

Vile Blood

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Dedication

For Gabriel, wish I could have met you.

Prologue

The night sky lit up like fire as masses of unholy magic blazed over the screams of the people. They had been awakened from their peaceful slumber by creatures from the darkest depths of shadows. Their barriers were broken; the beasts had crossed; now all they could do was fight back. The bodies of person after person fell busted to the ground, with every scream and tragedy witnessed by the violet eyes of a teenage girl, hidden in a wooden crate by her grandfather as a last attempt to save his only kin.

No amount of training could have prepared her for a battle like this; outnumbered and overpowered, every member of her clan unable to stand long. Fallen comrades within view no longer looked recognizable; all familiar definition had gone from their faces. Soon her clan disappeared from the fight altogether and only these demons remained. Some walked like men with the fangs and claws of monsters. Others were more deceiving and could only be distinguished by the glowing tinge in their eyes.

The girl watched as the creatures confirmed the death of every person, some taking trophies with them, others just pleased with the kill. She held her breath as one grew near to check the body of her former playmate. As it leaned down she could see the scales on its face, not quite like a reptile but more like that of a pine cone; it looked as though it was made up of the forest itself. It suddenly cocked its head and sniffed the air. It moved away from the body and stepped closer to the crate. It continued to sniff, and the girl realized that the creature had picked up her scent. She couldn't run without bringing further attention to herself, all she could do was wait it out and hope the beast gave up its search. It stepped closer to her, and she saw its glowing red eyes settle on her crate. She knew then that it was aware of her presence; there would be no more hiding.

Chapter 1

Sarain rose from her bed; another bad dream had disturbed her sleep. Most nights were un-restful, memories of gruesome sights she had seen over the years haunted her as if still real. She paced throughout her small dwelling; not quite a home, her job wouldn't let her settle to make one. The rooms were dark from the lack of windows. It was still day, but Sarain found it easier to fortify her quarters if there were minimal possible entries. There were no personal effects or decorations hung about - just the necessities, and few at that. No mirrors or reflective surfaces; this was a must for her, because to the average person they may be harmless, but to Sarain they showed much more than a mere replica of its surroundings. They showed the same horrific images that she tried to escape from in her dreams, only clearer.

Sarain made herself a simple meal, nothing fancy but adequate. Soon she would have to work. This was all a part of her daily tradition; many procedures, though some came unexpected, all left Sarain's life feeling motionless. She had become robotic over the years. No friends, no family, and few acquaintances, but she didn't long for more, all she wanted was to destroy them all - every last monster that waited in the darkness.

Sarain was born a hunter, trained since childhood; she was raised learning of demons and their weaknesses, sunlight being the obvious. These creatures were damned into darkness; while not all demons can be killed by sunlight, they all do have an aversion to it. Another weakness is to holy emblems; the ankh works best of all. Resembling a cross, it is an ancient Egyptian symbol for life. It holds the most power compared with all the other emblems since it is the most recognized and feared symbol amongst demons. Holy emblems wouldn't kill a demon, but would repel them on sight, and to the weaker of their kind it would burn. Sarain kept an old tarnished ankh, passed down from her ancestors, always around her neck.

She quickly dressed, all in black; this made it easier to hide in the shadows and keep from being seen. She grabbed her freshly sharpened machete and strapped it to her side, then donned a trench coat to hide it. It was warm out, but Sarain knew that she would attract a lot more attention being seen with a machete than she would being overdressed. She needed to blend in, for if a demon she were tracking were to catch on too soon, it could put innocent bystanders at risk and her own life in jeopardy.

She opened the door and stepped out over a line of ash; part of a ritual she had performed to seal a barrier around her dwelling, this was a holy tradition taught by her clan that kept out demons, it allowed nothing evil to cross.

Sarain walked out into the fresh air, it was nearing dusk and the creatures would be out soon. She had enough time to get away from her quarters and into prime hunting grounds, usually the slums of the city. She would have to stay away from her place till dawn so that she couldn't be followed back.

Every night she hunted, trying to clean the streets of its vilest filth, but everyday more demons seemed to crop up. Her work felt never-ending; she just hoped that she was making some sort of a difference.

