

Chapter 1: My Sister's Keeper

The sound whirling around her ears was muffled and distorted. The energy that she expended in an attempt to focus her senses was for nothing. Soon she would be set adrift to the bottom of the river. Swept away by the cruel current. Her vision was blocked by crashing and rolling waves. The water around her was painted deep red. Still, the muffled noise called out to her.

“Ju-...” It cried out. “Jul-...” And again. “Jul..iet! Juliette!” The voice screamed. But the deeper she sank, the quieter it got. Soon all traces of her would vanish from the surface. A death letter to the living above, revealing to them her fate. “No!” The voice cried out in a final burst of distorted tears. The sound of her name dancing around in her head was overcome by pitch black darkness. She could no longer breathe, the oxygen that once coursed through her veins felt like sandpaper rubbing against her skin. She closed her eyes and welcomed her eternal sleep.

“I.” The girl gargled as the last bubble of air collided with the surface. Vanishing into the brisk winter air.

With an exasperated gasp the girl shot up from the bed she had been lying on. Sweat dropped from her chin like raindrops as she clutched her neck. Her eyes darted back and forth, scanning the dark corners of the room. Black locks of hair clung to her damp skin and sheets. It was as if someone had dipped her into the ocean as she slept. Slowly but surely her breathing began to steady. She curled her knees closer and locked her arms around them. The sound of blaring alarms and the singing sirens of police cars echoed in the background. She turned to the clock sitting on the nightstand beside her. 10:00 PM flashed on and off in red lights.

With that she dragged herself from her watery bed. Her arms lifted to the ceiling, the bones in her arms and back snapped as she stretched. Her tangled hair nearly fell down to her knees. One would be curious to know just how long she had been growing it out. It was strange, as she walked through her home she did so in complete darkness, not stopping to use a single light switch. Into the kitchen she went. The light stemming from the open door of the refrigerator finally provided a fleeting insight into her home. And a wonderful home it seemed to be. It was a rather spacious studio apartment. Her bedroom area sat snugly against gorgeous windows overlooking the city. The walls were decorated with dozens of paintings. Photographs and various other items slept on the shelves littered around the surrounding area. The remainder of the apartment was engulfed in a deep darkness.

She swiftly pulled a small plastic bag from the top shelf and slammed the door shut. In rhythm she walked over to a cabinet and grabbed a drinking glass. With her teeth she popped the small cap enclosing the bag, pouring the drink into the crystal clear cup. Whatever this beverage was, it made no noise as it filtered into its new container. It was thick and blended in very well with the abyss engulfing the room. The glass kissed her lips and the liquid ran down her throat. As it coursed through her throat and down to her stomach she let out a pleasurable sigh. She leaned against the countertop and closed her eyes. Her elegant hands ran through her sweat riddled hair.

“Ugh..” She whispered to herself. Her entire body was drenched and untidiness made her extremely uncomfortable. She yanked the oversized shirt she had been wearing off of her and made her way towards the bathroom. The light switch clicked on as she closed the door behind her. In the distance, in the reflection of the lonely glass that she had left, was a glimmer of red. As the light faded behind the bathroom door, so did the color.

After a swift shower she took to the streets of the city. It was amazing how this winding maze of steel and concrete never slept. In fact it became more vibrant the later that it got. She had traded her once sweat riddled garments for an ensemble drenched in black. Jeans, boots, a turtleneck and a wool coat that nearly dropped to her knees. Her impossibly long hair fell down her back and slept on her shoulders. The woman looked distinguished. She looked graceful. She could have the people of New York eating out of the palm of her hand with looks like hers, but that wasn't her intention. No, her mind seemed to be set on something else on this chilly winter night. Why else would she venture out so late? The way that she walked, it was as if she were gliding on air. Not a sound was made as the heel of her boots collided with the fragile, cracked concrete. Even as she stepped through half frozen puddles of water, not a single sound.

She kept to the shadows cast by the ever looming concrete jungle. Making her nearly invisible to those who paid little attention. The people of this fine city were known for doing just that. You were only given attention here if you sought it out, begged for it. But she held no interest in the passersby and she moved far too quickly and silently for them to notice her. After a few blocks of walking it seemed that she had reached her destination. She descended down a rather wide alleyway. It was littered with the bodies of others who would rather keep to the shadows, much like her. Some could be seen sharing a smoke, some with bottles, others just talked amongst themselves. But as she walked by she garnered the attention of them all. Their heads turned and their voices dulled into low whispers. They watched as she made her way to a man waiting in front of a great metal door. As she grew closer she could see that he was smiling.

"Juliette, hey." The man spoke. His voice was low but also very welcoming. His skin was the same smooth color as melting chocolate. His curly black hair was tucked away under a red

knit hat. His brown eyes gleamed as he looked at Juliette. The two of them were ironically dressed the same as well. Black coats that dropped to their knees. Along with black turtlenecks and boots to match. He blew the warm air from his mouth into the palms of the fingerless gloves gracing his hands. He suddenly yelped out in pain. “Oi! Mind telling me what that was for?”

“Alistor Blair, where have you been?” She spoke sternly. She had flicked the man directly on his forehead. So hard in fact that it forced him to stumble back a few steps. “You haven’t been home in days.”

“What? Don’t tell me that you’ve missed me, love?” He spoke cheekily. “Careful Jules, people catch wind that you care about something and your stellar reputation as *Ice Queen* might be tarnished forever.”

“I care for you out of habit, nothing more.” She spoke dryly. Her forehead wrinkled and her face began to quickly harden again. “It is hopelessly stupid of you to be wandering around by yourself though, given what’s been going on.” She had been lecturing and looking after Alistor for almost a 900 years. In all the centuries they had spent together he never seemed to let go of his childish sense, and with that nature came trouble. Trouble that Juliette found herself digging him out of time and time again. Yet somehow, she could never find it in her heart to cast him away. A simple fact that had bothered her very much.

“Now now, before you hop on your high horse and start one of your lectures, I know alright? But I was on a *job*.” He emphasised. His eyes quickly darted over to the door they had been standing in front of. Juliette’s face was riddled with confusion. She looked at Alistor then at the metal door, then back to Alistor.

“No.” She groaned in an exaggerated tone.

“It’s not that big of a deal Jules! She asked and you know how she gets when I tell her no. I love her but I love my head a hell of a lot more. Plus it wasn’t even that bad of a job. Super simple.”

Juliette took a deep breath as she tucked her hair behind her earring riddled ears. How could he be so stupid, how could they both be? Now was not the time for them to be roaming the city and sticking their noses in business that they shouldn’t be in. Juliette forced herself to remain calm and collected. Just enough to not pull the door right off its hinges and cause a scene.

“Well” She spoke calmly. “It just so happens that I came to see her tonight as well. So why don’t we go together?” She gently pushed the door open and looked towards Alistor with a most serious gaze. “Go on then.”

It was so very true what they said. That you cannot judge a book by its cover. Looking at the alleyway winding around this particularly aged building, one would never assume that it would look like this on the inside. The walls were painted a deep and lovely purple, the same as Verbena. Lights burned warm and low but just low enough to cast a shadow wherever one chose to walk. Priceless paintings decorated the walls as the pair traversed down the corridor. As they grew closer to the stomach of the building more paintings and other photographs decorated the walls. There were people with pale skin posing in all manner of fun and silly positions. Some were playing at biting each other’s necks. Others hugged and huddled in close with smiles stretched across their faces.

The deep thump of a baseline began to quietly vibrate through the corridor. It blossomed into a catchy guitar riff, then the clicking of sticks knocking against a drum followed. Juliette and Alistor came to a halt as the corridor spread open into a large room. There were couches, tables

and chairs littered with people. The same Verbena purple colored the four walls of this obscenely large room. The sound of a woman softly singing through the speakers encapsulated the familiar and welcoming aura of this place.

“Looks like a full house tonight. Oh! Is that *Men I Trust* that I here? Your favorite band, right?” Alistor admired. “I wonder what’s going on.”

A scowl was beginning to make Juliette’s face its home. Unable to focus on the music her eyes narrowed as she scanned the room. Wall to wall and corner to corner. She quietly breathed in the scent that was flowing through her nose. Alistor looked at her with a confused grin.

“Are you-are you sniffing something?” He questioned.

“Humans.” She whispered as she crossed her arms.

“Beg your pardon?”

“I smelled it as soon as I walked through the door but I wasn’t sure.” She sighed. “There are humans here, Alistor.” He merely blinked at this revelation. His head craned to the side as he closed his eyes and took a deep breath inwards.

“Shit, you’re right. And there are quite a few of them here.” Juliette suddenly began to walk away into the sea of demons and angels. “Well by all means don’t wait for me!”

“Walk faster, you’re a vampire.” She replied dryly.

