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Kiss of Tragedy

By Stephanie Van Orman

Edited by Alison Quist

For Rose

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# Chapter One

## First Sight

“Do you believe in vampires?”

Elise sat on the end of the bed painting her fingernails. She shook her head like she was bored and answered drolly, “You have got to be kidding me. Who actually believes in something like that?”

Juliet hadn’t been expecting Elise to be very enthusiastic, but her tone was much less than that. “I guess nobody does.” Disappointed, Juliet got up and headed back to her own dorm room.

“Wait!” Elise shouted after her. “Why are you asking? Is some sicko trying to take advantage of you by saying he’s a vampire or something?”

Juliet stopped at the door and thought for a second. Something interesting had happened that afternoon—not what Elise thought—but something. Juliet had been gearing herself up to share the story, but now she was uncertain. She didn’t want to be ridiculed. For her, it was a once-in-a-lifetime chance and if she told Elise, who obviously would not understand the uniqueness of it, the experience would lose its sparkle. It wasn’t like they knew each other very well. It was their first year in university and Elise’s room was next door to Juliet’s in their dormitory, Lister Hall. It was nice that they got along well enough to support each other through the hectic month of September, especially living in dorms, but once they had settled into their respective grooves, Juliet wasn’t sure if they were very compatible after all. Elise was on the volleyball team, while Juliet was trying to find a *different* kind of group to join.

“Come on,” Elise urged. “Did you meet somebody?”

Juliet frowned. She didn’t want to tell Elise anymore, but she had to tell someone. The story was a like a hundred dollar bill burning a hole in her pocket. She had to spend it. She sat back down on the bed. “Well, I went down to the Student Group office after class to see if there was an interesting group I could join.”

“Huh,” Elise said, perking up a little. “Did you find anything?”

“Sort of,” Juliet said, chewing on her cheek. “There are a lot more student groups here than I thought there were. So, I was sitting in the Student Group’s office perusing the list.”

“And?” Elise asked impatiently. “What does this have to do with vampires?”

“And this guy came in.”

Elise screwed the lid back on her nail polish. “As I thought. There’s always a guy.”

“Fine. Yes, there is *always* a guy,” Juliet said, sorry that she had even begun to confide in Elise. She had been absolutely right, the fun of telling the story was lost and she hadn’t even got to the good part. “Yep, that’s right,” Juliet continued, getting up and heading back to the door. “I saw a guy in the Student Group office that was so hot I was totally reminded of Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*. End of story. Thanks for listening.”

“Hey!” Elise called after Juliet, who closed the door behind her.

Once safely back in her own room, Juliet locked the door and sat down at her desk. Sometimes no one understood her. No one except her precious laptop.

She pulled it out of her school bag and set it up on her desk. She opened her email and went straight to her blog.

Juliet loved her blog. It was called 'Moonlight Reflections' and it was a wonderful place where she could talk about her life without fear of misunderstanding. Her screen name was 01Pearl\_Moon. The black screen loaded showing her stunning banner which was a picture of the moon and stark white text on a pitch black background.

Her last post had been about her fascination with tarot cards. She scrolled to the bottom to see if anyone had commented. She still got comments from her high school friends, but they didn't visit often since, apparently, they all had thrilling lives outside of their own laptops. However, Juliet wasn't bothered too much by their inconsistency. Recently she'd begun getting comments from someone new, someone refreshing.

She didn't know their real name. He or she called themselves ReadyEyes808 and while none of her friends commented on her blog, this person had.

"I have never had my fortune told, but to hear you describe it, it sounds like I'm missing out. I made a blog. Come visit me sometime." Then the web address was keyed in below.

Juliet had every intention to go visit the blog, but first she had to write down her experience with the vampire she'd met that afternoon. She clicked to enter her account and pulled up the window.

"Today I saw a vampire. Don't get me wrong, he didn't introduce himself to me as a vamp, but you should have seen the absolute beauty of this man. I was sitting on the couch in the Student Groups' office trying to find an occult group to join at my school when this guy came in. His hair was perfectly black and straight. It was just long enough to fall into his eyes, which were also perfect by the way. Everything about his face was fascinating; the way his nose tilted up, the way the muscles in his jaw flexed when he talked, the way he searched for what he was looking for. Now, I haven't said what made him look like a vampire, but his skin was so pale it looked like he had powdered it. Even his lips were white. If only his eyes were green like Louis de Pointe du Lac, but instead they were brown like blackness had warmed.

