger, and I felt hopeless. How did any of this even happen? Maybe we should have just stayed in, that would have been easier and less painful.

“I can’t feel her.”

“Maybe she’s not here? Perhaps she got up, and just wandered off?”

“No, that doesn’t make sense. If she was up and walking around, I’d sense her.”

My throat started to swell as a lump formed. I fought back tears as the shock began to set in. I had lost Molly, and poor Max had died from the accident. Even though I didn’t know the guy, I still felt awful. When I pulled my phone from my pocket and saw the screen was completely cracked, I threw it to the ground in a temper. The guy watched me throw a hissy fit.

“I need to find Molly and Hayley.”

“Hayley, the huntress?”

“Yeah, she’s staying with her boyfriend, but no one knows where that place actually is.”

“Well, that’s not much help is it? If you know her number, then here,” he pulled his phone from his pocket, and handed it to me. “Use it as much as you need to.”

Frantic and unsure of what to do other than call Hayley, I dialled her number as fast as I possibly could, and of course, it went straight to voicemail.

“Bitch, I swear to God, pick up your damn phone!” I shouted. Then I hung up and dialled again, spamming her voicemail.

Pacing back and forth, the adrenaline was still running through my veins. I knew that it would soon stop, but I also knew that with whatever injuries I may have sustained, standing up and walking around wasn’t my brightest idea. I was too anxious, and it felt like the longest ten minutes had passed by the time Hayley finally called back.

After I explained the situation and told her who I was with, I knew she’d be with me in record time. Being the huntress, she could run pretty quickly when she wanted to, but thankfully, she showed up on her motorbike, with Darius on his. Practically leaping off, she ran to me, and wrapped me in the tightest hug I had felt in a long time. I started to break down in her arms.

“I don’t know where she is, Hay. I’m worried she’s hurt, or worse.”

“Don’t worry, we will find her.” Hayley cupped my cheeks, and leaned up to kiss me on the forehead.

“Darius, see if you can catch Molly’s scent. She couldn’t have gone too far.”

She let go of me, and turned to look at my rescuer. He was just casually standing there, as if waiting for orders.

“Thank you for rescuing my friend, but we’ve got it from here.”

“I’m afraid not, Miss Helsing. You see,” he paused, licking his lips. His whole demeanour changed. “With Angelique no longer here to...shall we say, order us around, we are taking back what is rightfully ours.”

“What is rightfully yours?”

A flash of yellow appeared in his brown eyes. Once she saw that, she quickly upholstered her gun, and pointed it at him. He held up his hands and grinned, but it was more of a sarcastic jester.

“I believe your friend here owes me a debt. A life for a life, as per the old ways.”

“This isn’t the old ways, you flea-ridden mongrel. Now, I suggest you leave before I put a bullet right between your eyes.”

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you. My pack will sense my death, and they *will* come after you.”

She appeared to lower her gun slightly as we both realised his meaning at the same time. He was an Alpha werewolf. *Shit*. That meant he was protected by the treaty the Van Helsing had created, the same one they set up with the vampires. He had not harmed me or any other human, as far as Hayley was aware, and that meant she couldn’t shoot him, unless he attacked first.

“Why did you save me?” I asked, breaking the tension.

“What better way for the huntress’ right hand man to be indebted to the werewolves. I saw an opportunity, and I took it.”

“Great.” I sighed, rolling my eyes. Could this day just be over already? “What do you want then? My blood? A spell?”

“All in due course. For now, I will help you find your friend. No one should be left out here alone. Even if Angelique is no longer with us, there are others who will take this opportunity.”

“She will not owe you a debt if you help,” Hayley ordered.

He simply nodded, waving his hand at her before removing his shirt and pants right in front of us, and then shifted into the most beautiful, whitest, and largest wolf I had ever seen.

He stuck his nose to the ground, and took off in the same direction as Darius went, leaving Hayley and I to stand in the middle of the road wondering what to do next.

“We need to get Max’s body out of the car, and back to the manor. He doesn’t deserve to be left there,” I suggested mournfully.

“Yes, of course. I will call a team to come and help because you are in no shape to do anything right now. We should get you home, and checked over.”

“But what about Molly?”

“The guys will find her, or at least something to help us find her. Come on, let’s go.”

Hopping onto the back of her bike and wrapping my arms around her, we sped off into the night, leaving Darius and the Alpha Wolf to find our friend.



By the time we got back to the house, the sun was starting to rise, and Hayley was on a rampage. She was demanding that a team go fetch the car and retrieve Max's body, and for another team to go search for Molly. She had to be somewhere, perhaps she was hiding or passed out, but even doing a locator spell was no use. She was powerfully hidden somewhere, and I hated not knowing where she was, or if she needed us.

"You have a few broken ribs, and you fractured your collarbone. Other than that, you're okay. I want you to rest for the next few days though, please."

Annabeth, one of our medical team members and a fellow witch, had assessed me carefully. She had taken X-rays of my chest, and was listening to my heart and lungs, all of which sounded okay. I had some bruises from the seatbelt, but if it weren't for that seatbelt, I would have been ejected from the car when it rolled.

"Yes, ma'am," I said sarcastically, before grimacing as she poked me in the shoulder with her pen.

"I'm serious, Jackson. I know you, you won't rest, and you'll just carry on as normal, but, you need to recharge. You've used a lot of your energy these past few days, and these injuries will take a while to heal."

"Can't you just give me a healing potion, and I can be on my way?"

"Here."

She passed me over a bottle filled with bright orange liquid. I downed it in one quick go, and had to hold back the bile that was dangerously close to coming back up.

“What the fuck was that?!” I shouted, as I took the glass of water she held out to me, and chugged it to get rid of the taste.

“Bone potion. It will help fix your ribs and collarbone. Nasty stuff, I know, but it will do the trick.”

“Bloody hell, do you give that to everyone?”

“Nope, I save that just for special whiny little men.”

She winked at me before taking her notes and leaving me behind the curtain. I started to dress and the curtain was pulled back, exposing pretty much all of me. If it wasn't for the fact I had kept my boxers on, the entire medical ward would have seen me naked.

The Alpha Wolf stood there smiling, gawking at me, and I wanted to smack the smug look off of his face. He shouldn't even be allowed in here, let alone in the medical ward. He should have still been out there hunting for Molly, or at the very least heading back to his club.

“Do you mind?!” I shouted frantically trying to pull my jeans up.

“Oh, don't stop on my account,” he winked, taking the seat beside my bed. “I'm just here to tell you, your friend's trail, it went cold south of the city.”

“South? What was she doing that far away?”

“Beats me, your huntress and her hybrid thing are looking into it, I don't know. I came here to check on you.”

“Ok, well you can leave, you shouldn't even be able to get in the building, anyways.”

I started putting on my black shirt and began to do the buttons, as he stood up and came incredibly close to me, his scent again taking me by surprise as he looked at me with his chestnut eyes.

“Don’t you want me here?” he asked, sounding incredibly seductive and suggestive.

“I don’t want you anywhere near here,” I said standing my ground as he sat back down, lounging in his chair with one leg crossed over the other.

“Gosh you’re no fun, I thought you’d be the interesting one, but alas you’re the same as every other witch.”

“If Hayley catches you in here, she will hurt you.”

“She’s the one who gave me permission to come in.”

I stopped then, looking at him with confusion, why would she even allow a werewolf into the building? Or even near the building? She was clearly up to something, and I needed to find out. Grabbing my jacket, I headed towards the door, unfortunately the Alpha was quick to follow me.

“Where are you going?” he called, almost as if he was interested.

“To see Hayley, and ask her what the actual fuck she is thinking allowing you here.”

“Well, I seem to recall it was because I saved your life soooo, hi, I’d like to introduce myself.”

He managed to push in front of me and held out a hand, waiting for me to shake it. I just stared at him, wondering where this was going, did I even care for his name? No. I didn’t.

Side stepping and going past him, I heard the growl rumble in his chest as I did. Feeling a little nervous as I crossed his path, I waited for him to perhaps grab me or something, but he did not, and I just continued down the hallway towards Hayley’s room.

“Even if we don’t shake hands, I believe we should be on a first name basis, don’t you think?”

“No, I don’t, I don’t owe you anything, you didn’t save my life, I wasn’t in danger and I could have gotten out of that car if you hadn’t got in my way.”



“Righttttt, sure, of course, that would explain your frantic heartbeat and the scent of fear I could smell a mile off.” He was teasing me now, and I wasn’t too pleased about it.

“Look, do me a favour when I go in there, you stay out here, ok.”

“It’s fine, I need to head back to my pack. But, I will be seeing you later, Jackson.”

He was gone in a flash. By the time I reached Hayley’s room, I was boiling from anger. I opened the door, spotting her standing in the middle of her room, arms crossed, and waiting for me.

“Are you kidding me right now, Hay?”

I was on a rampage, even feeling like I wanted to throw some fists. We’d all had a bitch of a day, or two, and I was running on little to no energy after having barely any sleep. This wasn’t ok, and now I had some Alpha werewolf stalking me.

“He’s needed with the investigation, I hate it as much as you, but we need his help.”

Rubbing the side of my head in frustration, I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. She must have been teasing. This was obviously a joke, one meant to annoy me.

“You are kidding, right? Since when do we need a freaking werewolf to help us?”

“Since all our trackers and spells have failed us, that’s when. None of us are able to find Molly, and I am running out of options. Adrian has offered to lend a hand, and right now, we need it.”

“Adrian, that’s his fucking name?”

I had to hold back a chuckle, I couldn’t picture him as an Adrian, maybe an Austen, but Adrian? Oh god.

“He will be helping you find Molly, that’s an order.”

Crossing my arms in anger, I realised I couldn’t really say anything else as an order was an order and once Hayley

commanded it, it was done. Rolling my eyes as she walked over to her desk and began flicking through some random bits of parchment and folders, I realised something. I had the book of Lady Elizabeth still in my possession and maybe that would be able to help us find Molly.



BY THE TIME I reached my bedroom and started looking through the first page of the book, my eyelids had begun to feel heavy. I only closed my eyes for a few seconds, or so I thought.

Day broke through my already opened curtains and the sun began to trail up towards my bed filling the room with gorgeous morning rays. It was a rather pleasant way to wake up, until I saw brown eyes peering down at me and my entire soul left my body as I jumped. Adrian.

“Sorry – did I startle you?” he asked with a cocky smile.

“Get the fuck out of my room.”

“Sorry, no can do, Hayley sent me up to wake you.”

“I don’t care if the bloody Queen sent you, get the hell out.”

“Are you always this cranky waking up? And here I thought we could maybe snuggle.”

He scoffed a laugh as he left the side of my bed, before he began looking around my room, fidgeting with ornaments on my desk. I was only mildly annoyed with his intrusive snooping, until he wandered to my nightstand, and picked up the frame of Alex and I. Before I could stop myself, a light blew out of my hand and towards him, knocking the frame out of his hands and smashing onto the floor.

“WOE! What the hell!”

He shouted at me as he began picking up the pieces of glass. The shock and realisation of what I just did hit me hard. What was I thinking? I could have damaged that photograph

doing something as reckless as that. Did I damage it?! Scrambling from my bed and rushing over to the picture, I ripped it out of Adrian's hands. I could tell the edges were a bit charred from the fire blast, but it wasn't too bad, thankfully. I had to compose myself, I refused to cry in front of this douchebag. *Deep slow breaths*, I reminded myself.

My heart felt tight in my chest as I took in Alex's face, his handsome features, and I had to keep myself together. I could feel Adrian's eyes looking at me as I kept mine low. Walking towards my bedside table, I put the photograph inside the table drawer and took another deep breath.

"Who was that?"

He asked me, then with my back still turned away, I felt that same lump formed again in my throat.

"Someone I lost a long time ago." It's all I could say, the answer I normally gave to those who asked me and had no idea of my history, or that of Alex's.

"I'm sorry for your loss."

He seemed sincere and part of me wanted to believe that he actually cared, but I highly doubted it. He was here for his own selfish reasons, claiming I owed him a debt when all he did was pull me out of the wreckage of a car, which I could have done myself – eventually.

Turning to face him then, he looked oddly regal in the morning light, his tight blue jeans that fitted him perfectly, hugging his obviously very muscular and toned legs. He also wore a black shirt that was open just a little near his collarbone, where he hadn't fastened all the buttons. My stomach did a little flip as I looked at him, it had been a very long time since I was near someone I felt such an attraction to, and now this annoying, but good-looking bloke was standing in my bedroom.

"It was a long time ago. Now why did Hayley send you up here at the crack of dawn?"

"Oh, did I say she did?" He laughed and rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly. "I lied, she didn't send me up here,

actually I have no idea where the huntress could be, but I wanted to talk to you. I feel we got off on the wrong foot yesterday.”

He shifted his weight from his left foot to his right, appearing to be a little awkward and lost for words. I crossed my arms, a defence mechanism I had developed since Alex’s death, Molly said it was my version of closing myself off from the world, and she was pretty much correct.

“Go on.” I wanted to see what he had to say.

“Well, I’m pretty sure you could have got out of that car yourself, but after seeing you at the bar, I don’t know... I wanted to talk to you more.”

“Right, that’s not creepy at all.”

“Don’t be a dick about it. It’s a wolf thing alright, and I don’t know, I just saw you throwing those fire thingy’s and wanted to see what else you could do.”

Interesting and again seemingly creepy. When I saw him at the bar, I had this feeling of wanting to get to know him as well, but dismissed those feelings as loneliness as it often was. I didn’t trust him, I had no reason to and now I was starting to feel as if he was just saying things he thought I wanted to hear, which I didn’t. What I wanted was out of this ‘life debt’ and to find Molly.

“Alright, well eh,” I didn’t know what to say as we stood in silence, “We should go find Hayley and see what we can do in finding Molly.”

Grabbing Lady Elizabeth’s book from the other pillow on my bed, where I clearly had moved it to during my forty winks and I smiled weirdly at Adrian as we left my room the same time, well he bumped into me as he went through the door first and I felt a sudden spark in my fingertips.

“You coming?” He asked, turning back at me and smiling that dazzling smile he had given me at the bar.

“Yeah, obviously.”

What was that? I had never felt sparks like that before.

# 6



Reaching the end of the staircase, Hayley was already there with many recruits waiting at the ready to go out on another search and potentially rescue. Darius leaned against the staircase railing as if he didn't even want to be there, and Adrian was holding out a fist for him to bump it, which he did not, thankfully. Once Hayley noticed I was there, she came up to stand next to me and address the rest of our team.

"I realise you are all tired and are wondering why I dragged you out of bed this early. Our werewolf connections, thanks to the Alpha Adrian, have notified us of a disturbance on the east outskirts of the city. Magic has been detected and a lot of it, we will be heading out there on a search and recon mission, hopefully we will be able to find and bring Molly home."

My eyes widened as I listened to her and I shot a glance at Adrian. He did have a reason for being in my room this morning, but of course, he decided to hold back on important information. This is why I couldn't trust him; he hasn't given me any reason to.

"Jackson and I will be leading the first two teams in and then Darius will lead the third. Adrian, I believe you said, you will have your pack ready should we need any back up."

"That's correct, they will be there ready to help when I give them the order to, should you need them."

Hopefully, we wouldn't need any werewolf assistance, we had never needed it before, and we certainly didn't need it now. Rounding everybody up and jumping into the back of the bulletproof vans we had, I sat in the front with Hayley as one of the recruits drove us.

I had no idea where Adrian had disappeared to and Darius was in one of the other vans with his team. For the most part, we sat in silence for almost the whole ride. I was still wondering what those sparks meant earlier and was hoping to God my gut feeling was wrong.

"Are you alright?" Hayley asked me as she cocked her gun back and prepared it.

"Yeah sure, why wouldn't I be?"

"I don't know, I just have this weird feeling something is up."

"No idea what you're talking about."

I continued to look out the window as we crossed the bridge towards the east part of the city, it was mainly the industrial side of the city, filled with warehouses and the power grid that kept the city somewhat alive.

"Jack, I don't know if she's here, but this is our only lead."

"I know that Hay, I'm just worried as she hasn't been able to take her sleeping potion, and I just have this strange feeling something awful has happened."

She placed a reassuring hand on my knee, and smiled softly, we both were holding onto some hope that she was fine, or the worst case was she had been captured by some vampires and was waiting for us to rescue her. Molly's bracelets controlled her magic, she was very powerful, but no one knew just how powerful as she had the limited put on her. During her training days, she set fire to an entire block that housed many recruits in one of her outbursts. To protect everyone, including the city, Hayley's parents asked me to create these bracelets that would help control her power. To control her.

As we pulled up a block or two away from the warehouse, Hayley jumped out first and then me as well as the rest of our

team, all guns at the ready.

“Now, I don’t want anyone firing unless I give the order. We aren’t about to have a full-on gun fight here, ok.”

Hayley was as bossy and as powerful as ever since she bonded with Darius. I believed she had regained some of his abilities after that night with Angelique as she seemed faster on her feet now, stronger than ever before, and healed faster. Darius took his stance beside her; a deadly duo. Then we were given the signal to move out.

As we reached a street away, the wave of magic that hit me almost took my breath away. It was unbelievable and something I had never felt before. It was beautiful, but also deadly, was it Molly? Feeling through all my senses, I called to the elements to help me try and detect her, to see if my hunch was correct and yet they couldn’t answer me.

An orange and yellow glow could be seen in the distance as the sound of pops travelled through the air. Hayley looked back at me with a worried look in her eyes, I knew that look, I had seen it before during certain missions that she wasn’t sure if we’d all come back safely. Was she getting the same feeling as I was?

“*What is it?*” I asked through our bond, hoping we still had some of it left and she could hear me.

“*I’m not sure, but Darius can feel it, too.*” She sent back.

The sudden feeling of dread, fear, and death flooded by senses, and I would have collapsed there and then if it wasn’t for the fact Adrian in his white wolf form appeared next to me and he placed his nose in my hand, the same sparks came, and I could feel him passing on some of his energy to me. Did he mean to do that? I looked at him for some reassurance in his eyes and he just turned away from me and ran towards Hayley as a chorus of howls were heard drifting through the air.

Finally, we reached the shutters of the warehouse, and the scent of death was overpowering, even Darius looked distressed, and Adrian looked back at me and then Hayley, we

were pretty sure every single one of us could smell the same thing.

“On three.”

At the count of three, Hayley pushed open the side door and the silence was defying, not even the sound of morning birds. Shit. This wasn't going to be good, and before I could even utter a single word to Hayley to stop the fire that had been in the sky, it engulfed us. Surrounding us as we entered the building, taking out any of the recruits who were standing on the side-lines and their screams could be heard over the roaring of flames.

*“We need to retreat!”*

I shouted at Hayley through our bond, and she just shook her head as she looked up above us. There hanging from the ceiling was a person, dripping with blood, and my body ran cold at the sight of it.

Flames continued to shoot out from around the person, setting fire to anything and everything in its path, and yet the person didn't move, didn't seem to even know what was happening.

Gun fire went off then, narrowly missing the person and Hayley nearly lost her shit as she turned quickly to look at the recruit who fired in fear.

“HOLD YOUR FIRE!!”

She shouted, but then soon every single recruit was shooting towards the person, hitting them in multiple places of their body as well as around them, but again they did not seem at all bothered. Until the flames stopped, and the person began to drift slowly towards the floor, towards where we were standing.

Molly.

It was Molly.

What the actual fuck was happening right now?

Looking at Hayley as her eyes widened, I could feel panic run through our bond. Darius must have felt the same as he



appeared right next to her with a protectiveness in his eyes.

“Molly?!”

I shouted, hoping she'd hear me, and she looked at me with her big blue eyes and a sinister smile emerged across her face. She waved her hand and the flames disappeared around us and I could see the aftermath of what the fire had done, not only had it taken the lives of some of our recruits, but also many, many people.

“You. You were the one who tried to trap me.”

She ran her fingers through her pink hair, and it changed a shade of bright red, as if she had become the fire itself, she landed gracefully on the floor mere inches from me. She paid no attention to anyone else in the room, just kept her eyes on me.

“I broke your spell months ago I will have you know, was pretty simple. Thank you for not making it overly complicated, I hate spells like that.”

“I'm confused, Mol.”

“Oh, sorry sweetie, I may look like your little friend but I'm not her, well I was – kinda – at some point.”

She laughed as if it was a grand joke, but it meant absolutely nothing to me, and began playing with a small ball of fire, running it in-between her fingers and looking at me with disturbing eyes.

“I'm not sure I understand.”

“Hmm – I thought you were smarter than this.”

Hayley and the others were still standing there watching in silence, or were they able to even speak? That strange feeling in the air was still hanging over us and as I looked at Hayley I noticed she wasn't blinking, or even moving. As if time was standing still.

Time was standing still.

The wheels in my brain began to turn as I looked at my surroundings, trying to think as to why this felt so familiar,

had this happened to me before? Had I read something like this before? And if it was as if a light bulb went off in the back of my mind, Hayley. Hayley mentioned a while ago she faced a witch who could not only fly, but they had stopped time.

“So, if you’re not Molly, who are you?” I asked them, trying to gather my thoughts.

“Someone a lot older than you, a lot older than this world actually.”

“Have you been here before?”

She began to circle around me then, as if I were her prey and the hairs on the back of my neck went up.

“Many times before, I have been searching for something, someone each time. But, this time around, you put a nasty spell on me, and I had a difficult time breaking free. Only managing it once or twice.”

“Can I know your name?”

“In due time my dear, but for now I am to be left alone to prepare.” She nipped at my earlobe, and it sent shockwaves down my spine.

“Prepare? Prepare for what?”

She started to float again in front of me, and as she reached the spot she was once before, she smiled at me again with that devilish look upon her face as fire started to wrap around her feet.

“To end the world.”

And then in a flash, she was gone, and time moved. Hayley looked at me shocked as did everyone else, looking around for where Molly had gone and fear enveloped me.



“What the fuck happened?!”

Hayley was now screaming at me as we stood in the house lounge while body bags were being brought in of our fallen recruits and taken down to the morgue. I knew she was pissed, but I also felt she was pissed at me, as if I had done all of this myself. I was just as confused and angry as she was, and I had no answers.

“I told you what happened.”

“No, you told me Molly was that weird creature person thing that was floating in mid-air. Jackson, what the actual fuck is going on?”

Taking her hands in mine, I could feel her panic and hear it in her voice. One thing I learnt about Hayley was she hated not having all the pieces of the puzzle, or not having clues as to what was going on. Darius sat on one of the lounge chairs with Adrian next to him, both looking at us with the same bewildered look on their faces.

“I don’t know what’s happened. But, I don’t think that’s Molly anymore. She said she’d been in here before, but I put some nasty spell on Molly, and I think it trapped whoever that spirit, person, or whatever inside Molly.”

“Her bracelets, maybe?”

“Perhaps, but Hayley, I think whoever this person is, they’re the ones who attacked you months ago in the city. They had the same time stopping spell ability and could fly, I know it’s not much to go on, but it’s a possibility.”

“But, Molly has never broken your spell before?”

“I can’t say for one hundred percent that’s true anymore, maybe there are other things at play here.”

She sighed then, letting go of my hands and going to Darius, taking his hands in hers, he got up and wrapped his arms around her. We were all overtired and stressed by this entire thing and now, we were clearly facing something even bigger than we expected.

“Jackson, maybe that big book of yours has some answers?”

Adrian popped up then, the book left on the lounge coffee table. One of the household staff must have put it there after I came down this morning. I had planned to show it to Hayley, but got distracted by our plans to ‘save’ Molly.

“Maybe. Darius, take Hayley up to her room, get her to have some rest and I will do what research I can, see what I’m able to find about an ancient witch, or something.”

“You haven’t really got much to go on?”

Darius asked, and I shot him a look of shut up and help me out. He took Hayley then even though she protested all the way up the stairs and towards her room, leaving me with Adrian, and as much as I didn’t want to be near him, I could still feel some of his energy coursing through my veins.

“Did you mean to help me out earlier?” I asked, picking up the book and heading towards the door.

“How’d you mean?”

“You sent me some of your energy.”

“Ah, I read witches need energy sometimes to help them in fights and stuff and well, I couldn’t have you dying when you still owe me a debt.”

He winked at me as if it were just a silly joke, and I rolled my eyes in response. Idiot. Heading towards the manor library, knowing full well he’d follow me, I decided to begin my research there. Looking for anyone who had been documented

to use time stopping magic or the ability to fly, hoping and praying I'd be able to find something.

Pushing open the library doors, I was crossing my fingers for it to be quiet and for once the place was empty, everyone was either out on patrol, training, or studying in the new classes Hayley had set up with some of the old professors.

“Where'd you want me?”

Adrian asked as he passed me and stood in the middle of the library.

It was a lot smaller than the one back at Van Helsing manor, and we would still be able to use that one from time to time, but I had brought all my family records over to this one as well as any history about the Van Helsing's or Elizabeth's line.

“Don't you have a pack to go and order?”

I asked putting Elizabeth's book down and trying to decide which stack I had put Elizabeth's lineage and history books in. The one Molly gave me most likely had more unknown information, so I would take some time to flick through it, but for now, I had to try and put two and two together if I was to find out who now inhabited my friend.

“They can do without me for the rest of the day, I've ordered them to continue protecting the city and to take down any vampire they see.”

“Taking orders from Hayley now are we?”

“Werewolves were never the enemy; we were mostly paid thugs and back up when the big vampires needed us. That or they had captured one of our own and we were used as pawns. I have no quarrels against Hayley.”

Running my fingers down a line of book spines and pulling out the few I thought may help, Adrian took them off me before I had a chance to say anything and set them down on the table then came and took the others I was pulling out.

“I like your huntress. She has spunk.”

“Spunk. I wouldn't say that to her face if I were you..”

He chuckled lightly and the sound sent shivers down my back as he took a seat across the table from me, flipping open one of the books and reading whatever was on the page.

“Ok, I have no idea what I’m reading here.”

“That’s because that book is in Latin.” Smiling, I took the book and handed him another. “Try this one, we are looking for anything to do with ancient witches banished or those who could manipulate time.”

“And do we have any clues as to what or who that person might be?”

“Honestly? I have never seen or heard anything like it. Hayley was attacked by someone who could control time and I believe this might be the same person. She never described them though so perhaps they were using a disguise or something.”

“Right so this is going to be totally guess work.”

I shrugged my shoulders in response and got to work flicking through the family tree book of Lady Elizabeth, even going as far as her predecessors. She wasn’t the very first witch to walk this world as her mother was one, perhaps her grandmother was one also? One way or another, I was hoping we’d find something out.



I HAD no idea how long time had passed by the time one of the household staff came in with a tray of biscuits, sandwiches, and a pot of coffee. They must have known we’d been at this for hours, and were no closer to finding out any information that was worth knowing.

Adrian never let up or showed signs of boredom, he continued to jot down notes of anything that might be of interest and although some of them came to dead ends, or meant nothing, he carried on. His persistence surprised me as I didn’t picture him as the book type, or the hard worker type.

Werewolves were renowned for going in all guns blazing, or having a very chilled outlook at life, Adrian didn't seem to be either. He seemed much more rounded than that, or at least he did at this very moment, time would tell of course. I was normally a very good judge of character, but even he was fooling me a bit.

“You keep staring at me – Is there something on my face?” He asked me, his brown eyes dancing in the library lights.

“I don't.” Shit, had I been staring?

“Yes, you are, I've caught you a few times now.”

He closed the book and leaned back on his chair, rolling up the sleeves of his shirt, and I could feel my heart skip a beat.

“What's on your mind?”

“Nothing, I'm just surprised you can read.” I joked, trying to cover my nerves.

“I will have you know I went to a very well-paid university before I was bitten.”

“You were bitten and not born?”

“You would be very surprised to know not many werewolves can procreate, so instead we are bitten to grow our ranks.”

I knew werewolves had a problem at having babies without defects as sadly there was something in the werewolf gene that stopped them from giving birth to fully changeable young. Most likely another one of those balancing rules, but any human could be bitten.

“Has a witch ever been bitten?”

“Not to my knowledge, but it could have happened.”

“Do you think a hybrid witch and wolf could exist?”

“Well, a vampire witch one does, doesn't it?”