Everyone seemed to notice Juliette as she waded through the room. She towered over nearly everyone there aside from Alistor. Their greetings and attempts at companionship simply bounced off the wall that she had constructed around herself. She had no time for this. The one person she desperately needed to speak to was in this club and she knew exactly where to find her. The pair had finally made it to the back wall of the building. There, carefully crafted and probably centuries old, was a wooden door with no handle. Its black oak glew under the dim

light and right in the middle was the shape of a raven. It's shape was meticulously etched into the wood. Juliette's eyes were immediately drawn to this symbol.

"She's here. I can smell her." She spoke. She began to make way for the door but her path became bared by the playful young vampire in front of her. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Look, I can tell that you're one coin drop away from murder." His voice had traces of both nerves and confidence in it. "So I think it'd be best if I went in first and prepared her for what's about to come, alright? I know how the two of you get during arguments and I think that I speak for everyone when I say that *that* would not be good for business." He said with his hands up. Juliette scoffed at his brazen attempt to stand up to her. She could just as easily remove him from her path as simply as a human could an insect. But he was right. Her anger was growing the longer she dwelled on it the more violent she would become. She needed to keep a level head. With a retreating sigh and a nod of her head Alistor smiled once again. "Excellent!"

"You have five minutes Blair. Best run along." She toyed with him.

Alistor knew better than to stay and ponder on whether she was joking or not. He wasted no time launching himself through the door. This was no ordinary door it would seem. The curly haired vampire neither opened nor broke it down. He simply walked through it. As he did the shape of the door became warped and morphed into some kind of strange, metallic looking puddle. It was as if someone had thrown a rather large pebble into a lake. And after a few moments it retained its normal shape once again. Juliette recognized this sort of thing. Despite refusing to show it, seeing magic and enchantments at work brought her so much joy. It never got old. Not even after 998 years.

She leaned against the wall next to the enchanted door, allowing Alistor the time that he had asked for. Her anger began to settle into a mild annoyance as she waited. She had the music to thank for that. Alistor was right, this was her favorite band. The smooth melody of guitar strings echoed throughout the room. *Tell Me How* began to play and the black haired ice queen started to hum along to every word. Her finger tapped melodically against the inside of her coat pocket. Her earrings quietly jingled like wind chimes as she swayed back and forth. Like the waves on a lonely beach. Juliette loved to get lost in moments like these. It was the only time that she didn't have to focus on her anger, or her feelings. And she had enough of both for multiple life times. She got so lost that she hadn't realized that someone had joined her on the wall.

"I like this song too." The voice said. It instantly snapped Juliette out of her haze. She looked to see who it had belonged to.

There, standing next to her was a young girl, nearly as tall as herself, swaying back and forth to the sound of the music, singing along to every word. She had long white hair that shined like a lighthouse in the low light. She kept it tied up in a ponytail that ran down her back, while two whisker-like lines of hair fell down both sides of her face and hung just below her jawline. The deepest brown eyes looked into Juliettes. They held a certain curiosity and wonder in them. But also a hint of sadness that Juliette recognized. A ring slept in her left nostril. Her milky skin was decorated by dozens of freckles. She wore a knitted, dark red sweater that seemed far too big for her slender frame. It's long sleeves had holes that her thumbs stuck out of. Along with black jeans and black shoes. The necklace that hung around her neck was tucked underneath the collar of her sweater, refusing to reveal its identity. She was enchanting and her smile was so inviting.

"You know *Men I Trust*?" Juliette asked as her eyebrow raised.

“Anyone with taste does.” She giggled. “And you seem like a woman with taste!”

“Looks can be deceiving, kid.” Juliette chuckled. She could feel the young girl’s gaze on her. It was like she wasn’t just looking at her, but *really* looking at her. “What’s with the creepy stares?” The girl just smiled.

“No reason. You just seem, I don’t know, sad?” She responded. Juliette smirked.

“You always talk to and analyze strangers like this? I could be a serial killer or something you know.”

“Nah, I don’t think you are. Plus you aren’t a stranger. Not really.”

“Oh?” Juliette said curiously. “Have we met before?”

“No. But it feels like I’ve met you!”

“What do you mean?”

“From the pictures?” The girl motioned towards the countless photographs that were framed on the wall. Many of them housed memories of Juliette in them. Refusing to smile, cringing at hugs or social contact from a strange woman. “You seem to be in most of them around this place.”

“Ah the pictures. Yes, I know the owner and she *loves* photography and art. ‘Keep the memories alive forever,’ she always says. Not that we’d need them for that.” Juliette said wistfully.

“She has a point, y’know. Photographs are one of the best ways to keep our memories alive. We can’t live forever right? And when we get old most of what we remember will fade anyways. So if we capture them like this, then they’re forever.” The mention of immortality forced Juliette to laugh, just a little. “Laugh all you want but I like to think that it’s true.” The girl smiled wide as she tucked her hair behind her ears.

“No no, you’re absolutely right darling. I just didn’t think that someone so young could have such a poised and level headed approach about such things.”

“I just like to keep an open mind. Why? Because I don’t want to be put in a box or compared to anyone else. I’m just me. No one else.” She spoke proudly.

“Well said, um, I didn’t catch your name.”

“Neriné. But everyone has always called me Neri! And you are?”

“Juliette. You’ve got a beautiful and unique name love. It suits you. It’s a pleasure to meet you.” She held out her hand but found Brin’s arms quickly curled around her. “Oh!”

“I like to give hugs, hope that’s alright Juliette.” She spoke as she embraced her new friend. Juliette was taken aback by the girl wrapped around her. Her hair tickled the bottom of her chin and her scent spread into her nose. It quickly filled her entire body and made its way into her veins. An itch began to rise in the back of her throat. This girl was *human*. Every muscle in Juliette’s body began to tense up. She was used to being around humans but she had not drank their blood for centuries. She refused to. But being as close to this girl as she was now was dangerous. She gently rubbed her back before pulling away. “Are you alright?”

“Yes... Yes I’m fine. Just caught me a bit off guard is all.”

“Whoa, your eyes are so beautiful. I hadn’t noticed their color because of the low light.”

“What?”

“Yeah, your eyes are bright red aren’t they? So pretty.” Neriné complimented. Juliette knew she had to take her leave now. She had given Alistor plenty of time and she no longer wanted to put this innocent human girl in danger.

“Colored contacts but thank you very much. I’m afraid that I must be going now.” She swiftly departed from the girl and began to walk away but a thought suddenly crossed her mind.

She turned back and grabbed her hand. The paint on her fingernails was chipped. She looked deeply into her brown eyes. “Listen, It was wonderful to meet Brin. But I need you to listen to me. Go home. It isn’t safe for you here. Take as many of your friends as you can with you. You’re far too young and too smart to be spending your time here. Go home, okay?”

“Okay. I’ll go home.” the girl responded. Her eyes were locked intently on Juliettes.

“Good girl. Be safe.” Juliette spoke. She moved with blinding speed through the wooden door. So fast that human eyes wouldn’t be able to keep up. It would simply be as if she vanished into thin air.

“Hm?” Neriné pondered as she looked back to where the door was. But there was nothing there. Just another wall decorated with the memories captured by the flash of a camera.

The anger had only subsided for a moment. It was coming back full force as she remembered the reason why she was here. Adding humans into the thick of things only fueled the flames kindling in the pit of her stomach.

“How could she be so stupid? What was she thinking?”

Unlike the walls of the club on the opposite side of the door, there was nothing on the ones composing this corridor. They were bare and as black as the night sky. But like the enchanted door their make did not seem to be solid. At the slightest touch they would crumble into countless waves. Almost as if they were made out of water. This design continued until Juliette came face to face with another door. But this one seemed normal. It was one of traditional wooden make, with a singular knob to turn. She could smell Alistor on the other side. Along with the scent of another. She clutched and turned the knob with such ferocity that the door flung wide open.

Suddenly the shirking cries of birds filled her ears. A cloud of black, flailing bodies with soft wings came crashing into her. They were ravens. The very same that the symbol on the door represented. They engulfed Juliette's body from head to toe and she became shrouded in feathers. She could feel the sharp points of their breaks poking at her skin and limbs. They were searching for something. She could feel the skin on the tip of her finger pinch as a beak enclosed around it. The corridor fell silent, save for the sound of Juliette's gentle breathing. Suddenly in a cloud of black ash, each and every raven disappeared.

"There have got to be better security methods than this." She sighed as she licked the blood from her finger.

She quickly walked through the open doorway and the door slammed shut behind her. Slightly irritated, she found herself once again in a different room. Only this time she had seemingly made it to her destination as a sigh of relief passed her lips. Four walls made up the overly large space. Lines of verbena flowers almost looked as though they were growing on the ceiling, in fact, they were what made the ceiling. Their fresh woodland scent gathered in Juliette's sensitive nose. It was beautiful. Warm lights hung from durable string, illuminating the spacious area. Much like the club, countless photographs decorated the walls. The same strange woman that clung to Juliette in the photos from before could be seen in these as well. Alistor was the star subject in a few that she walked by, others housed portraits of different places, different cities that she instantly recognized. Whoever this woman was, she had a rare talent for capturing the perfect moment in photographs.