"I wanted to talk to him, but I couldn't rally up enough composure to close my gaping mouth. So, I was staring at him with my tongue hanging out when he turned and looked directly at me. My mouth snapped shut. I wanted to look away, but his gaze was so compelling, almost like he knew what I was thinking (that I was seeing a real vampire for the first time), and it amused him. I think his expression might have been a smile. Then he finished talking to the Student Groups director and headed out, but you will not believe what he did before he left. He winked at me!

"Do you think he thought I was crazy?"

Juliet stopped typing and read over her post. Yeah, that had done justice to her feelings. Not like talking to Elise. *Bah!*

She posted it and went to check out ReadyEyes808's new blog. When the page came up, it was not black like hers, but the layout for the screen was white and all the text displayed was a deep blood red. The banner was a pair of red anime-like eyes. The design of it was stylish. Juliet could have chosen it for herself. But somehow that red struck her as darker than her black. She shook her head. It was just a color.

Before she read the first post, she looked at the 'About Me' section. It read: "It fills my mind and caresses my body. It kills my spirit and makes me move... so I move... And it makes me prove what I am and where I lie each time I die." Juliet's heart beat kicked up a few notches. She scrolled down the page madly, searching for more information about this person. With a few clicks, she found the bio information he had listed. It said that he was a man in his early twenties.

"Thank goodness," she exhaled as she moved back to the first page to read his blog.

“Today I saw a goddess. I was at work—bored as usual. She was hanging out at the university after hours. My guess is that she was waiting for her loser boyfriend. Who would keep a woman like that waiting? But maybe ‘woman’ is too strong a word for her, since she barely looked eighteen. She smelled like the ocean surf and flower petals blowing in the wind. She was utterly bewitching. I’m probably dreaming, but I can’t get her out of my mind.

“If I introduced myself to her, do you think she’d be interested in me? Nah, I didn’t think so either. Even if she is single, I’m too devilish for a girl like that.”

Juliet smiled and scrolled to the bottom. She was going to comment, but when she got there she was surprised at how many people had already commented. There were comments from at least seven girls, all gushing at the sweetness of this guy.

Juliet wasn’t sure if she wanted to comment after all, but he was one of the few people who consistently visited her blog, so she opened the window to send her comment. “You met a goddess today? Well, I met a vampire. Watch, those two will hook up and you and I will stay single. LOL! Thanks for visiting my blog.”

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Over the next couple of days, Juliet went back to the Student Group office several times. She asked the director if he remembered who he spoke to after her the first time she came in. Unfortunately, he had no idea.

“I talk to a lot of people, so sorry, I can’t remember,” he explained.

Juliet decided not to bother going back there since she had already found a student group to join. It was called the Occult’s Addict and they met every Friday night at midnight, always at a different location. They had an office and Juliet went there after class one afternoon to find out where their next meeting would be held.

The door to their office was decorated in black paper with papier-mâché skulls attached to it. Lucky for Juliet, someone was home. The door was wide open and inside, a couple of people were talking.

She knocked and said, “Hi. Is this the Occult’s Addict club room?”

There was a young man and a young woman in the room. Both the boy and the girl had white-blond hair that struck Juliet as almost unnatural, but at the same time she couldn’t spot even a millimeter of root to indicate it was bleached. The blond went right to their scalps. The girl had blue eyes surrounded by black lashes, the boy had red eyes surrounded by white lashes, and both their eyebrows were white. Maybe it was natural after all. The boy stood up to greet her.

“Hello. How can I help you?” he asked lightly.

“I am interested in this club,” Juliet explained.

“Well, come in,” he said, making room for her to enter. “Have a seat,” he indicated a bucket chair covered in an orange and black tiger print. “I’m Rylan and this is my twin sister, Taylor. She’s the treasurer and I’m the secretary.”

“Who’s the president?” Juliet asked.

