



The Eternal Kiss

Christina Kelly

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by Christina Kelly

Romance

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2009

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Dedicated to

My Cousin,

Darrielle Mitchell

Who read the very first draft that long ago summer night, loved it and demanded I continue and finish it.

Sorry it took so long.

&

My Grandma,

Deanne Thompson

Thanks for letting me “borrow” all those books through the years. Sorry I haven't given any of them back.

The Eternal Kiss

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I love you both, thank you for giving me room and space to be creative thanks for your support!

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I can't say enough! Thank you for my writer's market book and the use of your printer and postage stamps!

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Your awesomeness is astounding, thanks for the free advertising!

All My Family and Friends

Thanks for your support and enthusiasm

Part One

Did I need to sell my soul

For pleasure like this

Did I have to lose control

To treasure your kiss

Did I need to place my heart

In the palm of your hand

Before I could even start

To understand?

-Martin Gore "Only when I lose myself"

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Prologue

She moved through the darkness of tombs, ivy and weeping willow trees before kneeling in front of a cracked headstone. Her head bowed, the girl's face barely showed from beneath the shabby, black velvet cloak. They didn't know I was standing here, at the wrought iron gate of the deteriorating graveyard, the crumbling headstones and overgrown weeds, neglected for years perhaps; Hidden behind the abandon church beside it. The snow was falling lightly, accented by the full moon on this unclouded night. Allurius stood, like he had for the previous few nights, waiting for her to appear.

The hooded girl sniffled and wiped away her tears. Not mourning anyone buried here, she was instead talking silently to the graves. "But you don't understand do you? How can you, you're all dead." She sighed and uttered a short, pitiful laugh.

I didn't venture any closer to her as she slid back the hood and raised her face to the sky. Her curled pitch-black hair cascaded down her chest, standing in beautiful contrast to her dark skin.

I waited for her to speak again while she reached her hand out and traced the letters on the headstone. Her fingerless gloves surely couldn't have brought her any warmth but she didn't seem to notice the cold.

"No but you must try to understand, Miriam, it's so hard truly envying you, to imagine the joy of lying down in your grave beside you."

"Hmmm," I muttered to myself. "She's on first-name basis with the dead. How charming."

She didn't hear me and I was pleasantly surprised that Allurius didn't either. He was already acting with no regard to self-preservation. His eyes never left the girl as he dashed behind the cypress tree just behind her. This sudden movement caught her attention and she whipped her pretty little head around to see the cause of the rushing wind. She was greeted only by silence. Her small nose twitched in fear as she turned every which way. Seeing a slight figure behind the trunk she focused on the weeping willow.

"Who's there?" she turned her body toward the tree. She looked around it warily since she was getting no answer from the stranger.

She strained to see what my predator eyes could easily see. "I only want to know your name," Allurius replied simply. He stepped out of the shadows and allowed himself to be shown in the light of the full moon. I could see by the look in his eyes that he was already completely in love with this girl, like the fool that he is.

She inhaled sharply when he reached out to touch her face.

"Who, what are you?" She backed up in fright at seeing Allurius, yet she could not help but look up into his ice-blue eyes and his cascading white-blond hair shocked her.

"Tell me my love, what is your name?" Allurius asked, almost breathless beholding the object of his desire.

Before she could react, Allurius moved closer near her. He reached forward and tenderly stroked her cheek. She jumped at his touch, unsure how, or even if, she should react.

"Oh, this is too perfect!" I whispered to myself with a smile on my face, and then disappeared into the night.

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Chapter 1

Dresden Joseph Hawthorn...

"Who is that?" I asked him when he came walking through the door of our flat. For two weeks, he'd been gone and now he walked in, disregarding me entirely with a young girl in tow. Ignoring me, he brushed past me and led her, whoever she was, into the sitting room. She eyed me with an inquisitive gaze, a small-pleased smile on her face while she hungrily hung on to him.

"Allurius!" I snapped.

He ran his hands through his platinum-blond hair and then turned to face me. He smiled, a broad infatuating smile that did little to hide his basic nature.

"Your circumstances are showing." I chided needlessly.

He laughed out right, for he really didn't care. I was willing to wager that his petite companion already knew him for what he was. "Dresden, Forgive my absence," he began, without necessity for I was not surprised by his sudden departure. He always strayed from me to wander haplessly. It was a habit I had already grown very used to.

He looked so tenderly at the girl, who couldn't have been more than sixteen or seventeen years old, that I was powerfully curious as to why he had brought her here. Her waist length hair was a sea of soft waves and the same jet-black hue like my own. Though her roots betrayed the true color of her hair was a darker brown shade. She looked at him just like he looked at her, full of adoration.

"Who is this?" I asked again. My gaze swept over her dark skin and plump lips, her dainty nose and full breasts before falling on her doe eyes. She turned her gaze to me and I was taken back by her unflinching attention.