Suddenly Juliette stopped. Her eyes caught on a small framed photograph. She picked it up from the small cabinet it had been placed on, countless cameras slept on the same surface. Inside of it a young girl could be seen. She did not look more than sixteen years old. She had

long, flowing black hair and silk pale skin. A smirk tugged at the corners of her mouth. Next to her was a girl of the same age. She had beautiful snow white hair that was just as long as her companions. Her skin was also pale and freckles danced atop her nose and her cheeks. She was giving her friend a soft kiss on the cheek. The two of them were so similar but also so different. Almost like sisters. The photograph was black and white and the tin that had been used to produce the photo was beginning to lose its color. God knows how long ago this was taken. But the sight of it made Juliette laugh quietly to herself as she gently placed it down.

She focused herself once again and as she did the ringing of voices filled her ears. She could see a woman with snow white hair speaking with Alistor. She sat, legs crossed, on a gaudy black oak desk. The wall behind them had been replaced by glass windows that overlooked the city skyline. Giving off the illusion that they were in some sort of skyscraper high up in the sky of New York City. Or was it actually an illusion? Juliette took a deep breath, preparing herself for what was about to come. God knows that she was not in the mood for this tonight.

“The ravens are a bit ancient as far as security goes, don’t you think?” She voiced with annoyance. The white haired woman instantly stopped her train of thought as she heard Juliette’s voice.

The eyes that looked towards the black haired woman were so soft. The left was the same as Juliette’s, an alluring red. But the right was of a much different pigmentation, it was as blue as the ocean. Freckles decorated her milky skin, her cheeks were round and her nose was small. Half of her hair was tucked behind her ear while the other flowed freely down her face and her back. Much like Juliette’s it nearly touched the floor. Her ears were littered with earrings as well. As she hopped off of the desk Alistor quickly attempted to help her down by taking her hand.

“Oh my god, would you please stop worrying so much? I can get down just fine darling!” She said as she smiled and gently touched his cheek. She was a rather tall woman, though only an inch or two smaller than Juliette. She wore a long, black, overall dress that came down just below her knees. A white sweater clung to her limbs underneath it, while a pair of black tights and boots the same as Juliette’s decorated her legs. The ring on her left hand could be seen sparkling in the light as she walked towards her. Four pairs of boots collided with the spotless wooden floor. She threw her arms around Juliette and squeezed her gently. She could smell the scent of flowers and ocean water coming from the woman that was embracing her. It was comforting and familiar. Suddenly the woman pulled back from Juliette, her eyes narrowing. “You’re annoyed, why?” She questioned.

Juliette sighed. “I thought you were going to ‘prepare her for what was coming’.” She mocked Alistor. “What have you been doing? You said you’d only need five minutes and gave you plenty more than that.”

“Now before you get upset Jules, something kind of important came up and-”

“Alistor shush!” The woman cut him off. Juliette’s eyes grew wide.

“I’m sorry did I interrupt something more important than the fact that humans are running around in your club? Or that you’re sending Alistor on weird, mystery missions during a time that is very dangerous for our kind?” She spoke. The annoyance was increasing and her patience was starting to fade.

“Julie, I can feel you getting upset. Sit down, let’s talk. There’s always a reasonable explanation for everything. Isn’t there?” The woman smiled as she took Juliette’s hand and guided her back to the desk.

“Do not read my emotions Kissa. It was cute when we were children but it’s just annoying and invasive now.”

“No one has to read your emotions Jules. A blind man could tell that you’re on edge.” Alistor teased. His quiet laughter came to an abrupt halt as he spotted the intimidating vampiress glaring at him.

Juliette took a seat in one of the comfiest chairs she had ever sat in. It did well to remove a few of the thick layers of anger that had been wrapping themselves around her tonight. The woman named ‘Kissa’ returned to her seat behind the wide desk as well. Now that the front of black oak was no longer obstructed, the same raven symbol that Juliette had seen before revealed itself once again. Only this time it was etched in white lines. It felt like she could not escape it, no matter where she went. Kissa’s desk was very neat and organized. Small potted plants rested on the right hand corner. Several piles of books were stacked neatly on the left. Papers were organized on a small rack. While pencils, pens and markers were placed in a small cylinder shaped holder. Her fingers wrapped around a clear glass with a dark red liquid inside of it. She slowly pressed it to her lips and took a drink. Juliette’s eyes were glued on the glass. She watched intently as Kissa’s fingers wrapped around the glass. As the warm liquid disappeared down her throat. She could hear the sound of her own heart beating inside of her chest. She could feel the moisture in her mouth gathering. The sound of Kissa’s voice snapped her out of the trance that she was in.

“Juliette?” Kissa said.

“Yes?”

“I asked if you wanted some?”

“No..” She paused and looked away. “No, thank you.”

Kissa carefully examined her sister. Her gaze was not looking at just her physical body, at the language it was speaking. She was looking through her, into her, at the emotions that were emanating off of her. Covering her body like a blanket. She could see the invisible threads of unspoken words that led right to her heart. That was Kissa's gift. An immortal empath. She possessed the ability to peer into the deepest corners of someone's soul, feel what they feel and bring those emotions to the surface if she so chose. It was something that Juliette had loved about her sister when they were young. Her ability to help others that way. Help them work through their feelings instead of burying their worst trauma deep down. But after a couple hundred years of being the focus of that and thousands of arguments and fights later, she simply thought it invasive.

"I told you not to do that, Narkissa." Juliette spoke as she looked at her sister from the corner of her eye.

"When was the last time you ate?" She asked Juliette. Blatantly ignoring her sister's growing annoyance with her antics.

"Before I left the apartment tonight." Juliette answered shortly.

"That's not what I meant and you know that." Narkissa smiled as she leaned forward, the glass of blood dangled from the tips of her fingers. "When was the last time that you *ate*?"

"God, you sound like mother."

"And you still haven't answered my question." She laughed. Narkissa loved teasing her sister like this. It reminded her of their childhood together. "Don't think that I didn't see you glaring at my drink dear sister. You need only ask, you know that."

"Press her any harder and I'll be the one cleaning up this room, again." Alistor sighed as he took a sip of his own drink.

“Your fiancé is very wise.” Juliette pointed towards the young vampire.

“Well if she would stop deflecting and simply answer my question, then maybe she wouldn’t be getting as irritated as she is now.” Narkissa words were laced with sass. Juliette straightened up in her seat and slowly leaned forward.

“How about this. Tell me why there are humans in your club tonight instead.” The air in the room thickened as the words passed Juliette’s lips. Alistor began to tense up while Narkissa’s jawline began to flex.

“You know, you were never this serious when we were children. In fact, you were soooooo much more fun when you actually acted like a vampire.”

“C’mon Narkissa that’s--” Alistor was promptly cut off.

“No no, it’s quite alright Alistor.” Juliette interjected. Her eyes locked in battle with her sister’s. “I’ll ignore her childish attempts to irritate me and ask again. Why are there humans here tonight, Narkissa?”

The weight and pressure of the hair engulfing the room would be enough to bring any human to their knees. Have the begging for a reprieve. But the two sisters were different. This was just one night out of thousands that had played out the same way. Though Alistor was vehemently hoping that the result would be different. It had to be, so he quickly stepped in.

“Alright alright! That’s enough. You are both strong and stubborn women and if things continue on like this it won’t be pretty.” He looked towards Narkissa. “Just tell her why.” The look that she gave Alistor made him step back. “Stop. Look.” He gently cradled her chin atop his finger. “You think that she won’t understand but you haven’t even given her the chance to. So maybe drop the bratty sister act and just talk to her? Before you get into a fight that you clearly

can't win right now. Putting me up against her in defense of you just won't be fair to me either."

Narkissa took a deep breath and exhaled. She gently kissed Alistor's hand before letting it go.

"Fine." She sighed in defeat as she leaned back in her chair. "What exactly were you planning to do when you found out that humans were here tonight?"

"I was going to kill you, of course." Juliette stated matter-of-factly.

"Simply knocking me out wouldn't have been sufficient enough?"

"We both know that wouldn't be enough."

"True. I wouldn't stay dead for long, though."

"Long enough to get every human out of here safely."

"And the vampires that would stand in your way?"

"Barely even obstacles."

"Hmm." Narkissa giggled.

"Enough games. Why are they here, Kissa? Stall any longer and I will not hesitate to put you down and remove them from danger myself."

"Why do you think they are in so much danger, Juliette? I've done nothing to them."

"Yet." Juliette argued. "You might be fine with just one or two at first but what happens when that isn't enough anymore. Two will turn into five. Five will turn into twenty. Twenty will turn into an entire village, or need I remind you of Italy once more?"

"That's not fair... That was over three hundred years ago and I have learned to control myself since then. You know that." Narkissa was doing her best to stay composed as she clenched her fists together on her lap. "You were right there next to me in Italy as well. Or have you forgotten?"