Darius. Somehow word had gotten out that he was the hybrid, Hayley and I believed it was most likely Eric blabbing his mouth as he would always do after a few drinks at a bar.

Since then, she had become even more protective of him, even if he was one of the most powerful creatures on earth.

“Hmmm, maybe.”

“Why’d you ask?”

“I’m just curious that’s all – I found something in Lady Elizabeth’s grimoire about a spell to denounce a werewolf’s curse, or something, but I have no idea if it would even work. There are a lot of spells in this book I didn’t even know were real.”

“Denounce the moon? Does that mean we would no longer be cursed? I know most werewolves can change at will once they reach an age, or change so many times, it takes a lot of power and control, but those who are newly turned, it’s horrendous watching them go through their first hundred changes by will of the moon.”

“I’ve heard the change is pretty heavy for a lot of newly changed werewolves.”

Pouring myself and Adrian a cup of coffee, I was surprised how simple and easy it felt to talk to him, all things considered, and if I was able to overlook the whole life debt thing, which I wasn’t going to anytime soon.

“Yeah, it’s rough. I was bitten when I was about thirteen and well, let’s just say I was grateful when I hit eighteen and I wasn’t always changing every full moon.”

Thirteen seemed so young when he said it, I couldn’t even think about what I was doing back in my teens. Most likely messing around with Hayley and Eric as I grew up within the clan, after my father was killed by a vampire, leaving my mother to care for us. My powers started to show around the age of eleven and the rest was sort of history, a blocked-out history.

Being a werewolf, however, seemed much harder than finding out you could use magic spells, like a wizard. I was so excited when my training began, even though my mother was terrified of everything, she was just a ‘simple’ human, and the power came from my father’s side unbeknown to her.



All of my family were dead now, and I was the very last Gates to carry the family name. My mother died of an infection brought on from a - werewolf bite.

“My mother died after being bitten by a werewolf. The strain didn’t take hold of her, and she died of an infection of the blood.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, was she old?”

It would have seemed like such an odd question to ask from any ordinary person listening in, but to us, it was a reasonable one. Mostly everyone who was bitten by a werewolf when in their late years, fifties, sixties died.

“She was about fifty-six if I remember correctly. It was extremely hard to lose her as it was shortly after Hayley’s parents were also killed, well her father was and up until three, four months ago we had thought her mother was killed too, but nope, she was turned into a vampire and Hayley had to say goodbye all over again.”

It seemed like a silly bit of information to give to someone who wasn’t even there, but for some reason I found it easy to talk to Adrian about these things. I hadn’t mentioned my mother’s death in years, so that surprised me how easy it was to discuss it, especially with someone who had no idea about my past.

“Is being a werewolf difficult?”

I asked, drinking the rest of my coffee, interested to see his reaction, or if I could even read what he was thinking just by looking at him. The air around us felt calm, relaxed, and almost whimsical, the soft sound of candle lights flickering around us, and the soft pitter-patter of rain from the windows made the library feel even more magical than it already was.

“Being the Alpha is far more difficult than being just a wolf.”

“Oh, I thought when you said you were an Alpha I just thought you meant your pack, I didn’t know you meant all packs.”

“It’s not a title I hold lightly, and more often than not I have to fight to keep my place above the rest. But, I was voted to be leader and after I defeated our previous Alpha, the other pack leaders agreed I should be top dog, so to speak.”

“How does that work?”

“When I shift, I can communicate with every werewolf in the area, and my word is law. It’s very much like what Hayley does with all of you, she is the Alpha of your pack, and you do as she commands.”

We weren’t a pack, but I understood what he meant as we usually always did what Hayley commanded, even when I disagreed I would still find myself doing as she ordered. Maybe there was some magic in her words perhaps? She was chosen to be our leader by right of magic so it would make sense.

“We should get back to work and stop getting distracted,” I suddenly said, bringing my attention back down to my book.

“Well, stop staring at me then.”

Winking at me, I couldn’t help but smile. Adrian seemed a bit daring, perhaps too daring for my own good, but his rugged look and the way he ran his fingers through his blonde locks made my mind wander. How I would love to run my hands through them, look deeply in his eyes...

“*No. No, concentrate, Jackson.*”

I could feel his eyes upon me as I flicked mine upwards looking at him, still smiling and rolled mine in reply, trying to ignore the fluttering I had growing inside me.



I had decided at some point to call it a night, and Adrian seemed happy enough to, almost overjoyed when he no longer had to read anymore ‘magical nonsense’, and although I didn’t want to give up now, my eyes were starting to see spots and the words were beginning to bounce off the pages.

Lady Elizabeth’s book was still not giving me any clues as to what had taken over my friend. Frustrated and angry, I sat at the library desk with my thoughts as Adrian got up to leave, most likely half expecting me to go.

“You know, whenever I find I’ve hit a wall, or something, I go for a run. I know it’s a bit different for you witches, but maybe do something that can help clear your mind and come back again tomorrow, you might see things a bit clearer.”

He smiled then as he headed out the door, leaving me to mull things over in my head. Why wasn’t I finding anything? Why weren’t there any accounts of someone being able to manipulate time or fly? I had heard stories of witches being able to fiddle with time, but then again, hadn’t they all been killed or stripped of their powers? Meddling with time seemed like something Lady Elizabeth would stop, after all she helped keep the balance.

“Think Jackson, you’re smarter than this.”

I said to myself rubbing my temples. I was missing something, and I knew it was staring me right in the face, it was always the way. Maybe going and coming back later

would be the best thing to do, but then that would feel like giving up and right now, that's the last thing I wanted to do.

The sun was starting to rise as the light was coming through the library windows, which made me slightly happy, but also a little depressed, for it reminded me that I was running very low on sleep now. It had taken our staff weeks to get them completely clean as Angelique had every single one covered to block out the sun, so it was nice we had all this bright natural light beaming in every day.

Getting up to stretch my legs, I rubbed the back of my neck and tilted it from side to side, cracking whatever bone I needed, feeling a little less of the pressure sitting on my shoulders and started to wander through the stacks of books. Running my fingers across the spines of books, dust breaking free as many of them hadn't been touched.

I'd left many of the books left over from Angelique as I wasn't too sure if they would be useful or useless and yet I hadn't found the time to flick through them. As I glanced through the shelves, hoping for some light bulb moment when something caught my eye.

A symbol with a star and an arrow through it was at the base of a book. It wasn't a particularly eye-catching book. I pulled it out, a plain black leather-bound cover, but deep within the leather was the star pattern. The same symbol on the necklace Hayley wore. The symbol of Lady Elizabeth's family line.

Taking the book back to my table, one of the household staff was just cleaning up the left-over coffee cups and replacing them with a nice pot of hot tea and some warm waffles and a bowl of fruit.

“Thank you.”

“Of course, Mr Gates, chef, mentioned you had been at this all night, and we can't have you here on an empty stomach.”

She smiled at me before heading out the door and leaving me to the silence of the library. Pouring myself a cup, I

composed myself before almost ripping open the book and seeing it was just an ordinary cookbook, filled with medieval styled food recipes. This made no sense, I continued to flick through the pages and every single one was of a different recipe. No, something wasn't right.

Flipping to the middle section of the book, I held my hands over the pages and closed my eyes, honing in on my magic and waiting with bated breath to see if something appeared and at first, nothing, but then slowly a feeling of vibrations ran up my fingertips and into my arms.

Yes, it was cloaked.

Rolling up my sleeves, I felt a sense of relief and also some joy as cloaking spells were my favourite types of magic as you never truly knew what you were going to uncover. Rubbing my hands together blue and green sparks flickered at the tips of my fingers as my magic flowed through my veins, and I took in a deep breath, using the energy from the candle flames around me.

“Reveal.”

Waving my hands across the book, I waited for the pages to change, but they didn't. Ok, so this wasn't going to be a simple revealing spell, and I should have known better. Perhaps I needed more energy, maybe a different spell altogether would help.

“Ostendere.”

Most of our magic spells were spoken using Latin, we also wrote most of our grimoires in Latin also, as it was no longer a renounced language and everyone had forgotten the words, it worked perfectly for witches.

Nothing once again, and I was getting frustrated, I hated being bested by any magic spell, and I most certainly wasn't going to allow this one. Lowering my hands and rubbing them again, I pulled from my strength within to make my magic stronger and closed my eyes this time.

“Ostende mihi abscondita tua,” I commanded.

And finally, as I felt the warmth of my magic flow through me and onto the book in front of me, I opened my eyes to see a bright light appeared and once it was done, the book no longer had silly recipes, but something of a story with brightly coloured paintings.

Turning back to the first page, the symbol was on the title page, largely painted, and it wasn't just the star and arrow anymore. It had a whole scene depicted around it. A knight fighting a dragon, and a witch beside them firing out red and green fire towards the creature.

Flipping to the next page, the picture changed to the dragon falling to earth with a clock underneath, then on the next page, the dragon was on the ground, the witch and knight standing next to it and as I flicked to the next page, the dragon was gone and in its place was a girl.

The symbol was still on every page, either in the middle or in the corner. Moving past the dragon, girl, thing, the next page was of text written in ancient Latin, and I was slightly grateful my mother and Hayley's mum had pushed for me to learn the language, despite hating it.

Each page describes a battle, a battle older than time itself, before Lady Elizabeth was born, and the banishing of a great evil, an evil hellbent on destroying this world. The dragon was only a small part of that evil, but the girl within the dragon was locked away, hidden in a prison deep within the earth. She would not be rescued; she could not be saved. She could not be killed.

My eyes darted back and forth as I flicked back to the drawings at the beginning of the book. The girl's body laid on the ground as if she were in pain, lost, and alone and it pulled at my own heartstrings. I needed to know more, who was she and why was she punished?

Continuing to read through the book, I read through passages about spells that were forbidden, magic that was now lost in time, and the girl was only mentioned once or twice until finally, at the middle of the book there she was, a whole

entire page dedicated to her story and around her neck, Hayley's necklace.

Shutting the book quickly, I wasn't sure of what to do with any of this information. My brain felt fuzzy as the after effects of using magic took its toll on me. I needed sleep before I completely burned myself out and Hayley would call a meeting soon to see if I had found any more information. And from what I had found, I wasn't one hundred percent sure of it, or any of the assumptions I had come up with.

Grabbing the other half of my waffle, I left with the book and Lady Elizabeth's history book and headed up to my room, hoping I didn't bump into anyone as now the morning duties had started.

Recruits were up either having breakfast or getting ready for training. Lessons had begun again, teaching the recruits spell casting, finding your centres and the history of the Van Helsing's as per the orders of Hayley.

I was hopeful she wasn't awake yet, and thankfully, I reached my bedroom within record time, shutting my door behind me and bolting it shut. I put the books on my desk and as I turned to get to bed a thought popped into my head. Would the cloaking spell be working now that I closed the book? I needed to be sure as I didn't want it to fall into anyone's hands until I was sure I found something.

Thankfully, as I opened the book the recipes had returned, and my heart slowed down. I was feeling anxious from the moment I left the library, but was grateful something was going right today.

"If you wanna know."

I stood frozen with my back turned to whoever was speaking, why had I not seen someone in my room when I came in? Were they hiding?

"My history, I could just tell you."

Her voice was silk-like, beautiful, and rolled off the tongue so easily, she was an enchantress and as I turned around to face her, I was under her spell. Molly, or whoever she had

become, was sitting on my bed, wearing a red velvet dress with a sweetheart neckline, her hair curled, and she played with my letter opener that lived beside my bed.

“Not all history is true, you know that book of yours only tells half the story.”

“I – I eh – haven’t read it yet.”

“Even better, I can tell you first-hand what happened. Or, I can show you.”

Within a blink of an eye, she stood in front of me and placed her hand forcefully on my forehead, throwing me backwards and as I fell, the world around me appeared to speed up, as if it didn’t exist and I was travelling through time and space.

As I slowed down, I hit something hard, winding me slightly. She stood in front of me looking out into the distance, her dress long and trailing behind her. She was outstandingly beautiful and nothing like my friend Molly anymore, although she was using Molly’s body as a shell, she wasn’t her.

“Thousands of years ago, before the time of men, there were us, the protectors of this world. We kept the order, watched as man grew, procreated, and lived with women. And for most of it, we lived in peace, harmony.”

She began to speak as I pushed myself up off the ground, a little dizzy, but I staggered to stand beside her. Unsure of where we were or for that matter when we were.

“I watched them build temples to honour us, to give us offerings for prosperity, for good harvests and for the rain. And for a time, we honoured those requests, until he came.”

She looked at me and then pointed at the group that was gathering at the bottom of the hilltop we stood on. I hadn’t noticed anyone before, I didn’t even see that a small town was in the distance. She looked back at the group then waved her hand and the world melted away once again then we stood just inches away from the group.

“He brought with him religion, that we must all follow the one true God, he who created them. We were to be forgotten,



and those who continued to believe in us would be burned.”

“Are you telling me that you’re a God?”

I asked, my mouth open from the surprise and also the sudden confusion. I was never a believer in religion, as a gay man it was not something I liked to think about. Often or not, we were always punished for being different than the rest of the world, and now as a gay witch, two things that the world would never accept, I often hid away who I truly was.

“I wish, no, I was the high priestess. I was the one they’d ask for help, to pray for them and their wishes. When he arrived, I was banished for my beliefs. Thrown from my home, my family and my temple were burned to the ground. The protectors of this world understood and respected their wishes, if they chose not to believe in them anymore, they would not force them.”

The scene changed once again and in front of us now stood a burning temple, the smoke as tall as the trees, where a young girl stood at the bottom of the temple steps crying and screaming.

“I was weak back then; I had no idea of the person I truly was.”

My stomach started to turn into knots as the scene changed again, and now we were in some sort of woods, and the girl started to walk into a dark, black lake. I moved to try and stop her, but Molly grabbed my arm and shook her head.

“This is where I was reborn. Born to punish those who turned away, those who betrayed me.”

My eyes widened as I watched the girl completely disappear under the water then seconds later, she came back up, changing in front of my eyes into a dark, black, and red dragon, her eyes yellow and filled with rage. I had read about dragons in my history books, it was strange that everywhere in the world there was a story about a dragon, but we as humans have never found any proof they existed and now, I was watching one be born from a human.

“You took that from me. And now, I will take from you.”

She turned to face me then, her eyes turning red as smoke began to surround her feet and as my eyes started to widen I felt something hard hit the back of my head, causing me to fall backwards and as I opened my eyes, I was now looking up at a ceiling.

The library.



“God took you long enough to wake up! I was shouting at you for ages.”

Hayley’s voice drifted to my ears as I slowly opened my eyes, I saw her standing over me. As I pushed myself up feeling slightly dizzy, I noticed that Darius and Adrian were sitting either side of the table I was sitting at earlier. I hadn’t left the library; I was still here. Was that a dream? What the hell just happened?!

“How long have you been here?” I asked as Hayley helped me stand up.

“We only got here a few minutes ago and you were on the floor, I thought maybe you passed out from exhaustion. You’ve been here since yesterday afternoon.”

Hayley’s voice seemed worried as she helped me to sit back down. It was now dark outside, and I appeared to have lost an entire day.

“No, that can’t be right.” I uttered, looking at my watch and then up at the three of them, all concern on their faces. “I left the library this morning.”

“No, Jack, Adrian left this morning, and he left you here, even the staff said you’ve been here all day reading some book.”

Some book? Looking at the table, there was the leather-bound book open wide for everyone to see, showing the paintings of the dragon girl as she was shot down from the sky.

Had I dreamt that Molly had come to visit me and told me of her past? Or was it the books doing?

“This isn’t some book, Hayley. This book has your necklace symbol all over it, and I’m pretty sure this is the history of whatever, or whoever, is living inside of Molly,” I paused, biting my tongue wondering if I should continue. “She visited me, I think.”

“Who?” Adrian leaned forward in anticipation while the other two stayed silent.

“Molly, I think, she told me some sort of story that involved a girl who turned herself into a dragon, but it wasn’t just her telling me the story, I saw it. I saw it all.”

I stopped for a second, as everything came flooding back. The feelings, the words, everything she said to me, and how she looked, this enchantress that took hold of me without even really saying anything. The way she moved, spoke, everything about her had me hypnotised, until I wasn’t anymore.

“Hayley, I don’t think she’s just any ordinary witch.”

My voice was filled with worry and a hint of fear, I didn’t feel right, I could still feel her touch on my head as she pushed me through time. I felt dizzy and also electrified, as if I could do anything in the world. She had left a mark on me, and I didn’t know how I was going to get it off.

Sitting next to me then, Hayley placed her hands on mine and smiled up at me, an attempt to reassure me I think.

“She’s just any other bad guy, we will get our Molly back.”

“I don’t think Molly is ever coming back.”

“That or this person was always Molly from the beginning.”

Adrian said, and I looked up at him suddenly, the thought hadn’t even occurred to me before. She had said I had trapped her, barred her from using her magic and from releasing herself completely in Molly. But yet, I had known Molly since we were kids, both Hayley and me, we all grew up together. Molly started showing signs of magic around the time I did,

but she always seemed far more advanced than me, as if she already knew things before anyone else did.

Was this the other part of her? The enchantress who was deep within her mind? She had mentioned my bloodline and Hayley's, long before there were any Van Helsing's and yet, Van Helsing's had trapped her, imprisoned her after what I assumed was her killing their families as well as innocent people.

Did that mean we would have to do the same? Put her back in her cage. How did she even escape in the first place? My heart was racing with anticipation, and my mind lost track of the amount of thoughts shouting out at me.

Adrian stood then, putting his hand on my shoulder and those sparks from before ran through my neck, and it was as if they snapped me into reality, calming my nerves, and I looked at him wondering if he felt the same thing, but he just tapped my shoulder and walked around the table.

"I think we need to get you up to medical, get you checked over, and maybe you should stay in there for some undisturbed rest," Hayley ordered.

"No, I won't be of any use if I'm sleeping."

"You won't be of any use if you can't stay awake, so you will stay there for at least tonight, and we can reassess in the morning ok."

She didn't understand what I saw, didn't understand all the feelings I had, and how anxious I was to find out the answers to my questions. I would do as I was told however, as she ordered it. I knew I needed the rest, but I also hated lying in bed and not being able to do anything.

"Adrian, do you mind taking him up. Darius and I will go on patrol tonight, and see if we can find out anything."

"No problem, come on Mr Witch."

Sighing and grabbing the books, Adrian took them out of my hands and then made his way to the door, expecting me to follow him. And of course, I did. Wobbly on my feet at first, I made my way to the staircase and Adrian looped an arm

around my waist, keeping me upright, and we made our way to the medical room, slowly, but eventually we got there.

Annabeth was sitting at her desk going through some notes and when she saw me come in, her eyes rolled almost to the back of her head, and she sighed, annoyed.

“I told you to rest and now you have overdone yourself,” she sighed getting up, “Come on, there’s a bed free.”

She sounded like an angry mother, fed up with her children not listening to her, and we both followed her obediently. Annabeth pushed a curtain back to reveal an empty bed, and I sat on it without protest. Adrian smiled awkwardly towards Annabeth then took the seat next to my bed.

“Eh, what are you doing?” I asked.

“If you think I trust you to stay here, you are mistaken. I’m staying right here.”

Annabeth huffed a laugh, and smiled over at Adrian, picking up the chart from the end of the bed, and started writing down notes. Van Helsing’s were very peculiar with their note taking and keeping records, even if it was something as simple as a prescription for painkillers, it had to be written down.

“I will send someone to fetch you a change of clothes, but Jackson, you are to stay here until I feel you are fit and ready to leave. Do you understand?”

“So, I’m being held hostage then.”

“Shut your moaning, and say yes to the lady so she can go about her job.” Adrian snarled at me, and it was as if every fibre in my body was on fire.

“Yes, Annabeth, I understand.”

“Good, lights out in one hour, and I will be in to check on you shortly to get your vitals.”

As she left, she pulled the curtain back, leaving Adrian and I to sit there in silence. He pulled out his phone and began texting rather quickly as his phone started to get notifications,

several in fact and judging by his shift in demeanour and face, he was angry at something, or someone.

“You know, you don’t have to stay with me. You can leave.”

I said, still sitting on the edge of the bed waiting for someone to bring me a change of clothes as I couldn’t well climb into bed in jeans and a t-shirt.

“I’m afraid you’re stuck with me. You’re not the only one who’s been ordered to do as they’re told.”

“I didn’t think Alpha’s could be ordered around.”

“We can’t, but when a certain lilac haired lady who enjoys playing with silver bullets, requests you look after her wingman, you do as you’re told.”

Damn Hayley. I was perfectly capable of looking after myself, and even if I did try to leave, Annabeth would most likely tackle me to the ground. She had that look in her eye that told me to stay put or else.

Watching Adrian intently then as he ran his fingers through his golden locks, I couldn’t help, but think how he looked like he belonged in one of those American soap operas, gorgeous and a total heartthrob, and anytime I catch his eye, my stomach would start to do flips and fill with butterflies. Annoyingly.

I could always take advantage of this time we had here uninterrupted and ask as many questions as I could think of, but then he would most likely want to know things in return and was I really willing to answer them? Thankfully, one of the house staff appeared with a little duffle bag filled with clothes and some toiletries. As if I were going to stay here for days and clearly not be able to head up to the other side of the house, where my things were and my own bed.

“I will let you get changed in private, I have a few calls to make. Don’t go anywhere.”

He was up and out before I even uttered a breath, and I sat there awkwardly for a few seconds before pulling the curtain tight and changing, then climbed into bed, and flicked through

the ancient book once again. I was still dazed, and it wrecked my brain trying to think of what had happened earlier with the enchantress as that's what I was now calling her. It didn't feel right to call her Molly, she wasn't Molly anymore, but I hoped my friend was still buried inside waiting to be rescued.



I HADN'T REALISED I had fallen asleep until Annabeth came in, and I noticed Adrian hadn't returned yet. Perhaps he saw me asleep and left to do other things, which he was welcome to, I didn't need a babysitter.

“Your vitals are ok, not great and I'm worried about your heart rate. It seems a bit low.”

“I will be fine. Just give me a healing potion and I can eventually get out of here. I don't need this fuss, Anna. You know I always bounce back.”

She scribbled more notes down on my chart and then pressed the blood pressure machine again, giving me the look of 'stay quiet' as it worked. I hated this feeling as if I were in trouble, so far everyone had been telling me what to do and it annoyed me to no end. I was Hayley's second in command, I didn't have time to sit in bed and rest. I was meant to be out there, helping her defeat bad guys and keep our family safe. But every time I tried to lift my head, I was filled with overwhelming nausea and the only thing I could blame was the after effects from the time spell.

“Hmmm, I will order Cook to bring up some food for you, that will help with your heart. I will get him to make extra for your friend.”

“He's not my friend.”

“Whatever, I don't do gay boy drama.”

“He's not gay.”

She laughed a sarcastic laugh at me before putting the chart back. Clicking her pen off, she stood at the end of my bed giving me that 'are you stupid' look and I stared back at



her clueless. Adrian didn't give me any gay vibes and if anything, he was overly flirty and annoying, but he clearly was into girls, and a straight man.

“Babes, if you think he's into girls you are clearly mistaken. He's been back and forth the last three hours sitting with you, asking Hayley what he should do, and he hasn't stopped asking me questions about your love life. He is so into you.”

Sighing as she left me with these now overpowering thoughts that I wasn't going to be able to shut off. I needed to concentrate on the matter at hand however, the enchantress, the bad guy, beat her and then maybe afterwards I can ask Adrian if he likes girls or boys.

Laughing at myself then picking up the book to try once again to read something that might be useful, I kept looking up every few minutes to see if Adrian would pop in. *Damn Annabeth*. I didn't have the time, energy, or fucks to give for this. Yes Adrian was handsome and the thought of rolling in the bed sheets had crossed my mind. But I haven't had sex since Alex, which was nearly two years ago now, even watching someone eat a hot dog would make me horny.

Rubbing my temples then, I slammed the book shut and threw back the bed covers. I wasn't going to sit here and do nothing. I couldn't, it wasn't in me, and my friends needed me, Annabeth could just scold me later, or something.

Poking my head out from the curtains, the room was in almost darkness, aside from the lamp on her desk still dimly lit, but her chair was empty. She must have stepped out and I took my chance, even if I was in my pyjamas.

Sneaking out appeared to be too easy, but then again Annabeth wasn't really going to chase me down and throw me back into bed, she knew better than that, and I was in the clear.

“Going somewhere?”

Almost jumping out of my skin, I turned around and saw Adrian leaning against the bannister of the staircase, still looking down at his phone before pocketing it and looking up

at me with fire behind his brown eyes. Crossing his arms, he stared at me with a sterned look of annoyance and smiled a cocky smile.

“I knew you wouldn’t last a whole night.”

“Look, I slept, I don’t need a babysitter, or to be told to get to bed. I am going up to my lab, I will drink an energy potion, and I will be going out to find Hayley.”

“Hayley is fine.”

“Really? So, what has kept you on your phone these past few hours?”

Adrian lowered his eyes to the ground then as if he’d been caught out then looked back up at me, a lightbulb moment seeming to go off in his head.

“Alpha business, while I’m here I still have a pack to run.”

Shaking my head and rolling my eyes, I walked past him and as I did, he grabbed me by the wrist and pulled me back. Turning me so I was leaning against the bannister now in his place as he leaned facing me, his legs opened mine and I swore my heart stopped beating in that second.

“Now, where do you think you’re going?”

“I – eh,” I gulped, “To my lab, I said.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“You can follow me if you like.”

I leaned in a bit closer to him, testing his nerve. Was Annabeth right? Was he into me, or was she just reading some very weird mixed wolf signals, because right now I had absolutely no clue what I was even doing.

“Lead the way.”

He didn’t move straight away, as I watched his chest rise and fall, full of ease, nothing seemed to be making him nervous and those little sparks had run up between my legs and into my thighs, causing me to shake a little. He smiled as he looked down at me, licking his lips, I heard him growl

slightly before he pulled away, and signalled his arm to me to get moving.

“Hayley will beat us both if she knows I’m helping you.”

“She will only beat one of us, and it won’t be me.”

I joked as I headed up the stairs towards my lab. The lab Molly would often be found in, and once there, started shuffling through the many cupboards of potions we kept, hoping I had any spare left overs of the energy potion. A healing one would also be good to take, Annabeth had mentioned my heartrate was a little slow and surely a healing potion would help fix that right?

“Where have Hayley and the others gone then?” I asked, to break the silence.

Adrian had taken a seat on one of the many stools we had dotted around the place. The lab wasn’t yet ready to truly be a working one just yet, many of the pieces of equipment were still left at the old house, and I would need to order new and up to date things before we could make it fully functional.

“I think, well, my wolves and that hybrid of hers picked up the scent of your friend after you went to sleep. I think they are doing some recon and will move in.”

I stopped looking through the cupboards with that, then turned to look at him with a shiver running through my body. What did he mean by moving in? The last time we tried to ‘move in’ on anyone was the day Hayley’s parents died. When the entire clan lost our leaders, and without an heir, Hayley was knowingly putting herself at risk.

“What do you mean by move in? They can’t think they will be strong enough to take on Molly themselves?”

He shrugged then as if he didn’t know, or didn’t care, and it frustrated me how calm and cool he was about everything. Even if his own wolves could be killed if they attacked her. We didn’t know enough about her powers other than she could create fire, fly and play with time, what if she could do more. What if she could turn into the dragon?

I needed to speed up and find everything I needed to get myself back in working order. Finding the healing and energy potions, I downed the disgusting liquids in seconds, waiting for them to make their way through my system and for a few minutes I waited, until finally the weight on my shoulders lifted, the pain in my collarbone was completely gone and the dizziness behind my eyes disappeared.

They had worked and now I needed to get changed, and Adrian was taking me to Hayley whether he liked it or not.

# 10



Adrian had insisted we take his car, he didn't trust my driving and I was fine up until the moment I attempted to put my seatbelt on, and my heart started to race. The last time I was in a car, I ended up upside down and this entire mess began and how could I be sure it wouldn't happen again.

"I'm a wolf, I'm a far better driver than some human."

His vain attempt at comforting me, which of course didn't work. Sweat beads trailed down my back and my head felt wet, I didn't panic when I jumped in the truck with Hayley during that patrol, so why was I so worried now.