Her graceful beauty and poise meant nothing. It was seeing her calm demeanor that confirmed my suspicions of what he planned to do with her. Allurius grabbed her hand. Her dark color contrasted sharply against the white marble of his own. He had already forgotten I was in the room by the way he hugged her closely to him. For the first time, I noticed she was draped head to toe in black. Her nails were painted black, her simple black skirt touched the tops of her shiny black combat boots and the black turtleneck embraced her like a glove, boasting the hills and curves of her youthful body.

"Are you going to answer me?" I asked, becoming annoyed.

Allurius stared at me like he'd just noticed I was in the room. "Well Dresden! I'm Back!" He grinned, wearing my threadbare patience. He released the girl and took me in his arms. I lightly pecked his lips before drawing away and grabbing his shoulders.

"The girl Allurius, who is she!" I demanded. I couldn't scan her mind; she was too utterly at ease, yielding nothing.

"Ah," he said, bringing her to his side. "This is my Alana Marie." His eyes, such a pale blue that they seemed to be almost colorless, danced wildly and then locked with mine.

"Alana, how lovely," I said and then smiled at the girl.

"Thanks," Alana, replied, tilting her head slightly. She was admiring my face, I suddenly realized. She had a clear and confident voice that was unmarred by any uneasiness.

"Tell me, Dresden, what do you think of her?" Allurius' thoughts spoke in my mind.

I glared at Allurius while Alana watched him with lovesick eyes.

"Come now love! Don't be angry. I returned didn't I?" He smiled.

I sighed in return. "What is this about? Why did you bring her here?"

Alana seemed startled by the exchange that she knew was happening although she couldn't hear it. "Food," he replied and began to laugh. He withdrew a handkerchief from the pocket of his blue velvet vest and covered his sensuous lips while they curved with laughter.

"Allurius!" I shouted out loud, causing Alana to jump and jerk her head in my direction.

"Now you know that I'm not serious!" he said, running his hands down his midnight-blue pants. "Dresden, come with me into the other room."

Allurius turned and started out of the room before I could reply. I went over to Alana and smiled softly, leaning down to kiss her forehead. To my surprise, she lifted her head and met my lips with hers. She reached to touch a lock of my hair when we parted. She smiled, full of adoration for me. He knew, like I knew, that she wouldn't run, even though she should have.

"This place is so large," Alana said in a reprimanding manner. "He told me it was three floors. You'd think he'd tell you which room he is going to."

I laughed at the way she had said this. "Ah, yes. I shouldn't linger. We'll be right back."

I kissed her again and then followed Allurius back through the foyer and up the curving staircase to the library. I knew her mortal hearing wouldn't be able to listen in on our conversation unless Allurius raised his voice, which, of course, he would. He sat impatiently behind our grand Victorian desk. Just about everything in this room was an exact duplicate of our library at our home in Lake Forest.

“What is it Dresden?” he asked me, while bringing his long legs on top of the desk, crossing them at the ankle. He leaned back in his wing-backed chair, his face slightly amused while he waited for me to speak.

“Why are you doing this? Bringing this girl here to kill her? Unnecessary cruelty.” I told him half heartedly, sitting down in one of the chairs across from him.

“Ah shut up Dresden! You know exactly why I brought her here.” He replied his melodious accent thickened with his passion. “You can't tell me she isn't perfect for a companion. She is beautiful to an almost ludicrous point, and you'll love her.” He smirked, eyeing me knowingly.

“Allurius, you have got to be kidding! Alana can't be more than seventeen years old! Far too young.” I snapped.

He sat up pulling his feet off the desk and glared at me. “Please, save me your hysterics.” He rolled his eyes. “In that living room sits a girl who is about to become our companion, and there is nothing you can do to stop it. I plan to start the circumstances this very night.” He added matter-of-factly.

He tossed his tailored brocade jacket to the side and exposing the plain white t-shirt that clung to his body. He stood up ready to leave the room.

“And you love her?” I asked surprised he'd do something so rash. Allurius had never been the perfect picture of self-restraint but this seemed wholly out of character.

“Yes! I love her! I don't know why I do but how could I not? She's so bright and wonderful to look at.” He turned his back to me, to let me know he had no more say. I shrugged. He had clearly already made up his mind a long time ago. There wasn't anything that I could do to stop him from handing her his wrist.

Even though we were set to return home to Lake Forest tomorrow night, he'd begin a process that would take days to finish. “Come on, Dresden, watch me bring her over, join in this experience, for she will be yours too. Will she not?”

I nodded and he hugged me briefly. I wanted to speak, to yell out, No, Allurius she doesn't need this, and no Allurius spare her! She'll hate you later Allurius like they all do. God, My Gwen was a perfect enough example of this. But I said nothing and he caught my worried gaze. His own was wild with fire.