“Another set of twins. Well, one is the president and the other one is the vice president. Their names are Fiona and Halona. You don’t have a twin, do you?”

“That’s not a prerequisite, is it?”

“No,” Taylor said, “But it is more fun that way. Interesting backgrounds make for interesting research.”

“What kind of research?” Juliet asked.

“Well, what sort of things are you interested in, or rather, what activities would you be interested in participating in?” Taylor continued.

“Tarot cards,” Juliet said.

Rylan laughed, “Tarot cards and horoscopes, eh? You’re a first year, aren’t you? Please tell me you don’t have a teen girl magazine in your bag.”

“I don’t!” Juliet hotly defended. “I’m interested in other things, too.”

“Like what?”

“Vampires, crop circles, demons, psychics... you know. Those sorts of things,” she stuttered.

Rylan rolled his eyes, “Vampires, eh?” He seemed to be looking at something on the back of the club room door. Juliet couldn’t see it from where she was sitting. “Yeah, we’ve got a few people we’re investigating on campus, who we think could be vamps.”

“I saw a guy yesterday that I thought might be one.”

“Is this him?” Rylan asked as he turned his back to the door and kicked it shut.

As the door closed, the poster on the back came into view. It was a black and white picture of the guy she had seen in the Student Group office. He wasn’t looking at the camera. It was a shot that accentuated his jaw and the vein that ran down his neck. There, in plain sight, were three perfect sets of bite marks.

“Has this photo been meddled with?” Juliet asked, getting up and touching the photograph with her fingertips.

“No,” Taylor said.

“Is he part of this club?” Juliet continued, very excited.

“No. We house freaks, but not his kind.”

“You wouldn’t want a vampire to join you?” Juliet asked. She didn’t understand.

“If he wanted to join, we’d be thrilled to have him, but,” Rylan paused. “He wouldn’t want to. None of the people we’ve tried to recruit have ever wanted to join. They like their secrets and more than anything else, they like to pretend like there is nothing wrong with them.”

“Anyway,” Taylor interrupted. “We’re having our next meeting tomorrow night at midnight at the observatory. It’ll be a nearly full moon and we’re going to memorize the names of the craters and learn what the different phases mean when predicting the future. Do you want to come?”

Juliet’s eyes almost bugged out of her head. “Of course I want to come,” she blurted.

“Great,” Taylor said, pulling out a membership application form. “Have this filled out when you come and don’t forget the registration fee. We have to pay to rent some of the venues we have our meetings at, as well as this club room, so your fifty dollar fee is very important to our survival as a club. Please don’t forget it.”

“Thanks,” Juliet said as she took the paper.

“We’ll look forward to seeing you,” Rylan said, opening the door for Juliet.

“Wait!” she exclaimed. “Aren’t you going to tell me who this guy is?”

Taylor shrugged. “He’s one of our pet projects. We really wouldn’t appreciate you running to him and telling him that we’ve been watching him. He probably wouldn’t like it and if he reported us, we would get in trouble with University security, if not the police, for stalking him.”

“I wasn’t going to tell him, or anyone else. If you’re investigating paranormal activities, doesn’t that involve studying people most of the time?”

Rylan smiled. “You’ve got it exactly right, Juliet. Do show up tomorrow and we’ll make you an official member. Besides, you’re interested in fortune telling, right? Tomorrow should be right up your alley.”

“Are you sure you can’t at least tell me his name?” she begged. “I’ve been completely obsessed with him since I first saw him.”

Taylor frowned and shook her hair. “His name is Seth Halkias.”

Juliet grabbed the door and swung it so that she could see his picture again. “Seth, huh?” she said out loud, thinking of how completely captivating he looked. “Hey, can I write on this poster?” she suddenly asked. Her time spent in art class made her want to write and draw on anything that sparked her imagination.

“Go nuts,” Rylan said as he threw her a set of markers. “He’s probably just an ordinary guy who has a girlfriend with a vampire fetish.”

“I hate how you always assume that everything is commonplace and boring,” Taylor remarked.

Juliet couldn’t take her eyes off the picture of Seth. She opened the set of markers and fumbled around until she found what she wanted—the red. She uncapped the felt pen with her teeth and began coloring on the paper.