"Hey – Hey."

Placing a hand on my bopping knee as my body started to shake violently, I tried to control myself. What the hell was this? Adrian took a hold of my face then, turning it towards him and his eyes flashed a hint of worry as he looked me up and down.

"Breathe alright, everything is fine, you're safe."

I couldn't catch my breath as my heart continued to race even quicker.

"Come on, breathe with me – in – and out."

Watching as his chest rose and fell, I counted in my head to ten as I took in a deep breath and then out, following his every movement until the shaking stopped and my heart began to slow.

"You alright now?"

He still had my face in his hands and as a tear escaped my eye, he rubbed it away with his thumb, looking at me as if I were some kind of China doll that would break, even if the wind blew on it. But I felt a sudden calm flow through me as I looked into his eyes, those browns changing to shades of gold and then back again, his wolf clearly trying to break free.

“Yes, thank you,” I paused, taking a deep breath in again, “I have no idea what that was about.”

“It’s all good, I suspected you were gonna have a meltdown sooner or later.” He laughed, leaning over me then to pull my seatbelt across and strap me in.

“What does that mean?”

I questioned him as he smiled a cheeky smile and turned the ignition on, his sports car roaring to life. I couldn’t shake the feeling of the calm that was in me now, the air around me cool to the touch, but a fire was awakening under my skin. With every minute I spent with Adrian it was growing, just like any normal fire, desperate to escape for air.

He throttled, dropping the gear, and sped through RavenBlack city, dodging in and out of cars, the city was alive and busy this evening. One of the other good things with Angelique dying and her goons leaving, the city was starting to build itself up again, and even with Adrian and his many wolves, they were clearly helping build the city by fixing houses, bringing in trade and so much more.

It’s no wonder Hayley wanted to be civil with them, she had always visualised that RavenBlack would become something grand and here it was, rising around us.

“Where are we going?” I asked, breaking the silence.

“Hayley is holed up at my club, my pack is there, I’ve ordered them to hold off until I arrive. I don’t know if Hayley knows you’re with me.”

“Trust me, she knows.”

I felt it then, that small pull we had, our connection. I always felt when she was near, sometimes I just tried to ignore it. It wasn’t always a pleasant feeling, as if the insides of your

brain were being scrabbled and sometimes when she was really pissed at me, I would feel those insides turn painful and right now, they were screaming at me.

“How does that work anyways? You’re not mates or blood, I would have smelt it if you were.”

“Okay, firstly that’s kinda fucked up that you can smell if someone is related or sleeping together.”

“Ha! It’s a wolf thing. It’s how I knew her, and Darius were mates, even before he showed his face in the club, I could smell him when he showed up with you.”

Turning a corner suddenly and heading down a back alleyway, I was surprised to see it so alive and a few of the back-alley clubs were open again, including a few strip clubs and brothels.

“Right, well Hayley and I have a magic connection. Whenever either of us need energy, we are able to tap into each other and borrow some. We are also able to send messages telepathically if we are near each other, and once, she was able to come to me in a dream.”

His eyes lit up a little when I mentioned the dream and I could already sense he wanted to know more, but we came to a sudden halt as we pulled up outside his club. Hayley was standing outside waiting, with her hands on her hips, and she did not look impressed at all.

“What part of ‘keep him at the manor’ did you NOT understand?”

She started on Adrian, just like I knew she would, even when it was my idea, and I had already planned on coming to her even if I didn’t have his help. Adrian rolled his eyes and shrugged his shoulders, walking past her, ignoring her completely and heading into his club. The anger behind her eyes would have been enough to send anyone away quickly, but I was determined.

“You need to leave.” She attempted to order me, but this time it wouldn’t work.

“Hayley, I need you to listen to me.”

“What I need you to do is go home, Jackson, I can’t have you here.”

She turned to walk away, and I grabbed her wrist, pulling her back towards me. She needed to listen to me, I wasn’t some damsel or someone who needed to be kept safe. I had always been at her side, for mostly everything and now she was just pushing me away.

“Jackson, I don’t want you here.”

“Hay, since when have I not been at your side, fighting the bad guys? I am fine, see!”

Letting go of her, I stepped back and did a slow turn so she could see every part of me. I knew she could feel I was fine, healthy, and ready to take on the world and yet, she looked at me with heartbroken eyes. She was keeping something from me and even if I searched through her mind, whatever it was, she wouldn’t let me in.

“You need to leave. I will get Adrian to take you back home.”

“Seriously? I can help! I have found so much out about the enchantress! I don’t know how to stop her yet, but if we work together.”

“NO!” She interrupted me, taking a forceful step forward and pushing me into the passenger side of the car. “Jackson, I need you to fucking leave, right now!”

“NO!” I shouted back as her fist went through the window. “Hayley, what is going on?”

“LEAVE!!”

Turning away from me, I watched her fist heal within seconds, I’m always amazed by her incredible healing strength as she started to walk back to the club. Taking a deep breath, I watched in confusion.

“That’s right, Hayley, push everyone away. You’re good at that. Telling people that care for you to leave, that’s why no one bothered with you when you left the house, why no one gave a shit. Poor little Hayley who lost her parents.”



She stopped in her tracks as I knew I hit a nerve, but now I was mad, vengeful even. She had no right to tell me to leave, I was her right hand and would die for her if she asked me to.

“Don’t you dare, Jackson,” she said quietly, holding back her rage.

“Why then? Why can’t I help? I’m your right hand.”

“No, you’re not,” she half turned to me, a clear sadness on her face, “Darius is. You will only get in the way, and I can’t protect you.”

Darius had replaced me, and all she now saw was a pathetic human, I wasn’t some sexy hybrid or a wolf. Witches could easily be killed, we had human deaths. I knew deep down she would eventually surpass me, no matter how much magic I learned, she would always become better than me.

“Go home.”

She left me there then, standing in the middle of nowhere as a slow light rain began to fall. Choking back tears and the lump in my throat, I wasn’t going to wait for her to send my babysitter down and stand here looking stupid and wounded, I needed to leave.

Taking the car was out of the question, but I knew walking wouldn’t get me very far, especially if a wolf was on the chase. Closing my eyes, I sensed and called forth the elements, hoping they would help me as they had once done before.

I had read the pages of Lady Elizabeth’s grimoire about flying and using the air to create wings, and right now seemed better than ever to learn. Taking a deep breath and composing myself, I pictured air wrapping itself around me, creating a blue ball of light and as its cool touch bound around my arms, I said the words.

“Aer, benedic me volare, alis me duce.”

The sense of floating was there as soon as I opened my eyes and already I was a few feet off the ground. My eyes widened in shock as I didn’t think it would possibly work and now I just had to maintain control. There was no way I was going to head back home, I was going to find the enchantress

and find out exactly what she wanted with RavenBlack, Molly,  
and the rest of the world.

## II



I had no idea where to start, the last time we found the enchantress was in a warehouse and she would have long disappeared from there now. Adrian did mention Hayley and the others may have found her, but honestly, I didn't think they could.

Thinking back to the book with the star and arrow symbol on it, I cursed myself for not reading more than a few pages. Perhaps if I did head home, I could grab it quickly and leave? I was now far enough from Hayley to not feel our connection as strongly and hoped she wouldn't attempt to look for me.

Feeling the wind around me was unlike anything else, the sensation of flying, gliding through the skies was such an incredible experience, and this was going to easily become my favourite spell. Falling a little as I lost concentration almost gave me a heart attack as I brought my mind back.

The manor was just ahead as I had managed to clear the area quickly. Landing on my balcony, I slipped through the balcony doors and the book sat on my desk, waiting for me, almost calling out to me. Picking it up, I left the same way I came in, quickly making sure no one heard me.

Back in the air again, I had to make a plan. Where was I going? Where would the enchantress hide herself? Would she be in plain sight? I had this strange feeling of a cloud over my head, something was blocking me from using any location spells to perhaps find her. Most likely she had cloaked herself or maybe something else was going on.

As I soared through the night sky and looked down, maybe something would spark some inspiration in me, I couldn't just be flying around aimlessly, and if anything, this spell was going to drain a lot of my energy pretty fast.

Heading to the warehouse district seemed my best bet, I would do some groundwork, talk to anyone I could find, see if I could find anything and as I touched the ground, the earth beneath me felt as if it were shaking. An earthquake? RavenBlack didn't get those, and soon it wasn't just a small quake, but a violent shake that began to shake the buildings around me and gun fire echoed through the air.

Was I close to Hayley? I hadn't intended to be, I checked our connection, and it was silent, which meant one of two things, we were too far away from each other, or she was hurt badly. Maybe the gun fire and the shaking weren't her and her team, maybe it was the enchantress.

Checking the air around me and concentrating on the earth, I closed my eyes and followed the green and white lights in my mind that symbolised the elements, taking slow steps towards something, trying to keep my balance until I stopped in front of a large derelict church. RavenBlack was filled with religious buildings, a way for the humans to pray to their gods when the demons of the night were out. Vampires, werewolves, ghouls, and witches alike, anything that went bump in the night, they would seek God for guidance.

And who could blame them? At one point I am sure I begged God for forgiveness and help, especially around the time I was figuring out who I was and what creature I was made into. Taking each step cautiously, the air around me felt thick with smoke and despair. I knew I had somehow found the place I needed to be, had my magic brought me here? Or was I unknowingly being pulled?

Pushing open the smaller church door that the large wooden ones held, I was greeted with candle lights all around, where there was a space, there was a candle. It was a beautiful sight; the earth had taken back parts of the church as ivy vines wrapped around the stone pillars and made their way through the effigies of the great angels. The light of the moon broke

through a hole in the roof as water lightly dripped down one side of the altar wall.

There with her back to me stood the enchantress, in a beautiful backless white figure-hugging gown, her red hair loose and I had to blink a few times to not mistake it for actual fire.

“Good evening, Mr. Gates, how lovely for you to join me.”

Her voice was velvet-like and devious. She didn't turn to face me, just kept looking at the altar.

“You kept me waiting.”

“I didn't know you were expecting me.”

Goose pimples ran up my arms as I swallowed the nerves that were appearing in my throat. I didn't expect to find her, at least not this fast. I clung to the book in my arms, wondering where I could put it, just in case she demanded it back or something.

“I have been calling you, I thought after our chat the other day you would be able to trust me, or at least see things from my perspective.”

“And what perspective might that be?”

Taking a step forward, she slowly turned around, her eyes flashing a bright red and now I could see the front of her dress was stained with scarlet red blood. My stomach began to do flips as my body ran cold, the feeling of dread taking over, whose blood was that?

“You are to help me; we are to rid this world of its evil and darkness.”

“I'm not quite sure I follow, why do you need me?”

“Well, my dear boy, I need your help because your very blood is precious to me.”

My eyes widened as I attempted to take a step back, the door behind me slamming shut in response and a smile grew across her face. I was now trapped, like a mouse as a cat slowed in on its prey. I could feel my heart beat faster as

ringing in my ears started, panic and adrenaline was ready as my magic coursed through my body, lighting my fingertips up in blue and green sparks.

“Now, now, I don’t want you doing any of that.”

Waving her right hand, I felt my body freeze as my magic disappeared, and the air in my lungs was ripped from me suddenly. Dropping to my knees, letting go of the book, I clung to what air I could grasp in, desperately trying to fill my lungs as the building enclosed around me.

“You see, your history wants you to believe that Lady Elizabeth was the creator of the new line of witches and in some parts there is some truth, but there are many lies to her story.”

Waving her hand again, the air reappeared and as I took in a deep breath, I began to feel dizzy and panic, my heart beating louder in my chest, what had I gotten myself into. Hayley was right, I should have gone home.

“When I was reborn, into this form, this girl you call Molly, I read the same things she read and was disgusted to find my history had been changed to a footnote on a page in a book.”

Looking towards the book in front of me, I tried to reach out for it but felt frozen to the spot as she came to crouch down in front of me and picked up the book.

“Not this book, this book wasn’t written by your Lady Elizabeth, or her family for that matter.”

She stood up and began to flick through the pages, turning away and walking back to the altar as I tried to lift myself back up, it was only when she was back standing at the altar could I move again. Using one of the pews to hoist myself up, I felt lightheaded and exhausted, she had done something to me.

“You see, this book was written by me. I thought it would be a good idea, before I was trapped again to write my story. And as for the symbol, Lady Elizabeth’s family stole that from me.”

I had only managed to get through one or two pages and the shock of her words ran through my veins. She was its author. How? How was this even possible? How did this book end up in the library?

“After I was reborn, I created a life for myself, finding love, bearing a child, and I began to learn more about the world again. The kindness of humans, the relationships you could create, friendships, and also my magic that still filled my very being.”

Turning to look at me again, she turned to a page, and I watched her eyes lose their tenseness, and soften a little, something was on that page that made her appear more human. She ran a finger down the one page, and I swore I saw a tear form, but then in seconds the softness had disappeared.

“They were taken from me when your family, and Miss Helsing’s, came for me. They took little Emily and my husband,” she paused, looking away from me and I could hear her voice break a little.

“I watched as they strung them both up and lit their bodies, convinced they would bring death upon this world and as I watched their bodies burn in the flames, something that had laid dormant in me awoke.”

My breath caught as she began to tell me her story. She had her world taken from her for just being ‘her’ and I couldn’t understand why my family or Hayley’s would punish this woman for just existing. Why would her family bring death to this world? That made no sense to me as after all if she was the high priestess from thousands of years ago, how did anyone know of her? Where were the documents? The parchments depicting her story?

“That very night, the darkest creatures were born. Vampires. The first one created from my blood and the hatred in my heart, cursed to consume the humans that took my loves from me.”

“Wa - wait. You – you created the vampires?”

There were no accounts of vampires existing until suddenly in 1219, they started showing up all around the world. She created them, how? Lady Elizabeth had written accounts of the Van Helsing family and many other noble families trying to keep them at bay, but mostly no one knew how to destroy them.

Most of the modern folklore behind them was partly true. They couldn't go into direct sunlight, no invitation meant they couldn't come into your home, and holy water stung. But, crosses and religious items meant nothing to them, perhaps that was tied directly to the enchantress herself. She was a part of the old gods and not the new.

"I created the creatures to feast on the blood of humans, and to turn those that would continue to inflict pain, and until your family and the Van Helsing's found a way to create something as powerful, my curse on this world worked, but then I was punished. The old gods returned judgement one last time and I was trapped in that body – This body, doomed to watch as my creations were destroyed behind the eyes of another person."

My head was spinning from all this new information, but the academic in me was excited, uplifted, and wanted to know more, to get that book back and read every single thing I could find. Standing more upright now, I took a brave step forward towards her as fire began to light up the bottom of her dress, as if she were fire itself.

"I apologise for my ancestors' mistakes."

Holding my hands up in the defensive, I was feeling more frightened than ever before. She was a woman out for revenge, and I couldn't blame her. Alex had been taken from me by vampires, but I remembered the feeling of pain and all outrage, I was determined to destroy everything in my path and if it wasn't for Hayley, I would have been lost to that rage.

"Your apology is redundant. All I want is your blood and even if you don't give it to me tonight, you will eventually."

Confusion filled me as she waved her hand again and the door of the church opened behind me. Walking towards me, I



waited for something to happen and instead she handed me the book.

Taking me by surprise, she kissed me lightly on the lips and I felt a string as she did, and my heart fluttered slightly. I wasn't against women kissing me, but I never made it a habit and having this one kiss me took me by surprise.

“You are free to go, for now. Read my story, and when you are done, in the end Mr. Gates, you will find we are very alike, and you will see it my way.”

Within a blink of an eye, she disappeared in front of me, just as she had done once before, and every candle in the building blew out in a gust of wind. My head was pounding with a sudden headache, and I felt nauseous. Something wasn't right, I just wasn't sure what.



As I left the church, a bit defeated and overwhelmed, the rain had started to pour heavily, and slumping down onto one of the church steps, I felt my head continue to pound as the headache ran down my neck.

But, sitting in the rain felt nice, the magic deep inside me waking back up and welcoming the element of water, using it to give myself a boost of energy. Closing my eyes, I just sat there for a few minutes allowing the water to seep through my clothes as it cooled my body.

I felt him before I saw him, the sparks of his energy engulfed my own, and a sense of relief draped itself over my head. Opening my eyes, Adrian stood in his wolf form and his eyes shifted from anger to softness. His paws caked with mud and his fur soaked, he panted every few seconds, out of breath, and we just locked eyes with each other.

Shifting in front of me and catching my breath as he stood there naked, in all his glory I had to keep my eyes from looking down south, even if I was desperate to take a peak. He didn't seem at all impressed.

“Where the fuck have you been?!” He shouted.

“Why does it matter to you?”

Why did it matter where I was, he wasn't my babysitter, even if Hayley had decided this guy was suddenly in charge of me, I wasn't going to allow it to happen.

“Jackson, Hayley charged me to keep an eye on you, and when I came back out of the club you had disappeared. It took

me hours to find your scent, and here I find you just sitting on some steps of an old church, what the actual fuck is wrong with you?”

He was mad, and it shouldn't have bothered me as much as it did. I hated how he had abruptly decided to thrust himself into my life, and then again at the same time, I liked that he was around.

“Can you shift back please; your penis is distracting me,” I joked, and a growl escaped his lips.

Looking back up into the night sky, I didn't bother to look back at him, to see if he shifted or not, and for those few silent minutes, I just allowed myself to get lost back in the rain.

“You can't go running off.”

His voice was soft, almost concerning and as I glanced back, he shifted into his beautiful white wolf form and kept his eyes on me.

“I guess you're here to take me home.”

He shook his head and started to turn away, walking so far and then turning back to look at me again. Sighing, I guessed I needed to follow and with the book tightly in my hand, wondering if the rain was about to damage it or if the spell that cloaked it, also kept it from being damaged.

We walked for about fifteen minutes or so, until Adrian came to a stop outside an apartment block, waiting for me to catch up before shifting into his human form and walking through the revolving doors.

“Evening, Alpha.”

A man in the most glamorous uniform stepped forward and held out a dressing coat to Adrian as he put it on.

“Shall I tell the pack you are back, and prepare dinner for you and your guest?”

“Yes, thank you, Alex. See to it Mr. Gates gets a change of dry clothes first and when he's ready, escort him to the main dining hall.”

Stepping more into the foyer that was lit almost as if it were daylight, many wolf shifters walked back and forth in and out of rooms, some in their human forms and others in their wolf forms. Some glanced my way and when they did Adrian gave them a dominating growl, perhaps to tell them to stay away from me? Or was it something else?

“Right this way, Mr. Gates.”

The man whose hair was almost the same as a bright orange sun, walked towards an elevator and held the doors open until I joined him. Walking a bit faster, I stepped in, and he pressed a button to a floor, the doors shut and as we went up the floors, I stood awkwardly clutching the book close to my chest.

“Where are you taking me?” I asked.

“Alpha’s home, he wishes for you to dress for dinner, and he has ordered you to stay here until he says otherwise.”

“I’m a prisoner then.”

“Not at all, you can of course try to leave, but you know as well as I do, Alpha will stop you.”

Rubbing my head as the headache still sat there behind my eyes, I wondered if Hayley was in on this whole thing. I didn’t have time to sit in someone else’s room, I had research to do and to find out who the enchantress really was. She still didn’t tell me her name, and I was beginning to think there must have been more information about her, I just had to find out who she really was.

“Kelly will see you changed and shall bring you back down once you are ready.”

“Kelly?”

“Alpha’s beta. Word of caution though, don’t make her mad, please, she has a tendency to kill witches when they piss her off.”

Great. So not only was I trapped in this place, but there was also potentially a witch murderer as my next escort. This

had to be some cruel joke, everyone must have been in on this, perhaps it was punishment for my disappearing act earlier.

As the elevator doors opened into a wide-open living space, Kelly, I presumed, was standing in the middle of the room tapping her foot with her arms across her chest.

“You, witch boy, have been a serious pain in my ass.”

“Off to a great start I see then, you must be Kelly.”

I stretched my hand to shake hers, but she rolled her eyes and scoffed at me. Her brown curls bounced as she turned away from me, her body tightly wrapped in a short black dress, and heels tapped against the marbled floor.

“This way, Alpha wants you dressed and ready as soon as possible.”

“Adrian does like to give his orders, doesn’t he.”

She turned suddenly and came up towards me, her nose touching mine and snarled a little.

“Don’t address Alpha by name. I am his beta and will not see him disrespected in his house.”

“Noted.”

Swallowing the lump of fear in my throat, she turned away again, and I followed her down a corridor and into a walk-in wardrobe. Looking at me up and down, she then pulled out one or two suits, one grey and one a navy blue. Holding them up in front of me and tilting her head, as if she were deciding what to dress me in, she settled on the navy blue and grabbed a pair of clean boxers and socks as well as brown shoes.

“I will give you fifteen minutes to get ready. There’s a shower right through there. Leave your clothes by the door, they will be cleaned and ready for you in the morning.”

She left the clothes hanging on a wardrobe door and the other bits on top of a glass counter before leaving me to it. Placing the book down, I inspected it to see if the rain had done any damage and was thankful it was still in near perfect condition, before stripping myself of my wet clothes and left

them in the hamper by the door as ordered and headed into the bathroom.

A shower was a welcome and calming change, the bathroom however was bigger than my room back at the manor, and a free-standing bath was sitting perfectly in the middle, large enough to fit at least three people.

I wondered how a werewolf of RavenBlack had acquired this much space and in fact money, but then again, once Angelique was destroyed Hayley did mention many werewolf packs had arrived in the city and Adrian offered to help rebuild it. Perhaps I had judged him too early. Making a mental note, I decided I would try to get to know him at least somewhat, while I was semi trapped here.

Once washed and dressed, I joined Kelly back in the living space. She sat with her legs resting on the coffee table flipping through a trashy magazine before she noticed me, or appeared to notice me. Wolves had amazing hearing and could smell a person a mile off.

“You have really been a pain in the ass these past few days. Alpha may value your life, but if you step out of line tonight, I am sure many will challenge him to take you out.”

“I am unsure as to why he values my life or why you deem me as a pain in the ass. Your Alpha is the one who inserted himself into my life, I was quite happy without it.”

She snarled again and I wondered if I had said something offensive yet again, she was quick to temper, and I worried for my safety.

“I cannot and do not pretend to know what the Alpha thinks, we have all been ordered to keep you safe and protect you. Why I don’t know, having to go out and find you tonight wasn’t how I planned my evening.”

“I apologise for that; I had no idea anyone was looking for me.”

I knew someone would be hunting for me if I hadn’t returned home, but to find out it may have been an entire pack of werewolves, that came to me as a bit of a shock. She

slammed the magazine down and I waited for her to yell at me some more, but instead she stopped herself, sighing and looking towards the elevator doors.

“As much as your presence already annoys me, the Alpha see’s something in you and as he’s also my brother, I must at least be ok with his choices.”

“Brother? I thought beta’s were, you know, not related to the Alpha so they could continue the werewolf line.”

She laughed at me then, almost hysterically as if I had said the funniest thing she had ever heard. But it was a reasonable question, in all my studies I always read that the beta female was the one who would mate with the Alpha and she was the only one.

“No, I am my brother’s right hand. He does have other females he can do that with. However, chooses not to. It is also very difficult for us to procreate and so we stick to biting and changing willing humans.”

She left me with some food for thought then, already learning two new pieces of information about Adrian. I still wasn’t sure or up to the idea of fully trusting him, but each and every time I had seen him, he was either being a cocky bastard or kind and trying protect me.

“Right, Alpha will be waiting, and I am to escort you downstairs to the party.”

“Party?”

“Oh, did he not tell you? It’s Alpha’s birthday and we had to put our celebrations on hold to find your witch ass.”

“This witch ass has a name.”

“I don’t care.”

Taking hold of my wrist and almost stomping towards the elevator, she dragged me into it a little forcefully and we headed back downstairs to clearly celebrate something I had no idea about.



As we exited the elevator, the entire foyer had changed in the half an hour I was gone. It lit up like a Christmas tree, and it was as busy as a New Year's Eve party. I had never seen so many wolves and humans all mixed in together. Kelly linked her arm into mine and guided me through the busy groups of people who were either chatting away or heading towards what I presumed was the dining hall.

She growled at a few wolves who glanced my way and I felt awfully exposed as it seemed every single person we passed, they looked at me up and down.

The song 'Libiamo ne' lieti calici' was loudly coming from the hall and as we entered, many bodies were singing along horribly to the song. The drinking song as it was well known, and it did make me chuckle a little as I spotted Adrian singing quite loudly while holding a glass of something high above his head. Once the song finished, it faded into some R&B number, and some people took hold of each other as they danced the night away.

The room was decorated almost the same as the foyer, but this time there were gold and silver balloons hanging from the ceiling, Happy Birthday banners hung over windows and a DJ was placed near the middle of the room, in front of the dance floor.

Adrian spotted me from across the floor, and my chest felt tight as I watched him, walking towards me in a predatory stance as everyone took a step out of the way, to make way for their Alpha. He smiled a wicked and dazzling smile, looking



drop-dead gorgeous in a steel grey suit with his two buttons on his shirt open, exposing a little of his chest and a golden necklace that hung around his neck.

My mouth watered as I looked him up and down, his blonde hair left loose and as he ran his fingers through the front, I felt my heart stop a little.

“Well, don’t you scrub up nicely.”

He circled me and I felt as if I were on show, a prize to be won.

“Thank you, Kelly, for keeping Mr. Gates company, you may go and enjoy the party now.”

She bowed slightly and let go of my arm, disappearing in the crowd as everyone went back to what they were doing. No longer did I feel a hundred or so eyes on me.

Holding out his hand, Adrian waited patiently for me to take it and I hesitated. Could I really have not noticed he was ‘into me’ as Annabeth had mentioned, was I losing my touch? No, surely not, he was just being playful and flirty.

“I’m not going to bite,” he leaned forward and brushed his teeth against my ear, “Unless you want me to.”

I swallowed hard as my stomach did a backflip and a bead of sweat trickled down the back of my neck. He laughed a little as he stepped back, taking hold of my hand without protest as again those sparks tingled in my fingertips, and he led me towards the bar as many wolves and humans bowed and said happy birthday.

“You could have told me it was your birthday; I would have got you something.”

“No, you wouldn’t have.”

Stopping at the bar, yet another beautiful lady joined us, smiling and showing her wolf fangs a little. She bowed to Adrian and then prepared a cocktail for him without even asking for his order, he must have been drinking the same thing so far.

“I would have got you something, I’m not that nasty, and my mother always taught me to bring a gift when you visited another person’s home or a party.”

“I am not big on celebrations. This...” He looked around the room and then back towards me, “This was Kelly and Ralph’s idea, they decided the pack needed a party and what better excuse than my birthday.”

The music changed again and this time it was more of a pop tune, but had rather suggestive sexy lyrics and I watched Adrian closely as he licked his lips smiling at me, shaking his hips a little as he danced to the music.

My hands started to feel clammy as I turned away, shaking my head a little to remove any thoughts that were trying to break through. Like the ones about the sparks I kept feeling every time Adrian was close to me or our skin was touching, and I stared at the back of the bar, trying to distract myself by naming all the liquor that was there.

“Here, you look like you need this more than me.”

Passing along a glass of what I believed to be a ‘Sex on the Beach’ cocktail, I took a large gulp and the vodka burnt the back of my throat, clearly the bartender was generous when it came to the alcohol content. It was beautiful, and I could happily have another.

“So, how old are you today then?”

“Eh,” he paused for a second, counting on his fingers and I couldn’t help but laugh.

“Do you not remember how old you are?”

“Well, it’s a bit different to humans, our ageing kinda slows down when we reach our peak and umm, I think that was about fifteen years ago for me. So, if my maths is correct I think I’m around thirty something.”

“You’re thirty-three, jerk-face.”

Kelly slammed her glass down on the bar and waved over the bartender, ordering up another of whatever she was drinking. Clearly she had relaxed a little as I got the

impression earlier she wouldn't dare say anything out of turn towards Adrian, but maybe after a few drinks, she didn't have a problem.

“Ah, yeah, that's right, today I am thirty-three.”

