

Anti-Supernatural
Assault Team
Book 1
The Seal Of Solomon

Michael Keyth

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JUST A FEW WORDS FROM THE AUTHOR

What you are about to read is a combination of facts, theories and a lot of my own ideas to link everything in one piece. I decided to write a series of novels about special team to deal with paranormalia based on what I lacked in many movies and TV series. A.S.A.T. is a trilogy (or a longer series if my ideas keep coming.) Before reading this book, it is advised to read Book 0, which is simply a story of each member. Book 1 takes place a few days after Book 0 ends and covers time between October 1 and December 19, 2012.

“Take, O Solomon, king, son of David, the gift which the Lord God has sent thee, the highest Sabaoth. With it thou shalt lock up all demons of the earth...”

Testament of Solomon

1 THE BEGINNING OF THE END

October 1, 2012.

81 days remaining

1.

Another plane landed in San Francisco’s airport on this gorgeous, sunny morning. Like every day, there were lots of people everywhere rushing to their gates or trying to get accustomed to the new time zone. Some of them had just come to the city while the others were waiting to either pick someone up or to fly somewhere.

“What’s the purpose of your visit, sir?” asked a young man at the passport control.

“Excuse-me?” replied an Asian guy reading a colourful brochure he had found on the plane.

“Why are you here, sir?” asked the man again while the Asian was giving him a strange look.

“Ah, sorry, I didn’t understand you in the beginning,” said the man. “I am here to visit your beautiful cities,” he added putting his modern sunglasses into the pocket of his colourful shirt. Not willing to continue the conversation, the airport staff member answered.

“OK sir, please move on.”

The Asian picked up his bag, and walked farther to pick up his suitcase. He quickly spotted his possession among the others moving on a winding conveyor belt. He walked towards it, picked it up, and moved towards the exit. There were hundreds of people moving around. He saw lots of them waiting with names written on cardboards. He also saw families uniting and businessmen meeting. He heard the airport announcement coming from the speakers. Like every other airport you need to be really focused to be able to decode the message. Even though the Asian spoke good English, he could hear only the words *Sidney*. As he was heading towards the exit, three security guards came up to him.

“Sir, please come with us.”

He understood exactly what was going on, but Arthur assured him that there wouldn’t be any problem at the airport. He had no choice, but to let them escort him somewhere.

2.

The Asian was sitting on a modern office chair, in front of a wooden desk in a room with one wide window and a thick door. Two security guards were standing at the door. Someone entered. It was a man with short brown hair, a moustache and glasses. He was wearing a white, stripy shirt and he looked angry. Having entered, he peeked at the Asian and asked.

“Is this the guy?”

The security guard nodded and the man walked to the other side of the desk, and then sat down.

“Carrying a weapon, huh?”

The Asian said nothing. He was only sitting patiently and hoping that everything would be OK. The men turned to his colleague.

“Does he even speak English?”

“I do understand you, sir; I just hoped that everything would go smoothly.”

“All right then,” the man was impressed by his level of English. “Could you please explain to me, how on Earth have you managed to pass the Tokyo airport security with the sword? And Toku...tei is what? Your name or surname?”

“It’s my name, and there was no problem with my luggage. They simply let me through.”

“How dumb are they, huh?” he exclaimed hitting his fist against the desk.

The door suddenly opened, and a man wearing a black uniform came in. He came up to the one sitting on the chair, leaned and whispered something to his ear.

“What? Who?” the second one replied as his eyes grew.

He stood up discouraged and disappointed and unwillingly said. “Let him out.”

“What?” one of the security guys asked.

“You heard me, let him out.”

3.

The Asian was walking towards the exit with little satisfaction. Everything went exactly as he was told. As he left the main door, he placed his suitcase on the pavement and raised his hand.

“Taxi! Taxi!” he shouted.