Every now and then she heard a little rumor on the street about herself, more like an urban legend about a huntsman who executed evil doers. But being that there were rarely ever witnesses to her actions, the story didn't get around much, and her description had become widely altered, usually to that of a man who was seven feet tall and skillfully swift like a ninja. Sarain only stood at five feet and six inches, and while she was stealthy and quick, she did not fly about like a ninja. She wasn't sure where the male aspect came into the story; she figured that the tellers of the story must have thought that it would appear more plausible and accepting to be saved by a mysterious man than a strong woman.

Though one thing that the people usually did get right was the unusual violet eyes of their rescuer; an obvious shade of purple made her stand out from others. Most mistook it for color enhancing contacts, but Sarain's abnormal eye color was all natural. In her youth her clan had taken this as a sign of her being a savior to her people. Now she hid her eyes from the public, trying to not draw unwanted attention, she avoided eye contact. Those who did notice would either give her a double glance or a drunken comment like, "Whoa, cool contacts!" Sarain did not find this amusing, mostly since she was normally on a hunt and didn't want her presence announced. Not much could be done to conceal her eyes; contacts would be too much of a hassle and sunglasses would be a hindrance. Avoiding people and stares worked best.

Sarain didn't have to worry about any of that tonight. The streets were strangely clear, leaving her to walk freely; her hand always near her weapon. A quick draw of her blade was essential to her work; it made the difference of life and death for her and anyone she may be saving. Beheading would kill most demons, and a swift piercing of the heart would destroy nearly all half-demons.

These half-demons were internationally known as vil sangs or "Vile Blood." Both humans and demons view vil sangs as tainted blood creatures. More commonly known as vampires to society, vil sangs were formally humans who became infected by demonic blood from either a demon or another vil sang. However, against the popular beliefs, vil sangs are unable to turn into bats and do not sleep in coffins. The demonic blood does make them stronger and forever youthful, but vil sangs are weaker to sunlight than regular demons, and can be killed by it. They feed on human blood to sustain their own from the virus within, keeping them strong and energized. A vil sang that goes without blood would grow crazed and sickly, and although it wouldn't kill them to go bloodless, they would become more sensitive to light to the point that even artificial light could hurt them. Vil sangs look like regular people except when they're enraged; that's when their fangs descend and their eyes glow. The demon blood in them brings out the natural dark side in mankind, and over time can cause them to become more evil. Vil sangs made directly from demons usually take on more demonic features than just the glowing eyes and fangs. They are also stronger than a common vil sang; but most demons don't like to infect humans, since they despise vil sangs and would rather just make the kill.

It was dark now, no signs of a demon, and only a few people out. The lack of people could explain the lack of demons. While demons don't like crowds, they do like to pick off easy targets, such as people walking alone. Demons like to hunt humans for sport, and would often

make trophies from their remains. They also would at times feed on humans, viewing any creature or animal as just meat.

Sarain didn't know if she should be glad or disappointed by the absence of demons. She felt that if she wasn't killing them, then that meant they were killing someone somewhere else. She knew she couldn't force them to come out, but she needed to feel as though she had a purpose, that her life had meaning.

A drunken couple walked out of a bar swaying toward her. Sarain moved away and lowered her eyes. The lady giggled, as if the man had told her a joke, as they passed her. Sarain went unnoticed.

She walked on down a darkened alley way. The only street light was broken; it had been for some time. The city didn't care about its slums and ghettos. She had come upon plenty of demons killing people, and often never heard anything about it in the news. The city didn't care, most cities she had lived in didn't care.

Shadows lurked all around. That's where they lived. Sarain watched for a moment, but didn't want to look too observant. Nothing, no movement. She kept on walking.

Hours went by making it very late in the evening. Not much longer before her patrol would be over. Inactive nights were rare, but were her goal, if she could lower the demon activity, then she would move to a new city, and start over again. This is what she did, how she lived.

Sarain turned onto another street, this one also dark. She thought she saw something scurry in the distance, but was unsure. A few steps more were followed by what sounded like a hiss. However, she couldn't be sure. But when she heard a yelp, she stepped up her pace. Someone was yelling in the distance; an attack was being made. The night wouldn't be inactive after all.

Upon closer investigation, Sarain discovered a boy struggling to get away from a coarse-looking demon. Its skin was like cracked desert ground, its eyes glowed green, and it swatted at the boy with fiercely long talons. The boy screamed; he had wedged himself in a small gap between buildings, one that the beast was too large to enter. Too preoccupied with the boy, the demon didn't see Sarain approaching behind it. She unsheathed her machete and began to raise it in the air. But when the boy saw her, he yelled out, "help", causing the creature to turn around to see who had arrived.