Six years older than me and it wasn't that bad of an age-gap when I thought about it. Wait, why was I even thinking about an age-gap? Looking away again, I went back to staring at the bottles, sipping a little too fast on my drink and before I had finished it, another was placed in front of me.

Leaning with his back against the bar, he looked at his pack, who were dancing and mingled together, with pride, and I wished I knew how that felt. Witches were solitary creatures, yes there were many within the Van Helsing clan, but mostly we stuck to ourselves as either way, every other witch was competition, and they all wanted the top space next to the Van Helsing leader. And I had fought for my place long ago, but now I was losing it, to Darius Michaels and I felt the rage bellowed inside me.

“Where is Hayley then?”

I didn't and did want to know at the same time, I half expected all the other wolves and Adrian to be out there, preparing for the battle that was going to eventually come, against the enchantress. He shrugged his shoulders, taking a sip of his glass of vodka and lime, and half turned towards me.

“I neither want to or care where your little huntress is. I heard what she said to you and honestly, Kelly had to stop me from ripping her throat out.”

Alarmed and confused by his honesty, I wasn't sure how to even respond to that, I wasn't used to anyone being protective of me.

“She didn't mean those things, she just wanted me to leave.”

“It doesn't matter if she didn't mean them, I could have killed her.”

“Why? Why does it matter to you what she says to me? I'm just someone who owes you a debt.”

He sighed then, downing the rest of his drink, and I look at Kelly as she stared at me over Adrian's shoulder with fury filled eyes, and I shifted on my feet nervously.

“You aren't just a debt to me.”

Leaving me then suddenly, Adrian disappeared into the crowd of dancing bodies and Kelly just tutted, grabbed her drink, and left me there. I was missing something here, had I been out of the game for so long I had forgotten that someone might not have just been innocently flirting with me? Finishing my second drink, I thought about following him, but I couldn't see him anywhere and there was no magic light or something pulling me this time, maybe he didn't want to be found.

*“Screw it.”*

I thought as I ordered up vodka and soda, I had enough cocktails, although tasty, I needed something stronger. If I was going to be stuck here for at least the rest of the night, I might as well drink and enjoy myself. If Adrian wanted to act all cryptic and send me mixed signals, I would rather be drunk dealing with it then sober.

Once I felt rather merry, I headed towards the dance floor and started to sway, shake my hips a little and lose myself in the music. Wolves stayed away from me as ordered, but the humans they had brought were all up to dance with me.

Whatever this music was, I felt as if I were on a high trip, drinking my drink and desperately trying not to spill it, but of course, failing miserably. I hadn't been this drunk in a very long time, Hayley didn't mind you drinking, but since she was more of an in-house leader, it was hard to feel relaxed as something always needed doing.

As a female started dancing against me, our bodies grinding together as the music pace changed into another R&B tune, she put her hands around the back of my neck and started singing, swaying back and forth. I was at this moment loving life, vodka always made me lose myself and although the hangover in the morning was going to be killer, it would be so worth it.

I felt his eyes on me then, and I tried not to scan the room, wondering where he was as I took hold of the girl's waist and swayed along with her. She clearly had no idea I was gay and most definitely not her type, in that moment it didn't matter, all that mattered was the music and the thrill I felt.

The music suddenly started to fade out until there was silence in the room and as the space in the middle of the room began to divide, I was pulled out the way when Kelly and another male appeared.

"I would first like to thank everyone for joining us in this celebration," Kelly said with a smile on her face.

The other male looked around at everyone, clocking me instantly and a smile ran across his face. Tall, redhead with glasses that glittered in the light, he clapped his hands, and a large cake was wheeled out from somewhere.

"Can you all, please, join me in wishing our leader and Alpha a happy birthday!" The male shouted.

Adrian came up next to me, I could feel the sparks between us without even having to look to see it was him, as his fingers grazed mine, then he stepped out into the middle smiling towards everyone then smiling directly at me alone.

I swayed a little back and forth, trying to keep my balance as standing straight was not going to happen anytime soon, the room felt as if it were to start spinning as a chorus of people began to sing happy birthday and Adrian blew out his candles.

"Thank you everyone for coming, now please, enjoy the rest of the evening while I take my guest to bed as you can clearly see, he is about ready to drop."

Was he talking about me? Someone helped support me as the room continued to spin and I was guided to sit down on a comfortable sofa. Adrian hovered over me with an amused, but sterned face with his arms crossed.

"You're an idiot. Have you eaten today?"

"Umm, no." I managed to say as a glass of water was handed my way.

“Dean, can you go fetch some food for Mr. Gates and have it sent up to my rooms.”

“Right away, Alpha.”

The person who had supported me disappeared and I leaned back into the sofa, looking up at the ceiling as the dazzling lights sparkled and felt my eyes start to close a little.

“Oh, no you don’t.”

Lifting me up and throwing me over his shoulder, Adrian embarrassingly carried me out of the party and what I assumed was towards the elevator and any other time, I would be mortified and yelling for him to put me down, but right now, all I wanted to do was throw up.

As we went up the several floors, I felt my stomach flop and tried desperately to keep anything I had down, I was not about to throw up all over his suit as that would be something I’d never hear the end of.

Setting me down one yet another sofa, I was then given another glass of water and a bucket. Adrian sat opposite me then on the coffee table which was littered with Kelly’s magazines, and he just watched me intently.

“This is my party, you should be the one taking care of me,” he joked.

“I eh – sorry.”

Little sips of water were not helping, and I couldn’t help but throw up. Humiliated there and then, and I did not stop for what felt like hours and each time, Adrian placed a cold cloth on the top of my head, which seemed to help a little.

Thankfully, I stopped eventually, and he was back again with a glass of something that smelt horrendous, but ordered me to drink it down in one as it would help. Although disgusting and I was sure I’d throw that back up again, I didn’t, and I started to feel slightly better, and the room had stopped spinning.

“Eat this,” he ordered.

A piece of toast covered in butter and strawberry jam, something I had not eaten since I was a child, made me smile. Once done, he handed me back the glass of water and waited until I finished every last drop. He had done this before it would seem.

“Now, I am taking you to bed.”

“You will NOT be taking me to bed!” I shouted, expecting something differently. “Not like this anyhow, I am gross.”

Rolling his eyes at me, he unbuttoned his suit jacket and threw it over the arm of the sofa and then slowly began undoing his white shirt, exposing his beautiful, muscled chest and I could almost feel my heart skip a beat as I watched.

“Jackson, if I was going to take you, it wouldn’t be when you are half drunk and clearly not in your right state. But you are going to bed.”

Holding his hand out to me, I took it slowly this time and followed him to what I presumed was his bedroom. It was decorated in plush black velvet and silk, it looked like a boudoir and something I couldn’t help, but laugh a little, it was clearly a room he seduced many in.

“I will be sleeping in the guest bedroom, there is a change of clothes in the side drawer and a toothbrush in the ensuite. Get some rest, and we can discuss everything in the morning.”

Leaving me standing there confused and in the middle of his bedroom, I watched as he left and disappeared into another room. Slightly disappointed, but also grateful, there was no way I was going to allow anything to happen, even if I did want it to, a little.



I woke up in what could only be described as a dishevelled mess, my legs tangled up in the silk bedsheet half naked and with the worst dry mouth I had ever thought possible. Vodka, although the most amazing drink in the world, hated me the next day. We weren't friends at this point, and I regretted my decision of 'hey, let's just get drunk!'

My head felt fuzzy, and my eyes were refusing to open as I knew as soon as I opened them, the morning sunlight would blind me, and I would regret that decision, too. Slowly opening one eye and then the other, the room wasn't as bright as I thought it would be and it took a few seconds to realise, it was still night-time.

*Oh God.*

Annoyed, I had woken up mid sleep as the alcohol had worn off and my body was screaming at me to either go drink some more or at least grab a glass of water before I died of thirst. Dare I venture out into the living room though? Wouldn't Adrian be in bed by now, I hated to wake him up or disturb him.

Hunting for my phone under the pillow, I checked the time, and it was nearing five in the morning, and I was pretty sure I had only been asleep for about two hours. Exhausted, I knew it would take a lot to try to get back to sleep, so I decided to get up instead.

Now was better than later and if I got up now, I'd be able to get myself some headache tablets and some food before the



hangover truly took hold.

Untangling myself from the bedsheet and slowly getting out of bed, proved to be more difficult than expected. I contemplated staying in bed and just forcing myself to sleep, but decided otherwise. A pair of black jogging bottoms hung neatly on my hips as I got up, bare chested, I crept the bedroom door open and poked my head out into the dimly lit hallway, it was quiet and no one was waiting to jump out at me, I headed towards the living room with the adjoining kitchen.

The enchantress's book sat neatly on the kitchen breakfast counter and my heart stopped, it wasn't open, and I wondered how it got there, but then I recalled leaving it in the walking wardrobe with my clothes. Maybe Kelly or someone had put it there, thankfully the spell concealing what was inside kept it somewhat safe from prying eyes.

Rummaging in the fridge, I found a box of fresh strawberries and half a cut up watermelon. Adrian needed to get a food shop, that was for sure, perhaps eating his fruit wouldn't be the best idea, but after looking through some of the cupboards, I could only find a tin of chicken soup and a pack of those awful packet noodles you could chuck in the microwave.

Fruit it was then.

With half the watermelon in my hand, I felt the sense to snoop around once I actually looked at his apartment. Navy blues, golds, creams, and dark forest greens decorated the place, it all tied in so beautifully and I would definitely need to get in touch with his decorator. Above the fireplace was an obnoxious sized television and dotted on top of the fireplace were photographs in gold frames.

One I recognised was of him and Kelly, the other with an older gentleman and then one of him, Kelly and two elders, perhaps his mother and father? Picking up the last one, he looked so happy and content with his life. I had never seen his smile as brightly as it was in the photograph, and I wondered if the two others were still around.

Near the French doors, the balcony has a large golden globe and under it on a shelf were crystal whiskey glasses and I recognised what kind of globe it was, it was one of those fancy ones that held liquor, not surprising in the slightest.

The apartment seemed like any bachelor pad you'd bring your date to. There was nothing feminine about this place, but it didn't feel unwelcoming either, it actually felt more friendly and homely than most of the places I had been to.

My headache was still there sitting neatly behind my eyes, and I wasn't sure if it was from the vodka or from that weird thing that happened with the enchantress in the church. Perhaps it was both.

Pouring myself a glass of water from Adrian's fancy filtered jug thing in the fridge, I looked at the book as it called out to me. As I wasn't going back to bed anytime soon, maybe I could use this undisturbed time and get to reading a few pages, maybe I could learn more about her.

Taking the book and heading to the small armchair that faced the balcony doors, I tucked myself into the chair, getting comfortable and repeated the words to unseal the book.

“Ostende mihi abscondita tua.”

A small flash of light ran around the book this time and as I opened it, the same painting of the dragon girl was there. Skipping past them, I finally started to get to the actual book, pages that weren't just paintings, but text.

***March 11<sup>th</sup> 1186***

*I am writing this to remember.*

*So, I will never forget what they did to me.*

*The families of Van Helsings and Greys.*

*They destroyed my beautiful peaceful life, and now I  
am reborn to try and live it again. Thank you to the  
old gods for blessing me with this new life.*

*I will do better.*

*The world has changed since I was last here, there are  
more people, and they all still believe in one God.*

*Idiots.*

*If they only knew the truth.*

*Knew of the possibilities that were there waiting for  
them.*

TURNING the next page and then the next, I began to notice a pattern. This wasn't just a book detailing the enchantress's life, this was a diary. Her diary.

***July 25<sup>th</sup> 1186***

*I took a job at the mill today, the mistress said I could  
sleep in the storeroom as I have nowhere else to go.  
She seems nice enough.*

***August 9<sup>th</sup> 1186***

*I met him today.*

*I have never met a man as bold and bright as he.*

*Robert, a stable hand to a large manor a few miles  
from the mill. He said his lady was looking for a  
maid to help clean her home and I asked if he  
would get me a meeting with his lady. I am hopeful.  
He is very handsome.*

***August 10<sup>th</sup> 1186***

*Robert returned to me today, with a beautiful red apple  
and a smile on his face.*

*His lady agreed to meet me if I went that day. The  
mistress of the mill told me to go and make  
something of myself.*

*Robert's Lady is very beautiful and kind, welcoming me into her home with her two children and husband. She asked if I knew any knowledge and did I know my letterings, of course, I said yes as I still retain the memories of my life before and my life while trapped.*

*She said if I do well, she may require my services more than just cleaning the fireplace.*

### **December 25th 1186**

*Today was Christmas Day, a Christian festival and I am still getting used to all these new traditions. Today I read that my religion before Christianity rose to power was known as Paganism. Many of the traditions of today feel just like the celebrations we would make during the winter solstice. Gift giving, singing hymns, giving out holly or hanging it above your door for protection. I am told today Christmas has also been called Yule.*

*Interesting and frustrating how my way of life, before this, is just being replaced by new ways.*

*Robert gifted me with a pressed flower as a present and I felt terrible for not giving him something in return. He asked for a kiss and although it is frowned upon to interact with any male, I agreed to his request.*

As the pages read more and more into the enchantress's life during the 1100's century, I was amazed by how sometimes she would go into great detail about her day and other times she would just write a few notes. I wondered how long she kept this going and as much as I would have loved to have read each and every entry, learning more about her as a person, I decided to skip ahead.

1189 – 1193 – 1197

The diary continued until 1199 when the entries slowed, skipping days, weeks until the word married, and baby caught my eye. I guessed that perhaps her and Robert had married years prior and maybe the enchantress no longer cleaned this ladies house, but maybe began to teach future children in the ways of the world.

***February 6th 1199***

*My beautiful Emily Jane. My heart. My soul. You have given me a new life, new lungs where I can breathe in the world and feel it's very being in my body.*

*Watching you sleep and dream has become my favourite thing to do.*

*You have your fathers eyes and when he is away working in the mistress's home, I will stare at them, reminding myself of the happiness you both have brought me.*

*I never fully understood what my gods had told me about love, how it protects, how it encloses you in warmth and safety. You are my everything.*

As I read the passage, I noticed tear stains where words had been rubbed away and ink blots on the next few pages and my heart squeezed in my chest. I was unsure if I should continue to read, it felt like an invasion of privacy as I already knew she had said she'd lost her daughter and love, would the next pages detail this? Skipping entries about her life, happiness and other things I saw with pressed flowers hidden within pages, doodles in the margins and around the dates, until I stopped.

***May 18th 1211***

*My Emily is growing, becoming the sweetest lady I have ever met. Mistress often asks for her to come with me when I attend work, leaving her in the nursery with Mistresses grandchildren.*

*We have become close friends, teaching her grandchildren their letters and numbers. Mistress continues to ask me where I studied, and I hate lying to her, but I can't let anyone know the truth.*

*There has been talk within the town of heretics, witches, and the hunting of them.*

*I am frightened.*

*Frightened for my family as I know if anything were to happen to me, I would come back, but if anyone harmed them, I'd lose them.*

*Mistress says we have her and her family's protection, but humans still lie, and I know she would throw us to the wolves if she had to.*

***September 4th 1211***

*They are coming.*

*I can feel it.*

*I don't know what I should do, where to take Emily and Robert, where to protect them.*

*My Mistress's eldest daughter accused me of being a witch after I placed a leaf on her daughter's ankle after she was grazed by a nettle.*

*Now I am scared.*

My heart began to race as my eyes darted between the words, scared for her and worried to read that moment, the moment in history her world broke in two and she lost everything.

***November 17th 1211***

*It's dark.*

*Darker than it has ever been before.*

*My gods have abandoned me.*

*No longer do they hear my prayers, my words asking  
for help, for guidance.*

*The bonfires in the next village burn brightly on the  
horizon as the witch hunts continue.*

*They are coming closer, and I should have escaped  
many weeks ago, but Robert has taken ill and I am  
to tend to him and keep Emily safe.*

*What should I do?*

*Please.*

*Help.*

***November 18th 1211***

*They have taken them.*

*Demanding I tell them who and what I am.*

*The Church of the one God has arrived. I am locked in  
my home while Emily screams for me in another  
room.*

*I can't breathe.*

***November 23rd 1211***

*Ut intelligas quid egi, debes videre.*

AS I READ THE WORDS, I felt my head spin as my eyes rolled back and the book slipped from my fingertips as the world around me rushed into a blur, disappearing. The words of a spell were etched into the book, 'In order to understand what I did, you must see.'



Screaming. That's all I heard as my eyes opened quickly, feeling the soft, muddy ground below me. I lifted myself up as I continued to hear shouting and the sounds of a burning fire, the smell of that awful stink of something burning in the air. Flesh. It was flesh burning.

My breath hitched at the sight of it all as I looked around where I had landed. Thatched roofs and stone huts surrounded the pyre as a woman from the one side screamed, shouted, and was being held back with her arms behind her back. Molly, the enchantress.

People laughed, cheered around the scene. It was something from a horror movie as I could make out the bodies that were tied to the stake. The smoke billowing up into the air as the enchantress continued to scream and cry, a cry I don't think I will ever forget.

She locked eyes with me as I watched her and suddenly, her weeping stopped and she smiled a devilish smile, one that even gave me chills.

Silence then as one by one everyone looked at her, the crackle of the fire was all that filled the space. The men holding her let go. Lifting her hands forward, she took a deep breath in, and it seemed as if she was pulling the flames towards her.

Shock and horror rang through the crowd as many stood there in disbelief. She looked me dead in the eyes and then began to blow out the same flames she had breathed in, setting



alight every single person in her wake. Many ran screaming, protecting their children as the men behind her stepped back in fear.

I did not blame her for this act of revenge. I had read of her devotion towards her child, towards her husband and she watched them be burned right in front of her as many joined in with laughter and cheers.

“Malia! – Please – please stop.”

A voice shouted across to the enchantress, dressed in a dark green gown. She looked as if she had stepped out from a noble history book, and rushed towards the enchantress as she stopped breathing out the flames and fell to her knees.

“Please Malia, please, I did not know what they would do.”

Malia, that was her name, her true name. She looked down at the noble woman and she appeared distinct, broken and for a moment I thought she would stop her rampage and listen to the pleas of this woman. Was she the Mistress she had worked for? Become friends with?

Watching as she took hold of the noble woman’s chin in her hands, she began to scream as the enchantress held on tightly and then let go forcefully, throwing her to the ground.

“You are just the same as them all. Humans don’t deserve forgiveness!” she shouted as she stepped towards the burnt pyre.

Climbing top of the burnt wood she pulled the charred bodies from the stakes and held the smallest closely to her chest as she stepped back down. Looking at me again, I saw the tear stains on her cheeks, now looking closer at her, blood was covered on the bottom of her dress, her face dirty and hair was caked with dirt and mud.

She did indeed look broken.

Holding what I believed to be Emily close to her chest, leaving her husband’s body to disappear into the wind, she left the space as now the crowd had completely disappeared, and I followed.

Walking a few steps behind her, I followed her as she entered a woodland of tall pine and oak trees and after another ten minutes or so, we came to a clearing and inside the clearing was a stoned circle.

I had only read about these in books so to see one in this 'dream' or perhaps it was a memory, I wasn't too sure, felt incredible but also painfully sad as I watched her place Emily down in the middle of the circle and knelt next to her body.

I could just about make out some of her features and with a wave of the enchantress's hand and uttering what I believed to be a spell, Emily's body was no longer burnt, and she appeared fine, as if she were sleeping. Her hair was as bright as the sun, and she looked just as beautiful as the enchantress.

"Please my gods, please bring her back."

The enchantress sobbed, her heart breaking as she held up her arms in prayer and I wanted to rush to her aid, to pray with her, to beg her gods to bring her daughter back, but I wasn't really here, I was just watching her memory play, again.

When no answer came and rain started to slowly fall, I felt the sigh and then her anger in the air, the shift in the wind and change in the earth. She rose then, looking like a madman as she paced around the spot she had placed her daughter and began muttering something I could not make out.

Picking up a thin rock then, she slit her wrists and allowed the blood to pour over Emily's body and the ground started to shake a little.

"Oh gods hear my prayer!" she shouted up to the heavens.

"You take from me, now I take from you."

As the shaking grew stronger, I fell off balance and watched as light poured from the enchantress and Emily's body, lighting up the night sky. She was speaking something again which I could not make out and as the world shifted, the wind became fiercer and behind me shouting started with light peeking out from the treeline.

The villages, they were coming, coming to get her.

“Sanguis meus, vita mea, fons meae potentiae, ut a te, facti sunt quod nati sunt facere.”

Something didn't feel right as dread began to fill my body, the air smelt stale and uncleansed and the stone circle shook, cracking under the pressure of whatever the enchantress was doing and as the light became brighter, my fear rose.

Watching in horror, her blood trailed up Emily's body and it was in that moment I knew what was happening. She told me she had created the first vampire from her blood and my eyes widened as I saw it. I saw what she did, and I felt sick to my stomach.

She hadn't just used anyone to create the creature that went on to be the greatest killing machine and enemy to the world. She had used her daughter, as revenge.



I FELT the air suddenly fill my lungs as I watched Emily rise from the ground then all of a sudden I was thrown backwards, backwards into time. Falling through the air and as the world changed around me, I landed on my back with a thud.

I was no longer in the armchair in Adrian's, but yet again on the floor. Every single time why couldn't these spells just land me into something soft, like a bed! Shooting my eyes open, it took me a few moments to register exactly what had happened. My headache screamed at me as dots of lights appeared in my vision. I was using too much energy now and magic came with a price, the price being my life force.

I hadn't rested properly for days now and if I didn't get a full night's sleep, I would be spent and most likely if I used magic anytime soon, it would kill me. Looking up at the ceiling contemplating on what I should do, I would normally have told Hayley everything by now, the feelings I was getting for Adrian, the revelations I had about the enchantress and all the information I had found out thus far. Malia, the noble woman had called her.

Was that her true name? Or just another name she used throughout time. I needed to know her name, knowing someone's name I could create a potion or spell to keep her from controlling me or at least attempt to make one.

I needed to talk to someone.

To get this out in the open as I couldn't keep this in anymore, I was way over my head. After watching her create the first vampire, turning her daughter into a demon, I needed to talk to someone.

Adrian.

Adrian was just lying in the guest bedroom down the hall and as much as part of me still didn't trust him, he had given me no reason not to trust him and clearly, he had issues with Hayley so perhaps he wouldn't go rushing off to tell her everything. I wasn't one hundred percent sure of their relationship and how that had even started, but as I was here, I might as well talk to him about all of this. Maybe he could help in some way.

Heading to the bedroom door, I knocked lightly first, still hesitating if this was the right thing to do. I barely knew the guy, and this was information I should have really been telling Hayley, but since she pretty much told me to fuck off, I had no other choice and I needed help.

Knocking again, this time louder, I heard nothing. Pushing the door open, I could see someone lying in the bed. Perhaps I could get Adrian back for watching me sleep, but then again, this was important.

Looking at him now, his perfect blonde hair was in a bit of a mess over his pillow and his blanket was just draped over his hips, leaving his muscular chest exposed. He didn't look like he lived in the gym, but obviously worked out or was that just because he was a werewolf.

"It's rude to stare."

His voice made me jump out of my skin and a small laugh escaped him, his eyes still closed.

“Sorry – I eh,” I paused, was this the correct thing to do?  
“Can we talk?”

He opened his eyes slowly and looked at me with confusion. Rubbing his eyes then, he sat up and yawned. He looked tired and I felt bad, this may have been the only time he had rested these past few days as well.

“Sorry, go back to sleep, you need rest.”

“So do you. Jackson, what’s wrong?”

He moved over slightly to give me room to sit on the edge of the bed and I hesitated for a few seconds before sitting down. Drinking some sips of his water, I waited until he was ready before I spilled my guts about everything. How I have been moving through time with spells, watching the enchantress’s memories play out in front of me. It had become too much and now I needed to let it out. We talked for what felt like hours and Adrian listened to every word, never interrupting, and just sat there watching me intently and taking everything in.

“And now, I think, well I’m pretty sure I watched her change her daughter into a vampire, the first vampire.”

“And you didn’t see anything after that?”

“No, I was thrown out of the memory then. I haven’t looked at the book to see if there were any more entries, I doubt there were to be honest.”

“Okay, so now we know her name or the name she used around that time, is there any way we can check records? Maybe see if there are any history books or something to help narrow down what happened afterwards?”

Thinking for a moment, I tried to recall if there were any books in the new home that had the history of vampires and couldn’t bring one to mind. They would possibly be in the old manor as many of the history lessons were still taking place there. Vampire history was basic 101 for the new recruits along with our history, Hayley had made sure it was the first thing everyone learnt when they arrived.

“I think there might be somethings in the old house, maybe.”

“Okay, so what are we waiting for? Let’s head there now and see what we can find.”

He jumped out of bed almost instantly and headed for the bedroom door, it took me a second to realise something.

“Wait, you actually want to help?”

“Jackson,” turning back towards me, his face soft as he ran his fingers through the front of his hair, “I told you; you are more to me than a debt and the sooner you realise that, the better.”

He smiled gently at me then took to leaving the room again, with me quickly following him as we entered the walk-in wardrobe and started to get dressed. We were heading back to the old Van Helsing manor and I wondered who we would bump into.



We were silent during the car ride over to the old house, and I wondered if Adrian was allowed through the magical barriers that were still up to protect the remaining recruits and staff that lived there.

It felt neglectful leaving the home we had made for centuries, but Hayley expressed such disdain for the manor, we all just accepted that we were moving. Doing as we were told as per usual, but I missed this place.

Adrian kept his eyes forward as we drove up the long driveway, recruits were scattered over the grounds either training or sitting in the winter sunshine, most likely taking advantage of it not raining today. It had been raining an awful lot recently.

“Park up the front, one of the staff will move your car to the garage if you’d like, or you can just leave it.”

“Whatever works best.”

Stopping outside, he unbuckled his seatbelt and was out of the car lighting fast, opening my door. Catching his eyeline as I steadied myself, my vision was still a bit fuzzy, and I assumed it was due to the vodka and the lack of sleep. Chucking his keys to the valet, we headed up the stairs and through the front door.

It wasn’t that unusual to not be greeted by anyone anymore, most of the main household staff were at the new house and honestly, the less people that knew we were here the better. If Hayley caught wind of our arrival, she would

possibly start to shout at me or something. As we were childhood best friends, it wasn't that weird. We were arguing a bit as we were always in each other's pockets and sometimes it got a bit much.

"The library is down here, not all the books have been moved over to the new house."

"What books are we looking for?"

Adrian asked as I pushed open the large oak doors and we entered the library. It was a little busy with recruits sitting at some of the tables reading through their notes, perhaps studying for an exam as there were many to take throughout your time here, and not just physical exams.

"Hi, Mr. Gates!"

The librarian stood from her desk and waved at me a bit too excitedly. Diana had been here since she lost both her parents to a werewolf on vampire attack, they were in the crossfire. Hayley's father found her wandering the streets while on patrol and brought her to the house, although she had no magic abilities and could barely throw a punch. She was still given a home, a warm bed, and an education then once she graduated, she asked to help with the library and no sooner started to run it.

"Hi, Diana, still here I see."

"Like hell am I going to the new house, my books are all here."

Diana, like many others, refused to leave our roots and I couldn't really blame them. Molly had been the same and for some time I didn't want to leave either, but Hayley reminded me of all the awful things that had happened here and that a new start would be a welcomed change. She wasn't wrong. But, I understood why some decided to stay here, after all this was their home.

"Diana, this is Adrian, my eh – friend."

"Nice to meet you. So, what can I help you with?"



“I am actually looking for the history of vampires and if we have any books with the name Malia, please.”

“Well, “Vampire 101” can be found in bookshelves one through twelve. I can search the registry for the name Malia and see if it cross-references anything.”

“Amazing thank you, we will be sitting in my space, you are welcome to join us if you’d like.”

She smiled at me softly and started to tap anyway at her computer while Adrian and I headed into the stacks. The history of the vampires was long, there were many accounts throughout history of them appearing all around the world and although we knew how other vampires were created, we never found out how the first vampire was created, until now.

“Is there any particular book timeframe we need to be searching for?”

Adrian ran his fingers across the spines of many books and watched me closely as I stood in between one of the stacks, wondering to myself what book would be best to start with, what era at least.