Almost immediately a yellow cab arrived. He quickly grabbed his suitcase and rushed towards the car. As he was running, he saw a young adult carrying a large bag approaching him. It was a tall man with short blond hair. He was no older than 22. He waved at the Asian.

“Oh, you don’t have to help me,” he said to the boy, “I’m alright.”

But the blond-hair lad ignored him, opened the door from the cab and got in closing it behind.

“You must be kidding me!” the Asian man yelled angrily as the taxi took off.

“Taxi! Taxi!” he shouted again, now irritated.

Another yellow car arrived. The man quickly looked around, then opened the taxi door, threw his bags in, and got in.

“Sir, you should put your bags into the trunk,” the white, curly haired cab driver suggested peeking at the rear-view mirror.

“I am really sorry sir but I’m in a hurry.”

The driver gritted his teeth, rolled his eyes, and looked back.

“Where do you want to go, sir?” he asked through his teeth.

“Please take me to the Dewey Monument” answered the Asian guy.

“You know, people usually go to hotels or their homes, but you, with such luggage to the monument?”

“Just take me there, please.”

The taxi driver pressed the accelerator, and the taxi took off. Seconds later, a tall black man with a big bag on his shoulder came out through the doors of the airport. He looked around the buildings, raised his eyebrows, and said indifferently.

“Phew. Sydney is much better.”

Then he went farther, and called a taxi.

4.

The Asian guy was in a cab admiring the city through the window. Everything looked beautiful to him. The tall buildings, the cable cars, hilly roads, the weather.

“Beautiful city, isn’t it?” he said to the driver.

“Yeah, whatever,” came the cold answer.

At first, the Asian man thought that the driver was rude to him because he hadn’t put his luggage to the trunk, but now he was sure, the driver was a racist. He ignored his being rude and kept on eyeing the towering sky-scrapers. The cab suddenly stopped.

“We’re here, it would be 80 dollars,” the driver said. The man drew out his wallet and took out a

100-dollar bill then gave it to the driver.

“Keep the change”.

The man looked at him and immediately changed his attitude.

“Do you need a helping hand with that bag sir?”

The Asian guy looked at him.

“No thanks, I’ll be alright,” he answered pulling out the baggage off the cab.

“Have a nice day, sir.”

The Asian closed the door, turned around, and saw the Dewey Monument up ahead in a vast square park. It was a large column with some greenish person on the top. This person was a full-length female, wearing a green gown. She was holding a trident in one hand and a wreath in the second one. It was a victory monument raised to commemorate Commander Dewey’s victory over the Spanish fleet in Philippines. As the man was approaching the benches nearby, he noticed the same youngster who had stolen his cab earlier. Not thinking much, he briskly went up to him.

“You!” he said irritably putting his luggage on the pavement.

The man peeked at him.

“You’re talkin’ to me?”

“You stole my cab at the airport,” the Asian guy shouted and took off his sunglasses.

The boy remembered him very well but he decided to lie.

“I didn’t see ya’, man,” came the answer.

“I was right next to the cab when you turned up and simply jumped into the car,” the angry Asian guy yelled.

“So what? You came all this way here to tell me that?” The boy rolled his eyes. “And by the way, I see you didn’t have problems with finding another one, did ya?”

“Guys, guys, this is not how gentlemen behave,” some voice came from the left.

They both looked into the direction of the voice and saw a man in his sixties with a short beard and moustache.

“Arthur!” they both said simultaneously. Then they immediately looked back at each other with a surprise. “Do you know him?” they both asked.

“Of course I do,” the boy replied standing up, “That’s why I’m here.”

Arthur sighed, then said,

“Boys, please, if you are to work together, you can’t behave like this, and you certainly can’t hate each other.”

The men looked at each other.

“Work with this dishonourable man? No way!” the Asian guy exclaimed. “You told me something different Arthur when we met.”

“Whatever,” The blond man added.

The old man couldn’t let the argument continue. This is not what he was hoping for.

“Tokutei, Dan” he said firmly looking at them convincingly.