“Think she’s in love with him?” Rylan whispered behind Juliet’s back.

“If she’s not, it probably won’t be long before she is,” Taylor murmured.

Juliet didn’t care what they were saying. She finished up and stepped away from her handiwork. She hadn’t done much. She’d only colored his iris red, but in her mind, it was a vast improvement.

Taylor walked up behind Juliet and put her arm on Juliet’s shoulder. “It looks better that way. Red eyes look the best, right Rylan? I think Fiona and Halona are going to love it.”

Juliet pushed Taylor off and put the lid back on the marker. “If you ever decide that you don’t want this picture anymore, I’ll buy it.” She turned over the bottom corner and wrote her email address with the black marker.

“How much?” Taylor asked.

Juliet looked at it. She wanted it in her dorm room so badly her mouth was watering. “A hundred,” Juliet said.

“S-O-L-D!” Rylan and Taylor said together as they playfully slapped her on the back in unison.

She should have tried to bargain more before she said that grandiose amount. Since they took the picture, they could obviously make another copy if they wanted to.

“I’ll even gift wrap it for you, so bring the money and you can pick it up tomorrow night,” Taylor said, smiling.

“Now, you had better show up tomorrow!”

Juliet said good-bye to the twins and headed out of the clubroom and toward the elevators. She pressed the button and ruffled her hair. Life had just gotten unexpectedly interesting.

## Chapter Two

### Hang the Moon

Juliet arrived at the observatory a few minutes before midnight. It was early October. The weather was chilly, even though the first snow had not yet fallen. She had brought her winter coat as well as her toque to help fight the frigid wind. She didn't know how long she would be able to sit outside since the observatory was not an enclosed space, but simply a gigantic telescope on top of one of the science buildings. However, the top floor had a comfortable heated room that led out onto the roof, so everyone was meeting there before staring in wonder at the moon.

"Welcome!" Taylor called out in a tone that was almost friendly when Juliet came through the doors. "Glad you found the place okay."

"Yeah," Juliet said, shaking hands with Taylor.

"I don't think I caught your name yesterday," she said.

"I'm Juliet."

"This is Fiona and Halona," Taylor said pointing to two exquisitely beautiful blonde women. They looked like fourth years, or maybe even grad students, and almost exactly identical. They had taken to tinting their hair different colors in order to help people differentiate between the two of them. Fiona had tinted her hair silver, while Halona had tinted hers gold.

"Nice to meet you," Juliet said politely.

"You know Rylan," Taylor continued, introducing the people standing around the room.

Rylan was crouched in the corner with his laptop stretched across his lap. The bright screen illuminated his face as he examined something closely. He had quite a bit of equipment with him and a long tube of rolled up paper, undoubtedly her poster of Seth. Her fingers itched to open it.

"This is Blanche, Ceries and Tawnee," Taylor said, introducing Juliet to three more women. They were standing in a circle behind Fiona clasping hands and praying.

"Are they nuns?" Juliet couldn't help asking.

"Not exactly," Taylor said swiftly. "They are not triplets, just in case you were wondering. Tawnee is still in high school, but since not all of our membership has to be made up of university students, she is welcome to attend. Ceries is a first year like you and Blanche has been a member for a few years. You probably won't believe this, but they actually make up a small coven of white witches."

Juliet's eyes rose. "Really? Are they looking for members?"

Taylor shook her head. "No. Witches do things in threes. They wouldn't dream of taking you on unless you brought a couple more with you. You would have to help them have six members or nine or twelve. But, you're not a witch, are you?"

"No," Juliet said.

"Then you don't qualify. They only want real witches, the kind with real magic and if you don't have it, then you don't have it. It's as simple as that."

"So if they're witches, what are Fiona and Halona?"

Taylor waved to Fiona. "Talk to the president. She can answer for herself."

Fiona appeared and dismissed Taylor. Then she smiled and explained, “Halona and I are the true Gemini. We’re not two souls trapped in the same body. We’re one soul in two bodies. Our bond is such that we can feel each others’ thoughts and wishes.”

“What about Rylan and Taylor?” Juliet asked, eager to learn as much as she could.