Sarain quickly ducked as the beast swung its large claw at her. It lunged toward her, knocking her against a wall. She held on to her knife, and forcefully shoved the monster back. While it was big, she nevertheless found the strength to fight it off. The creature swatted at her again, and missed once more. She sprung forward, and slashed her machete through the air, slicing off the demon's head. It fell limply to the ground with not even a twitch. It was dead.

Sarain wiped off her blade, and then put it back in its sheath. She gazed over at the boy, who cowered in his crawlspace. "You can come out now," she said, backing away from the boy's position.

He squeezed through, and stepped forward. He brushed himself off and stared down at the remains, and said, "What was that?"

“A demon,” Sarain answered.

The boy’s face went pale as he responded, “Seriously?” then paused and said, “How did you do that?”

“Training,” she simply replied.

The boy glanced down again at the remains and said, “Are you just going to leave it there? What if someone finds it?”

“The daylight will take care of it.” After a moment of silence, she asked, “Why are you out so late?”

“I’m old enough,” the boy answered.

“What are you, like nine?” she asked.

“No, I’m eleven,” he said sounding offended then shot back with, “What are you doing here?”

“Apparently saving you. Besides I’m twenty and able to take care of myself,” she replied, and then repeated, “So, why are you out so late?”

“I was looking for my brother, Nate,” he finally answered.

“Well you should wait for him at home,” she firmly said.

“He’s been gone for three days,” the boy added.

Sarain sighed, it didn’t look good, but she replied with, “Well then you should call the police.”

“The police don’t care; they just think he’s a runaway. Besides, my brother is nineteen, he doesn’t hit their list of importance,” he responded.

“You should go home and let your parents handle it,” Sarain said, not looking at the kid.

“I don’t have parents, it’s just me and my brother, there’s no one else at home,” he pleaded.

Sarain gazed over at the boy, and sighed again; she knew now that she would have to watch over him.

Chapter 2

After sun up, Sarain found herself in a small one bedroom apartment downtown. Following a few hours of conversation, she learned that the boy's name was Kit, and that his brother, Nate, had been taking care of him for the past two years since their mother's death, who had been mugged and murdered. Their father was a deadbeat and hadn't been in the picture for many years. Kit had always been able to rely on Nate, and didn't believe that he would abandon him. He had expected him home from work three nights earlier. At first when he didn't show, Kit had assumed that Nate had to pull a double shift. But by the next night, Kit had become worried. When he finally went to the police, they shrugged off the disappearance as just Nate trying to escape his responsibilities. They had tried to contact child services for Kit, but he took off from the station. Now he had resorted to looking for Nate on the streets.

In this time, Sarain had also taken it upon herself to seal a barrier around Kit's building. The ritual had taken most of the time, especially with Kit continuously asking questions. She eventually sent him inside to wait for her to finish.

Currently Sarain was back inside, having explained that the barrier kept out demons. She was waiting for Kit to bring her a picture of Nate. She had agreed to look for him, figuring that it was better than Kit going out and looking for Nate himself. He had agreed to stay safely in his apartment until she gave him some answers. Sarain understood that it was possible that there would be no answers, and if it came to that she would have to turn him over to child services. She knew that he wouldn't be able to take care of himself, and she couldn't take him in - her lifestyle couldn't fit a dependant in it nor did she want the responsibility that would come with him.

Kit came back with a picture; he seemed to cling to it, holding it near him. As he handed Sarain the photo, he said, "Sorry, this was the most recent picture I could find."

The picture was two years old; it was of him and Nate at a park, Nate had him in a headlock, but they both were smiling. It was taken by their mother.

"It'll do," she said, taking the photo. She saw Kit's look of concern, so she added, "It could be something else other than a demon, if that's what you're thinking. He could have been in an accident, it may sound bad, but he could just be resting in a hospital somewhere. Normal things do still happen."

Kit nodded and responded, "I just can't believe that monsters are real. Nate use to always call me a scaredy-cat for wanting to sleep with the light on when I was little."

“Well, only daylight would actually help you. A night light wouldn’t do anything,” Sarain commented, and then noticed that her remark wasn’t helping him with his fears. She wasn’t used to being sensitive to others’ feelings; these were emotions she had long since lost.