“Alright, I’m sorry,” the Asian said changing his attitude.

“If he says we need to make up, then we need to make up,” Dan replied rolling his eyes again.

“My name is Tokutei,” he reached out with his hand as a sign of a greeting.

“And I’m Dan,” the second man replied shaking his hand.

“Good, now we have to wait for two more,” Arthur said quietly.

“Two more?” Dan asked astonished. “You said you were looking for five people?”

Arthur looked into his eyes.

“That is correct. However, one person will join as later today,” he replied in a joyful voice.

Tokutei spotted another taxi stopping nearby. He turned his head and watched a black man get out of it. He grabbed his bag from the boot, looked around, stopping his eyes for a while on the monument, then on them, and started to walk towards them.

“I guess we don’t have to wait for a long time though,” Tokutei said turning back towards the men.

Dan caught a glance of the man approaching.

“I guess this is number three.”

“I hope this is it,” The black man said glimpsing at the three men.

He put down his bag, peeked at the monument in front of him, and smiled.

“That is correct Jason,” Arthur replied. “Please, meet Tokutei and Dan,” he added pointing at the men.

“Hi guys, I’m Jason, I guess, err, I’ll be your new teammate,” he said casually.

Tokutei made a fast step forward, bowed, and shook his hand.

“Nice to meet to you.”

Jason bowed adding a gentle smile.

“Oh, and we have the fourth person coming,” the old man announced looking at the corner of the street.

Everyone looked at that direction. They saw a tall Asian woman wearing black clothes walking towards them. She had long, straight hair, very beautiful complexion and a perfect figure. She was carrying a huge black bag on her shoulder.

“Wow, what a hotty,” Dan chuckled.

She came by, closely observing all the guys standing there. There was something strange about her. It wasn’t her extraordinary beauty or her bag that seemed much heavier than the bag of others. There was something wrong with her face. There was no smile on it, no emotions. Only her eyes were filled with sadness. Arthur noticed it on the spot. He knew exactly what was going on with her. He had been there a few days earlier. The woman quickly shook off her sadness, and put on her happy face.

“May I introduce to you Qiaolian,” Arthur announced beckoning at the woman.

The others smiled politely, and waited patiently to be introduced.

“Actually,” she said, “You may call me Lian,”

“And these are...” Arthur continued, “Tokutei, Dan and Jason”

Jason raised his index finger as a sign of interruption.

“Actually, you may call me O.D.”

Lian beamed.

“Nice to meet you guys.”

“I see, that the team would consist of all races, heh,” Dan said with a silent smile.

“You haven’t seen the best yet,” Arthur replied.

Tokutei didn’t say a word, he was only observing the situation. But he was more convinced that this country was filled with racists. O.D. cleared his throat, and picked up his bag.

“You said Arthur, there would be four of us, so what are we waiting for?”

Arthur glanced at his watch.

“You’re right. Time is money, so we’d better be going guys.”

Everyone grabbed their belongings, and followed Arthur. Dan caught up with him, cleared his throat to get his attention, and asked.

“Could you tell us something about the fifth man?”

“She will join us later in the castle,” the old man replied.

“She?” the boy asked simultaneously with Jason’s “Castle?”

Arthur turned around and nodded.

“Yes, and Yes. Yet, now we must be going, so follow me.”

Only Tokutei didn’t say anything. He seemed to be disappointed with the team, but it wasn’t this. He moved back to his childhood.

He was five years old, sitting among fifteen other Asian boys like him. They were all outside in front of an old, Japanese, wooden house. No one was talking. Everyone was gazing at a figure sitting in

front of them. It was a man in his early forties with scars all over his face.

“Your families have abandoned you, and left you to die. I have taken you. Not only have I become your new father, but your master as well. I do understand you are still children, and like every child, you have dreams. However, I regret to tell you, that most of your dreams would not be fulfilled. You shall spend your life here with the very people who are sitting next you. You should love each other, not hate. You should be glad to be chosen, to be able to change lives. You are being trained to become the best fighters, the best ninjas in the country, to save the world. It is the greatest honour of all. And I do hope we would treat one another as a family. What Otaki here has done was inexplicable.”