“If we can start from the 1300s and work our way down, that would be handy. Problem is that vampires weren’t officially documented in our records until 1219 and the stuff we had then were maybe footnotes, folktales, and Chinese whispers.”

“So, we are literally working with nothing.”

Laughing a little and shrugging my shoulders, Adrian rolled his eyes at me and started hunting for the books we may or may not need. Pulling out anything he could find that had the dates 1300 and down, I did the same on the other side. Looking through the first book stacks, I knew the ones further down were more of the modern history and we needed the dark ages.

Settling down into my old reading desk in the right-hand corner of the library, one of the remaining staff appeared with a tray of coffee and biscuits. It was as if everyone knew I was running on fumes.

Adrian sat across from me with one leg across the other as he flipped through a book, running his fingers down the text and when he couldn't find what he wanted, he shut the book forcefully, threw it down then picked up the next book.

"How do you know you haven't missed anything, you read too fast." I asked, looking up from my book.

"Wolf eyes are different to witches."

"Wo – Wolf..."

Diana stood behind Adrian, and I watched as the blood drained from her face, she started to shake, dropping the book and papers that were in her hand. Shit, I hadn't thought about how she'd feel with a werewolf coming into her safe space and here I had brought Adrian in without a care.

"Diana, it's okay."

I shot up from my seat and rushed towards her, placing my hands on her shoulders as Adrian stood from his and took a step towards us.

"Adrian, stay where you are – Diana, Adrian is a good wolf, trust me, he will not hurt you or do anything to hurt anyone here. You have my word."

Her brown eyes studied me as she took in a deep breath, calming herself then looked over my shoulder to Adrian and back to me.

"Eh, I, umm," she was stuttering, something she did when she was younger, more so when she was scared and concerned.

"Trust me, Diana, I won't let anything happen to you."

She swallowed hard then took in a deep breath again before centering herself and I removed my hands, giving her a minute or two before I leant down and started picking up the pages and book she had dropped in her shock.

"I found a note in a margin about a Malia in a storybook, so I cross referenced it and found a whole book around a girl who could shapeshift."

Looking at the slips of paper and the book in my hand, there in the top left of the spine was the symbol, the star, and the arrow. It was so small you'd think it was just a mark, but as I had seen this symbol so many times, I knew what it was right away.

“Thank you, Diana.”

She nodded then, taking a few steps backwards as I passed Adrian the book and papers.

“I will be at my desk if you need anything else, I will send someone over with anything else I find.”

Nodding as she left, I knew she would make me pay for bringing Adrian into her safe space and I didn't blame her. Perhaps that was to rash of me, and I should have known better, been more mindful of her feelings.

“What was that about?”

Adrian asked once Diana was out of hearing distance as he placed each piece of paper in front of us on our desk. They were different extracts from what I guessed were old books, perhaps books from museums that were locked safely away?

“Her parents were killed in a werewolf and vampire attack. Hayley's dad saved her and kinda adopted her into the house, she's been here since I can remember.”

Sitting back down in my seat, I saw the wheels of his brain turning as I looked down at the book and the papers.

“Ah, that explains why she was so frightened of me, maybe I should go and apologise on behalf of my wolves.”

He went to get up, but something seemed to change his mind and sat back down. Quiet for a minute or two, I wondered what else was going on in his mind, but as we had bigger things to deal with, I thought prying right now would not be the answer.

“After we've done this, I think we need to go out, I've only been taking you to libraries and that's not exactly romantic.”

His words took me by surprise as it was the last thing I expected him to say. Annabeth may have been right all along; I was missing the mark here. Perhaps I had become so blind by the darkness in the world around me, I forgot to see some form of light, even if it was as fuzzy and dull as Adrian's.

"I don't date," I started to say, and he laughed, "but, a coffee wouldn't go amiss."

Smiling, he rolled his eyes at me and went back to reading a book while I continued to read through the book Diana had given me.



A FEW HOURS HAD PASSED, and we were no further than we started. I found a few notes about a woman who had been accused of being a witch and her family were hung and then placed on the stake when they were near death. I assumed this was the enchantress's family as the dates were correct with the ones in her diary, but then there was nothing, silence.

It irritated me as I knew all witches of the world liked to document their history and yet, there wasn't much of anything before vampires arrived and I just needed to figure out why she was here and what she meant by the end of the world.

All villains, of course, wanted to end or take over the world, if you ever read a book or watched a movie, you'd know they were always beaten by the good guys. And yet, it was a puzzle to me.

A puzzle I needed to solve.

Rubbing my head where stubble had begun to grow, I hadn't shaved my hair in a few weeks, and it was starting to grow, I wondered how scruffy I looked and how tired I seemed. My headache had finally disappeared hours ago, and I had the six cups of coffee to thank for that.

Diana had sent over one of her assistants at some point with a few more history books to hopefully help us, but we were coming up empty handed. Frustration filled my body and

if I were a smoker, I would have lit up a cigarette there and then to take away some of this stress.

“We’re missing something,” I said.

“Okay, any idea what that might be?”

Closing his book, Adrian almost chucked it on the table and leaned back into his chair. Standing up, I had to stretch my legs and I always seemed to work through things better in my mind if I were moving.

“We now know the enchantress used her daughter to create the first vampire in November 1211. We know she is pretty powerful, and I am pretty sure she is reborn into different centuries. I haven’t figured out how she broke out of the first prison, but we will put a pin in that.”

Pausing for a breath, I noticed that Adrian kept his eyes on me throughout the entire time I rambled on. His soft face, his eyes filled with light and wonder, and I realised then, I could stare at his face for the rest of my life.

“What is this?”

My mouth had betrayed my thoughts, I covered my mouth with my hand and he looked at me with confusion.

“What do you mean?”

My voice caught in my throat as I kicked myself mentally. Why would I even think about spending my life with him? We barely knew each other and yes, I was happy to admit he was handsome and had the body of a Greek God, but he was arrogant, pushy, and overly obnoxious. And those weren’t qualities I liked in a person and yet, every touch sent sparks through me and every time he looked at me, I felt those small flutters in my stomach.

“Forget it, I didn’t mean to say anything.”

He narrowed his eyes at me, and I felt rooted to the spot. He wasn’t the type to forget it and I knew I had now potentially opened a can of worms and it was highly doubtful he’d let me shut it without question.

“Jackson, you know I thought we were becoming friends and you felt you could trust me or at least tell me what’s on your mind.” He leaned forward, his hands resting on his knees as he looked up at me.

“What is on my mind is the research we came here to do. Everything else – That can wait.”

He sighed and before I could object, he took my hand, sending the same sparks once again through my fingertips and pulled me onto the book stacks. The library had started to empty out and Diana, I assumed had gone for dinner, it felt as if there were just the two of us in here now.

Pulling me through aisles and aisles, we passed many different books and as we got further in, the light grew dimmer and gave off a soft orange glow.

“Right.”

Looking around, he stopped and let go of my hand, I felt this sudden coldness from where his fingers used to be. Turning back towards me, he smiled that dazzling smile I was getting to know, and I watched him as he in turn watched me.

“What are we doing here?” I asked, feeling a bit nervous

“We needed more privacy to have this conversation, I think.”

“And what conversation would that be?”

He stepped forward, closing the gap between us a little more, causing my heart to beat a little faster in my chest and soon there was just a few centimetres between us. Watching as his chest rose and fell gently, he was calm, whereas I could feel my hands begin to get sweaty as my nerves started to peak.

We stood so close, we were almost touching, and I tried to step back, bumping into one of the shelves. He leaned in then, his left hand resting beside my head and my breathing becoming shallow, as if I couldn’t catch it.

“Do you feel this,” he paused, leaning further in and brushed his teeth against my ear, and I felt my knees go weak.

“Do you not know how much my body aches for you?”

Biting my bottom lip as he nipped at my earlobe then licked at my neck causing a small moan to escape my lips.  
*Shit.*

“From the moment I saw you, I knew I had to have you,” he stood in front of me, his face firm and ready, not breaking eye contact, “to make you mine.” He growled and something felt like it was about to break inside me.

“What – what makes – you think I want to be yours?”

I stuttered, I was losing my edge and myself in this whole thing. I swallowed hard, my stomach doing flips and my erection growing. Licking his lips, he huffed a laugh and smiled again, looking at my lips and then back at me under his long eyelashes.

*Shit.* I thought again, my body was starting to betray me completely.

“You have always been mine, since the night at the bar, I know you felt it then and I know you feel it now. We were made for each other.”

It clicked then, as if that last puzzle piece of myself had been searching through the box, wondering if I had just misplaced it and yet, here it was, six-foot three standing in front of me.

“Don’t tell me,” I paused, and he laughed a little under his breath.

“You and I, we are mates.”

He said the words and my entire body felt as if it were on fire as he looked back down at my lips. I knew he wanted to kiss me, and I so desperately wanted to allow him to and for a few minutes we just stared at one another. How could this be? Werewolves and witches did not mix, Hayley and Darius were one in a million and even now I know she still questioned the logic behind it all.

In order to complete a mate bond, we would have to have sex and right now, with everything going on I wasn’t sure if I

even wanted to do anything of the sort.

He leaned in closer to me again, his leg parting both mine and brought a hand up under my chin. Although we weren't that different in height, only by an inch or two, this movement had me gushing at the knees.

“If it's alright with you, I'd like to kiss you now.”

I didn't need to say anything, my body had already taken over and before I knew it, my lips were crashing against his, my fingers were pulling his hair at the base of his neck, while my other ran down to squeeze his bum. I wanted to feel every inch of him in that moment as his tongue pushed its way into my mouth and mine danced along with his. The passion, the pressure, the wanting and need were all there and all I wanted was for this moment to continue, to never end.

I wanted more.

I wanted his body pressed up against mine, naked in the stacks.

Even if we weren't what he said we were, I would have still eventually got to this stage in this so-called friendship.

I needed him.

Every inch of him, I needed.





Wait. I did want every inch of him as we became entangled together with his hand running up the back of my shirt and I pulling at the buttons of his. I wanted him all. I wanted him to consume me and as we kissed in the dimly lit library, it dawned on me.

Is this what happened to Hayley? She fought Darius pretty much all the way, he annoyed her, his very voice pissed her off and yet, he's now the love of her life and she can't see or think straight. Is that what having a mate did to you? Causing you to become blinded by all those around you and only see your person?

Breaking the kiss for a moment as the thought trailed through my mind, Adrian took a few breaths and as he went to kiss me again, my hand pressed against his chest to stop him.

"What's the matter?" He asked with worry in his voice.

"If we become what you say and finish the mating ceremony, like Hayley and Darius, does that mean I will lose a part of myself?"

"I'm not sure I follow."

"When Hayley and Darius met, she hated him, didn't want to be anywhere near him and yet, the universe kept pulling them together, like us. And now, she is so hooked by her love for Darius, she has started to push people away."

Watching him as he took a step back and straightened up his shirt, I could see his face fall from the excitement and primal heat to disappointment. I didn't mean to hurt him, but I

had already been hung up over someone so much, when I lost Alex I went into a deep depression and how did I know that this wasn't going to happen again? I didn't even have a clue Adrian had feelings for me, yes flirty banter was one thing but then admitting you wanted to taste someone, make someone theirs. Those words still played in my head.

“Whatever the huntress and her boyfriend have is different from what we could have. Each bond is different, and each ceremony isn't the same.”

He stopped, to think maybe or to take a breath, either way his face did not change, he was clearly mad I had interpreted us.

“Look, I like a good make out session as the next gay man, but we need to think realistically here Adrian. We have spent what? A week together, I don't know you and you most certainly don't know me. Maybe, after we beat the enchantress, we can like I said, go for coffee and see what happens next.”

I could see by his face he wasn't impressed with this idea, and it annoyed me a little. Did he think he was going to whisper sweet nothings to me, and we'd end up rolling around the library floor naked and possibly fucking each other into existence. And as much as that sounded pretty incredible, I would be stupid to think the whole world was going to stop just because I was having fun with a very hot werewolf guy.

“I'm not used to being told no,” he uttered and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Well, maybe that's the problem, just because we kiss doesn't mean anything more might happen.”

He was starting to bug me a little and I didn't want to be angry with him, but he was being an Alphahole and rather than stand here listening to his potential excuses or woe is me attitude, I had other more important things to deal with.

Pushing past him, I made my way back to our table and I didn't care if he was following me or not. I needed to get away

from him, away from the heat that was filling the air. The air that I had become great friends with.

As I reached the last bookshelf, Adrian grabbed my wrist and pulled me back suddenly, covering my mouth with his hand as he made a shh noise. The heat in the air wasn't because of him or me, someone had arrived in the library that most certainly wasn't welcome.

“Oh, Mr. Gates.”

We were hiding in the darkness of the stacks as evening moonlight pooled through the library windows. There was a light tapping on one of the wooden tables and a heavy sigh filled the air.

“Don't make me come in there and find you and your little wolf friend,” she paused, “it won't be pretty for either of you if I do.”

Removing Adrian's hand from my mouth, he shook his head and gave me a 'don't you even think about it look', and I had to ignore it. I didn't want the enchantress here. There were too many innocent lives living in these walls and already they had seen too much.

“I will be fine.”

Letting go of me, Adrian followed in the shadows behind me as I stepped out into the main section of the library. The enchantress was sitting down in one of the armchairs with her legs resting on the table, still in the white blood-stained dress.

“Hello, Malia.”

She smiled a wicked smile, and the room shook lightly, I was testing my limits with her.

“I see you've been reading my diary; I had forgotten that name.”

“Is that not your name anymore?”

She looked at me with a sinister, almost deranged expression and for a moment I felt fear start to grow. Adrian was still close behind me, sticking to the shadows, but I could

feel his presence, sense it. And as her eyes looked over me, I knew she could sense him too.

“Little wolfie, there’s no need to hide, I won’t bite.”

“I will though.”

He stepped out and shifted into his beautiful white wolf self, coming up next to me and stood guard. I hadn’t noticed how tall his wolf self was until his nose was brushing against my left elbow. I knew wolves were tall and stood proud, but an Alpha, this was daunting.

“What do you want, Malia?”

I was going to make it a habit of calling her by her name, even if she made out she didn’t use it anymore. Calling her the enchantress was becoming redundant and knowing something’s name gave you power, perhaps this was one more step away until I found her true name.

“I came to see if you had decided to join me.”

“Well, you will be disappointed in your trip.”

Her smile dropped and the fire behind her eyes lit up for a second then extinguished. She didn’t like being told no either, it seemed I was surrounded by spoiled brats. Watching as she lowered her legs, she pushed herself off the table and appeared to almost stumble a little, she seemed shaky, and I wondered why.

“I am not going to help you end the world or whatever it is you want to do.”

“I only-”

She stopped and looked at me with wide eyes then pressed a hand on the side of her head, shaking it and began to mumble something I couldn’t quite make out. Taking a step back as a precaution, I watched as her face seemed alarmed then she fell back into her chair scraping her fingers down her face.

“No, no, no!”

Shouting then silent seconds later, I looked at her wondering what in the hell was going on and as I went to step forward, Adrian growled next to me and proceeded to go in my stead. Using cautious steps as he sniffed at her feet then moved his way up her body, she was still and unresponsive.

“Is she dead?”

I asked moving forward and Adrian shook his head, moving backwards as her body started to move and her fire-coloured hair began to change into a dark shade of pink. My eyes lit up as soon as I saw it change and she lifted her head up, her eyes searching the room before she locked onto me.

“Jack!”

Tears streamed down her face as she got up suddenly and rushed towards me, Adrian blocking her way and she looked at him and then at me, confusion clouding her face then a sudden sadness.

“Please, I don’t have much time. I can still feel her, trying to – ah!”

Falling backwards, she gripped the table and took a few deep breaths. It was Molly, was she fighting Malia inside herself?

“She’s strong, stronger than ever before. I had to get out, to warn you.”

“Warn me? About what?”

“She needs blood, blood to survive, but not like a vampire does, it’s to keep her magic working, to keep me locked in my body. She wants yours most of all.”

“Okay and why is she here? Do you know?”

Pushing herself back up onto her wobbly two feet, I could see the strain she was under as she tried to keep herself from being won over and I wanted so desperately to put my arms around her, my best friend, but Adrian kept her from coming near me.

“She’s looking for the stone circle.”

*“Stone circle.”*

“The stone circle, the one she used to create her vampire?”

“Yes! – She wants to – oh no.”

Molly’s eyes widened as the room started to shake viciously, Molly was losing, and I wanted so badly to help her, send her some of my energy to help her, but Molly was a powerful witch in herself and if she couldn’t win, what good would I be.

“Run. Jackson, run! Get out of here, I will try and get her as far away as I possibly can.”

She looked at me then and as tears escaped her eyes, a soft smile played on her face and I knew at that very moment, I was losing my friend.

“Goodbye.”

Closing her eyes then, she muttered something, and a dark cloud of smoke enveloped her and once the smoke cleared, she was gone. I didn’t get a second to think or cry about the loss of my friend as Adrian started to push me out the door with his nose, there was no doubt she’d be back eventually and I had to do what Molly said, I needed to run and maybe try to find the stone circle.

Rushing out the library door and seeing the carnage that the enchantress had left behind, my entire body went into shock. Bodies littered the floor, recruits who hadn’t even known what to do were left either bleeding or completely taken out and as we ran into the foyer of the manor, we found Hayley and Darius standing there. Darius held onto Diana as she cried into his arms while Hayley looked at me with confusion and lost eyes.

“Jackson.”

My body was betraying me again as I ran to her and embraced her in a deep and soul crushing hug as my knees gave way and I fell to the floor; she came down with me as she held on tightly.

“What the hell happened?” Darius asked.

“She was here.”

Adrian’s voice broke through my mind as he must have shifted back into his human form. Hearing some shuffling behind me which I could only assume was Adrian finding something to cover his naked body, Hayley released me and looked at me with a concerned face.

“Why were you even here?”

“I – eh,” I paused, choking on my own words.

“We were doing research.”

Adrian came up behind me and placed a hand on my shoulder before almost pushing Hayley out of the way as he helped lift me back up onto my two feet. His face was tender and concerned. He had some sort of blanket, or something wrapped around his waist and nodded at me in almost a ‘I got you’ motion and I wiped some of my tears away with the back of my sleeve.

“Research on the history of vampires, she just showed up in the library. We had no idea she had done this.”

Diana continued to weep as Hayley’s group of hunters came in to either help the injured or cover the dead up with sheets. I didn’t want to know how many had died or been hurt in the crossfire, I just wanted to cry myself to sleep as it was my fault she was even here. She had been looking for me.

“Guys, get everyone out of here and take them to the other house. Jackson, I know you’re a little shaken up, but do you think you can lock this place down.”

Hayley ordered as she stood back up and crossed her arms, appearing unbothered and not remotely interested. Something was going on with her and as much as I wanted to think and blame Darius for her sudden change, perhaps something else was going on. Maybe I wasn’t the only one feeling these weird headaches and effects in the air. Perhaps she was getting it too?

Nodding in response, Darius led Diana out with many of those who could still walk, along with the injured. Adrian refused to leave my side, linking his fingers into mine, he

kissed my forehead and then let go, taking his warmth with him.

“I need to tell Kelly and the others to prepare as I don’t think tonight was a one off and if she comes back, we need to be ready,” He paused looking at Hayley and I could hear a growl low in his throat. “As much as I don’t want to leave you, stay with the huntress until I come back and get you.”

“He will be coming back to the house.”

Hayley announced as if I weren’t standing there and Adrian turned fully towards her, blocking me.

“No, he will be coming back to mine,” Adrian interrupted.

And in that moment, it felt as if something snapped inside me. I wasn’t this damsel; I had never been. I was a badass witch, powerful one and as much as Hayley thought she could try and order me around, I wasn’t having it. I was her second-in-command whether she liked it or not, I had been appointed by the council as well as her parents since we became a team.

“Hayley, I will be going back with Adrian. I do not and will not take orders from you. You may be the boss of everyone else, but you are not and will never be the boss of me.”

Something flashed in her eyes, and I recognised then our bond, our connection was no longer there, and I realised that was why I had felt so sick, dizzy, and the fuzzy headache that was forever there in the back of my mind. I was no longer connected to her, but something else. Someone else.

“Where is Hayley?”

I whispered almost as Darius came back into the foyer.

“What did you say?” He asked, his eyes wide and confused.

“Where is Hayley Van Helsing, because this person, this isn’t her.”

“Of course, it’s her,” he shouted while she stayed silent, her eyes narrowing at me.



This hadn't been Hayley since before the warehouse, the Hayley I knew would never have sent me away, would have had snarky remarks about Adrian holding my hand, kissing my forehead. She would have wound me up like it was my last day on this world. The Hayley I had grown up with wouldn't have demanded anyone do as they were told or ordered around. She was a great leader and one who listened to those around her.

Taking out her gun suddenly, she pointed it at all of us, mostly towards me and I wasn't sure if I should laugh or hold my hands up in surrender. She looked panicked and deranged, using her one hand to hold the gun and the other pressed at the side of her head.

"No – You don't, you don't know anything," she stuttered, tears beginning to release from her eyes.

"Release her, Malia!" I shouted.

Darius was unsure of what to do as he held his hands up as he took a step forward.

"Hayley, please, this is Jackson, your bestie, your brother, put the gun down, my love."

"NO!" She shouted, pointing the gun towards him, "stay back or I will shoot you too!"

We were at a crossroads. I knew this wasn't Hayley and it made me sick to my stomach. I hadn't realised it sooner. My friend was trapped or being controlled, and I should have noticed, I should have known, but I had been so caught up in my own story to even see it.

"I said – EAM DIMITTERE!!"

Suddenly her eyes changed, and a flash of red showed through, her hair changing from its lilac to a hint of red. The enchantress, Malia was inside her too and I wasn't about ready to lose another friend. Drawing strength from the earth and air around me, I called upon the elements to give me enough power to fill me, to help save my friend.

My fingertips lit up with blue and green sparks as the elements ignited my magic and I was ready to face anything

Hayley threw at me. I kept a tight hold on the magic, watching her shake her head and appear to fight within herself, clawing at her t-shirt then at the skin underneath. She dropped the gun and as it went off hitting Darius in the shoulder, she started to scream, scream out in pain and anguish.

Rushing to her aid as she fell to the floor, blood began to drip from her eyes, running down her cheeks as she shook violently. Lifting her up into my arms, I held on tightly as she continued to scream.

“Hayley, come back, please, you can fight this bitch.”

Darius appeared behind her and knelt down, closing his eyes he placed his hands on her shoulders as she slowly stopped shaking and her screaming turned into a sound of muffled cries.

“Take my strength – Take our strength, draw from us to help you.”

I felt it then as the energy I had built up was being slowly drained away, Hayley was fighting back, and I was sure Darius could feel it too. Could sense that she was with us again, fighting.

“It’s working, Hayley. Keep going!”

I shouted as I let go of her and lowered her down onto her back, her eyes closed and darting under her eyelids. She twitched a little here and there as Darius kept his hands firmly placed on her shoulders.

“How did you know?”

Adrian asked as he came up to kneel beside me, holding my hand as I felt his own power pour into me then into Hayley. She had three powerful men willing to fight for her and help her anyway we could.

“I couldn’t feel her anymore. I hadn’t felt her for a few days and honestly, I thought it was because we were too far away from each other or she just didn’t want to be found, but then, I realised, even when she didn’t want me to know where she was, I could always sense her. Just like with Molly and I.”

“Do you still feel Molly?” Darius asked, looking up at me.

“No, Molly has been gone for a long time and the last bit of her said goodbye to me earlier, before we came out to face this.”

Hayley continued to take the energy she needed, and we sat there all surrounding her for ten or fifteen minutes, until the floor began to shake again, and a bright red light burst from Hayley’s chest and a scream erupted through the air as the light escaped out the door and Hayley’s eyes fluttered open slowly.

“Jackson.”

Her voice was broken, tired, and defeated. I had never heard this tone before and it broke my heart. I had failed as a best friend, failed as her second, I should have known.

“I’m sorry.”

I whispered as I brought her hand to my face, kissing her knuckles lightly. She was my family, my sister and I was meant to be there for her, be her person and I had been sucking at it.

“You – You didn’t know.” She coughed as she began to sit herself up, Darius pulling her back to rest on his chest for support.

“She got me after the warehouse,” she paused, catching her breath and rubbing her eyes. “I was at home and felt this strange eerie feeling, I thought it was just the house you know, being creepy then a strange feeling of cold and pure hatred passed through me. I thought it was a ghoul at first, but then it went dark.”

Holding her hand tightly, she looked at me then to Adrian and a small smile showed up on her face. She wasn’t going to ask me any questions or for an explanation, she knew I’d tell her when we were all ready and not too busy trying to save the world.

“I saw you at the club and I heard the things I said to you. Please know, that wasn’t me. I would never say that, I always need you around.”

She started to cry, and I wasn't used to seeing such raw emotions coming from Hayley. She rarely cried and it broke a little piece of me. I knew deep down she never would have told me to go away, or that she didn't want me around.

"It's forgiven. Now, we need to rid our city of this menace once and for all."

She nodded and started to lift herself up, using Darius as her aid and as she turned to look at him, she planted a gentle kiss on his cheek and they both rested their foreheads against each other's.

"You're incredible, you know that right."

Adrian's words of affection took me by surprise, but they wrapped themselves around my heart and I took a sigh of relief. I had no idea if my spell command would work as the enchantress had already displayed amazing amounts of power, I had no idea if I would be able to help Hayley out.

"I am just as shocked as you are, I didn't think that was going to work, but I am grateful it did."

"What do we do now?"

He still tightly held my hand and in that moment I just wanted to kiss him, to feel something that was normal and not filled with despair or death.

"Right now, I want to kiss you, but we have other important things to deal with."

He growled a predatory growl and licked his lips as he looked me up and down. He was still wrapped in a towel and if we weren't surrounded by blood and being watched by my best friend and her mate, I would have taken him there and then.

"Where do you think she's hiding?"

Hayley addressed her question towards me and for once, I felt like I was in somewhat control. I knew now she would listen to me, listen to everything I had seen and found out.

"We need to find the stone circle she used to create the first vampire. Hayley, there is so much we need to discuss, but first

let's head home and check on the injured and we can go from there."

Turning back towards Adrian then, he seemed to be waiting for me to either tell him to come with us or meet us there, I wasn't too sure.

"Adrian, get your pack ready and meet us at the new house. I will get everyone I can to look for the stone circle, can you maybe see if Kelly or someone can search for one as well?"

It felt right commanding and being in control. This was the most relaxed I had felt in days, from the moment Molly had told me about her missing time, to the car accident then to Adrian's and my first kiss. It had been nearly two weeks since I tried to help Molly and even then I felt like I didn't know what I was doing, but this, I knew here what I needed to do.

"Of course, we shall meet you at the house." He nodded before kissing me lightly on the lips then shifted into his wolf form.

"And we shall head home."

Holding out her hand for me, I linked my fingers with Hayley, and we headed out the door. Towards a battle? Or towards the end of the world? I wasn't sure, but at least this battle was done.



As we stepped outside, the sky showed purples, reds, and dark oranges. It was spectacular and concerning, I had never seen the sky change to these beautiful colours and already knew in my gut it was due to magic.

We had to be quick, time was going to start running out and when you are battling a powerful witch who can in fact, stop time, it was worrying.

On the drive to the other house, I explained everything to Hayley in depth and as we shared tears, we discussed the stone circle and what its importance was.

Stone circles could be found all across the world. They were crucial points in the change of history and the way magic was brought to life. Mostly, stone circles were used for healing and magical powers, to regenerate oneself or even for social gatherings at certain times of the year.

I had however, not seen or heard of one being created or within RavenBlack. That isn't to say one wasn't here before the city was built or when the world began to change and grow after the middle ages, which was when the enchantress had created her family.

“I will get the research division to look up as much as they can about stone circles and if there are any in the area.”

Hayley commanded as she stormed into the house with Darius trailing behind her. She was on a mission and clearly pissed about being taken over or whatever the enchantress did.

No one did that to the greatest huntress and demon killer known to man and she was certainly not going to let it go.

“I don’t think we will find anything in any history books, I’ve already looked. I think what we need is Lady Elizabeth’s grimoire.”

“Okay, where is that?”