She got up to leave, and Kit quickly asked, “Are you going?”

“I have to, if I’m going to find out anything on your brother,” she glanced around for a moment then said, “Do you have enough food?”

“Yeah... Are you coming back?” Kit questioned, sounding like a scared child.

“I will when I find something,” Sarain replied reassuringly. But she was only going to give it a couple of days before she would contact the authorities on Kit’s situation. There wasn’t much hope, and Kit needed stability. She would do what she could, but couldn’t let herself get too drawn in. Her work was too important.

She departed, and as she was walking down the apartment stairs, she contemplated her next move. She would have to rest first, but aside from questioning random people and physically searching the streets for Nate, there wasn’t much she could do. She didn’t have the type of resources that the police would have when searching for someone. And she normally wasn’t searching for humans. Besides, odds were that any news Sarain would have for Kit wouldn’t be good.

After she slept, Sarain was once again walking the streets. She left her residence earlier this time, giving her a few more hours of daylight to survey people about Nate. She showed around his picture, but no one recognized him. She first tried more public crowded places, stores and such. When that didn’t pan out, she tried the more slummy areas, seedy bars, and underground clubs; the people at these places were even more reluctant to talk.

Sarain stepped into another tavern; this one had puddles of liquid on the ground, which she hoped was alcohol, as soon as she walked in. The place smelled stale and was poorly lit. Some old sounding twangy music played on the radio while the patrons sat around lazily; most were overweight and looked dirty. She approached the bar, where the majority of the people were sitting, and as she got near she saw a cockroach run down the counter. She cringed, this place made her house seem like a palace.

The bartender glanced up at her and asked, “What can I get you, missy?”

“I’m not here for a drink. I’m looking for this man,” Sarain replied holding up the photograph.

“I just serve, I don’t watch,” he answered back gruffly.

Sarain sighed and took a look around. A man sitting close by was staring at her and he waved her over; he looked rough, but was nothing compared to the demons she fought. She walked to his table with him checking her over as she approached.

“Who you searching for, honey?” the rough man asked.

Sarain held up the picture and replied, "This man, his name is Nate."

The man quickly glanced at the photo and said, "Who is he to you?"

Sarain stared at the man and answered, "A friend... He's missing and needed at home."

"It sounds like you could use a real man at home, honey. Why don't you sit your pretty little self down and let me buy you a drink," he boldly spoke, making her disgusted.

"Not interested. I just want to know if you've seen him," she stated, glaring back.

He shrugged, "Can't say I have... But it seems like a lot of people are going missing these days. Not really a bad thing though, news says that crime and gang activity is at a record low in the city. But then again, it's never safe for a sweet thing like you to be walking around alone."

"Well I manage just fine," she said firmly.

This method appeared pointless to Sarain. She would have to go about searching differently. She turned and headed for the door. When she reached the exit she heard the rough man call out sarcastically, "You be careful out there, honey!"

But Sarain wasn't the one who needed to be careful.

Stepping outside, Sarain discovered that the day had transformed into night. This was alright with her; she felt she worked better at night.

The streets were quiet, and thinking about it, they had been fairly empty of late. Sarain thought over what the rough man had said about people missing and crime being low. She had been ridding this city of its demons for a while now, but that wouldn't change the regular human crime level, like gangs, rapes, and muggings; that was all human. She wasn't sure about actual missing people, she hadn't been seeing any flyers or anything in the papers looking for people, but there was definitely less activity on the streets. This wasn't really her concern, and all in all, less crime was a good thing. Besides, fewer people hanging out on the streets also meant fewer people she'd have to save or that could get in the way of her work.

The moon shown down brightly and the air was cool. The vacant streets felt peaceful to Sarain, this wasn't a feeling she experienced frequently. She usually felt empty, not necessarily sad, but just lacking of emotion altogether. Yet she believed this made her a better hunter; if she didn't feel fear then her mind wouldn't get clouded with thoughts of worry and doubt.

The road was wet and appeared to shine under the light of the moon. Sarain's footsteps were soft on the concrete, she had learned to walk lightly so not to be heard. Trees nearby swayed in the wind, leaves rustled, and a cricket chirped. She could hear the music from a car driving in the distance, and people talking in the building to her right. She focused her hearing so that she could absorb all the sounds around her, and listened for anything out of the norm. The noise of her surroundings faded and somewhere out in the vastness ahead of her she could hear footsteps; they were walking away at a steady pace. They were definitely an alone pair, but they weren't necessarily demonic; she would have to investigate further. She picked up her speed to catch up to the source of the sounds.