He pointed at a beaten boy sitting next to him. He had blood flowing from his nose, and bruises all over his face and arms.

“This behaviour will not be accepted in our family. Otaki,” he turned towards another boy sitting on his right.

“You will be punished for what you have done. And let this be a lesson for the future for all of you.”

“And you?” Jason asked Tokutei snapping him out of his memories.

“Hmm?”

“Are you Chinese or Japanese?”

“Japanese. You?”

“Australian.”

“Ha! I knew it from your accent,” Dan added.

“At least they’re talking,” Arthur murmured.

5.

They left the square and headed towards the main street. Arthur pointed at the long Hummer limousine parked ahead.

“How do you like our transport over there?”

“I have only seen such cars in movies and magazines,” Tokutei said impressed.

“I like it,” Jason added casually.

“You don’t look surprised, don’t you love cars?” Dan asked amazed.

“Oh, I do love cars. You don’t understand how much. But I live, I mean I lived in a celebrity neighbourhood, and I saw something like this every day.”

Arthur fished a small rectangular piece of plastic out off his pocket, and placed it into his ear.

“Steve, we’re ready.”

It was an earpiece, through which he communicated with the driver. The back and the side doors opened.

“Alright guys, hop in.”

They went inside. Dan, Lian and Jason sat at the back while Tokutei and Arthur sat opposite to them.

“Alright Steve, take us home.”

As soon as the driver started the engine, all doors immediately locked, and the car took off.

6.

The Hummer was speeding along the city streets heading towards the Pacifica State Beach in the south. The passengers were admiring the San Francisco’s beautiful buildings and views through the window. Then the Daly City views which were no different from San Francisco.

“Were you serious about the castle, Arthur?” Lian asked.

“I see that you didn’t read the materials I gave you,” he smiled. “Well, there was too much to read so I’m not even surprised.”

“I-I wanted to read all of this on the plane, but um...”

“Just admit you have forgotten the materials, as I did,” Tokutei interrupted.

“Still, not surprised,” the old man smiled.

Tokutei went on to staring at everything they were passing by. He was really fascinated with the city, the people they passed, and the cars. It was all new to him.

“The famous cable-cars, I always wanted to see them,” he muttered

Dan looked at him raising one of his eyebrows.

“I don’t know why you Asians are always like spoilt tourists.”

“Spoilt?” Lian asked with a cold look.

“You know what I mean, girl.”

“No I don’t, so could you please tell me?” she asked again lowering her voice.

“Ya’ know, groups of Japanese looking at the American monuments and attractions, always taking zillion of photos. So whenever you see such an excursion, you can only hear the sound of reel moving. You’re always like, *wow look at this, look at that, blab, blab, blab*”

“Oh, I know what you mean now,” she replied. “But you’re no better when you, Americans, are away from home.”

“But you’re right, Dan,” Tokutei interrupted. “And I can tell why it is like that.”

“C’mon.”

Tokutei sat comfortably, scratched his head.

“Well, our nation has always been fascinated by your achievements, your greatness, and your culture. We watch so many American movies, and always dream to see those places for real. But when an opportunity comes, taking pictures or making a film, are the only chances for us to memorise our being there. It’s not that an opportunity like that would come again. Japanese people do not earn money and they cannot afford going on distant holiday every few years. We’re very busy people, and we do not have much free time. Do you understand now?”

“Yup, I think I do,” the boy answered, “But still, I always find it funny,” he added amusingly.

Tokutei slowly shook his head. Dan realised that what he had just said might sound to the others as an insult.

“I hope you’re not offended, Tokutei.”

“I’m fine.”

Jason was sitting quietly listening to the conversation.