“Back at Adrian’s. I will call him now to bring it with him when he gets here.”

Fishing for my phone out of my pocket and searching through my contacts to find his name, I saw not only had he put his name into my phone but also Kelly’s. Rolling my eyes and wondering when he’d done that, if it was before I met Kelly or shortly afterwards.

“Hey!”

“Missing me already, are you?” He asked and I could hear the smug smile across the phone.

“No, umm, can you bring my books from your living room please? I put them on your coffee table.”

There was a quiet pause then some shuffling on the phone and I waited, tapping my fingers a little as there wasn’t time to be patient here, I just needed a ‘yeah sure’ or something. When the front door opened again, Adrian stepped through along with Kelly and around ten or fifteen more wolves. Many I had met at the party. In Adrian’s hands were both books, the enchantress’s diary, and Lady Elizabeth’s book, the very one Molly had given me.

“Oh, shit,” I said out loud as the thought appeared.

“What? What’s the matter?” Hearing Hayley’s anxious voice made me realise something also.

“Molly, she gave me Lady Elizabeth’s book and the enchantress told me there was more to the tales we have been told,” I paused for a second to let my brain catch up, “She wants my blood, but Hayley, I don’t think it’s just mine she wants.”

Sighing heavily then, Hayley rolled her eyes and crossed her arms, going a little red in the face as if she knew where my train of thought was going.

“Of course, she’d want my blood as well. All these witch bitches – no offence – seem to want a piece of me.”

“Well, that’s because you’re the chosen one, my little spitfire.”

Darius wrapped his arms around Hayley’s waist from behind and kissed her neck gently. And I felt my heart twist a little as I watched them both together. She spun around so she could wrap her arms around his neck, and they pressed their foreheads together looking lovingly in each other’s eyes.

Adrian’s presence was so close behind me, it was almost as if I could feel his breath against my skin and jealousy welled up inside me. My best friend was happily in love, but I continued to deny that perhaps Adrian and I were to become something, if only I could allow the something to grow.

“I will look through Lady Elizabeth’s book, again, and see if I can find anything about the stone circle.”

“Sounds good,” Hayley distractedly replied, she still had her back to me, then she kissed Darius lightly on the lips. “I’m going to take a shower and wash that bitch off me. Jacks, come find me if you find anything.”

Pausing then, she let go of Darius and turned to address Adrian, who stood with Kelly idly chatting. Most likely they didn’t want to see the public displays of affection and I couldn’t blame them. It had taken me a while to get used to her and Darius.

“Adrian, will you and yours patrol the grounds. I don’t want to risk sending more of my recruits out, they’re all young and inexperienced and everyone I have sent out, she’s massacred, pretty much.”

Kelly’s face changed as she heard the words. Hayley, I know didn’t mean to come across as if she didn’t care about Adrian’s wolves, but her priority was to the people of the



family, of our clan and knowing her, she felt the wolves would be strong enough to take care of themselves.

“I’m sure they would be happy to, but if the enchantress is out there, I will be asking them to stand down until they receive my go ahead. I won’t lose any of my pack if I can help it.” Adrian was assertive and the Alpha he was meant to be.

“Understood,” she nodded and headed towards the stairs, “Are you coming Darius?”

“In a moment, love.”

She didn’t question him or even ask why he wanted to stay down here with me. Adrian and Kelly had left without even glancing my way and I wondered for a second as to why that was. But then again, we had an awful lot of things on our minds and sharing glances with ‘almost’ people wasn’t always the brightest idea.

“Something I can help with?” Darius asked as I headed towards the living room.

He stood rather sheepishly, and I wondered if he felt as if he were stepping on eggshells with me. Which he was. After the events here with Angelique, I had tried to get to know Darius, tried to become his friend, but he seemed more interested in Hayley and getting in her pants, rather than trying to get to know her family.

Molly and I would often invite him to spell practice with us as Hayley had mentioned he was somewhat skilled and when that didn’t work, we tried inviting him to a games night here and there. Hayley stopped coming after he said he wasn’t interested. So, for the most part, I disliked him.

“It’s alright, go be with Hayley.”

Slumping down into a chair, I opened the book and searched through the pages to see if anything drew my attention and for the most part, the book was still the same, spells unknown and spells already used a million times.

“She will be alright without me for a bit, I just wanted to check in on you.”

“That’s sweet, but not interested Darius. I gave you plenty of chances to get to know me and now, when we have some villainess trying to take us all out you wanna know?”

Rolling my eyes, I went back to reading the grimoire as he leaned against the arm of an armchair, fiddling with something in his hands. I didn’t want to sound nasty, but he frustrated me and when Hayley, or the enchantress said I was being replaced by him, my heart broke a little as I had already felt that pain.

“I’m sorry, we got off the wrong foot.”

I interrupted him, then uninterested, “No, we will never be on the right foot.”

He huffed an awkward laugh and I just wanted to bury myself in this book. I needed to find the information we needed. The stone circle was where the enchantress was heading, and we needed to get ahead of her, as so far she was winning this fight.

“Hear me out, please, Jacks.”

Looking up at him and his beautiful brown eyes, as he brought on some kind of smoulder, I wanted to throw the book at his face. Sighing, I closed the book and leaned back into my chair, crossing my arms, and crossing one leg over the other. If he wanted me to hear him out, he was going to be on a time limit.

“Right – I wasn’t expecting you to actually agree to listen.” He rubbed the back of his neck before standing up straight and pacing a few times.

“I should have known that wasn’t really Hayley. I mean, I had some suspicions that something was wrong, but nothing felt different. Our bond still felt pretty much the same.” He paused his pacing and stared directly at me, “I’m guessing that was magic.”

Raising my eyebrows in a sarcastic way, he took the hint that yes, it was clearly magic that was blinding him from the truth.

“I saw how you and Adrian were back at the old house. How long has that been going on for?”

“I believe we were discussing Hayley. Not me.”

“Yea, sorry.”

I never knew Darius was a blubbering mess and right now, the super strong hybrid warrior in front of me, sounded like a schoolgirl talking to her crush. I just needed him to get to the point now. We were on borrowed time and considering the bad guy could also manipulate time I wasn't sure how long we really did have.

“I messed up. Hayley told me she felt funny that night and I just took it as tiredness or something. I should have known better.”

“The enchantress is a pretty powerful witch. She had us all fooled for months while taking over Molly, it's nobody's fault.”

Mentioning Molly's name hurt a little. It had always been her, Hayley, Eric, and I and so far we had now lost two people we had grown up with. Yes, Eric brought it on himself after what he did, but how he died wasn't expected and deep down I knew Hayley and I hadn't really gone through that grief.

She has been so taken over by Darius, she never grieved her friend as that's what he was. He was our family and made terrible choices, but was still one of us and at one point, he was very important to Hayley.

“Either way, I am worried. If this witch can get into the likes of Hayley who is pretty powerful, what else can she do?”

He sat down in the seat he had been leaning against earlier and rubbed his forehead. Maybe he had been just as stressed as I had been throughout this entire process. While I was stuck in research mode, he was there with Hayley as she prowled the streets hunting for the enchantress, who was already inside her.

“Well, I am pretty sure she's the one who attacked Hayley months ago in the city. She was able to stop time and was able to cause some serious damage to Hayley.”

I couldn't remember if I had already told Darius that. The days were slowly rolling into one as lack of sleep and energy were taking their toll on me, the headache sitting at the back of

my head was just numb enough to deal with. For as much as I wanted to head upstairs and get one of my energy potions, too many could kill a person.

“From reading her diary and seeing it first hand, well kinda, I witnessed her suck in fire and use it herself. She can shift into a dragon and was able to bring her daughter back to life by making her into the first vampire. So, honestly, fuck knows what else she can do.”

His eyes widened as the realisation hit him.

“Well, I think I jinxed us all then after Angelique died, when I said she was a shit bad guy and now we have this one.” He joked, perhaps trying to lighten the mood.

“Honestly, Da, it’s like Angelique was that little boss you fight in a game and then the epic background music starts to play, and you come up against the boss’s boss and I don’t think we have enough health potions to keep us from dying.”

He laughed out loud as I noticed how much of a geek I sounded like and joined in a little in the laughter. This was the first time in what seemed like forever since I had laughed, or even joked with someone that didn’t involve flirting.

“What is actually going on with you then and that wolf?”

“You wouldn’t even believe me.”

“Try me.”

Taking a few seconds to decide if I should say anything as I hadn’t even had the chance to tell Hayley. I wouldn’t be impressed as her best friend if I wasn’t the first person she told when something important happened, but then again, Hayley and I didn’t feel very ‘best friend’ at the moment.

“He and I have been getting kind of close the last week or two. There has been some good flirting and banter and well, we kissed in the library in the old house and there was some heavy petting. But, I stopped it before we got carried away.”

Noticing Darius was laughing a little, I shot him a glare.

“Sorry – You said the word petting and well, wolf. Please, go on.”

“Anyway, I think I might have feelings for him, but I feel awful about it.”

Sighing, my body relaxed a little as I uncrossed my arms, I hadn't even realised I was still in that 'haven't got time for this' position and I could see Darius relax a little as I did.

“Hayley mentioned to me about your ex, she said he died, after a vampire attacked him, in your arms. That must have been pretty traumatic.”

“It was and when I feel like I am getting even slightly close to Adrian, I pull back. I feel like I am betraying Alex's memory.”

“You know,” he paused, biting his bottom lip as if to stop him from continuing and I watched the wheels in his brain turn trying to decide if he should say anything.

“Before I met Hayley, I met this girl. She was sweet, very handsy and honestly, I thought I could easily settle down with her. Well, if I wasn't a hybrid and had to hide in the shadows. She knew what I was and was willing to accept me, but one night...”

He stopped again as his face turned a little sad and his neck began to turn red.

“One night, I become enraged during a full moon, and I had only ever changed a few times by this point and, I begged her to stay away from me, to leave and she didn't – I attacked her and when I woke up, like myself, the next day and saw what I had done, I promised the gods or whoever, I would never love another again as punishment.”

“And then walked in Hayley,” I said.

“I was desperate to know her after I was given the letters and I had to fight every fibre of my being to stay away. Had I known then what I know now, about us being soulmates, I would have wanted to know her before then and obviously circumstances would have been nicer as well.”

I was surprised at his truthfulness with me and not worried I would potentially report him to Hayley, as she wouldn't have been impressed to know he killed an innocent. However, I was

putting two and two together as to why he was sharing his personal story with me.

If he had known Hayley would end up being so important to him, he would have got to know her better and perhaps, not locked in a room where they were forced to get to know each other more and complete their bond. They could have perhaps completed their bond on their own terms.

“I am glad you both found each other. I can see how happy she is, even if you have replaced me as her person,” I joked, but the statement still stung.

“Jackson, you will always be her person.”

He smiled a soft smile before getting up and heading towards the cabinet Hayley hid liquor in and pulled out two glasses along with the bottle of whiskey.

“Drink?”

“Please.”

Focusing now on Lady Elizabeth’s grimoire, I ignored the fuzzy edges around my vision and called forth the elements to aid me, give me strength and guide me to the page I needed. Wind took over as I opened the book, and it blew through pages and pages until it stopped at a page with the title carefully scripted in the middle.

### *The History Of Raven Black*

“Problem is, we already know the history of the city,” I said out loud taking a swig of my drink as Darius sat back down.

“Do we really though? I’m guessing this enchantress bitch wasn’t in the history books anywhere and I heard you tell Hayley she created the first vampire? So, perhaps Lady Elizabeth knew more than anyone else.”

His words got the wheels of my brain turning, I should stop judging books from the get-go. History wasn’t what we were led to believe and more often or not things were changed,

altered throughout time to work with a certain narrative. Lady Elizabeth's teachings had always been the same, never mess around with the balance of life and death.

Which is what the enchantress did. She messed with death itself and brought forth a demon to rid this world of humans. She had mentioned that my family and Hayley's were the first to trap her and once again centuries later.

Almost three centuries later would have been around the time Lady Elizabeth was in power as queen consort. Opening the next page, 'The History of RavenBlack's first few pages seemed to detail the movements of the people from around the world venturing across the seas.

Finding new lands to explore, to create, build life and for the most part RavenBlack wasn't a city, it was a small village in the middle of nowhere and had been here for centuries before, maybe even from the very start.

*'The very start?'*

Looking over at Darius as he watched me intently, possibly wondering if something was going to click and although I had some ideas, I needed to read more. To find out more information before I went spouting ideas.

There were detailed pages of how the people lived, how witches and wannabe vampire hunters settled here. How Van Helsing came with his soldiers, leaving behind his old world on English soil, after his daughter was married off and his wife had long passed.

His son, his last heir kept the family line as well as the blood connection that Lady Elizabeth had created. They kept the vampires at bay as the 'sickness' had spread across the world, with Lady Elizabeth's blessings and with the powers flowing through his veins, Van Helsing created the clan and began recruiting known witches and those who could swing a sword, axe, or any other weapon.

I already knew most of this and I was getting angry as the fuzzy edges grew bigger and I rubbed at my temples, frustrated. This was becoming irritating, and I hated failure. I

was not a person who failed, I worked hard and got where I wanted to be, but now at every turn, I felt I was going in blind and unprepared.

Turning a few pages, ignoring all the text garbage I knew I was going to face, I sighed.

“Wait,” Darius spoke up, almost jumping out from his seat. “Go back a page.”

I flicked back through the pages until he told me to stop and as we both looked at the description of a drawing, my mouth dropped. The stone circle.





“T here. There’s the stone circle.”

Pointing at the sketch, I showed Hayley in her office, she stared at the book blankly for a second before it all clicked into place. The stone circle was RavenBlack. Throughout the centuries, the original stone circle in 1211, was broken into pieces and moved to different parts of the city and the outskirts.

“It’s why so many dark creatures are drawn here and why ghouls and ghosts can’t leave or be at peace.”

It was all beginning to add up, finally. The reason the enchantress had been found in different parts of the city; she was looking for the pieces. She must have been trying to put them back together.

“Either that, or she’s looking for the centre of the circle.”

Hayley spoke and for a moment I was surprised, but then very grateful that our link had reconnected, and she was able to hear my thoughts. Well, at least some of my thoughts. Adrian and Darius had joined us in her office, and both looked as stern and angry as the other. Both with arms crossed and broody expressions.

“So, how do we find out where she hits next?” Adrian asked.

“Easy.”

Hayley began to shuffle some papers off her desk and scattered much of the stuff on her desk to the floor and

revealed the map of RavenBlack underneath. Her father had this desk custom made, Hayley would often joke it was so he could play with his toy soldiers and armies, pretending they were re-enacting those classic war games across the board.

“Jackson, find me a pen.”

Looking around the floor and under her desk, I found a pen and handed it to her. We watched as she looked at the sketch then thought back to all the places we had met the enchantress. The warehouse first, the church then the old house as she began to draw a circle through the spots and then back to the first spot.

“Okay, judging from that sketch, there are seven stones. We already have four of the places she’s been. Jackson, you’ve been to three of them, Darius and I have been to the shopping districts and the living districts. Both of which we found she had made her way through, leaving a few bodies.”

Marking that off, Kelly appeared in the doorway.

“My team and I saw her at the docks yesterday.”

“Okay, so that’s one more. There’s one more stone left.”

As we started to think and wonder where the last stone could be as there were a few options, Adrian and Kelly suddenly went stone cold silent as Adrian growled an almighty growl and his eyes flashed yellow then to a slight tinge of red.

“Something is wrong.”

Shifting quickly, both him and Kelly ran from the room and out the house. Hayley, Darius, and I looked at each other and wondered if we should follow. My heart was stinging at the distance already between Adrian and I, but I wasn’t sure if it would be ok or if I would be of much use.

“Shall we go after them?” Darius took the words right out of my mouth, and I was thankful it was him asking and not me.

“Honestly? – No. You both should stay here.”

Hayley’s orders took me by surprise. I was expecting her to say yes, let’s get the weapons, get the cavalry and head on

out. To hopefully help those who have been helping us thus far and yet, she didn't move a muscle.

“Seriously?”

“Seriously. Jackson, we don't know what that was about, and we could easily be walking into a trap. This witch bitch wants our blood and as much as I love a good fight, it's not worth it. Not yet, we need to know more of what we are up against.”

She was right. And I hated that. I felt this pull, this horrible dragging feeling towards the door and where Adrian had run off. I hadn't told her about Adrian and I, our kiss, or the fact that we may be soulmates and I wasn't sure how I was going to even start that conversation.

Now was not the time.

“No, you know what, Hayley. No. We should help him and his pack, Adrian helped you search for Molly and has thus far helped keep me safe. We owe him.”

She smiled at my words, a little devilish and pulled her gun from its holster, pulling out the magazine, checking it and then clipping it back into place. She lifted her leather jacket off the back of her chair and looked at me again.

“Fuck it. What are we waiting for then?”

There was my Hayley. She didn't play it safe and wouldn't care to spill a little bit of blood, even if it were hers. Grateful for her change of heart, we rushed out the door and towards the front door, ready and slightly excited to finally kick some butt.

When the door swung open, Kelly was supporting Adrian with one of his arms thrown over her shoulders and she was holding him up around his waist as they fell to the floor in the foyer, many more wolves piled in.

“SHUT THE DOOR!! SHUT THE DOOR!!” Kelly shouted.

Hayley ignoring the werewolves pleas, she stepped through the doorway, and I followed. Both our eyes widened

as we looked around us seeing not only a blaze of bright red, hot fire, but also a great many vampires.

The enchantress hovered above them with fire spilling from her body. She looked like a phoenix that had risen from its ashes and without warning, Hayley grabbed me and pulled us both back into the house.

Slamming it shut behind us, she kept her back to the door and looked panicked, scared even.

“She – She destroyed our pack at the apartment then followed us here.”

Kelly spoke breathlessly as she pulled herself up, wounded and bloody. I couldn't take my eyes off Adrian as he laid with his eyes closed, something inside me was hurting.

“I think we found the centre of the circle,” Darius said as he took hold of Hayley's hands.

“Jackson, get the remaining witches here. We need a barrier.” She ordered and as much as I wanted to help Adrian, I had to protect our home.



BY THE TIME I had found the remaining witches, they had all been hiding either under their beds or in the lab. Hiding from the flames outside and the army of vampires that were knocking down our doors. We had to think fast, the spells I had used to protect the house were not good anymore and thus, we needed something stronger.

Gathering at the front door of the house, I took hold of witches' hands on either side of me and called upon the elements and all the strength around me. Hayley stood behind me with her hands upon my shoulders and I breathed in deeply.

“Repeat these words - Non intrabis quod destruat de quo non permittitur.”

And as we began our chant, the room started to shake as the energy from the earth was pulled upwards and started to surround the entire house. I had no idea this spell would actually work as it was one of the many found in Lady Elizabeth's grimoire, I had not had a chance to try it yet. I kept my fingers crossed and my eyes shut tightly, Hayley wouldn't be impressed if it broke down.

"It's working!"

Darius shouted as he looked out one of the foyer windows and as he spoke, a power rumbled through me and burst outwards, green, blue and yellow sparks flooded my hands as well as the other witches and as we continued to chant, a light barrier covered the house.

The house shook as the light reached its apex and joined together with the other side and we were sealed in. Locked from the outside world and the only people left to help aid us were the ones in the building.

Hayley, Darius, the recruits, Adrian, Kelly, and some of his wolves who had survived the attack.

"Jackson, take Adrian up to your room, Darius will help," Hayley ordered, letting go of me.

"As for the rest of you, take the wolves up to the hospital wing to Annabeth and get them the medical attention they may need. If you are able to hold a weapon, follow me."

I didn't question why Hayley said my room, but I did wonder why not to Annabeth. Adrian may have needed medical attention as well. Watching as Kelly and Darius both lifted Adrian up, they headed up the stairs as Darius directed Kelly towards my bedroom. Once there, they settled Adrian on the bed, covering him up with a blanket. I stood idly in the doorway, wondering what I was meant to do.

"Kelly is it?" Darius asked and Kelly nodded in reply. "Come with me, we can see if Annabeth is able to give us anything to help Adrian."

"He doesn't need basic human shit, he needs magic. He wasn't able to shift for long once we were out there and that

witch bitch blasted him with something. One minute he was running next to me then the next minute he's down and shifted back into his human form."

Awkwardly taking a step in, I didn't know what I was meant to do. I looked at Adrian as he laid peacefully in my bed, and I imagined if in different circumstances what he would have looked like with me next to him.

"Jackson, any ideas?" Darius asked, snapping me back into reality.

"Eh," pausing for a second, I had to think. "Maybe we can try a healing potion, there are some in my office in the lab."

Nodding, Darius left the room quickly as Kelly sat down next to Adrian, holding his hand in hers as she whispered something to him.

"What happens if we can't wake him up? Who becomes the Alpha?" I asked.

"I will take his place until another is called, but that won't happen. He is still warm, and I can feel our wolf connection is still there, can't you feel yours?"

My eyes snapped up at hers as she looked at me with a stern look. Did she know about the bond? The soul mate connection Adrian had spoken about. Wait, of course she knew. They were partners in wolves. They were family and he must have shared this news with her at some point. Closing my eyes then, I searched through myself, looking for that small glimmer of light I had seen before, it didn't burn as brightly as before and appeared to be fading.

"He's still here. But he's fading."

Opening my eyes, Kelly looked sad and lost as she turned back to look at Adrian, brushing a hair from his face and then leaned in to kiss him on the forehead.

"Then you are the one who must bring him back."

"What? – How am I meant to do that?"

"When a wolf creates a bond with someone, normally they are able to share some thoughts, but only in wolf form," she

paused, rising from the bed she came to stand in front of me and took my hands in hers.

“Adrian said when your mate is found, your connection is different. You will not just hear their thoughts, but feel their emotions, their pain, their strength.”

“We haven’t completed our bond though; the connection won’t be as strong as the ones who have.”

“That’s ok, you can see his lifeline, it’s connected to yours and right now, he needs you. I need him.”

Sighing, I felt myself becoming overwhelmed and out of my depth. I never signed up for any of this, I deeply wished I had never got into that car accident and Adrian had not been the one to pull me out. But then again, everything did always have a reason for happening and as I think about it more, perhaps the enchantress who most likely had taken over Molly by that point caused the accident.

“Please, Jackson, you’re the only one who can bring him back.”

“Okay, I will try my best.”

It was all I could offer. I had never been within someone’s mind and the only person I knew who had done it before was Hayley and right now, I couldn’t go rushing to ask for her help or guidance. I had to do this alone and use all the knowledge from my spell lessons to not fuck this up.



Sitting beside Adrian, I breathed in deeply and took in the scene around me. Kelly sat on the opposite side of him holding his hand and watched me closely as I prepared myself. Darius hadn't returned with the potion, and I could only assume he had been called to do something else or had not been able to find it.

I was running on next to no energy after the barrier spell. I wasn't even sure if I had another spell in me, this would possibly drain me and as magic had a price, I was cutting my life span every time I used magic without resting.

I hadn't stopped yet and I knew deep down, my body was paying the price. Holding my free hand out, I held it above Adrian and Kelly took it without a word.

"I need your energy if this is going to work. Do you mind?"

"No, take whatever you need if it will help him."

"Confer me ad animum - ostende mihi cogitationes - coniunge animam meam," I said, hoping it would be the right spell.

"What does that mean?" Kelly asked, breaking my concentration for a moment.

"It means, bring me to his mind, show me his thoughts and connect my soul with his. It's ancient magic, sometimes it works and other times, well – Lets just see if it works."



Repeating the words again, I held on tightly to Adrian's hand as I felt Kelly's energy rush through me and give me the smallest of boosts that I needed. I was spent and unsure if the elements would help me cast this enchantment. Mother Nature and the balance, Lady Elizabeth had spoken about, was now tilted, the enchantress shouldn't be here and if she wished to bring upon destruction of the world, I had to do everything in my power to stop it.

A small twitch drew my attention back to Adrian as I repeated the words one final time. Three always being the lucky number and I felt my mind begin to wander as my eyes drifted shut.

When I opened them, I stood on a grey skied beach. The wind brought a chill to my bones and the rain drizzled lightly on my skin. The smell of the salty sea air took my breath away as it felt so real, as if I were really standing on the beach.

"You shouldn't be here."

His voice hit my ears like lightning, and I felt a sudden heat underneath my skin as he came up behind me. Adrian's voice was soothing but alert.

"I came to bring you back."

"I can hear her, you know, her voice. She keeps talking to me and I am trying not to listen, Jackson, but she's strong and she wants something."

Turning around to face him, I took his hands in mine as I could sense his worry and I was sure even fear. She was powerful and I didn't know if I would have the strength to defeat her, but I wasn't going to give up, and I wasn't going to let her take Adrian from me.

"She can want all she wants. You are coming home."

He smiled sweetly and gently to me, placing a hand on my cheek causing a blush to flush my cheeks. I had just found him, and I wasn't about to give him up.

"And how do you suppose you will be able to bring me back?"

“We need to find the way out.”

Looking around as the beach waves calmed and the rain stopped. All I could see was sand and for a moment I stood there wondering if I could pull this off and if we would get out in time before the enchantress found out I was here.

“What is it we’re looking for?”

Adrian held tightly onto my hand as we started walking across the shoreline. The weather, although dull, has this sense of warmth that wrapped around my body, enclosing me in this protected shell.

Adrian looked almost a greek hero, his blond hair left loose, blowing freely and his brown eyes watched every part of me. He was breathtaking. It felt as if I were only now looking at him, truly seeing him for who he was within. I was looking at his soul.

Up ahead there seemed to be a break in the clouds as sun beams shined down towards a cliff and I felt a small glimmer of hope that perhaps our exit might be that way. I sensed he saw it too as he pulled me forward a little, quickening our pace and almost turning into a run as a rumble in the distance rang out.

She knew I was here, and we had to hurry.

“QUICK! FASTER!!”

Adrian shouted over the thunder and lightning as it sparked the sky and fear filled me. If she caught me, or us, I wasn’t sure what she’d do, but I was only worried for Adrian’s safety. For his soul.

Adrian held tightly onto my hand as he continued to pull me forward and I felt his nervousness and worry as we cleared the beach and began a climb up the cliff’s edge. My heart raced in my chest as the earth began to shake violently and rocks started to fall around us, barely missing Adrian and one stone hitting me in the shoulder, but I held tightly onto his hand as we reached a ledge.

“Jackson, you should go,” he almost pleaded, looking concerned.

“What?”

“If she catches you, I don’t know what I will do. One of us needs to be out there fighting her.”

“No, I will not leave you.”

Cupping his face in my hands, I pulled him down for a soft, wanting filled kiss and I felt my heart shutter as my stomach flipped. I needed him, one way or another, I have needed him since my very first breath.

Pulling away as a thunderclap slashed through the air above our heads, we both looked up as the rain began to grow heavy. We needed to keep moving and not get distracted.

“Adrian, don’t even ask me to leave again.”

Taking his hand, I pulled him upwards as we climbed, until we reached the cliff’s edge. Lifting myself upwards and supporting Adrian’s weight as I helped heave him up, we almost fell into each other’s arms.

“Look.”

Turning around, there in the middle of the clearing was a bright white door. Our escape was within our grasp, running towards it with Adrian’s hand clasped in mine, I felt the tug and pull as a lightning bolt hit in-between us. Breaking our connection and flinging us both separately across the cliff.

Falling onto my back, I felt the air knock out of me and my heart beating erratically in my chest. Pain seared through my body, and I let out a cry of agony, my body felt as if it were on fire.

“Jackson!!”

His voice sounded distant as I tried to catch my breath. Why did this hurt so much? Surely it wasn’t supposed to hurt. I was in someone else’s consciousness and for a second, I swore my heart was starting to slow.

“Intruders will be eliminated.”

Her voice. I was growing tired of her voice; this witch needed to disappear and leave us be. My head throbbed as her

voice entered it and my ears started to ring. Her voice was power itself, seeping through the very existence of time and space.

“Give him back to me!” I shouted out loud as Adrian appeared beside me.

“Give yourself to me first.”

“NO! Give him back!!”

She laughed a sinister laugh. One of those deranged laughs that made your body run cold with fear. I wasn't up to my full strength and hadn't been since the very beginning of this entire ordeal, but I needed to do something.