“That night will haunt me for the rest of my wretched, immortal life sister. For three hundred years I forced myself to never drink another drop of human blood ever again. No matter how much I want to rip their throats out and drown in the euphoria, I don’t. I created a blood substitute so I would never have to harm another innocent life just so that I could live. But the difference between us is that I took no pleasure in losing control, you did.” The anger that was once boiling inside of her veins had subsided and was now replaced by a much different feeling. Narkissa could taste the scent of sadness pouring from her sister's skin. “Tell me why they’re here. I won’t ask again.”

Narkissa could not form the words to respond to what her sister had just said. The massive wave of sadness and loathing that had just washed over her was overwhelming. That night in Italy was something that the two of them rarely spoke about. Mainly because they both had radically different views of how it actually went. Juliette had made it crystal clear that she never wanted her to dig into her feelings about that night. She fully understood why now. Narkissa wanted to break down and cry for her sister. Not only for how she truly felt but because the words that she spoke about her were true. And they cut right down to the marrow of her bones. Suddenly she felt a familiar hand wrap around her own.

“She needs their blood.” Alistor’s cut through the silence. His eyes were focused intently on Juliette. The raven haired vampire’s face twisted in anger.

“Their blood? Is this what you call control Narkissa? I will not let this---”

“She’s pregnant, Jules.” He could feel Narkissa’s grip tighten around his hand. Like a toddler clinging to her mothers clothing. Juliette stood there motionless. Her mouth hung open, nearly dropping to the floor. Her eyes softened as she looked at her sister.

“You’re what?” She whispered.

Juliette stood there. The shock of her Alistor's proclamation seemed to have drained her body of the ability to move. Even her eyes refused to blink. Though none of this was unnatural for a vampire. Was Narkissa really pregnant? Juliette stretched her mind back through centuries of vampiric history. Like humans vampires were also able to procreate, though it was much different for them. For the simple fact that a pregnant vampire was more dangerous than an immortal with more than one thousand years under their belt. Or a newborn with the strength of five elders. Vampires carrying a child were not only strong but their hunger was borderline insatiable. These women have eradicated entire civilizations because of the life growing inside of them. The babies were also vampires and when you put the hunger of two together, it could be a very dangerous thing. Juliette had seen what these future mothers could do if not cared for and watched over carefully. The amount of human life and blood lost was enough to freeze the blood in veins. Visions of Narkissa covered in red from head to toe flashed before her eyes.

"Are you going to say something?" Narkissa spoke in a worried tone. She wore a smile that was nervous and her eyes did their best to hold back her fear. She cared far too much about what her sister thought. "You've been standing there like a statue for ages."

"I'm afraid we might have broken her. Perhaps we should've waited?" Alistor laughed.

"Oh for goodness sake, Julie!" Narkissa slammed her hand on her black oak desk with enough force that it should have crumbled the whole thing into firewood. The sound of wood splintering echoed off of the walls and finally snapped her sister from her trance.

"Are you sure that you're.." Juliette's hand covered stomach as she began to slowly walk towards her sister. "Are you one hundred percent certain of it?"

“I’ve done nothing but drink blood for the last month or so. More than I usually do. That’s what Alistor has been out doing.” She stood up. “He’s been out gathering as much human blood for me as he could.”

“How exactly have you gotten the blood?”

“If you’re asking if I’ve killed anyone to get it, then you rest easy. No human lives have been lost in my quest to satiate my fiancé’s hunger.”

“Then how?”

“Mainly hospitals. Blood banks.” The playful vampire walked in sync with Narkissa. We thought it would be enough, at least for the first few months but...”

The couple stood face to face with Juliette. She had regained control of her body again but the look of disbelief still stuck to her face like gum on the bottom of her boots. No life was lost. That was the most important piece of information given tonight. But how long could they keep this up?

“You’ve gone through all of it already. Haven’t you?” Juliette sighed.

“Yes.” Narkissa replied somberly. “And I need more. The baby needs more. And I’d rather not hurt anyone to get what I need. Not anymore.” Juliette chuckled at that.

“That’s why we put the word out to make tonight a packed house. Invite any and everyone.” Alistor said.

Are the two of you dense?” Juliette’s voice began to rise. “All of that blood that you gathered before, you went through in less than a month. Now I’m guessing that it was supposed to last much longer than that, right? Do you know why it didn’t? Because your hunger is already bad by vampiric standards, Narkissa. Add on the fact that you’re pregnant and it is damn near uncontrollable! So what happens when the blood that you collect from these humans tonight runs

dry? At a certain point you will not be able to control yourself because you yourself lacked control for so long!”

She was pacing back and forth as she yelled. One hand rested on her hip, the other ran through her thick hair. Her head was spinning. She wanted to be happy for her sister, she truly did. But the risk that was now very much visible to her could not be ignored. Vampires do not carry their children for very long but so much irreversible damage would rain down on the innocents of this city if Narkissa lost herself to her appetite. And if she went down that hole again, Juliette was not sure that she could drag her back out. The look on her sister's face broke her heart though. Narkissa's nose was glowing red and her eyes began to sparkle beneath the small pools forming inside of them. She was a strong woman. She was close to one thousand years old after all. But she was also a very emotional vampire. Her powers were wonderful but they also took a toll on her. Being able to feel what others felt so deeply, it blurred the line between her own feelings and the feelings of others. She was taking on Juliette's anger and worry. All the while piling it all on top of her own anxieties and fears towards this pregnancy. And in the blink of an eye she found herself wrapping her arms around Juliette.

“Then help me... Please.” She whispered. “I know that it's a bad plan but it's all that we've got. I *know* the risks of this pregnancy and I don't want to hurt anyone. I won't be that kind of vampire again.”

“Kissa...” Juliette sighed as she hugged her sister.

“Look Jules, if the three of us put our heads together then these next six months will fly by without a hitch. We've always stuck together when things seemed impossible right? It's been this way for hundreds of years. That's what families do.” Alistor spoke as he rubbed Narkissa's back gently.

“Your niece and or nephew will be eternally grateful. I know that *I* would be eternally grateful. Please?” Juliette closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Alistor did have a point. They always stuck together because they were a family. Bound together until infinites end. It did not matter how angry she was at them, she would never abandon her sister. Even if she had no clue how this was going to work out in the end. Narkissa could feel the anger peeling off of Juliette. One less weight that she had to carry.

“Alright.” Juliette said.

“You’ll help?” Narkissa spoke optimistically.

“You’re my sister. And no matter how stupid the two of might be, we are a family and I won’t abandon you. OH!” In an instant she felt the crushing strength of a pregnant vampire as Narkissa tightened her grip around her waist. “Kissa, you’re crushing my ribs, love.” She coughed as the air slowly returned to her lungs.

“Sorry! So sorry!”

“Nothing more terrifying than a pregnant vampire. Trust me.” Alistor seemed distressed as he thought back to recent memories of Narkissa knocking the wind out of him. Juliette rolled her eyes as she fought back a smile.

“Speaking of family, have you told mother yet?” Juliette questioned. Narkissa’s eyes grew wide at the mention of their mother.

“Oh god. No, not yet.” She groaned. “What do you think? Should I?”

“Your call. I haven’t seen or spoken to her in one hundred and fifty years.” Juliette replied dryly. She had not noticed that the room had grown quiet. Even more suspicious that a single word had not passed Alistor’s lips in a few minutes. “What? Nothing to say about your future mother-in-law Alistor?” She turned her attention to the quick witted vampire to see him

down on one knee. His head bent over towards the floor. Narkissa appeared to be looking through her, eyes locked on something else in the room. Juliette followed her gaze and found what had captured her attention so suddenly.

“Oh darling, I'm not that terrible. Am I?” A woman spoke in a most soothing voice.

Chapter 2: Foresight

Neriné did her best to take her mind off of the mysterious woman that she had met before. She looked around the club for a while but could not find her anywhere. How could someone just vanish into thin air like that? How could the door that she swore that she saw just vanish like that? And the way that she spoke to her, the way she looked into her eyes. Neriné could not help but soak up everything that she had said like a sponge. It was almost as if she *needed* to obey but her heart was fighting against it. She wanted to stay. She wanted to talk to Juliette again.

The young girl was always observant. She had been ever since she was a child. Her eyes caught subtle hints that other people would surely miss. She could detect the truth in a person's voice, as well as the deception. She could sense shifts in the air, signs that something was happening or was about to happen. Good or bad. She arrived at an empty table. Several chairs circled themselves around it. She planted herself into one of the empty seats and took a drink from the plastic water bottle that she had been carrying in the small bag slung over her shoulder and chest. The club had grown quieter than it was before. She appreciated the growing ambiance because she could hear the music more clearly.

"She's got to be around here somewhere." The young girl thought to herself as she bit her lip pensively. The tips of her fingers began to tingle. Like the nerves in them were racing around uncontrollably. She could feel multiple pairs of eyes observing her. The feeling was coming from every direction, enclosing around her like a cage. She subtly scanned the room in an attempt to identify her admirers. "I know you're watching me, so where are you?"