The moon kept the street well lit, so Sarain walked in the shadow of the buildings to keep out of sight. Just ahead she could see the individual come into view. From this distance, the being looked human, but Sarain realized that if this was a vil sang then she wouldn't automatically be able to tell by looking. She picked up the pace, but still held back, she didn't want to bring attention to herself. From behind, the person looked male, with short hair and an athletic build. She couldn't see his face, and he also seemed to keep to the shadows. It was growing late in the evening, not too many people would be out at such an hour. This man could be an insomniac out for a walk, a thug searching for an opportunity, or something else altogether. Her gut told her to follow the man, something just felt strange about him. He didn't appear to be looking around; he walked as if on a path, and he didn't check streets signs either, so he must have known where he was and where he was going.

Sarain followed him for about a mile, all the while thinking that everything seemed too perfect; his straight steps on his course with him never looking around or back, and finding him on a night so quiet with empty streets. It almost felt like a trap, but to be so, she would have to assume this man was indeed a vil sang, who knew who she was and where she'd be, and this wasn't very likely. She was a better hunter than that, and kept a low profile purposely so that the demons would never see her coming.

They finally came upon his destination, a club called The Purge. It was one of those low key clubs; much like a rave, it was located in an old warehouse and didn't check IDs. It was in downtown slum central, and wasn't the kind of place for regular club-goers. Word on the street was that this club dealt heavily into drugs and alcohol, and was likely to have mob connections, because the police never touched it. Sarain had never been inside herself, being that she preferred to avoid crowds. Now it was beginning to look like her mysterious hiker was just another junkie looking for a fix. She started to rethink her pursuit on the man, when something suddenly caught her attention. The man had stepped into the light of the club sign, and once lit up, she realized that she had been trailing Nate all along. It was a lucky break that left Sarain feeling unsettled; she didn't like nor believed in coincidences.

Chapter 3

Sarain was surprised to find Nate so quickly, and she was amazed to find him alive. Most people who went missing in slums like these either turned up dead or didn't turn up at all.

She watched as Nate walked up and exchanged words with a large man standing in front of the entrance. After a moment, the large man disappeared inside the club while Nate waited outside. Sarain refrained from approaching him, and felt it best to hold back in the shadows and see how things played out. Nate kept his back to her as he waited. She wondered if he could be waiting for drugs. Kit had never mentioned Nate having a drug habit, but she figured that drugs would be something that Nate would most likely not want to share with his younger brother. She observed that he remained motionless, his head stayed straight forward, and he didn't seem interested in his surroundings. His behavior wasn't that of a junkie, he should be fidgety. But why else would he abandon his only family for a place like this?

A few minutes went by with no change until the large man returned followed by a tall blond man. The blond man was well dressed with well kept chin length hair, his physical stature was toned, and Sarain got the impression that he was extremely into appearances. She also first and foremost noticed that the man was incredibly pale; this was something she watched out for in her line of work, however she couldn't make assumptions.

The blond man dismissed the large man, who went back to his original position at the door. The blond man then led Nate aside where they had a conversation, but it was mostly one sided with the blond man doing the majority of the talking. Sarain was unable to make out what the men were saying; with the distance and the noise coming from the club, eaves dropping was out of the question. She did watch intently, searching for any other sign besides paleness that might point to the blond man being a vil sang. But most of the time vil sangs only showed their demonic features when they were enraged and this blond man was staying composed.

They finished talking and the blond man quickly headed back inside. Nate soon after started walking off in the opposite direction, keeping on a steady path once again. Sarain considered following the blond man into the club to get a better look, and then remembered Kit. She had made him a promise, and understood that finding out what was going on with Nate had to come first. Even if it meant letting a possible vil sang slip through her fingers. And if he had been a vil sang she was curious to what business he had with Nate. Perhaps she wouldn't be bringing happy news to Kit after all. But this was taking place at a club, a public place, and a seedy crime-filled one at that; it was possible that everything could just be within regular human wickedness.