“What’s your opinion, O.D.?” Dan asked.

“I totally agree with you, Tok. We also live with the American dream, and if I had my camera with me, I would go sightseeing.”

“What ‘bout the castle, where is it?” Lian asked.

Arthur looked out the window, and squinted his eyes.

“Over there,” he smiled pointing at a towering building on an island on the horizon.

Everyone looked closer.

“Oh my God,” Lian gasped, as she almost lied down on Dan. “I’ve seen this on postcards before. I didn’t know you were renting this, Arthur.”

“Cause’ I’m not renting it. It’s mine,” he smiled again proudly.

“No way!” Dan exclaimed pushing off Lian.

“This is not the only thing I will surprise you with,” the old man added.

“Living in San Francisco in a castle,” Dan daydreamed for a while.

Arthur took a deep breath and sighed.

“Actually, Daniel... well... technically it’s Pacifica, not San Francisco. But it’s San Francisco Bay, after all.”

7.

The limousine left the city. It was going along the Cabrillo Highway. The views immediately changed from bright houses, tall blocks of flats and colourful shops into green hills, tall trees and rocks. The magnificent castle disappeared for a while behind the hills, only to emerge once more as soon as the

vehicle got higher. The ocean was spreading on the right side, and the weather was perfect for surfing. The car slowed down and turned left. It circled a large shop and headed for the area with two spacious villas. As soon as it passed it, the limousine slowed down, turned left, and headed towards a steep, three-metre side of a hill. Suddenly, the hill split into two, and opened like a door, revealing a hidden tunnel. The Hummer accelerated and disappeared inside.

“That’s nice,” Jason said surprisingly.

“Where are we?” Lian asked giving furtive glances over the illuminated walls of the tunnel.

Arthur smiled again.

“This underwater tunnel leads to the Maldito Island; I had it built over ten years ago.”

The car was going inside a long tunnel with two way street, lit by thousands of spotlights. The wall ahead lowered, and the car reached the open air again. The group saw the thick forest surrounding the road. The vehicle continued moving along the road. The views were magnificent. The Pacifica shore was visible about three miles from the island, and the forest looked really amazing. After a while, the Hummer stopped in front of a huge castle. It had a wide, metal gate that lead to the spacious courtyard that was over 100 metres long. The courtyard ended with a five-storey building, from which erected a very tall tower. The south side of the castle had also five levels. The castle itself had about four towers on each side of the walls. The building was very clean, and looked as if it had been just restored.

“Wow, it’s enormous,” Lian commented admiring the large building.

“It looks better than in the postcards,” Tokutei added.

Arthur smiled, but said nothing. Out of a sudden, a strange sound came from the direction of the castle.

“What’s that sound?” Dan asked immediately throwing himself at the window.

“The gate is raising.”

“Now I know what will keep me up all night.”

“As long as you won’t leave the castle for nights, you won’t be bothered.”

As soon as the gate disappeared in the top part of the wall, the car rushed inside. Behind the front wall, was a courtyard very well-kept. There were two choppers parked near the southern wall, and several luxurious cars. The limousine stopped at the western wall.

“OK, we’re here. Take your luggage,” Arthur said pressing a button on his rectangular piece of plastic causing the door to open.

Everyone got out. Tokutei went first to the boot of the car in order to take out all the bags. He thought he was the strongest of all, so he wanted to help the others. Dan walked closer to Lian and tapped her shoulder.

“Well, I’ve got way less to carry, so I can help you out.”

She looked at him indifferently and replied.

“I’m fine.”

“If you say so,” the boy replied with a silent laugh.

“You can have my bag,” Jason said, “I have way a lot to carry.”

Dan’s smile immediately disappeared, but he didn’t want others to think of him as if he was hitting on Lian, so he walked up to Jason right away.

“Alright, O.D,” he said unwillingly grabbing his bag, and then marched towards Arthur.

“OK, follow me,” the old man beckoned, and walked towards the main door.