Her eyes stopped. There, by the entrance of the building, she found a pair of eyes looking right into hers. She could not quite make out all of their features thanks to the poor lighting but

she could tell that it was a woman, at least. The woman had eyes as blue as the ocean. They gleamed like gems as they cut through the darkness. She was surrounded by a group of both men and women. All who were dressed in black, head to toe. The woman's eyes smiled brightly at Neriné as she whispered something in the ear of the stoic man standing next to her. Neriné felt uneasy but she could not help but stare. Those eyes, the presence that radiated from them, it was familiar. But in that familiarity she could sense dread, calamity. She almost felt hopeless the longer she stared.

“Listen to what Juliette told you. *Leave, now!*” A voice in her head screamed. It was so loud that she could have sworn that someone was yelling directly in her ear. It was enough to finally break her concentrated gaze. When she turned back the woman was gone, as was the group she had come in with. “Do not look for her, just go. **Run!**” The voice yelled once again. She could feel the air shifting in the room. Something was definitely wrong, something had changed. She took a deep breath and made her way towards the entrance. It was like her feet were moving on their own as she walked through the crowd of people dancing and drinking. It was strange because the people were moving but they were not making any noise. They were not speaking, their footsteps were silent. That's when she noticed it. The music had been cut off and the lights had been shut off completely. All that illuminated the room was the dark red glow of the emergency lights. Everything was laced in blood light and black shadows, and no one seemed to question it. Not a single soul.

“What the hell is going on?” Neriné asked herself. Whatever was happening there was no time to think. She knew that she had to leave. She turned to continue her journey to the exit when suddenly she ran face first into what felt like a wall made out of stone. “Whoa!” She exclaimed as she rubbed her forehead. She looked up to find that she had not run into a wall, it was a man, a

rather tall man at that. “Oh excuse me, sorry about that. It’s so dark in here that I can barely see where I’m going.” She chuckled.

The man said nothing in response. He barely moved at all. He just looked down at Neriné with the same blue eyes that the woman from before had.

“Are you alright?” She asked the man. She felt uneasy in his presence. His abnormal silence and stillness made her feel like her bones were freezing underneath her skin. The voice promptly returned and yelled: “**Run!**”

Neriné did not hesitate to heed this warning. She left the quiet man and made for the exit once again. The bad feeling she had gotten was becoming more intense, her heart started to beat faster and faster. “Just make it to the door.” She thought to herself repeatedly. Finally she made it, after forcing herself through countless bodies. But suddenly she stopped. There was someone blocking her path. “What the hell?” Before she could finish the thought a blinding pain began to course through her entire body. She swiftly collapsed down to her knees. Her vision began to blur under the harsh grip of this pain. She could feel something warm flowing from the corner of her mouth. She brought her fingers to her lips and slowly pulled them back. “Blood?”

The voice had come from a woman who was standing just a few feet away from them. Her presence added a weight to the aura of the room. But it was not pressuring. It was regal and mysterious. Gentle, yet asserting all the same. Her eyes were as blue as the water of the ocean. Crystal clear, almost glistening in the light like two beautiful jewels. She was a tall woman. Her face was thin and sharp. . Her hair was a spectacle in its own right. It was as smooth as silk and ran down her neck, over her shoulder and down to her stomach in a carefully crafted braid. Both black and white colors mixed and tangled together on her head and within the strands that birthed

her braid. Her skin was perfect and pale, not a single blemish or wrinkle in sight. Her lips were painted a dark color, contrasting well to the complexion of her skin. She wore a gorgeous long sleeved dress. It was as black as shadow and hugged her arms and hips as if it were perfectly fit to her tall, slender figure. Perfectly knitted lace patterns composed the neckline of the gramet, exposing the skin around her neck and collar bones through the thin veil. A simple yet elegant pair of black heels protected her feet. She wore no jewelry, aside from the diamond ring adorned her finger. She was pulling off and handing a red trench coat to the man standing beside her. As a matter of fact she had entered the room with a small group of both men and women. All who stood silently, as still as statues.

“Thank you, darling.” She spoke gratefully to the man that took her coat. With a smile and gentle nod of the head he stepped back in line. “Oh Alistor, please. Get up, get up.” She laughed as she begged the boy to lift from his knee. The echo of her heels knocking against the floor filled the room as she gained closer to the three of them. Narkissa took hold of Alistors arm and pulled him close, almost as if she were attempting to hide herself, making herself smaller somehow.

Juliette began to regress behind the couple. Putting more distance between her and the woman approaching them.

“What are the pair of you just standing there for? You would think I was a commoner with this welcome, not a queen.” She smiled, revealing a pair of perfectly white teeth. “Come here, come here!” Her arms opened wide to welcome them in.

“So sorry mum, you’ve just surprised us.” Narkissa spoke as she embraced her mother. She hugged her tightly, breathing in her scent, scanning her emotions.

“We weren’t expecting you for a few more weeks, Lady Anniceta.” Alistor added as he embraced the queen.

“I know, I know. But I was in the city, on business and thought that I would come by early and see the two of you.” Anniceta said. She beamed with pride as she looked at Narkissa. The adept girl gifted her mother with a smile of her own. All the while dissecting the feelings and intentions of the words spoken by Anniceta in her mind. Why was she really here? Surely she can’t know?

“Well, we know that you are a busy woman. We appreciate you taking the time to come and see us but-”

“But a call beforehand would have been nice, mum.” Narkissa interrupted Alistor. She sensed a disruption in her mother’s heart. It was faint and she was concealing it well.

“My apologies if i’ve...” She paused as she glanced behind the pair. Her eyes locked on to Juliette. The raven haired girl was staring out the window. Watching as snow began to fall over the sleepless city below them. She could see Juliette staring right back at her with those piercing red eyes through the reflection of the glass. “Interrupted something of importance... Your sister would have fled my presence by now if it weren’t some sort of occasion.” Narkissa sensed both sadness and anger while her mother gazed at Juliette. Her thoughts were screaming at her sister to not make a scene.

“It’s been one hundred and fifty years, mother. We were bound to see each other again sooner or later.” Juliette scoffed. “I suppose sooner was today.”

“I suppose that it was.” Anniceta chuckled. “How have you been darling?”

“I’d rather not do this with you. I’m here for Kissa and Alistor, that’s all.” She spun around to face her mother. “So why don’t we skip to the part where you tell us why you’re actually here. Cause we all know that it isn’t to simply see your daughters.”

“God dammit Julie...” Narkissa sighed. Her sister's coldness only served to stoke the sadness and anger within their mother even more.

“Hm...” Anniceta breathed. Her head tilted slightly as she looked at Juliette. It was almost like looking in the mirror for her. The two of them were so alike, yet so different. “What did I do to make you hate me so? I wonder...”

Juliette responded with silence. Her frowning face remained unchanged. Her eyes narrowed, drilling into Anniceta’s skull.

“No matter. You are still my daughter and I will always love you. But you are correct, another reason has brought me here tonight. Your sister has been sifting out that very reason the moment I stepped in the room.” She looked back towards Narkissa. “You feel and take on so much. The ability to journey through another's heart and see their deepest feelings and bring those feelings to the surface. Your power is such a gift, so beautiful. I’m reminded of your father everytime that I look at you...”

Narkissa tried to swallow the lump that had grown in her throat, but her mouth was dry. A sense of satisfaction flooded into her heart, surely that came from her mother. A sense of shock and confusion came after, but she could not discern whether that was coming from herself or from Alistor. How could she have known? Juliette was the only other soul they had told. Before today this secret was theirs and theirs alone. Alistor took great care to keep his movements concealed. Draw no attention, move in the shadows. What was she missing? That is when a thought from a far, dark corner of her mind came into view.

“Foresight.” Narkissa spoke as her eyes grew wide.

“You didn’t?” Juliette groaned.

Narkissa scoffed as the truth had finally popped into her mind. It was something that was forbidden by the royal family hundreds of years ago. Something that was never to be used against the will of the members of the family. The pact that was made held much importance. Anniceta had disregarded that importance. What was once barricaded in the deepest throws of the queen’s heart was now floating to the surface. She could see it now. A swell of emotions began to overtake Narkissa.

“You used foresight on me?” There was no anger backing her words. There was no sadness. Only shock. Though Juliette was more than willing to become angry enough for the both of them.

“And you have the nerve to ask why I hate you? Just add this to the list, mother.” Juliette spat as she stormed past Anniceta. Taking up residence beside her sister.

Foresight is a great and equally terrifying power. With it the wielder is given visions of events that could happen in the future. Though powerful indeed there are weaknesses, as with any other power. The user is only given glimpses of what *could* be. Given only possible futures with no direct path to any of them. But with a user adept enough this weakness could be worked around. Absorbing every clue in each vision in order to ensure the right path to their desired future.

“I came here for you, Narkissa.” Anniceta put on a reassuring smile and her eyes glided down towards Narkissa’s stomach. “For you and your baby.”

“With all due respect, Lady Anniceta, Narkissa’s pregnancy surely wouldn’t constitute all of this.” Alistor straightened his back and stood tall. The tone of his voice morphed away from

its usual casual song. “One of your letters, or better yet a phone call would have been sufficient enough considering how busy you are. The *Ravensguard* is only deployed for S-Level occasions. And seeing how you’ve brought them this evening means that something else has brought you here. Am I wrong?”