Sarain trailed after Nate, but kept distance between them. She wondered when she should approach him, and if she should do it in a populated area or not. Given the time, she was most likely not going to find a populated area. Probably for the best, because she knew what she might have to do. She thought about Kit at home waiting for her to return with information on his

brother, and hoping that it would be good. She so wanted to be able to give him good news too; that's why she wished she hadn't gotten so involved in Kit's problem. It was better for her to not feel compassion, it only made her weak.

Sarain continued to follow Nate for another two miles before he finally came to a stop. He stood there, back to her, perfectly still, and staring up. Sarain recognized where she was, they were standing outside in a back alley behind Kit's apartment building. If Nate was a vil sang than he wouldn't be able to go inside thanks to the ritual she had performed around the building, and his just standing there didn't look good. She felt that now was the time to confront him. No one was around, and his journey had ended. She slowly approached him, but stopped short before getting too close.

"Nate," she called out softly to him.

He swiftly turned around, but it seemed as though he was reacting more to the noise than to his name. He stared at her blankly like a deer in headlights, unmoving.

"Nate," she called out again, "Are you okay?"

He didn't answer; he just stood there like he was unable to communicate. Sarain had never seen this before, whether he was a junkie or a vil sang he should have responded. He could be confused, and maybe suffering from a concussion.

"Nate, I'm a friend of your brother, Kit. He's been looking for you, he's worried," Sarain relayed, hoping to jog his memory.

"...Kit?" he repeated faintly.

"Yes, Kit, your brother," she said again.

She took a step closer to Nate, almost within arm's length, and then saw his eyes settle on her, but not her face. Was he looking at her neck, she quickly thought; no, he was staring at her necklace, her ankh cross.

Sarain gazed up into Nate's eyes, and saw the glowing tinge she hoped not to see. He was a vil sang, and she only had one thing left she could do. Her hand went to her machete and as if reading her mind, Nate hissed and lunged at her with his fangs starting to descend. Even with his demon speed, Nate couldn't out run Sarain; she rapidly dodged his attack, whipped out her blade, and lunged back at him full force. She felt her knife sink in, all the way to its hilt. A perfect hit directly to the heart.

The fire in Nate's eyes soon faded, he fell to the ground, landing on his back. He stared up at the apartment building, his eyes settling on a window, possibly Kit's. His eyes were just a normal brown now, and he looked like the guy in Kit's photo. A tear ran down Nate's cheek as his eyes glazed over.

It disturbed Sarain, how easy this all came to her. While Nate could only have been a newly born vil sang, it bothered her that her instincts were stronger than a beast's. But what was more troubling, was the fact that this was what she worried about, and not the bearing of bad news to Kit. Perhaps she was more detached from her emotions than she had earlier thought.

Sarain gazed down at Nate's lifeless body. If she hadn't known better she would have thought she was looking down at the corpse of a human. She couldn't fathom his bizarre behavior; why hadn't he just attacked her from the beginning? And why did he not seem to remember Kit at all? Sarain only knew the basics about vil sangs, she didn't know what went on in their heads, only that the demon blood inside made them turn blood thirsty and evil. But she had never seen a vil sang behave robotically before, and was curious to find out why.

Sarain stared up at Kit's building. She would have to tell him the grave news soon, but first, she needed to find out what Nate had wanted from the pale blond man back at the club. And if he too was a vil sang like she had previously suspected.

It wasn't long before Sarain was back in front of the club, The Purge. She watched from afar, debating if it would be best to just go right in; if she did, she could try to blend in, but there would be good odds that she'd be observed in whatever she did. She would have to be sneaky but come across casual in doing so. The large man was still guarding the door, and there was no way of seeing inside. The windows were all made with thick blurry tiled glass. Clubs were a popular place for vil sangs to inhabit, the drunken club-goers made easy targets; Sarain had tracked and killed many vil sangs from clubs. She didn't much like going inside them though, far too crowded for her taste. But tonight she would have to if she wanted to find out what had happened to Nate. She made up her mind, she was going in.

Sarain walked out from the shadows, and headed towards the club entrance. She approached the large man who stared onward, and towered over her in both height and size. She peered up at him when he didn't move or open the door.

"Are you going to let me in?" she asked straight forward and without politeness.

The large man glanced down at her and said, "No more entries tonight, we're near closing." He remained strong and steady, blocking the doorway.