“That’s interesting,” Fiona said, inviting Juliet over to sit down at a small table by one of the windows and drawing the conversation back to herself. “Normally, when I tell someone something about Halona and myself, they think we’re crazy.”

“I don’t think you’re crazy,” Juliet said.

“No, I guess not. You are really into this stuff, aren’t you?”

Juliet nodded eagerly.

“Taylor and Rylan are conjoined twins,” Fiona said seriously, and then she waited for Juliet’s response.

Something in Juliet’s brain clicked and she immediately started up, “Are you sure? Aren’t conjoined twins always the same gender because they are identical twins who haven’t quite separated?”

“Very good,” Fiona praised, although it appeared that she was only slightly impressed. “They say that they were joined at the hip, and I’ve seen their scars from when they were surgically separated, so I don’t think they are lying. They say that one of them is cross dressing, so they might be two boys or two girls.” Fiona glanced over to them. “I’ve been watching the two of them for years and I can’t decide which gender they could both be. Sometimes Taylor’s voice is so husky that I think that it couldn’t possibly belong to a girl and other times Rylan’s cheek is so smooth that I think that he couldn’t possibly be a man. What do you think?”

Juliet glanced at the two of them. Taylor was sitting beside Rylan looking at something he was reading on his laptop. Taylor wasn’t very curvy, but Juliet didn’t feel like criticizing her for that since she wasn’t very curvy herself. Juliet studied Rylan. When Juliet met them yesterday she had taken it for granted that Rylan was a man and Taylor was a woman. It was quite the mystery.

“I don’t know,” Juliet said to Fiona sheepishly. “I wish I could tell the difference.”

“So do I,” Fiona said. “I have a reason for explaining all this. You see, the Occult’s Addict is not a club that Halona and I formed. Back in the day, Halona and I had to prove we had a psychic connection in order to gain membership.”

“Really? How did they test you?”

“They took us into separate rooms and asked us random questions. We gave the same answer for ninety five percent of their questions. So, we were invited to join. Blanche, Ceris and Tawnee are witches and I’ve explained about Taylor and Rylan and Halona and I. The thing is, right now you only have trial membership. You only get full membership if you are or can do something unusual.”

“Like what?”

“Once we had a girl who could bend spoons with her mind.”

“I can’t do that,” Juliet said weakly.

“Let me see,” Fiona said, thinking. “I heard you say you’re not a witch. Psychic?”

Juliet shook her head.

“Rylan said that you like tarot cards. Do you tell an accurate fortune? Having a fortune teller could be cool.”

Juliet shrugged her shoulders. “I could give it a try.”

“Wait,” Fiona said, raising her finger as though she had just thought of something brilliant. “What about vampire hunting?”

Juliet’s eyes opened wide in shock. “Do you mean killing vampires?”

Fiona laughed. “I mean nothing of the sort. I just thought you might have a good time in our club if you researched some of our campus vamps. I might be able to get you full member status for something like that. If you’re good at it.”

Juliet thought about it for a second. She wasn’t sure how to respond. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to give updates to her club on how she was doing pursuing her crush.

Fiona noticed her indecision and said, “Well, you can think about that later. Did you bring your application with you?”

Juliet reached into her bag and brought out the papers.

Taylor sat down next to them while Fiona read through Juliet’s application. Her eyes squinted several times as though she were surprised at Juliet’s answers. Well, Juliet was surprised at some of their questions. They asked the usual questions like: Name? Date? How did you hear about us? What faculty are you in? But then they asked other questions and some of them Juliet didn’t exactly want to answer. For one thing, they wanted a detailed account of where Juliet had lived her entire life. She’d been born in Toronto, but her parents moved to a small town called Clearwater and she couldn’t remember living anywhere else. It was boring and she didn’t like to talk about it. They also wanted to know what her ethnic background was, which she didn’t know. Her last name was Hudson, but her parents never talked about where their family had originally emigrated from.

“So Juliet,” Taylor said, leaning across the table. “I brought you that lovely poster of Seth. Did you bring the money?”

“Yes,” Juliet said, opening her wallet and parting with five very smooth twenty dollar bills that came straight from the ATM. She was going to regret spending it, but she said she would buy it, so she was on the hook.