Anniceta's eyes narrowed at the wit of this young vampire. She placed her slender hands in the pockets of her dress. Her long legs carefully landed one in front of the other in a rhythmic pattern. *Knock, knock, knock, knock*, was the sound of her heels clicking against the floor. “You are not wrong, young master Blair. Ever so observant and insightful when the need arises.”

“Enough games mother. What future did you see?” Juliette blurted out impatiently. Her fingers held on tight to Narkissa’s. She wanted to whisk Narkissa away from here. She tried to conceal it but Juliette could tell how anxious she was becoming, without the ability to read emotions. Their mother was unpredictable. She always had been. And she loved her daughters. Very much. But she never showed much interest in their personal affairs. Only when it directly affected the future of the Royal Family and the vampire race did she insert herself.

“Calm yourself Juliette.” Anniceta spoke in an assertive tone. “You would do well to remember that I am still your *Queen*.”

“I don’t give a damn about your title.” Juliette fired back.

“Stop it, please! The both of you.” Narkissa roared. “All of this anger and sadness is exhausting me.” Small beads of sweat were beginning to fall down her skin and sporadic patterns. Her throat was beginning to become dry. “What future did you see for my baby, mother?”

“All will be revealed, my daughters. But in the meantime I think it imperative that we provide you with proper nourishment Narkissa. You seem to be fading rather quickly the longer this conversation goes on.”

Both Juliette and Alistor eyes darted over to the white haired mother to be. Her pale skin glistened like she had been thrown under a waterfall. Her lips were drying, small cracks formed on them like breaking glass. The grip she maintained on Juliette’s hand was tightening. It was all that she could do to stay upright. Her hand collapsed her stomach as it began to tighten.

“Narkissa!” Alistor was by her side before any of them could. His speed was nearly unmatched, even by Juliette. He scooped her up in his arms. Carrying her back to the chair behind the black oak desk. He sat her down gently, moving a strand of her snow white hair away from her cheek. He touched so gently, so lovingly. It made Juliette want to smile. “Our kiddo is gonna be a handful, huh?” He laughed.

“Aren’t all children of vampires?” She laughed dryly. “A little blood and they’ll settle.”

“Where is your blood supply?” Juliette asked. The worry that had washed over just moments ago was settling down. Alistor was by her side, there was no safer place for Narkissa. “I’ll go and grab you some.” A pensive look flashed across Alistor’s face. “What is it?”

“She drank the last of it earlier, when you were coming in... That was all that we had left.”

There was no more blood? Was her hunger really that bad? Juliette knew that they were running through their supply stock but she never imagined that it was this bad. There were over a hundred people downstairs, many of them human. Unaware of their impending doom. Soon there would be a ravenous, blood thirsty, pregnant vampire snapping at their throats if she did not get the blood that she needed. She shuddered at the horror that scene would bring. Her sister would

blackout and gorge herself on the warm, thick liquid that pumped through their veins. She would drown in its euphoric feeling and feel their flesh tear like paper against her razor sharp fangs. And wake up soon after in a graveyard paved by blood and corpses. She would feel Juliette's shame, her regret for not being able to save every single human life there and crumble from the weight of it soon after. That was when Anniceta spoke.

"If I'm not mistaken I believe that you had a plan that you wished to carry out tonight, yes?" She inquired as if she did not already know how the events of tonight would play out.

"That is *not* an option!" Juliette snapped. "There has to be another way."

"Ever so sweet on them, aren't you darling? When will you learn that humans only exist to sustain us? They are nothing more than insects that can and will be crumbled into dirt under our heels."

Alistor interrupted what was sure to become another argument. "Now is hardly the time to be arguing about such things." He looked down at his fiancée. Her condition was worsening. "Narkissa *will* need human blood. That's the bare truth of things and we don't have time to enact the plan as we originally planned on."

"I won't take human life Alistor. I can't..."

"All that we have to do is *trance* them Jules. We extract the blood that we need, safely. And then we send them on their way. No lives lost."

"Alistor..."

Anniceta examined her daughter carefully. Intrigued by the choices she might make in the minutes to come. "What will you decide?" She thought to herself.

"If we don't do this now then she'll lose control and rip through the city. She'll feed too much again and become a blood addict. And when the baby is born, it'll be just as bad as she is."

This was the only moment in her eternal existence that she could recall wishing to have her mother's power. What would be the outcome if she refused this. Would her sister really end up becoming a soulless vampire whose eyes only saw the blood pumping through the veins of powerless humans? Would her baby turn out just the same? Would she have to put her down?

"I will use my power for this. For Kissa... But never again, alright? We'll find a better way."

"Let's get to work then-" The sound of Alistor's voice was suddenly cut off. His eyes narrowed as if he were focusing on something. His nose twitched as a scent wafted underneath his nostrils. He inhaled deeply, taking the invisible cloud into his body. His muscles tightened and his jaw clenched. He could feel his fangs growing longer underneath his lips. Poking at their soft sin cage. "You smell that?" He asked Juliette. But she was steps ahead of him already. Her ruby red eyes beamed and her stance was as rigid as stone.

"Blood." She turned back towards Alistor who wore a face just as worrisome as hers. That worry quickly morphed into fear. The black oak desk behind them was vacant. The chair spun around several times before collapsing to the ground. Narkissa had vanished from the room. Her head shuffled around to face Alistor but he was already on his way out the door. Her eyes could barely see the outline of his silhouette speeding through the air like a flash of lightning. The world began moving in slow motion. A jarring feeling for an immortal being such as her. Everything had always moved so fast. Everything was always heightened. But time had frozen over at this moment. It all started to freeze. Her bones, her limbs, even the blood in her veins. Move, move, move, move, **move, move, move, MOVE!** The word echoed in her skull, egging her on. Pressuring her until she burst out of her stasis and cut through the air. The flowers on the ceiling ruffled around, caught in the fierce gust of wind. The pictures on the walls shook from

the trembling of the force of her stride. Anniceta's lips formed into a smile as she gracefully walked over the group of silent vampires. She took her coat and put it on. Allowing it's warmth to fall over her limbs and rain down to her ankles.

"So it begins." She sang.

The path down to the main floor of the club was much easier to navigate than the path leading up. There were no magic doors or sprawling corridors that seemed to go on forever. A simple portal of sorts would appear to those who opened the door leading out of Narkissa's office and zip them right back to the club. It was one of the only things that Juliette thanked the magic of vampires for. Narkissa had gotten a substantial head start and when she thought of the damage that could be done during those minutes, she shuddered. The wind collided against her soft, pale skin. She and Alistor were moving as fast as they could. Suddenly they arrived in front of another door. To the people without the inner sight to see magic, it was just a regular door that led into a small closet.

With haste Alistor curled his fingers around the doorknob, ready to squeeze and push it open. But there was a scent, it crash landed open them like a meteor colliding into the earth. It was the scent of blood, the same scent that they had smelled upstairs. Only it was much more poignant, so enticing. It was so fresh and smelled so sweet as it swam through their nostrils and into their veins. From the thick smell there was an abundance of it. Both Juliette and Alistor possessed unmatched levels of control when it came to their vampiric impulses. Hundreds of years of practice were the sole cause of that restraint. Narkissa's threshold for control was better than most but if she were to drink too much, she would lose control and chaos would descend. Now that she was pregnant control was just a word, an afterthought. The two vampire's exchanged glances as the knob turned, releasing the wooden door from it's shackles.

The ambient light that once blanketed the room had vanished. Now every corner, from wall to wall, was illuminated by bright white light. There was music filling the stagnant, empty air. '*Somebody Else*' by The 1975 echoed smoothly. Providing the soundtrack to the scene that the two young vampires observed. Juliette stood motionless. Her body locked into place, her feet cemented into the ground. Her blood colored eyes were wide. "No..." The word was all that she could manage to produce in her state.

"Narkissa..." Alistor thought to himself. He too was at a loss for words.

The floor had been painted over in a thin layer of blood. The walls housed smeared trails, handprints leading around the room. Countless bodies lay motionless in puddles of red. Lifeless eyes stared right through Juliette. Mouths agape and limbs twisted. Some had their heads nearly falling from their necks, what was left of their necks. Others had simply been torn apart like ragdolls, children's toys. This club had been visited by death, it left its mark, its stench, in every direction that she looked. Juliette felt her stomach toss and turn. What felt like the makings of vomit began to rise up her throat but she quickly suppressed it. This was no time to succumb to weakness, her sister needed to be found. So her eyes diligently scanned the room, looking past the corpses that decorated it all. There she was, at the bar. Her once powdered snow white hair clashed against the red of the room. She had her face buried in the neck of a man who had clearly been long dead. He was missing his left arm. The blood gushed out from the holes she had embedded into his neck, thanks to her fangs. The sound of liquid flowing and pooling sang in harmony with the accompanying music. It slid down her throat in a never ending stream, pulsing through her veins like an electric current. Her eyes were glowing like the moon in the night sky. Suddenly her mouth flew away from the man's neck, revealing her face. Blood covered her mouth like a mask and stained her perfectly white teeth. A deep sigh of pleasure passed from her

lips, she could feel the blood filling up her unborn child. But she hardly noticed her sister and fiancé watching her at that moment.