“Adrian, run to the door.”

I shuddered as I began to cough up blood and Adrian quickly grabbed my hand. I could no longer feel his warmth. My vision started to become blurry and dark. My magic was fading, my spell breaking.

“Please. Run! GO!”

He looked at me then with this look of determination and sadness. I wasn't going to leave him here and if my spell broke, he might be lost to me forever, but if he could get to the door in time, it would be fine. All of it would be fine.

Running his lips across my knuckles as the rain, thunder and lightning became stronger, then he got up and started running. I couldn't turn to see if he reached the door or if he was stopped as my vision turned black and I coughed up more blood, feeling my heart stop.



My chest hurt as pain seared through it, pressure against my ribcage and the coughing continued. What was happening to me? Darkness surrounded me as the light was snuffed out. The enchantresses called deep within my mind, and I felt my mind lose itself in the darkness.

“No! Don’t you dare do this to me!”

Adrian, his voice was coming from somewhere in the distance, he sounded distraught, and I tried to reach out for him, but my arm stayed stuck to my side. The pressure on my chest started to intensify.

Feeling a presence next to me, I tried to open my eyes, to see what or who it was. And yet, there was no warmth, no comfort of someone next to me as a tear escaped from my eye.

I would welcome death if he were here to take me, if it meant the pain would stop, but I still had so much left to do. So many things I wanted to say.

“I’m sorry.”

The presence next to me spoke and I felt their touch linger at my fingertips. And a shockwave of heat ran right through my body as a charge filled my chest and my eyes shot open.

Staring upwards at my bedroom ceiling Adrian huffed out a breath of panic as he lifted me up and pulled me tightly into a hug. A hug so tight I thought he would break me in two. My mouth tasted metallic, and it hurt to breathe every few breaths.

“What happened?”

Without a second thought, Adrian let go of me and found his lips on mine. Even if I tasted blood, it didn't matter, he was kissing me as if he had lost me and the butterflies started in my stomach. Letting go of me after a few seconds, he rested his head against my forehead and sighed deeply.

“I thought I wasn't going to get you back for a moment. But I got you – I felt your heart stop, but I wasn't going to let death take you. You belong with me.”

As he helped me up, I spotted Kelly standing near my desk with her arms crossed, but instead of the stern face I was getting used to, it was softer. Once she caught me looking she gave me a small smile then headed towards the door.

“I'm going to help the others. Thanks, Jacks.”

Shutting the door behind us, Adrian guided me to sit on the edge of my bed and started pacing back and forth. I was grateful and also surprised my spell had worked to get him out of that dream world, but the pain I felt after being hit by that bolt concerned me. Stepping into someone else's mind you shouldn't feel any pain unless the pain wasn't within that mind but outside.

“Are you alright?” I asked.

“Honestly, no. I thought you were a goner for a moment, but then I felt your heart start to beat again and along with your breathing. I thought my heart was going to break.”

Sitting next to me then, he placed one hand on my knee and rested the other on the back of my neck. I felt my heart flutter, which maybe wasn't a good thing after that experience. Smiling at my own thoughts then looking at Adrian's beautiful brown eyes, I tried to memorise his face. Every line, every wrinkle, and every scar. I wanted to stare at this face for the rest of my life.

I could feel him move his hand slowly up my thigh, biting my bottom lip, I started smiling. He was going to play a dangerous game, but now wasn't the time. We had evil to defeat and as much as I would have loved to have his mouth firmly around my cock, we didn't have the time.

“Adrian, we should go help the others.”

“Mhmmm. In a minute we will, but for now, I want to taste you.”

He looked up at me under hooded eyelashes and I felt myself flutter at the thought. Hayley would not be impressed if this was what we were doing while she had to man the house.

But then again, when was the last time I had a guy in my bedroom and was desperate to get my clothes off. He licked his lips and continued to watch me as the palm of his hand rubbed up and down the cotton fabric of my jeans. Hissing back a moan as he continued his movements, he moved his other hand to cup my cheek and seconds later was pulling my mouth towards his.

Our tongues danced together as if they had always belonged, and heat ran down me as my erection begged to be let free.

“Adrian – We – Should,” I said between each parting of our lips, “We – Have – Things.”

He just mmm’ed at me and I felt the pop of my jeans button then the groan of the zip becoming undone and dove his hand in, separating my boxers via the button and a deep growl rumbled from his chest as I moaned in response.

“Want me to stop?”

He broke the kiss again and looked at me while still holding my cock in his hand. I was at his command, and he knew what he was doing. I was going to easily become undone right there and then.

“It doesn’t sound like you want me to stop.”

He teased me as my body moved, aching for him to continue, not to ever stop touching me. His mouth found mine again and I moved my one hand to do the same motions as him, in return. But his touch was causing me to see stars and my body was no longer my own.

His hand picked up a smooth motion of up and down, the speed perfect and almost otherworldly. My head fell back

slightly, breaking our kiss and his hand reached around the back of my neck, holding me there.

“Come for me, my witch.”

As I felt the sudden appearance of desire and ecstasy, I felt the blood rush downwards and as I came to my undoing, Adrian kissed me passionately, demandingly and pulled me closer to him. I would now need to change my clothes before we went down to the others.

“I think you needed that.”

He let out a breathless laugh as he got up and chucked me the box of tissues on my bedside table. His trousers were loose on his hips, and he didn't seem at all as flustered as I felt.

“Don't you want anything in return?” I asked, wondering if I should at least attempt to give him the same treatment he just gave me.

“Oh, you will, when I do eventually get to fuck you senseless, you will give me anything I ask for.”

He winked at me and headed into my ensuite as he threw his t-shirt out onto the bedroom floor, and I heard the shower turn on. All I wanted at that moment was to get up and join him but reality set in. We still had to figure out how to defeat the enchantress and I was starting to think Adrian and I were something of importance to her.

She had locked him away in his mind and when I tried to retrieve him, she fought me. Was he important to her spell perhaps? She hadn't mentioned him before other than knowing he existed.





Deciding against my better judgement, I left Adrian to shower and got changed. Sitting at my desk then, I began to write down all the notes and information I had discovered the last few weeks. Notes about Molly, the timeline of events, the enchantress, what she had shown me and what I had learned via Lady Elizabeth's books.

The enchantress wants to bring her daughter back. The first vampire. To destroy the world of man, or that's what the enchantress had previously told me and as Molly stated she would need mine and possibly Hayley's blood to do it. So, we needed to keep a wide berth from her, or as much as we were able to.

"I thought you'd have joined me."

Adrian stood in the bathroom doorway with a towel wrapped around his waist and another one he used to dry his hair.

"I thought it would be best to leave you wanting more."

Looking back at my notes, I tapped my pen on the table wondering if I had left anything out. I was sure there was something missing, but it wasn't coming to mind, especially now that Adrian was standing naked beside me with his penis greeting me proudly.

"You're doing it again," I muttered.

"Doing what?"

"I've already told you to put your dick away."

He laughed then. A belly laugh and it sent shivers down my spine. I could get used to it.

He turned around then and started looking through my wardrobe while I stared back down at my list. I couldn't put my finger on what I was missing, and it was starting to bug me.

“You know when this is all over, you still have to go on a date with me.”

Looking back at him as he spoke, I watched Adrian as he pulled one of my grey t-shirts over his head and then pulled his jeans back on. He looked hotter in my top. His idea of a date intrigued me, what would he have in mind? A dance at his nightclub? A walk on the beach? Maybe even something as simple as coffee and a conversation, anything would have been nice.

He cleared the space between us and took my face in his hands, kissing me with such heat and wanting it almost took me off my feet. And while we were in the thick of it, I could feel my body rise to the occasion he suddenly stopped and looked towards the bedroom door.

“What is it?”

“Somethings happening.”

Letting go of me and rushing out the door, it didn't take me a second to follow him as loud crashes came from downstairs. As I reached the top of the staircase that opened up into the foyer, Hayley capitulated through the air and before I even had a chance to process what was happening, Adrian had jumped higher than I had ever seen before and caught her. Well, his body broke her fall, landing hard on the bottom of the staircase. The enchantress hands were lit with fire as she stood in the front doorway.

She shot her eyes up at me as soon as she saw me looking at her, that terrifying smile appeared across her face. I gulped at the fear that crept upwards in my spine. She was still wearing that white dress, but it seemed to be far dirtier than

before, more mud and blood caked the bottom as did more blood up her arms and across her chest.

She also looked to be bleeding from a wound on her neck, but that didn't even seem to slow her down. As a wolf tried to take her out while she was distracted, she shot a fire ball at him and his howls will be something I will never forget.

“Stop hiding behind your pets Jackson and come out here, join me.”

Her voice was filled with venom as Hayley and Adrian regained their balances, Hayley looked up at me and I could feel her sense of confusion through our bond. I had missed out the parts where the enchantress had been asking me to join her, to help her in her endeavour.

“He won't be going anywhere with you,” Adrian growled as he stepped forward.

“Not even to save one of his precious friends?”

Narrowing my eyes at her, I looked around the room to see if everyone was accounted for and that's when both Hayley and I realised. Darius wasn't there.

“Where's Darius?” Hayley muttered looking around and her panic tied with my fear.

The enchantress's smile grew bigger as a laugh erupted from her then suddenly she stopped as quickly as she started. Snapping her fingers, Darius came into view behind her, being held against his will by an invisible force. How did she manage to get him outside? He knew to stay put behind the barrier.

“Darius!” Hayley shouted and as she moved forward, Adrian grabbed her by her arm and pulled her back. “Let go of me!” She protested as she tried to break free from his grip.

“She wants you and Jackson to both go out there, it's a trap and you know it.”

“Hayley, babes, it's alright, I will be fine, you stay in there, you hear me!” Darius shouted.

The enchantress however didn't want Hayley. She wanted me and I still had no clear idea why, I knew she needed my blood to do the spell, but that might have only meant a few drops and yet, she was now using one of my friends as a bargaining chip. She must have needed something else, or she was running out of ideas and perhaps time.

She looked a lot more haggard than she had in our past encounters. Maybe her inner battle with Molly and trying to keep Hayley under control was taking its toll on her and she was running out of juice. Magic came with a price and each time you used it, a small piece of your life force was taken.

And yet, she had used magic quite often. She would need a source to connect with, something to help gather energy and have a constant flow for her. She had killed many since she had awoken and as much as humans are able to give you some energy, they can't give you much. The same for werewolves. The best type of energy source a witch could use was either someone like Hayley, Darius, or a witch.

*A witch.*

It was as if everything clicked into place then. The headaches, the dizziness, the low energy and constant need to ask for strength from the elements, my slow healing. I wasn't at my best and I just took it as a sign of lack of sleep and food. Perhaps it was something else entirely.

She looked back at me again as if she could hear my thoughts and watched as everything clicked into place. I was the one giving her this continuous state of power, this energy she needed to keep going. And there was only one way to stop it completely.

*Shit.*

The only way to completely sever a link from someone who was using your own life force as their own, was to either kill them or kill the other person. But then again, this felt different, Hayley had used my energy previously and I never had this same feeling as if I were being completely drained. Something else was going on.

Adrian loosened his grip on Hayley as I joined them at the bottom of the staircase, wondering what our next move would need be. We couldn't very well stay in this house, but then again, we would only have to make it to daybreak as her vampires would have to go into hiding then it would just be her against us.

"Hayley, we need to regroup and think smart about this. She isn't going to harm Darius if she's using him as a bargaining chip," I said calmly.

"I'm going to kill her."

"I have no doubt about that, but right now, we need to think smart."

Hayley pulled her gun from her holster and for a second I thought she'd fire and part of me hoped she would, to see what would happen. The wolf was only killed as he went through the doorway.

"Why is the door even open?" I asked, confused.

"Some recruit tried to make a run for it, coward. He ran out and before he could even make it off the porch she had him."

Hayley didn't seem at all impressed as she didn't train people to run, she trained warriors. It made me wonder how Darius had even left, why had he left? Maybe she lured him out with something, she was very good at tricks.

"Tick tock Mr. Gates. I don't have all day."

She didn't have all day. Looking at Adrian as it seemed he caught what she said as well, I wondered if we were both on the same page then. Why now? Why hasn't she attacked like this before? If she was on a time limit, it would have something to do with tonight. Maybe the conditions needed to be perfect to enchant her spell, most of the bigger spells required planning, the moon cycle and all the pieces to come perfectly into place.

"Well, he's not really my friend so I'm wondering if I should even bother."

Her eyes turned a darker shade of red as her hands lit again and I could see it rattled her a little at how unbothered I was. Hayley looked at me with anger in her eyes then back at Darius and was ready to shout at me.

“Tell me Malia, why the rush? Does it have something to do with tonight’s full moon? Or maybe it’s because it’s the same beaver moon you were blessed with on the day of your daughter’s death?”

She twitched a little and I felt it then, that small glimmer of worry slipped through the bond she had created between us, one I was only now recognising for what it was. I was catching up to speed with her plan, she needed tonight as it was the perfect condition to bring her daughter back.

“Hayley, I need you to trust me okay,” I whispered to her as I pulled her close towards me.

“What are you going to do?”

“I need you to shoot me.”

“WHAT?!”

Adrian took a step towards me, protecting me as Hayley stepped back, her eyes wide as she looked at me shocked. I had a plan, and I needed her to help me enact it. If I was correct in my theory and we were in fact connected, bonded in the way I believed, any harm that came to the enchantress came to me and vice versa.

“I am not going to shoot my best friend.”

“Ok, well, can you at least slash my arm or something?”

“NO! WHAT THE FUCK, JACKSON! NO!”

“Yeah, I am going to agree with the huntress here, what are you thinking?”

Rolling my eyes, I realised they weren’t going to do anything to me, and I needed to take matters into my own hands. Quickly moving to Hayley’s belt as she was distracted, I unsheathed her dagger and sliced across my palm and as I did, the enchantress cried out in pain. Which in turn made

Adrian and Hayley turn to look at her then back at me as I made another cut, and she yelled out.

“As I thought.”

Hayley took hold of my bleeding hand and then looked at me pleadingly in her eyes. She knew what it meant as did I. In order to break a full-fledged bond, one would need to die, but as the enchantress had tied herself to me, she knew no one would want to do me any harm and therefore, she would be safe herself.

“Shit,” Hayley muttered as she thought the same thing as me.

How were we going to kill her now?

Staring at each other as the wheels turned in our brains, Hayley’s worry mixed with my panic should have been enough to make us both run in the other direction, but we had people to keep safe. Darius needed to be saved and now that I had Adrian at my side, I was now a little stronger.

I felt then, the sudden blow of power shifting in the air, the change of warmth that had surrounded the house was cumbering, breaking down. The shield was being torn down the middle and the hum of chanting had cracked. Something was wrong.

Leaving Hayley’s side, I rushed towards the living room where the witches I had joined forces with were standing. Four of them tried to keep up the chanting while one stood behind another as blood spilled from her mouth.

Watching as she dropped to the floor, the murderer stood there with a knife in her bloody hand and tears streamed down her face.

“She promised me – She promised she could bring them back if I let her in.”

The girl said through her tears, Hayley pushed past me as she raced to the dying witches body as Adrian appeared to apprehend the other. Hayley, overwhelmed with emotion, held the dying witch in her arms as shouting began in the foyer. The

barrier was breaking, and it would only be minutes until it was down completely.

It was as if time stood still, he didn't think twice before he snapped the other witch's neck as Hayley screamed up at him to stop. I was frozen to the spot, unsure of what to do. We had no plan; everything was in shambles. This wasn't how everything was meant to go.

The enchantress had already infiltrated our home, our minds. And I felt we were defeated in that moment.





Adrian was pushing past me as a horde of vampires raced into the building. Werewolves started to shift, and Hayley geared up for battle. My witches, the part of the house I was meant to protect, was beaten, lost and I had no idea how I was meant to protect it.

The four remaining ran, disappearing into other parts of the house as the barrier fell completely. And I could feel her glee, her joy as she stepped through the doorway and into the house. The enchantress was here to take what was mine.

Or would she threaten everyone I held dear until I gave up, surrendered, and went with her willingly. Was the centre of the circle our home? Or had we got that all wrong. I so desperately wanted answers. I needed guidance.

*“JACKSON, SNAP OUT OF IT!”*

Hayley’s voice came flooding through my mind. It was a rarity I would hear her voice in my mind and whatever strength she used, it brought me back to reality. I had friends to save.

Turning on my heel, I was greeted instantly with a vampire and his very existence sent me into an angry spiral. They were not welcome in my home, and I wasn’t about to let anyone ruin this house, too.

Green and purple sparks lit up my hands as I sent my energy outwards. The elements were still with me as they surrounded me with protection and warmth. Calling to fire and

water, I lifted my hand towards the vampire as he came at me and let my incantation flow through me.

“Ignis lux.”

Fire, the enchantress’ friend, but it was still mine to wield. Fire lit the vampire’s legs and shot up towards his face, he turned to dust within seconds then I stepped over the pile of ash and headed back to the foyer.

Hayley was neck and neck with a vampire as two piled onto her. Adrian was fighting another as was Kelly, and the other werewolves, and recruits. The enchantress was nowhere to be seen, neither was Darius.

How had she got past Hayley? As she would have tried to stop her, or had she become overrun with vampires that meant she could just ideally walk by?

Lighting up more vampires in my wake, I closed my eyes trying to sense where she had disappeared to, and a very faded red thread appeared in my mind’s eye leading up the stairs. Following her trail, I was punching, kicking, and throwing fire as best as I could to any vampire that neared me and I raced upstairs.

The thread led up to the third floor, towards my bedroom and for a second I stalled. Stopping in my tracks. Why was she there? Had she found something or was she looking for something? If she was hunting for her book, I couldn’t remember if I had put it back on my desk or left it elsewhere. The living room. That’s where I last left it, so she was up here looking for something else.

Pushing the door slowly open, she stood there in the middle of the room, and I armed myself with my powers, ready for an attack and yet, she did not move.

“I could bring him back, you know,” she said softly, taking me by surprise. “I could make it as it was before, I could even bring them all back if you wished for it.”

As she turned around, I saw her holding the photo frame of Alex and I, causing my heart to nearly stop. I was speechless and didn’t know what to say. Messing with time, the balance

of life and death was something Lady Elizabeth had mentioned could not be toyed with and yet, here the enchantress was offering it to me.

“I remember him, you know, well, Molly does. I was just behind her eyes watching.”

She went back to my desk and placed the photo frame down and then picked up the paper with my notes jotted down on it and huffed a laugh before putting it back down.

“I watched your pain and even felt your grief. Your bond with Molly was strong, she thought of you more than I’d like to admit. She didn’t deserve this fate, none of my past lives did.”

Confusion and empathy filled my mind, were these her emotions or my own? I wasn’t sure anymore. So many people were now linked to me in my mind, I was unsure which thoughts were my own. She continued to shuffle through things dotted on my desk until she turned to stare at me.

Her eyes no longer bright red and filled with rage, her firelight extinguished for the moment, and she stayed silent for a moment before waving her hand causing my own sparks to go out.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Jackson, I have never wanted to hurt anyone.”

“Tell that to all the people you’ve killed.”

“I am and always have only fought for my survival. My daughter. My family were ripped from me for simply being a part of me and your ancestors are the cause of that pain, as is your huntress’ family. They too are to blame.”

“How can you blame us for something that happened hundreds of years ago?”

She shrugged her shoulders as if it didn’t matter as to when it happened, she was going to blame us one way or another.

“I believe we have hit a crossroads. You and I are connected, an oversight on my part, when I pushed you through time the first time, I had forgotten about your

connection with Molly and thus, it merged into a connection with me.”

She paused, pulling out my desk chair and sitting down, appearing to make herself comfortable as if there wasn't some sort of battle going on downstairs.

“You see, the truth of the matter is I need you to help me fix my wrongs.”

“And use my blood to bring your daughter back.”

She laughed a little and smiled as if I had no idea what I was even talking about. Molly had already told me she wanted my blood, and it was obvious now with knowing the date and the moon cycle. Tonight was the perfect time.

“Yes, I do, but I won't bring her back as the demon she was changed into. She will be her human self and shortly after she is returned to me, I will leave this world with her and find a pocket in time where we can live our lives together, alone.”

My shoulders relaxed suddenly. I had assumed she wanted to bring her daughter back as a vampire to help destroy this world, that's what she had already told me. Why was she now changing her story?

“You're lying. You said you wish to destroy the world.”

“That was before I saw everything this new world has created.”

I didn't know if I should trust her or believe her for one second. She had stormed into our home, battle ready and was willing to destroy everyone in her path just to get to me. To get to Hayley. If she only wanted to bring her daughter back to then leave this world, she may have had a chance at asking us for help, we possibly would have given it.

“Where is Darius?”

“The hybrid? He's safe, I haven't killed him, yet. I will if you don't agree to help me.”

A bargaining chip. I felt as if I were a fish caught in a net, no matter what I did, I would drown either way. If I didn't help, she would kill Darius and Hayley would die in the

process due to their mate bond and if I did help, who's telling what would actually happen. Either way, I had to break this bond with her, that was the most important. Which meant I had to kill her.

“When I leave, and I will leave, our bond will be severed. No one will have to die unless you don't play ball and betray me.”

I was stuck.

I needed to protect my friends, to help them survive this, but time was running out and this spell only had a limited window. I wasn't ready to wait another year and deal with this woman any longer than I had to. If I agreed to help, she would release Darius, Hayley would then be safe, and I would be able to spend the rest of my days with Adrian.

“If I help you, you must leave my friends, this home and myself alone and never return.”

“You have my word; I will never return. On one condition, you leave with me right now and your friends don't come after us.”

“Well, that will be pretty tough, they will of course follow me. I can however promise they don't harm you as they know it will harm me. I would also like you to call off your goons.”

She took a moment to think it over and I wondered if I was able to send a message to Hayley, to tell her what had happened and to prepare for this to end badly.

“Deal.”

Shooting up from her seat, she appeared in front of me as fast as a vampire would and took my bleeding hand and clasped her own wounded hand. Our blood bonded together and for a second I could feel our energy mixing together, creating something I had never felt before. Pure rage. Pure power.

What had I done?



By the time I realised what was happening, my bedroom was disappearing around me and we were reappearing in an open space within the woods that surrounded the house. The moonlight gave off the only sense of light in the clearing and it almost felt like something out of a horror movie.

The enchantress let go of my hand once the world stopped spinning and started walking towards an already built altar. There was no great stone in the centre, the only thing that marked it was where the moonlight shined down.

“We will do the spell shortly. I will need a vial of your blood to cast it and I am hoping your huntress comes looking for you so I may have some of hers.”

“Wait, I said you need to leave my friends alone.”

“I will, once I get what I need.”

My eyes wide as I thought about it, I’d fucked up and already she had lied to me. How was I to believe she wanted only a vial, or few drops of blood, she most likely would decide to use it all. Spells like this wouldn’t surely just take a few drops. Angelique had sliced poor Eric’s neck wide open and even then, that spell didn’t go according to her plan.

As I stood there wondering and questioning my decisions, she waved her hand at me and as she did vines from the ground sprouted up quickly and began wrapping themselves around my wrists and ankles, holding me in place.

“You just stay there while I go fetch your buddies.”

Struggling and pulling onto the roots as I tried to break free, I wondered if I could call earth myself to help get me out of these things. But earth did not answer, she did not come to my call and now, stuck in the middle of an empty and dark woods as the enchantress disappeared into thin air, I was scared.

After what felt like hours but most likely only minutes, Darius' shouting and protesting could be heard through the trees. Growling and snarling followed suit and as the enchantress emerged through the tree line, her horde of vampires, or what was left of them, followed her.

Two were holding Darius tightly in what looked like chains and Adrian was being dragged across the grass, caught between shifting to wolf then shifting back to human, crying, and screaming out in pain. Hayley was also being carried, appearing almost lifeless by a vampire and my heart stopped.

What had happened in the time I was in my bedroom to being taken?

As Hayley was placed gently down beneath the altar, Darius continued to pull at his chains while Adrian screamed out towards the moon. I couldn't move, the fear was too much. A weakness of my own, but something I had grown a custom to.

I was reminded of that day while leaping across rooftops and how my fear of jumping had stopped me in my tracks. This was that moment again, that same flooding feeling of I can't do this, I am not strong enough to do this.

Was I strong enough though? Hayley seemed to think so and now my friends needed me. The enchantress had, of course, lied to me. She never planned on not harming my friends, she still needed them one way or another for her spell. Be it to keep me in check or to use them against me. I needed to break free of these vines one way or another.

Feeling Adrian's eyes on me as he tried desperately to stop from shifting, I could also feel his pain. He looked as if he were broken and ready to be put out of his misery. For a wolf

to be forced to not shift would be horrendous, a form of torture.

The enchantress began chanting in Latin as she stepped towards her altar, and out of her pocket she pulled a jar filled with something that looked like ash, and began to spread it across the ground next to Hayley.

Piercing her own fingertip, I felt the sharp sting as if it had been my own fingers and watched as she made a symbol over Hayley's forehead then continued to chant.

"You don't just need Hayley's blood do you?" I asked as my thoughts caught up.

"You catch on quick don't you, Mr. Gates."

She broke her chanting and turned to face me, her finger already healing. Darius pulled at his chains, determined to break free. It concerned me how both men, who were strong and powerful in their own right, as was Hayley, and yet all of them had been subdued. Magic must have been used, that was the only explanation.

"Get away from her you bitch!" Darius shouted as the enchantress circled Hayley.

"Now name calling won't get you very far, hybrid. I have great plans for you and my daughter, don't worry."

"You're going to use Hayley's body as a vessel, aren't you?"

"Ding, ding, ding! Ten points to the witch!"

No, she surely couldn't do that. How had I fallen for this, was I so blinded by the fact that the enchantress still walked within Molly's body? Was that the reason I thought differently and that she wouldn't really destroy the world.

If she allowed her daughter to use Hayley's body, there is no telling what she would do with it. She wouldn't be the huntress, the one who helped rid the world of evil, she would perhaps help create it.

I wasn't going to let this happen. I needed to break free, to stop being this useless pathetic witch who was always the one



in trouble. Or at least that's how it seemed as of late. I needed to find the badass witch I was before this, before Angelique, before Alex died.

Closing my eyes and taking in a deep breath to settle my nerves, I pushed fear down to the pits of my mind, locking it up into a tight box. Clinging to what was left of my magic as she was using me up as a battery.

*“Terra, veni ad me, defende me, circumda me, da mihi potentiam tuam.”*

Calling out to the earth to protect me, guide me and give me its power. I waited. With each breath I continued to call out in my mind hoping she could not hear me. She continued to prepare for the spell, waiting for the moon to rise completely and centre herself over Hayley's body and the ash beside her.

I wasn't going to have long to get this right.

*“Aer, peto te, circumde me vento tuo et per me fluere.”*

Air next. Air and I had become companions, the element I had used the most and the one I had become the most comfortable with. I begged it to surround me with its wind and to flow through me.

The hair on the back of my neck prickled as a gust of wind flowed through the woods and towards me. I felt its caress on my cheek then it flooded my lungs with its power.

This witch bitch wasn't going to win. And to hell was she going to take my best friend from me. It was now my time to save her for once.

Pulling at the vines at my wrists first, I felt them shift and as I called to the earth, they loosened and ran up my arms like two snakes, holding on tightly, becoming one with me. The enchantress spun round and looked at me wide eyed, as the vines on my ankles disintegrated into nothing and I stepped forward.

*“Ignis lux.”*

Fire flowed through my body and out of my hands as I fired a shot of pure fire energy towards her, taking her

completely by surprise and knocking her off her feet. The vampires that circled around me and my friends didn't move a muscle, they just stared blankly to where she once stood. She must have them under some form of mind control to only do as she orders.

“Little help?” Darius yelled as he held up his chains.

Sending another fireball, this time smaller, I aimed for the vampires holding his chains and watched as they went up in smoke. As they did, the key to his chains dropped from what was left of one of them and I rushed over to help unlock the chains.

“We need to be quick. Get Adrian out of here.”

“What about Hayley?”

“I will get her, don't worry.”

As Darius ran towards Adrian, one of the enchantress's own counter spells ripped through the air. I wasn't sure what spell she used, but it hit Darius causing him to fall to the ground and as he tried to get back up, she shot him once more.