The rest followed him, and seconds later, they were all inside.

8.

The inside didn’t look like a typical castle you see on the movies. Everything had been modernised. The walls had been painted in more modern and brighter colours. The unnecessary things, like spears or swords had been removed. Even the floor had been covered with glossy boards, which were probably hiding some kind of heating underneath.

“What a cosy place,” Tokutei complemented glancing over the spacious hall with many paintings

on the walls.

“Thank you, Tokutei. Anyway, I will take you to your rooms now. Then, I will leave you to go sightseeing.”

“I will definitely get lost here,” Lian said with a silent laugh.

The old man turned around.

“Actually, you won’t. You will be provided with a digital map of the place with hmm... inbuilt GPS.”

On hearing that, Dan slowed down.

“Are you saying that some pretty girl’s voice will lead me to a bathroom?”

“That is correct, but not only bathroom. The pretty girl’s or boy’s voice will take you everywhere inside and outside the castle, including the city.

“Awesome.”

The old man went up the spiral stairs and turned right. The rest of the team slowly followed him, constantly looking around admiring the unusual interior of the castle.

9.

After a while, they were walking along a long corridor several storeys higher. The walls were painted in brown-red, and from about six foot high, the colour gradually changed into bright yellow. Arthur stopped at the next stairs leading up and down, and turned around.

“Each of you will get their own floor.”

The old man was full of surprises. First the castle on an island, now one floor for everyone. What else does he have in his sleeve? He was really generous. And the floors themselves were vast and spacious, typical for castles.

“What a life!” Dan shouted joyfully comparing his old room to the size of his future home.

“To avoid quarrels or any misunderstandings, I will be the one who will assign the chambers.”

Everyone stopped, put down their luggage and waited for Arthur to continue.

“So, this floor and the next one will be taken by the girls. The last three ones will be given to Dan, Tokutei and Jason.”

O.D. grinned, “I’m gonna have the best view, wonderful.”

“Wanna switch?” Dan suggested.

“No switching!” the old man raised his voice, but he could see a grin on everyone’s face.

Somehow he wished to tell them the best part, but he knew, that without the last member it would be unfair. Yet, he couldn’t help giving them good news, so he continued.

“To make you even more thrilled, in every chamber, there’s an ensuite bathroom, 70-inch TV, menu with a huge choice of food. Err... What’s more, oh yes, computers, gym and err, you will see yourself. Any questions?”

Lian raised her hand,

“I have one.”

“Yes?”

“What do we have to do now? Apart from unpacking, of course.”

“Oh, yes, I nearly forgot. It’s now...” he peeked at his fancy, gold watch, “Almost 12, so you have 2 hours to unpack and accommodate, and at 2 p.m. sharp, we’re going to have a dinner together.”

“Dinner at 2?” Jason asked surprised.

“Well, it’s too fancy to be called lunch.”

“Where are we going to meet then?” Tokutei asked.

“Just go downstairs to the hall, and I will take you to the dinning-room. You’ll find a special watch and a tablet PC on your beds. They’re equipped with the digital map of the whole place.”

“And what about the facilities here?” Dan asked. “Can we use them?”

Arthur thought for a while, then boomed.

“Yes, of course, everything here is at your disposal. Any other questions?”

He glanced at the team, but they all shook their heads.

“Great, so if there are no more questions, you may go to begin your new life here.”

Tokutei raised his hand and asked.

“Just one more question, Arthur. You said there would be five of us. Where is the fifth one?”

“You will meet her at 2 p.m.,” the old man said turning around.

O.D. walked up to Dan.

“OK, you may give me my bag back.”

The boy handed it over to him. Lian went up to the door, opened it and went inside. Before closing it she turned around to the group.

“See ya guys later,” she said joyfully and closed the door.

The boys went upstairs while Arthur headed downstairs.

10.