“There’s no way that she did all of this so quickly, is there?” Alistor questioned.

“I... I don’t know, Alistor.” She truly was unsure. But there was no one other vampire in this room capable of such carnage when they had arrived. “We need to stop her from feeding anymore than she already has though. Before we worry about anything else. It’s going to take both of us. If you can hold her then I’ll be able to use my voice to settle her, alright?” Alistor nodded, signaling his approval to this proposed plan.

“Narkissa?” Alistor spoke to the bloodied vampire. Her head slowly turned to face him, their eyes locked in an unbreakable gaze. “Why don’t we get you cleaned up, love? Reckon you’ve had enough to eat now.”

Narkissa’s head tilted as she observed Alistor while he spoke. There was something primal about her. Something animal-like. It was as if she had lost her reason, her sense of self. Like the predator within had taken over completely. She snarled and growled slowly, baring her fangs as she released her grip on the body. It hit the ground with an emphatic *thud*.

“She’s had too much blood, she’s passed her threshold and hit her primal state.” Juliette spoke grimly.

“But your voice can soothe her, right?” Alistor asked.

“Yeah. If she doesn’t kick our heads off first.” Juliette sighed. She didn’t want to fight her sister but there was no other alternative. She could still be saved. “You can apologize for hitting her afterwards.”

“Ah.” He sighed.

Suddenly Narkissa was speeding towards him with crippling intensity. The human blood fueling her body was sending her into a frenzy. Such a thing would happen when any vampire consumed too much human blood. At their core vampires were animals. The apex predators. They hunted and stalked their prey with class and finesse. But the blood is what unlocked the levey that held back that primal part of them. When in this state it was a grueling task to return one back to reason. But both Alistor and Juliette were more than up to the task.

Narkissa lunged, swiping her hands in calculated motions. Hoping to strike her moving targets. To her, in this state, she would bring down anything that stood in her way. The blood shrouded her eyes and clouded her judgement. Alistor spun behind her as she swung at him. In the same motion he grabbed her arms, locking them behind her back. She struggled and squirmed relentlessly. It was taking every ounce of strength that Alistor had to contain his fiancée. Her strength had risen exponentially.

“She’s already getting loose, I won’t be able to hold her much longer.” He grunted. “Do it now and do it quickly!” His voice projected over the animalistic snaps and growls of Narkissa.

Juliette loathed seeing her sister in this state. She loathed seeing any vampire in this state. Their mind but mere prisoners of their lust for blood. Their reasoning flapped away helplessly in the wind. They become nothing but murderous animals, no more superior to the humans who had murdered each other for centuries. *So is this what makes us better, mother? This is what we truly are, at our core. Narkissa and I are no different. No, stop it Juliette. She is better than this, we are better than this. Do not let her become a monster.* Juliette sprung into action without another moment of hesitation. Her feet stepped quickly and carefully through the field of corpses. She wished not to disrespect or defile them any further. She came face to face with Narkissa. The

blood had begun to dry and smear over her mouth. The stain was a memento of the tragedy that had happened here tonight.

The ravenous vampire's breathing was deep and hectic. It had been so long since Juliette had seen Narkissa like this, her heart broke silently in her chest. She cradled her narrow, blood-stained face in her hands. Their faces were so close that their noses nearly touched. Juliette could smell the blood on Narkissa's breath. She could almost taste it.

"Calm your mind, Narkissa." Her voice was solid, unwavering as she looked deeply into her sister's odd eyes. "Remember who you are. Control your hunger. The blood has no hold over you." It was enchanting, yet strange. Narkissa seemed to be in a trance as she absorbed the words her sister was speaking. Enamored by her voice in every sense of the word. She stared into the seemingly endless, red pools masked as eyes. Her breathing began to steady and her strength slowly faded. "Sleep now." Her muscles relaxed as she fell into Alistor's familiar embrace. What had Juliette done?

"I've got you." Alistor whispered. Her head fell into his chest as it did countless times in the past, almost by habit. Blinding white covered the stains on her face. Her chest rose and fell in a soothing rhythm. It was like all of the anger and all of the blinding rage had vanished completely from her body. The dauntless vampire carefully lifted her up in his arms. Her hands hovering over her stomach, her feet dangling like the verbena on the ceiling of her office. As she slept soundly he leaned in. His lips pressed carefully against her forehead. *I won't let anything happen to you or our baby. I swear, Kissa.* The thought swirled around his mind relentlessly. "How long will she be asleep?" His attention turned to Juliette. He could feel her watching him, she wore a soft smile as their eyes met.

“A few days.” Her finger slowly ran through the strands of her hair. “We’ll have to keep an eye on her when she wakes up.”

“I just don’t understand...” He looked at the dozens of bodies scattered across the floor. “We were right behind her. There’s just no way that she could tear through all of these humans that quickly.”

“Anything is possible when it comes to vampires, Alistor.”

“You don’t think that she did all of this, do you?”

“All that I know is that the lives of these innocent people were snuffed out tonight. And most of them were so young... Whatever Kissa did or didn’t do, it doesn’t matter right now. We’ll deal when she wakes up.” Her voice was strained, tired.

“If it was her...” His eyes floated down to her beautiful, freckled face. The face of the thing he loved most in this world. He suddenly felt a hand collide with his arm.

“Then we’ll be there to help her.” The look in her eyes provided Alistor with the reassurance that he needed. “There’s no need to hold your tongue, mother. If you have something to say then speak.” Both of their heads turned to face the elegant woman. She had been so quiet that neither of them had heard her come into the room. Juliette could feel her mother through her exuding presence alone.

“I have nothing to say. It is as you say darling, what matters is Narkissa’s health and safety, as well as that of her child’s.” She pressed her thumb to her darkly painted lips. Her eyes thoroughly absorbed the carnage surrounding her. Every body, every drop of blood. The smell of it sent a chill down her spine. She could taste it in her throat. Ever so sweet. She nodded gently towards the silent silhouettes that followed her like shadows. One by one they separated into

every corner of the room, gathering the bodies and placing them into formal lines. “The *Order* will tend to the bodies of these... animals and perform a thorough cleanse of this place.”

“Some of these bodies are mere *children*, mother. Barely adults, barely given the chance to experience life, or even achieve their potential. Step down from that pedestal you place or race upon and show some respect for the dead.” Juliette hissed. Her mother’s attitude towards the human race was no secret to the world of vampires. She thought them better, the superior race. And that humans existed for a single purpose, sustenance. But now was not the time for her to find herself drowning in a trap set by the Vampire Queen, her full attention was required elsewhere.

“Why you love these creatures so, I will never understand.” She sighed. Suddenly her ears peaked. Tuned to a faint sound rising above the death and carnage. The slow pumping of blood into a fading heart grasped the attention of every vampire in the club. *Thump, thump... Thump... Thump...*

“Do you hear that Jules?” Alistor inquired.

Thump... Thump...

“A heartbeat?” Juliette gasped. She let her ears lead the way to the dying sound. Her legs moved on their own.

“Whatever it is, it will surely die in a few moments. Their struggle is useless. I would not waste your breath darling.” Anniceta spoke coldly. But her eyes still followed Juliette’s actions intently.

She was correct though. The heartbeat was fading fast, despite how hard it must have been fighting to reach the ears of someone, anyone. Still, Juliette followed its song. A waltz, slowing with every hollow pump of blood. Suddenly she stopped. Her gaze fell upon a young

girl, with a familiar face. Hair that was once neatly kept in a cute ponytail was now set free, falling over her head like a white blanket of snow. It stuck to her round cheeks, sweat falling and clinging to her skin. Her lips were turning blue and her breathing was quiet and rigid. Her narrow hand clung to her stomach tightly in a feeble attempt to stop the blood from pouring out. But she had failed. She sat, her back to the wall, in a pool of the dark red liquid that leaked from the wound inflicted upon her. It was the girl that she had met earlier that night. The sweet, inquisitive girl with a blinding aura. Juliette could hear her heartbeat silencing with every breath that she took.

“It’s her...” Juliette whispered. Her gaze softened. She kneeled down to the young girl.

“Someone you know?” Alistor questioned. “She looks so young...” There was sadness twisted within his words. He too knew that she did not have much longer to live. But she was fighting.

“I met her shortly after you left... She was sweet, excellent taste in music as well.” She gently brushed her hand through the tangled mess of hair atop her head. “She can’t be more than seventeen? Maybe eighteen... I wondered what brought her to a club infested with vampires, I got worried for her. Using a bit of my influence to sway her mind, I told her to leave.” She bit at the corner of lip hard.