Sarain sighed; she would apparently have no luck tonight. She turned around to leave and found the blond man standing in front of her. She didn't flinch, yet it caught her off guard, and thought it odd that she had never heard him drawing near. He was indeed very pale up close, and even now looked quite polished. He stood there with a smile, and Sarain noticed that his eyes were an unusually bright shade of blue, but they didn't glow; at least not at the moment.

"I see you finally decided to come in, too bad you're too late; closing hour," the blond man stated pompously.

"You were watching me?" Sarain asked with surprise.

"Well I saw you waiting there across the street looking toward the club. I didn't realize it took so much thought into coming in," he responded sounding smug.

Sarain's blade flashed into her mind, but it was still too soon to tell. Besides, she couldn't move on the man with his large guard so near.

“You probably should have come in earlier when you were watching me and my associate talk,” the blond man said casually.

Sarain felt her heart stop for a second; she had known that she hadn’t hidden well when she was contemplating going in the club, but she had been much further away and better concealed when she had observed him with Nate earlier.

“Are you alright? You look bewildered. I think it would be best for you to go home and get some rest,” he spoke condescendingly.

Sarain collected herself and shot back, “I didn’t ask for your opinion.”

The man put his hands up as if to keep her at bay, and replied, “Just a simple suggestion,” then extended a hand out to her and said, “The name is Winston, by the way.”

Sarain simply stood there; she glanced at his hand, but made no attempt to shake it. Her expression was one that wasn’t amused.

Winston moved his hand back, but then gestured to her and asked, “And your name is?”

She didn’t reply, she only glared at him.

“Not very friendly, are you?” he remarked. His eyes then settled on her ank. She noticed it too. She waited for a reaction, but he merely smiled, and said, “Nice necklace.”

The entrance to the club abruptly opened, and Sarain’s attention quickly went to behind her. The final club-goers were leaving, and were now crowding past her. She turned back toward Winston, but he was no longer there; he was nowhere in sight. She scanned the crowd with no luck; no sign of him. It looked like her new acquaintance hadn’t stayed to finish the conversation, and she still had questions that needed to be answered.

Chapter 4

One steady footstep after another; it was quiet as the morning sun turned the dark sky just a slight shade of blue. Sarain hurried to reach her destination before time ran out. Dawn was approaching and she had one last thing she needed to do. She stopped and stood there waiting, gazing down on what was once a loving brother, and while she had never actually known him, she felt that it would be wrong to leave him alone. The sun would soon take care of her work; she normally would leave it at that, but today she required seeing it through. Countless times she had left the bodies of beasts to dissolve in the daylight, but this time, with this one, she could see the man it once was.

In her hand she held a picture; a happy family in a park, two brothers who would go to great lengths to protect the other. Kit would have no family now; no one to protect and no one to protect him. Sarain could try, but she was no real substitute, she lacked the instincts to care for someone. Both brothers had just been boys doing what came natural to them. She was the one who was unnatural, breaking the mold on what should have been a normal young woman. No, she had never been normal, she hadn't been lucky enough to experience that. She could only try her best, so that someone out there could live up to the standard that she couldn't. That's why she worked.

Sarain could feel the warmth of the sun on her back; she closed her eyes and let it embrace her. Its tenderness gave her a brief wave of tranquility, and it was almost as if being loved. When it passed, she opened her eyes and saw nothing but ash, the deed was done. She gave what remained one last look, and departed to go finish her task; it was time to tell Kit.

Each step up a stair was one that Sarain didn't want to make. She didn't long to see the look on Kit's face when he heard the news. But she found herself climbing his apartment's stairs; the boy deserved to know. Once she reached his door, she paused for a moment; she could still turn back. And then she thought of her own family, something she rarely did, and closed her eyes, hoping to force her thoughts away. Kit was all she wanted to think about.

Sarain took a deep breath, and knocked on the door. She heard the creaking of footsteps on the other side quickly approaching. A chain rattled, and then the door slowly opened. Kit stood tiredly in the door way; he looked like a small child, and as though he hadn't slept in quite some time. He pushed the door open, without a word, to let Sarain in. She walked past him and he locked up. Afterward, she turned to him and waited for him to ask, "Is Nate alright?"

She had prepared herself for this instance, but suddenly couldn't find the words. Instead, she bit her lower lip and shook her head no. Kit began to cry, and Sarain knew that she didn't need to say anything now. She gazed down at the sobbing boy, his heart was breaking, but she couldn't

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