During these two hours everyone managed to unpack their luggage and put their clothes into wardrobes and drawers. They were also able to stack their bathrooms and check what the rooms had to offer, and there was really a lot. Each floor looked the same. Every room was very huge, about 2000 square metres. Actually it wasn't a single room, but a huge apartment divided into several single rooms, storage areas and different facilities. Every storey had four balconies. Two overseeing the courtyard, and two overseeing the ocean and the peninsula. Moreover, the interior was far more expensive than in any regular hotel. Everything was modernised. The beds disappeared in the walls, the toilets were self-cleaning, and the Jacuzzi had several additional bonuses for lazy and tired. Even the kitchen itself was different from a typical one. If you wanted to cook, you simply pressed the needed products on the special tablet, and seconds later the products magically appeared in the container in the fridge. If you didn't feel like cooking then you simply pressed the icons with desired dish from the digital menu, and several minutes later it was brought to you from the castle's main kitchen. Everything fresh and hot. However, every floor was different. It was all designed to suit the needs of each member. Lian and Tokutei had a special room with walls filled with weapons of all kind. One third of Dan's apartment consisted of a laboratory for his projects. And Jason. Well, he had his own shooting range.

11.

It was almost two o'clock. Tokutei was walking in the castle, admiring the paintings and architecture. Arthur did change much in the castle, but there were many old Spanish paintings and sculptures as well. Jason was resting on his spacious bed in his room or a chamber, to be more precise. He was tired with the long-haul flight and needed rest. It was him, who had the longest flight, after all. Dan was checking out the laboratory. Lian was trying out the tablet PCs they had been given. She reached the Arthur's office. The door was made of steel, covered with thick leather. There was a small sign on the door with letters AW. She went up closer, knocked the door and got in.

“Excuse-me Arthur, may I talk to you?”

The old man was doing something on his computer on the desk. The computer was a super-machine. There were four, 30-inches screens, lots of papers. The desk was illuminated by the spotlights installed in the ceiling. Although the desk was filled with technology and papers, there was still a small room for a photo of a beautiful, young woman. Actually it was the first thing, Lian caught eye of.

“Go on, how can I help you?”

She got closer to the leather armchair in front of the Arthur's desk and sat comfortably on it. She looked around the office. There weren't any shelves or bookcases. Everything was replaced with servers and monitors. She wasn't surprised by it because she used to have something similar in her and her brother's office. What surprised her, however, was a huge painting of a night sky. It was hanging in the middle of the wall over the servers.

“I was wondering... you remember... the day we met, on the bench. You told me then that you’d tell me about the key and my brother.

“Hmm... I do remember that.”

“That’s why I came here.”

“Now, when you’re here, I can tell you. I remember I told you weren’t ready then, but I’m not sure whether you are ready now.”

“I need to know. That’s why I came here.”

“Your brother is in a very distant place. No one can reach him at the moment.”

“What do you mean?”

“Chang wasn’t the only demon back then. Somehow the others have obtained the information about you having the key. Your brother was supposed to be a bargain card in case you wouldn’t give this item back.”

“So where is my brother?” she tried to get this desired information.

“He’s kept by the demons.”

“Where?”

The old man took a deep breath.

“In Hell.”

Lian’s eyes filled with shock.

“And the key, you see, is a magical tool. It can open the door from Hell anytime someone is inside. I didn’t want the demons to have it, so I hired you, knowing that you’re the best to retrieve it.”

“Is there a way to save him?”

“Apart from giving back the key, yes. But we are not able to do it yet.”

“Not yet, hmm. You know, Arthur, I still can’t believe many things you say. I just hope, no one will use this key as an act of evil.”

“I hope that, too. Fortunately, it’s kept safe here. And don’t worry about your brother. We’ll save him.”

“Thank you, Arthur,” she said standing up.

She now knew about the key and her brother. The information however, was devastating. But she was a patient woman, and she did realise the severity of this situation.

“Don’t bother going to your room. We’re having dinner in 8 minutes.”