The wounded girl was trying with all of her strength to raise her head, to look Juliette in the eyes. She groaned and grimaced through every ounce of pain coursing through her veins until finally, she was able to see Juliette. In all of her impossible beauty. The corners of her mouth raised upwards.

“B-... before you say anything, I...” Her words were stagnant, held back by the lack of air in her lungs. “I know that I was supposed to go home... C-c-clearly life had other plans huh?”

As she laughed she coughed out drops of blood. The sharp, stinging sensation burned her throat in the aftermath of her words.

“I have to say, your luck is quite shit love.” Juliette teased. Despite her current state, the look in the girl’s eyes told a different story. The light was not leaving them. The brown sparkled like the reflection of towering trees on a lake surface. Juliette could sense love and life from her gaze. In return she could feel the cold, pale skin on her cheeks tremble from warmth. An unfamiliar sensation began to well up inside of her, making its way up to her eyes. Until it had begun to leak out from her ruby red eyes in tiny droplets.

“Be honest... I’m gonna die, right?” Nerine spoke softly. But she was met with silence as she watched Juliette stare at the bloody hole in her stomach.

“Truthfully you should have perished from blood loss long ago.” Anniceta spoke matter-of-factly.

“Mother, *please* just be silent. For once in your internal existence...”

“It does no good to leave her suffering any longer, Juliette. Either put her out of her misery or turn her. We have more important matters to attend to.” The Vampire Queen rolled her eyes.

“You...?” Nerine questioned. Juliette’s head jerked upwards. “You can help... me?”

“I...” Juliette looked towards Alistor. Hoping that he could provide some kind of support. Anything would be of help. There was no way that she was prepared to turn a teenage girl into an immortal monster. It did not matter if she was dying or not. She could not force this miserable existence onto anyone. “I can... But you don’t know what you’ll lose in return...”

“I’m only seventeen, y’know? Don’t think that I’m ready to die just yet...” Blood trickled down her lips as she coughed. Her playful disposition did its best to mask the fear that was

overtaking her. She was well aware that her next breath could be her last. Juliette had several options. Let this girl die a meaningless, early death or give her a second chance. She had no idea what life she had lived before meeting her tonight. Was she happy? Did she have family waiting for her? Did she have hopes and dreams? All of that would be erased if she became a vampire. All of that would be erased if she died as well. *Thump... thump...* Her heart was reaching its limit.

“Jules...” Alistor spoke in an empathetic tone. “She’s just a kid.”

Thump...

The bleeding of her gaping wound had stopped and her body became frozen in time. Her breathing could no longer be heard. Her heart had finally given in. Her beautiful brown eyes glossed over, a line of tears dropped from them both and collided with her red stained clothing. The decision had been for Juliette. The name Nerine was added to the list of countless lives that had been taken tonight. All because of vampires, once again.

Chapter 3: Daughter of The Night

Was this the way that it was meant to be? Humans being put on this earth simply to serve as fodder for the monsters lurking in the shadows? Countless lives. Sons, daughters, mothers and fathers are constantly snuffed out in the blink of an eye because of the Vampire race. And in exchange for their unwilling sacrifice they are gifted with death and a coffin six feet in the dirt. While their killer is rewarded with immeasurable strength, beauty and immortality. Free of the weight of a nagging humane conscience rattling around in their brain, forcing them to feel even the smallest glimmer of emotion and remorse, they rule the world from every corner.

It was a world the Juliette had been born into, though not by choice. The visions still haunted her. Static flashes of memories that she did not know slept in her mind replayed themselves as she stared out of the window of her loft. The sloshing of water, a little girl sinking to her damp grave. The sound of her name echoing through the waves. The sky was blanketed by dark grey clusters of clouds. Rain poured down from them in cold droplets and collided with the cold concrete on the streets. Her steady, warm breath masked the glass of the soaked window with a thin layer of mist. A rain storm like this in the middle of winter in this city was rare. It was an occasion that Juliette treasured for it allowed her time to quiet her mind and attempt to focus. To take a moment for herself. Something that she had been missing for awhile now.

It had been a month and five days since the incident at her sister's nightclub. She had seen Narkissa off before they all left the city, returning home. Juliette and her mother had agreed on one thing. That it would be best for Narkissa to carry out her pregnancy back at the Aether estate. She would receive the finest care and most importantly be around people that she could not harm. And of course Anniceta pushed the point of tradition. Pure vampires had always been born in the *homeland*. Her mind pictured her sorrowful sister's face. Her eyes were soft and

filled with tears. Words of regret passed her lips. She blamed herself for the massacre in her club. She blamed herself for losing control. Juliette and Alistor did their best to reassure her that she was not to blame but she was beyond the point of reconciliation. Juliette could see it in her eyes. And so without a fight or struggle, she willingly left with their mother and the raven haired vampire chose not to follow. What happened that night, the blood spilled and the lives lost, it was not coincidence. Narkissa's pregnancy, running out of options to feed, their mother mysteriously showing up the same night? Something was off and Juliette would not rest until she uncovered the truth.

The rainfall began to relent, save for the echo of stray droplets falling from the metal of the fire escape. Juliette took a deep breath and lifted herself from the windowsill. Her attention shifted to a slightly cracked door that led to a spare bedroom. Dim, grey light from the bare window illuminated the room, creeping through the thin slit. In a few silent steps she was at the door. Her thin fingers wrapped around the knob and gently pushed it open. The walls were a beautiful mauve color. One wall was decorated with posters of films. Another held a collage of photos with various people in them. They were smiling, posing and laughing at various locations in the city. A desk was resting against another. A lamp and laptop decorated the surface while a dry erase calendar hung above it. Shelves full of books were scattered around the room as well. Candles and plants sat atop and draped over them. There was a towering window that opened up and looked out into a silent, Greenwich Village street. The windowsill was wide enough for someone to sit, even lay down on. Pillows and stuffed animals littered the ledge.

Then there was a bed. Not too big and not too small. Just the perfect size for the wide space. Next to the bed was a small nightstand that housed a rather worn out notebook and a cup of tea that was still steaming with heat. The blanket and sheets were still perfectly made. Like

they had not been slept in yet. And there, atop the plush surface, was a young girl. Dressed in denim overalls, a black sweater and an oversized white cardigan. She sat crossed-legged, comfortable and silent. She had milky pale skin, similar to Juliette's. Her hair flowed down her back, spilling onto the pillows behind her in a perfectly crafted ponytail. It was a stunning black, with a few white tufts that hung down both sides of her face. Her face was beautiful and her cheeks were round. Her nose was small and spotted with freckles, while a small ring hooked itself onto her left nostril. Thick eyebrows crawled over her eyes. Freckles of brown mixed with the deep, shining gold of two holes hidden behind a pair of black rimmed glasses.

Juliette politely knocked on the door before entering. "May I come in?" She asked.

"Mhm." The girl nodded with a tired smile on face.

The bed creaked silently under the weight of two bodies, while the plush blanket crumbled together. The young girl's eyes drifted and her head sunk back down. Juliette sighed as she examined her.

"How are you feeling?" She questioned.

"I'm okay." The girl spoke in a sweet voice. Her gaze remained downward. Suddenly she felt her face raise up, a thin finger lifting it up. Her golden eyes met the red of Juliette's.

"Neriné."

"I said I'm fine. Promise." Neriné laughed.

"You do know that I can sense the vibrations in your voice when you lie, right?" She pointed to her ear.

Neriné rolled her eyes as her head fell back onto the plethora of pillows lined up against the wall. She hastily threw a pillow the size nearly half the size of Juliette over her face. She

attempted to speak through the barrier. “Sjendkalkskcnskns” The words might as well have been spoken in a different language to Juliette.

“My pillow talk has gotten a bit rusty over the years but, what?” Juliette chuckled. “Cut the teenage theatrics and just talk to me kid.”

Neriné mumbled a groan into the pillow hiding her face. She slowly slid it down over her chest and gripped it tightly. She looked up to the ceiling and said “Will I always feel like this?”

“Feel like what?”

“I don’t know... Empty?” The word was backed with a sorrowful tone, though her face lacked the emotion itself. The question prickled at Juliette’s skin. It was something that she had pondered her entire existence. A question that she never had the answer to herself.

“It’s different for every vampire. But if you’re asking me personally, I cannot give you an answer. I still haven’t figured that out myself.”

“Hmm..” Neriné pondered. Juliette watched as the gears inside the young girl’s mind began to turn and work. She was a smart and whimsical child. There was a way about her that intrigued her like nothing else ever had before. But she hadn’t the slightest clue on how to be a parent, a mentor. Could she give this girl what she needed to thrive in this new world that had been forced upon her?

“The sooner that you embrace who you are the better things will be for you in the future.” She was so unsure of her words. Were they the ones that this girl needed to hear from her?

“That’s all that you’ve got for me? Take it all in stride and move forward” Neriné was shocked.

“What? I was born a vampire. My experience differs greatly from yours. I do not know what it was like to be human. So I have nothing to miss or to feel empty and grieve over.”

“But you do know what it’s like to feel empty.”