“Here you go, darling,” Taylor said, handing Juliet the poster. “Unroll it to make sure I haven’t cheated you.”

Juliet scooted the rubber bands off both ends and pulled it wide. She gasped. He was even more beautiful than she remembered. “Thank you Taylor. This is gorgeous.”

Fiona smiled pleasantly and said, “Oh, and I think Rylan has something else for you, Juliet. That is, if you’re interested in pictures of Seth.”

“There are more!” Juliet exclaimed as she accidentally let go of one of the poster edges. It swiftly rolled back up.

“Yeah,” Taylor said, a conspiring smile on her lips. “He even brought his mini printer. I think he’s selling pics of him for five bucks a pop.”

“Too expensive!” Juliet balked.

“Well, maybe he’ll be willing to give you a deal if you’re going to be a repeat customer. But, I think they’re worth five dollars apiece.”

“Go have a look,” Fiona encouraged. “We’ve got a few minutes. Our little coven is still chanting for luck. Everyone has midterms next week.”

Juliet replaced the rubber bands on the poster and joined Rylan on the floor.

“Hi Juliet,” he said, offering her a piece of carpet. “I feel like a prick doing this, but our club needs my fundraising efforts. Anyway, these are the other pictures I took that day. These ones happen to be in color. Pity, it doesn’t show. He’s very monochrome.”

Rylan made a slideshow of his pictures of Seth on his laptop screen and made them change every twenty seconds, but twenty seconds was not enough for Juliet. After a while, she decided that taking the pictures had to have been a combined effort. Yes, Seth was good looking, but Juliet doubted that he would have looked quite that good if Rylan hadn't worked hard searching for the perfect shot.

Suddenly, Halona returned to the foyer. Juliet had been so involved in her conversations that she hadn't even realized that she was gone. "Sorry it took so long, kittens, but we're finally ready to go."

Rylan shut his laptop and reached for his toque. "This should be fun for *you*," the tone he used was derogatory. Exactly like he could think of a hundred better things for him to be doing with his time, but he had to spend it here.

Juliet frowned at him. "Don't you like looking at the moon?"

His eyes flashed. "Until you've loved the moon, you've loved no one."

"Wow... deep," Juliet said callously, like she was getting him back for making fun of her.

Rylan swallowed hard and opened the glass door for Juliet to follow the others onto the roof. They all gathered around the telescope while Halona took the reins and led the lecture.

The sky was quite clear, though the light pollution from the city drowned out most of the stars. A few planets were visible. Juliet could see Venus, but she wasn't sure which one was Mars. The moon was bright too. Most of the face was showing, though it wasn't a full moon. The shadows of the craters fascinated Juliet. She couldn't wait until it was her turn to look through the telescope.

"Tonight we've got a waning gibbous moon," Halona said, explaining the shape. "Next week at this time, it'll be a waning crescent moon. Too bad our meetings are only on Friday nights, or we all would have been able to watch Blanche, Cerie and Tawnee dance naked under the full moon on Thursday."

"Har-har," Blanche said, far from amused.

"Okay, so when you look at the man in the moon, what are the names of the seas?"

Rylan answered without thinking, "The right eye is the Sea of Clouds. The left eye is made up of two seas; the Sea of Tranquility and the Sea of Serenity. The nose is called Central Bay and the mouth is called the Sea of Rains."

Fiona didn't look surprised, but Juliet was. "Way to go, Rylan. You really *do* love the moon."

He shrugged his shoulders like he didn't care for Juliet's praise when something caught their attention. Someone on the ground was shouting, or blowing a whistle, or perhaps both. Juliet went to the edge of the building to have a look at what was going on.

Down below, a man was chasing another across the grass. The man being chased was running awkwardly. Juliet watched as the graceful man pursuing him ran effortlessly and much faster. Within moments, he had overtaken the other. He forced him onto his stomach and pinned his wrists to his back. The man pinned to the dying grass yelled and screamed, but Juliet couldn't understand what he was saying across the distance.

"That's your boyfriend," Rylan said, as he joined Juliet.

"That's Seth?"

"Yep."

"But why was he chasing that guy?" Juliet wanted to know.