“I’ll wait downstairs.”

“Actually, we may go there together. There is one more thing I need to tell you.”

12.

Dan was in his room looking out the window. He glanced at the watch and turned round heading towards the door. He decided, not to be late, so he left his room earlier, and slowly headed downstairs. While he was walking along the corridor on the second floor, glimpsing over the paintings on the walls, he saw a figure of a woman at the end of the corridor. He couldn’t see her clearly because of the dim light, but he noticed that she was tall; nearly six feet. She was closing the door to the room trying to fit the key into the lock. The boy slowly approached her. When he was about fifteen feet from her, he raised his voice and said.

“It works for your handprint, you know?”

The girl noticed a small screen next to the door and placed her hand there.

“The lock is only a decoration.”

“Oh, thanks, I just thought...never mind.”

As he was a few feet from her, he scanned her from top to bottom. It was a girl in her late teens; 18, maybe 19. She was wearing regular jeans and a blue top showing her perfect figure. She had long, straight, black hair with white highlights. The girl saw his face, and became really intimidated by his handsomeness. She quickly looked down at the floor, then at him and staired,

“I-I am Surya.”

He could easily see that she was nervous and didn't want to make the eye contact with him.

“And I'm Dan. Nice hair by the way.”

“Thanks,” she replied raising her eyes.

Dan looked deeply into her weird, whitish eyes and froze. Something was wrong. The boy's eyes grew with horror, as he made a step back.

“Is s-something wrong?” the girl asked slightly dropping her jaw.

Dan took a glimpse at her lips and noticed two of her teeth being a little longer than the others. At this moment, Dan realised who she really was. He quickly took off a pistol, he had always been carrying behind his belt and aimed at her yelling,

“Vampire!”

The girl quickly reacted by hitting the gun off his hands.

“No, you don't understand, I'm...” she couldn't finish, as Dan threw himself at her, trying to knock her down.

She pushed him away using much more strength.

“I'm not a vampire!” she exclaimed.

But the boy wouldn't listen. He took out a silver knife attached to his shin, and again attacked the girl.

“Stop!” someone shouted from the other end of the corridor.

The strange girl grabbed Dan's arm blocking the blow and pushed him onto the ground. She saw O.D. speeding at them.

“What the fuck are ya' doing, Dan?” he asked furiously.

“She's a vampire. We've been breached.”

“I'm not a vampire!” the girl shouted again.

Dan moved back and lowered the knife. Jason came closer. The boy kept looking at girl's fangs and white pupils.

“So how would you explain your eyes and fangs?”

The girl leaned against the wall and took a deep breath.

“I'm a Dhampir, and I am like you; vampires disgust me,” she tried to explain.

Jason caught up with them, and stopped between her and Dan.

“Dan, for God's sake, this is Surya, the girl Arthur was talking about.”

The boy was in shock, he didn't know what to say or how to behave. He looked down and bellowed,

“I'm sorry, I really thought you were one of them.”

Surya put her hand on his shoulder.

“Don't worry, everyone does.”

“I'm sorry, but my original profession was a vampire hunter,” the boy continued. “It was just a reflex.”

He tried to save his face by being polite in front of Jason.

“That's OK. You wouldn't have killed me anyway. I'm too strong for you.”

Having heard that, the emotions cumulated in him. But this time, he followed his brain, and didn't do or say anything irrational. He had to wait this one through. Even though he hated all vampires and vampire-like creatures, he wasn't happy to work with one of them. No matter how pretty or good she was. He simply despised of such creatures.

“It's almost 2 o'clock,” O.D. announced, “We'd better go downstairs, I'm starving.”

They turned around and headed towards the stairs.

On their way down, Dan couldn't help asking.

“O.D., how did you know about Surya?”

“Well, I met her an hour ago while I was sightseeing the castle.”

“I see.” he turned left towards the direction of Surya.

“If ya're a dhampir, so you must have some powers of a typical vampire, too.”

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