“Ignis lux!” I shouted, but this time she deflated my attack.

“Please. Fire is my speciality.”

“Venti aeris!”

Air it would have to be then. Wind wrapped around her and flung her up in a spiral and continued doing that for a few seconds, giving Darius a chance to get up and reach Adrian. Staking the vampire that held Adrian's chains, he unlocked his and his shifting slowed to a stop.

“Silver.” He coughed looking at me with grateful eyes.

Silver, of course. Silver bullets can kill a werewolf, but silver chains or anything like that could also stop a werewolf from shifting. As my spell ran out, the enchantress dropped to the floor and for a moment I thought she may have been knocked out, but as she started to rise, she began chanting.

“Ignis in me pugnabit draco.”

“Guys, grab Hayley.”

“Aeris adducer!”

Holding out my hand, Hayley’s body began to rise and with lightning speed, Darius was at her side lifting her up and running towards us.

“Pugnavit draco.”

My Latin was incredibly good, I had always been the head of my class, but I have only one clue as to what that spell she was chanting was. Draco, dragon. She was after all the dragon girl from the story, and I was hoping, praying she wasn’t able to shift into that large black dragon from the paintings.

Fire magic wasn’t great especially when we were surrounded by a forest, but I’d prefer to fight fire than a dragon.

“What do you need?” Adrian came to stand beside me looking worse for wear.

“I don’t know. She intends to use Hayley’s body as a vessel for her daughter’s soul and in order to complete that spell she will need my blood.”

“Okay well, we just make sure she can’t get either of you.”

As a loud roar broke out into the air, both of our eyes snapped back towards the enchantress as a large amount of black smoke filled the area. I wasn’t a knight, I had no swords and if she had turned herself into a dragon, I had no idea how to even fight her.

Through gritted teeth, I prepared myself and stood my ground as Darius ran behind me holding Hayley and Adrian shifted into his white wolf. Hayley needed to wake up now, if she missed out fighting a dragon, she’d be pretty pissed.

This seemed very much like the ultimate boss fight you had in video games. I could only stun her as we still had our connection and although I had already set two attacks on her, I had not felt any repercussions from them; for which I assumed was due to the elements protecting me in some way.

But they would not be able to protect me from a potential death and she wasn’t going to risk killing me either if it meant

destroying herself. We would be at a crossroads no matter what happened, I just had to stall her enough until the moon crossed its path, and she could no longer do her spell.

As she rose, so did the magnificent black wings that shot out from her shoulders and spikes began to run down her spine. She ran her fingers through her hair, and with the pass of her fingers two large black horns with red tips grew out of her head. She appeared to have features of both a dragon and a woman, a strange dragon hybrid as it were. Her eyes flashed bright red as she rose to her clawed feet.

“Return the huntress to me hybrid.”

She demanded, her voice filled with venom and sounded almost snakelike. Darius held on tightly to Hayley begging her to wake up, as with her strength she would be a great help. With Adrian at my side, I knew we could at least fight as long as we were able to, until our bodies screamed for us to stop.

She started to breathe in deeply and I knew what this was, she was preparing to release fire upon us. Shoving Darius back and pushing Adrian aside, I stood in front of them as I knew, well hoped, she wouldn't try and set me on fire.

“Out of my way.”

What did she expect me to do, allow her to harm my friends, my family? Not a chance.

“You have to go through me first.”

She growled a deep, terrifying noise and narrowed her eyes before she quickly took to the skies. Once at dizzying heights, she turned in the air and began plummeting down towards us, breathing out fire and aiming straight for us. As she swooped over us, we each dived out of the way. Great, she had called my bluff.

Looking up at the moon, we perhaps had maybe only thirty minutes until it would be too late for her spell. And during that time, she was sure to be able to destroy at least one of us, if not everyone, but definitely the ones she needed.

Standing up straight, I sent out a call to water. Any body of water in the area to come to my aid, to help combat this attack.

“Venti aeris!”

Calling to air once again, I asked the wind to withdraw from around her, hoping to knock her off course or to take the air away from her. Without air she wouldn't be able to use her fire breath spell. She dodged my attack and continued to fly through the air, towards us, sending fire ball after fireball. Narrowly missing Adrian and Darius. At least with Darius carrying Hayley, she wouldn't risk completely hurting them, but Adrian however, she was hell bent on destroying and I had no idea why.

“Jackson! We need to run!!”

Darius shouted as he began sprinting to the treeline with Hayley, but as he did, the vampires that had once surrounded us unmoving were now alert and ready for action.

They were snarling with claws out. We were surrounded and there was no one coming to our aid. Kelly and the others weren't here, and I feared the worst. We were on our own.

“Adrian, you should go. She will only hurt you because of me.”

He looked up at me with his beautiful brown eyes and shook his head to say no. I had a feeling he would deny my wishes, but he was going to get hurt and it was going to be my fault.

Sending more fire and air blasts towards the vampires to keep them away from us, Darius was fighting with one free arm and kicking the vampires who tried to get too close. He was losing. We were all losing.

Water was still not answering my call and it worried me, as deep down I knew the reason why, my magic was disappearing. Her using our combined energy to transform herself must have taken a lot out of both of us. I so desperately wanted to cling to my own energy, to use it against her.

As Adrian took down vampire after vampire, his white fur became stained with ash of the vampires and blood from his own wounds. I continued to fight bare fisted as best as I could, using whatever I had.

“Miss me?”

Hayley.

Turning around quickly, Darius had already lowered her feet to the ground and although she seemed a little shaky, she didn't think twice at pulling her guns out and began firing at the enemies in front of us as well as above us.

“What the hell did I miss!?” She shouted over the bullets and fire that began to rage throughout the clearing.

“Dragon.”

I just shrugged my shoulders as she popped one of her guns back into her holster and pulled out a stake from inside her boot and chucked it towards me. I may not have had a sharp sword or a gun, but a stake would do nicely, for now.

A loud roar came from above as the enchantress hovered above us, her wings flapping slowly in the air as fire climbed up her legs. She looked beautifully terrifying and if anyone believed in the devil, they would believe this being was it.

The moon was just coming to the centre of her apex, and I knew she was running out of time. Hayley continued to keep the vampires at bay as did the others. Adrian took hit after hit, but carried on fighting.

The enchantress laughed her poisonous laugh as she watched. All of us were fighting vampire after vampire, we were all growing tired. The edges of my eyesight began to become fuzzy and dark again.

I knew what this was. I had felt this feeling before. If I kept this up, using my energy and her stealing it, I'd have nothing left, no reserves. If she had it her way, she would easily take what she wanted to the point of no return, but would still keep me alive, tethered to her.

This battle would continue on if I didn't manage to stop her. A howl rippled through the air as I turned to see a vampire biting hard onto Adrian's neck and terror rocked me. Rushing to him as Hayley fired a shot towards the vampire, shooting it in the leg, I drove my stake through its heart and as it burst

into ash, I grabbed Adrian as he shifted back into his human form, holding onto his neck.

The bite was deep and my heart began to beat uncontrollably as I looked at him, panic in my face. No, no. I had just met him, we were only now becoming something, I couldn't lose him now. No. I wasn't going to lose him.

Looking up at the enchantress as she unrelenting taunts us with her laughter. I felt the rage, the fire grew within the depths of me. She wasn't going to win. Kissing Adrian on the lips then, softly, and unsure if I would make it back in time to save him, I called to air.

*"Aer, benedic me volare, alis me duce."*

Adrian looked at me with lost and worrying eyes as I felt the wind envelope me. Lowering him down on the ground, I felt the ground beneath my feet disappear and Adrian's eyes widen as well as Hayley's as I flew up towards the enchantress.

She looked at me just as shocked as the others and I held up my hand shouting for air to push her out of the skies, even if it hurt me, I wanted her to feel pain.

Hitting her once, twice, then a third time with a mixture of fire and air. She growled and hurled more fire back at me and each time seemed to miss. I didn't care that every time I hit her, I was draining myself. I didn't care that I was starting to feel the pain she was feeling. All this was because of her and she deserved to die.

*"JACKSON!!"*

Hayley's voice shouted up towards me and I looked down at her with sadness in my eyes, as she fought against the last of the remaining vampires. This might be the last time I see her, if this ends the way I think it will. Darius was sitting next to Adrian and looked like he was putting pressure on his wound, it was now or never.

*"Elementis oro te adiuva me hoc malum de mundo exue!"*

I called to all four elements and any other energy within this world to help me, help me destroy this evil that was now

trying to ruin my home. I felt fire, air, earth and finally water greet me, and I knew the energy burst they gave me would only last a few precious minutes.

“ELEMENTA DESTRUERE MALUM!!”

Shockwaves tore through the skies coming out of me and towards the enchantress, and they hit her again and again. She stopped in her tracks, held up in the air only by the force and as the shockwaves finished, she fell. We fell.

“JACKSON!!!!”

Hayley’s voice once again rang in my ears as I felt my body give in, finally. It was tired. I was tired. And as we landed deep within the forest, I felt the enchantress’s connection fade, the last bit of light leave me and as it did, I prayed it would reach Adrian through our bond to help heal him.





Empty white space surrounded me as I sat down on a bench that just happened to be here when I arrived. The pain was no longer there and the taste of blood had vanished from my mouth. I was reminded of the mind world that Adrian had created, but this time there was warmth and so much light. It made me happy, and I had a feeling where I was. This place was talked about in so many different religions, the gateway towards your final resting place.

That fear that had been clouding my judgement, making me pick all the wrong choices was no longer binding me and keeping me hostage. I could think clearly, see clearly.

“My sweet, sweet boy.”

My mother’s voice took hold of me, as if I were a small child again wrapped in her arms. Her happiness and joy filled my heart as she took the seat next to me. Her beautiful golden skin almost shined as brightly as the room in its entirety.

Her brown eyes traced every inch of my skin and I looked at her, with the same degree of love and devotion I had throughout my entire life. She was and would always be the most beautiful lady I had ever seen.

“I’m sad to see you here, already. I thought you wouldn’t be sitting waiting until you were an old man, and I would greet you with arms wide open and ready to take you home.”

Her voice, soft and kind as it was once before. My eyes started to tear up as I listened closely, she was going to be here

to greet me when I died a more natural death and yet, here she was to meet me when I hadn't had a chance to truly live yet.

"Can't I go back?" I asked, whispering almost through tears.

She looked at me with sorrow in her eyes then took a hold of both of my hands, smiling a little.

"Oh baby, how I wish we could. Your body is broken beyond repair and if we sent you back, it would mean she'd have another chance to commit her evil deeds upon the world."

Cupping my cheek as I leaned my head into her hand, I huffed out a sob uncontrollably.

"Is there no way? Mum, I met him. I met my person and now – I – I have – I can't."

"I know, baby."

Pulling me closer, she wrapped me into a tight hug as I continued to allow my tears to flow. I knew when I left Adrian back there and flew into the sky it would possibly end this way. One of us needed to die to kill the other. I hated the balance of it all. The law behind magic was and always would be what ripped me away from my family, my love.

"Please, I have to know," I said as I pulled back, and she wiped a tear from my eye, "Did he survive?"

"Yes, my sweet boy, he did. You gave him the last bit of your light and it healed him."

Another sob escaped me then. This was unfair. I had dedicated my life to saving people, to protecting those in need and when it came to me, I was always last.

"And Hayley?"

A faint echo of Hayley's voice screaming at the top of her lungs entered the plain, calling out my name and my heart broke. She would not only have seen my death, but she would have felt it as our bond broke. Adrian and I had not completed our mating bond fully, and although he would maybe feel the loss, Hayley would feel it the most.

“She will eventually get through this loss. She’s a strong lady, always has been.”

“But she shouldn’t have to get through this, not alone, not without me.”

My voice broke as I thought back to when Hayley went through the death of her parents and how lost she was. She pushed everyone away, including me, but I managed to pull her back and be there for her.



### **HAYLEY**

“JACKSON!!! – JACKSON!!!!!!”

My throat hurt from screaming as I watched him slice through the sky and land on the ground. Throwing the vampire I had in a wrist lock over my shoulder then staking it as it landed, I continued to scream before rushing to Jackson.

Darius was still holding Adrian’s wound as he coughed up blood. The fucking dragon lady, who I would have liked to beat to a pulp myself was lying face down a few feet away from Jackson.

She didn’t stir once as I slid next to Jackson, lifting the top half of his body onto my lap and cupped his face then leaned down to listen for his breathing.

He wasn’t breathing.

“Jackson! No, no, you cannot leave me. You promised, we promised to always be with each other.”

Small raspy sobs came out as I pleaded, begging him to open his eyes, to breathe again. I could feel him slipping away from me as his light started to fade. Our connection was breaking.

“Ple – please – no – don’t leave me.”

Lifting him up more, I buried my head in his chest, hoping. I don’t know what I was hoping for, I didn’t believe in

anything anymore. I just knew I'd be lost without him.

“I can't do this without you.”



## **JACKSON**

“I CAN STILL FEEL HER. I can still hear them. Why?”

“The living will always call for their loved ones, once they've passed on.”

“But I don't want to pass on.”

She continued to hold me as my tears still flowed. I hated myself for how I left them. Adrian a simple kiss and Hayley, I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye.

“Please, mum, is there no way?”

“I'm afraid, Mr. Gates, that your time is near.”

Lady Elizabeth. Of course, she would be one of those who were here to greet me. Turning to look at her, she stood there in a beautiful grey suit with black heels and her blonde hair loose and free. She smiled at my mother as she kissed me on the forehead and stood up to leave me.

“I will leave you in the hands of my lady. Whatever you choose my sweet boy, know that I will love you and be with you always.”

Letting go of my hand as her warmth slipped away, she faded into the light and seconds later was gone. I felt my heart break again as the uncontrollable pain of loss was starting to take its toll.

“Walk with me.”

Lady Elizabeth held her hand out for me then looped it in her arm as she guided me across the plain. She smelt of honeysuckle and lavender, her rest doing wonders for her it seemed.

“I know your pain deeply; I have been where you are. When I met my second husband, King Edward IV, well back then he was Sir Edward. We met on a road quite randomly actually, but I knew at that very moment I was his.”

She paused as the scene around us changed into a dirt road surrounded by open fields and trees. The sun shined down on us both beautifully as we continued on our walk. Was this my journey towards the afterlife?

“When he died, I moaned about his loss to the point I thought I would die from a broken heart. I felt the loss of five of my children, but like you, I continued to move forward. The ones we have lost..., we will carry their memories forever in our hearts.”

“But, what of the ones who lost us?”

“The huntress and the wolf, they have a great and winding path in front of them and sadly, your death is just part of their journey.”

“And there is no way I can return?”

She stopped us walking then, she looked as if she was deciding something, and I watched the thoughts float across her eyes, it disappeared seconds later as she stepped forward to carry on our walk.

“There is a balance to this world, which you already know of. Malia, she was an exception to this rule due to the nature of her rebirth centuries ago.”

“Is she dead now?”

“Yes, thanks to you her plan to bring her daughter back would have destroyed your world.”

Sighing out of relief, I felt slightly better knowing that the enchantress was no longer able to do any harm to my loved ones or anyone else for that matter.

“There is however, one way you may return.”

I stopped, breaking free of her arm, and looked at her with wide, pleading eyes. Whatever it was, I’d do it, no matter the

cost. I just wanted to get back to Hayley, to Adrian and even Darius.

“What would I need to do?”

“It’s not what you need to do, it is what you are willing to give up.”

“Name it.”

“With each of my deaths, I was forced to sleep away from the world. Until the balance of nature required me to return, to guide those in need and to punish those who sought to hurt the balance. If you were to agree to be that new guide, and be granted the type of powers I have, it would mean you could go back.”

A smile beamed across my face, I would happily do whatever was required of me if it meant I could do that.

“The price however far outweighs the pros. You would be forced to sleep, sleep away the next fifty years of your life and with each return, you will only have a glimpse of your memories before. It would be up to fate to decide if she helps guide you back to those who live in your heart.”

“And the price?”

“You will outlive those around you. Even those with supernatural abilities, for everything must die in order for new life to be created. It is a part of the balance. But you won’t die a natural death. You will eventually die, sleep and return again when needed. A never-ending cycle until the very end of time.”

Stepping away, I let her words sink in as I thought of the heaviness they created. I would lose my loved ones at some point in my life and whenever I returned from my sleep, however long that may be, I might be reunited with my loved ones.

“Have you ever been reunited?”

“Once. When Van Helsing came to my door, I thought I was seeing the ghost of Edward.”

“Do I get a chance to say goodbye to Hayley and Adrian?”

She thought for a minute. I knew she had the power to make these things happen, she was and always would be the most powerful witch, throughout our history she was always there.

“Your body is no longer viable, but I can grant you a goodbye in their dreams for one hour and after that, your soul will rest until it is ready to be reborn.”

“Will I be reborn into a child?”

“No, you will be reborn back to this moment, unchanged, unaged.”

“One hour.”

“One hour and that is all.”



Her cries and sobs were the only things I could hear in the distance. Hayley's broken heart was shattered into a million pieces, and it was all my fault, I should have known better, tried harder. Sitting on the edge of my bed as she held my hand, my lifeless body left there to rest and I could only assume because Hayley refused to wrap me in cloth and put me in the hospital wing.

I was watching her as if I were a ghost, she had no idea I was standing behind her and all I wanted to do was wrap my arms around her, hug her tightly and promise her it was going to all work out, it was going to be okay.

I had one hour, one hour to say my goodbyes until we meet again. I hoped I would see Hayley again in maybe fifty years, or however long I was meant to sleep. But hunters or huntresses of the Van Helsing line had a short life. So, there was no telling how many years she would still be fighting evil.

Lady Elizabeth said all I had to do was touch the person I wanted to connect with and as long as their minds were open and ready, I would be able to connect with them and say my goodbyes. I hoped Hayley would allow me to do that.

Taking in a deep breath, I raised a shaking hand and slowly placed it on Hayley's shoulder and watched as her head snapped up and her body spun round looking straight through me then around the room.

"Who's there?" She asked through a broken voice, "Jackson? Is that you?"



It pained me to see how hurt she was and I hated how our goodbye was reduced to possibly a few moments as I also wanted to say goodbye to Adrian. I needed to.

Placing my hand on both her shoulders then, she closed her eyes slowly and it was as if she knew. She could finally feel my presence there and when she reopened her eyes, they lit up and she wrapped her arms around me, burying her face into my chest as she cried.

“Jacks, I thought I lost you. How are you here?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t have long.”

“What do you mean you don’t have long?”

“It doesn’t matter, but know this.”

Pulling away from her, I looked at her deeply in her eyes with both my hands placed firmly on her shoulders as she looked up at me, silent tears still running down her cheeks.

“We will see each other again. Maybe not in this life, but we will in the next. Just know this, you will and always have been the greatest friend and sister I have ever known. Our bond will go down in history,”

“Jackson – stop – why are you saying these things?”

“I’m sorry. I promise I will find you. I love you.”

Kissing her on the cheek as I felt her body almost collapse in my arms, she wrapped her arms around my waist again and hugged as tightly as she could.

“You are the most badass vampire huntress there ever was so do me a favour please, try not to die from now on.”

She huffed a laugh then sighed and I could feel the magic of her seeing me was starting to wear off. I didn’t want to leave her crying and I hoped Darius would walk through the door and wrap her up in his arms and protect her until I came back.

“I will see you soon, okay.”

She nodded as she pulled away from me and whipped her tears, attempting to give me a smile as I felt myself begin to

fade away. She would eventually learn to live without me, for the moment at least and when I returned, I hoped I'd find her again.

“Goodbye, Hayley.” Holding back my own tears as my heart shattered once again, she choked back a sob as she tried to hold it together.

“Goodbye, Jackson.”



WANDERING the halls of the house, I watched the carnage being cleared away. Recruits, house staff and what was left of the werewolf packs picked up the pieces. I spotted Kelly barking out orders with her arm in the sling as she pointed and shouted at the wolves for not doing something correctly. I continued looking, hoping I'd feel him, sense his mind, a little drop of our bond along the path and yet, I could not.

Worry and panic was starting to show as I continued up the stairs towards the hospital wing, catching Annabeth as she wrapped a bandage over a recruit's leg and asked what little assistance she had to go help others.

Turning a corner and heading down the corridor, I saw it, that small little sparkle of light that had guided me once before and I knew then, it was Adrian. Almost running towards it, I came through the side door of the library and rolled my eyes seeing him sitting at the table we once shared pleasantries with and other things.

He sat with his arms crossed holding something tightly to his chest, his eyes closed as if he were resting, and I wanted so desperately to race over to him and plant a kiss on his lips and finish what we started. But I was sure this magic wasn't going to allow me to do anything even close to that.

Taking the seat opposite him, I watched him closely, seeing now he was holding a t-shirt of mine. Capturing an image in my mind of every inch of him, his tanned skin, his blonde, hero looking locks along with every scar and wrinkle I

could see. There were no bite marks on his neck, and he looked as if he were almost glowing in the light.

As he opened his brown eyes, he stared at me as if he could already see me and my heart fluttered at the sight of him. Leaning forward, he let go of the t-shirt and placed it on the arm of the chair.

“You idiot, witch.” His voice was broken, raspy as if he had been shouting.

“I know, I am an idiot.”

“Yes, you are.”

My eyes shot up towards him as he looked at me again. I assumed I could only be seen by touch, but he was already talking to me.

“How? – how can you see me?”

“I’m a wolf. We have the ability to also see ghosts. Well, sometimes.”

I fought back a laugh as it was such a ridiculous ability, but one I was very grateful for at this moment. He didn’t think twice before standing up and rushing over towards me and pulled me out from my seat. Wrapping his arms around me, I could feel every bit of warmth there was pulsating from his body, he was very much alive.

“I believe my debt is paid by the way,” I said as he crushed me with his arms, and he laughed.

“Yes, I believe it is.”

Letting go of me, he pulled my head up towards him gently and began kissing me deeply on my lips, cheek, jawline, and neck. Each and every peek took me by surprise as I could feel every single one of them. Ghosts weren’t meant to feel such things, they couldn’t even pick up something, let alone feel someone else’s touch.

“I hate you for doing what you did, but I also understand why.”

He broke his kisses and looked me deeply in the eyes, his eyes becoming glassy as his words made an impact.

“You gave me your life, I felt it then I heard the huntress scream as she felt you leave. Why would you do that?”

“Why wouldn’t I, Adrian? We may have only known each other for a short time, but I couldn’t let you die.”

“And now, you are the one who is gone.”

“I know, I’m sorry, but if I didn’t do any of that, the enchantress would still be alive.”

He kissed me again, breaking my train of thought then continued to kiss me for what felt like hours, but was only seconds as I pulled away.

“I don’t have much time, the magic used to send me back was only for an hour and I’m afraid that hour is almost up.”

I was trying hard not to burst into tears as I knew this may be our final goodbye as there was no telling what would happen over time. He may find someone new, someone to love and in that time forget all about me.

“I wish we had more time together.”

“Me, too.”

No more words were needed and he continued to kiss me and I kissed him back, wrapping my arms around his neck as I pulled him closer to me. Filling the space between us with heat and passion, I wanted nothing more but to fall into his arms, feel every single inch of him as I so badly wanted to. Regretting how I had stopped us in the library the last time, or not joining him for that shower before this entire mess began.

“Adrian, promise me, you will watch over Hayley, please, she’s important.”

As his mouth trailed kisses down my neckline, he made a noise I assumed was agreeing with my request as he brought one arm around my waist and lifted me up as I wrapped my legs around his waist. As we moved back, my back met the wall of one of the stacks and I laughed a little as it reminded me so much of last time.

“How long?”

“A few minutes.”

He growled angrily as he brought his lips back up to meet mine and I could taste the urgency in his body as he tried to grab every inch of me. Both of us are filled with wanting and unfinished business. It broke my heart.

“It’s not enough,” his voice broke as his nose rubbed against mine. “I don’t know if I can do this without you. Without knowing what we could have had, should have become.”

A tear fell from his eyes and ran down his cheek. Kissing his cheek lightly to catch it, he breathed out a small whimper and I wrapped my arms tighter around his neck as we held each other in place.

“Will we ever see each other again?” He asked.

“Nor time or death will keep me apart from you. I will find you. I will walk through time just to be at your side again and then, I will never leave it.”

Kissing him then, frantically as I started to feel my mind begin to slip away and the world slowly fade, I knew it was almost the end. I kissed him again, and again and again.

“I love you – I should have told you that before this started. I have loved you since the moment you walked into my bar and longer before that.”

His words broke me as he buried his head in my shoulder, hugging me tightly as if he never wanted to let me go, but we both knew he would have to. At least until we meet again.

“I love you,” I whispered in his ear as I felt his cries ripple through him and my eyes became filled with tears, “We will find each other again, I promise.”

And as we kissed for one last time, I felt it then. The moment, and as we said our final goodbye, the world grew dark around us both and my eyes closed as my sleep finally began. One day I would see them again and I would always

hold onto that hope. If it takes another twenty or fifty years, I will be with them again.

**THE END**

**... FOR NOW ...**

# Spell Pronunciation

# All spells are written in Latin.

**Aer, benedic me volare, alis me duce.**

Air, bless me to fly, guide me with wings.

**Ostende mihi abscondita tua.**

Show me your secrets.

**Ostendere.**

To show.

***Ut intelligas quid egi, debes videre.***

To understand what I did, you have to see it.

**Sanguis meus, vita mea, fons meae potentiae, ut a te, facti sunt quod nati sunt facere.**

My blood, my life, the source of my power, you have become what you were born to do.

**EAM DIMITTERE**

Let her go

**Non intrabis quod destruat de quo non permittitur.**

You shall not enter that which you attempt to destroy, you will not be permitted.

**Confer me ad animum - ostende mihi cogitationes - coniunge animam meam.**

Combine me to the soul - Show me your thoughts - Unite my soul.

**Ignis lux.**

The light of the fire.

***Terra, veni ad me, defende me, circumda me, da mihi potentiam tuam.***



Earth, come to me, protect me, surround me, give me your power.

*Aer, peto te, circumde me vento tuo et per me fluere.*

Air, I beg you, surround me with your wind and flow through me.

**Venti aeris.**

Winds of the air.

**Ignis in me pugnavit draco.**

The dragon fought with fire in me.

**Aeris adducer.**

The air will be brought.

**Pugnavit draco.**

He fought the dragon.

**Elementis oro te adiuva me hoc malum de mundo exue.**

I pray to the elements, help me rid the world of this evil.

**ELEMENTA DESTRUERE MALUM.**

Destroy the elements.

# Acknowledgments

After writing Graveyard Shift, I had no idea it would become as successful as it has and even so, you guys, my readers made me write this book a year early. Writing Jackson was such fun! He is such a complex and fisty character. For those who don't know this, he is completely inspired by my best friend Alastair, whom this book is dedicated to. Thank you for giving me the support to make his character great.

I have a lot of people to thank for this book, firstly my husband as always, thank you for being patient with me as I wrote late into the night, and bringing me a constant flow of cups of tea as well as being my talking board, even if I did confuse you a lot.

Lisa, my amazing PA! Honestly, I will continue to tell you that I would be lost without your help and guidance. You are wonderful.

My BETA readers, Karissa, Jess, Lou, and Brook. Thank you again gang for joining me on this journey and helping every step of the way. I'm sorry about the tears and those crazy voice notes lol

To my incredible readers and my street team, thank you. Thank you for your constant support these past two years. I never thought in a million years I would write a book, let alone three and it feels amazing.

I have left this book with an open ending as maybe one day I will return us to RavenBlack where we can either chase after Jackson's and Adrian's tail or Hayley and Darius's love story. Time will tell.

# About the Author



Melanie Davies began writing when she was in her early teens, starting off first in vampire role play forums, she began to learn her voice and teach herself how to write creatively.

This is her fourth published book and she looks forward to bringing more fictional worlds and characters to you.

Writing has always been a dream of hers and one she is excited to achieve.



**Also by Melanie Davies**

# The Midnight Stakes Series

[Graveyard Shift](#)

# Nimra World Series

[The Sapphire Oath](#)

[The Emerald Truth](#)

# Join My Reader Group