"Oh, I don't know. There could be loads of reasons. Seth's always doing that sort of thing. He's the director of Safewalk here on campus."

“Safewalk? You mean that you call him when you want someone to walk you across campus when it’s late? How weird! He can’t be a vampire! A vampire would never take that kind of job.”

Rylan smiled knowingly. “Are you sure? I thought about it a lot too when I first spotted him and suspected he might be a vamp. But after a while, it seemed like the perfect cover. While it’s still controversial exactly why vampires prefer night, it’s still a given that they do. Safewalk doesn’t operate during the day. And it gives him an excellent reputation, because he’s doing something charitable. And he gets to see crazies like that guy down there all the time, so maybe he has a blood supply, though I’ve never caught him doing anything truly suspicious.”

“But Safewalk is so goody-two-shoes!” Juliet whined. “It’s not something a cool vampire would do at all.”

“Maybe not,” Rylan said peevishly. “But it does allow him an excuse to escort vulnerable female university students across campus. He might not have anything more complicated than that on his mind. Who’s to say? Maybe you should ask him.”

“Maybe I will,” Juliet said, still looking over the ledge at Seth, as he helped the officer from Campus Security lift the guy he’d just chased back on his feet. She looked at her watch. It was twelve thirty. She looked down at the scene and measured how long it would take him to finish up at campus security and head back to the Safewalk office to wait for another call. She squinted and watched them leave. Then she made up her mind. She’d call for a Safewalk in an hour—at one thirty. But until then, why not have a good time?

She tried to listen to Halona’s speech, but it was challenging. Afterwards the three little witches had brought white hot chocolate which they shared with everyone. Juliet had never seen such dainty little mugs as the ones they served their hot chocolate in. It was delicious. They even had the sense to squirt a little whipped cream on the top of each mug.

Juliet went out to the roof several times and looked through the telescope. She had wanted to learn the names of all the craters and seas, but the atmosphere distorted her vision of the moon. She couldn’t see anything through the telescope clearly, and felt bored with her dream of moon gazing. Instead, she settled for looking at the city lights.

Rylan came and stood beside her. He might have been hitting on her, but Juliet couldn’t get the idea out of her head that he might be a girl and so she couldn’t stop looking for clues that would lead her to the truth of his identity. She was far more interested in unraveling the mystery, but if he was hitting on her, he was going about it the wrong way. He was still trying to sell her pictures of Seth. Before one thirty she bought a small stack that he printed on his mini printer, but none of them were as good as her poster.

A few minutes before one thirty, Juliet said she was done for the night and that she was going to head back to the dorms.

“Right,” Fiona said, suddenly standing up and commanding the attention of the other club members. “Juliet said she’s done for tonight, so I’ll announce the next meeting. The next meeting will be in the Forestry’s greenhouse. Blanch is going to teach us about the medicinal properties of some of the plants there. Interesting, eh? Don’t forget, Juliet. We’ll meet at midnight next Friday. Don’t miss it.”

“I won’t,” Juliet said as she excused herself.

“Here, I’ll walk you back,” Rylan said, probably using his best gentleman voice.

“No need,” Juliet said with a wink. “I’m going to call Safewalk.”

Rylan clicked his tongue on the roof of his mouth. “I knew that I shouldn’t have told you that.”

“Oh come on! It’s not so lame as all that.”

“It’s way lamer, since an hour ago you didn’t think what he was doing was sexy,” Rylan said blankly. “Well, whatever. I’ll see you next week.” He turned around and went back to the others.

Juliet put the photographs he’d printed in her bag before she realized the hypocrisy of his statement. She wasn’t going to let him get away with it. She went back toward Rylan and said, “Hey, why are you giving me a hard time? You knew I was interested in him, you even sold me pictures of him, so why are you acting like it’s pathetic that I want to meet him?”

“That’s not what’s pathetic,” he said, scratching his ear.

“Then what?” Juliet demanded.

“Hey, just go,” he said in a slightly different tone of voice. “There’s no reason why you can’t call him. Go ahead. I’m sure you’ll have a great time.”

Juliet didn’t know what he was talking about, but she’d had enough, so she turned around and headed toward the elevator. She was pretty sure there was a red Safewalk phone on the main level.

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