“Now come Dresden, watch me do this,” he said twisting the brass door handle and shooting out the room.

Alana Marie Sheridan...

The apartment was as quiet as a church, except for the rain softly hitting the window. I sat on the mauve couch. So ridiculously plush, I practically sank into the cushions. I leaned back to look out the window, really more a wall of glass than a window, to see the Miami skyline. I listened to their hushed voices travel down the hall and I wondered what Allurius and Dresden

were fighting about.

I closed my eyes and thought of only Allurius, my sweetheart. How shocked he had been to find I still adored him even after he told me of his 'circumstances.'

"You mean you're a vampire?" I asked.

"Alana I just have different circumstances than you do." He sighed.

"Vampire!" I said again.

"Fine, but I do loathe that word, really, 'Vampire' so simple."

Then he had swept me up in his arms. Fine, 'circumstances' whatever they wanted to refer to it as. I could handle that, anything to be with him, loved by him and not anyone's burden.

Dresden wasn't half bad himself. Just as heartbreakingly handsome as Allurius and the same towering six-foot and some odd inches height. With midnight blue eyes and black hair that fell just above his shoulders, he probably couldn't walk down the street without women blocking his path. My inside fluttered whenever he turned those sleepy midnight blues on me.

I heard Allurius' voice and I sat up in excitement. I didn't hear their footsteps though I could clearly see them walking toward me.

"Circumstances." I pondered.

Dresden had a somber look on his face as he sat down beside me, gesturing for me to come closer. I obliged and melted into him. Allurius wore a very peculiar look on his face as he kneeled down in front of me and reached for my hand.

"Ah, Alana, did you miss me while I was gone?" Allurius smiled, my eyes darted from his gleaming white hair and up and down his lean muscular frame. I could barely think as I mumbled what he wanted to hear.

"Yes, Allurius." His icy eyes cut into me, his eyes were extremely pale. They seemed almost colorless. Longing was shown clear in them. Or was it hunger? I fidgeted uneasily. It could easily be hunger.

"Alana, as I told you he would be, Dresden is quite taken by you." He began.

I frowned, wanting him to get to his point. "And as you also know, I love you very much and I want to make up for all the turmoil you've had in your short life."

I nodded. He had told me this before. My calm began to dissolve. Why was he looking at me that way?

"You want to throw me out?" I asked trembling.

"No, never." Allurius assured.

"We want to give you our circumstances." Dresden finished for him.

I laughed without meaning to. "Circumstances? You mean turn me into a vampire?" I asked.

“Vampire is such a dull word.” Dresden sighed.

“Okay then, what circumstances?” I demanded, “Sleep all day, party all night?”

Allurius grunted, “Fine, vampire, call it what you wish. But it's what I want to give to you. Our life, it means to suck all humanity out from your body and to take the life inside of me into yourself.”

I was stunned. “Oh God, no.” I muttered, my voice shaking just beyond my control. Allurius looked at me in disbelief. “I don't know,” I managed.

“Oh you don't? You don't want to be with me?” He asked mockingly, “So what? You go back home? Perhaps Rachelle will come save you?” He stood up and turned on his heel, clearly hurt by my refusal.

“No Allurius.” I went after him. “I can't be apart from you, I need you.” He lifted me in his arms and rained kisses on my face.

“I want to be with you. Both of you, always.” I murmured as he laid me on the floor of the living room. The carpet had to be at least an inch deep.

“You wouldn't be turned away from us Alana, if you didn't want to be turned.” Dresden said coming to kneel beside me. I watched as Allurius glared daggers at him.

“No. It's okay.” I whispered closing my eyes, fighting off the waves of unease washing through me. I was powerfully nervous. I trembled so much I'm surprised the floor didn't give beneath me. I opened my eyes to glance around the large ornate living room before meeting Allurius' gaze.

“Be full aware of my love. Calm down, close your eyes.” He whispered in my ear. I lost all control of my emotions as my limbs went limp.

Allurius LeBeau...

“Relax.” I murmured brushing the locks of hair from her face. Sweat wet the crown of her head as she struggled to remain to calm. She whimpered and Dresden looked as if his heart was breaking.

“Please Alana, remain calm, love.” He whispered, his own voice on edge.

I traced my tongue along her neck, tasting the salty wetness that was pooling beneath her turtleneck.

Alana moaned then fainted. I cradled her head in the crook of my arm and brought her neck to my mouth. My eyeteeth sharpened in anticipation. As she felt the pinprick pain of my fangs penetrating her artery, Alana's eyes sprang open. They took on a lazy look as the bloodletting caused her to relax.

Dresden put his hand on the small of her back and kissed her forehead tenderly. I concentrated on the bloodletting, watching her chest rise and fall as I drank all of her terrible memories. As I took the Nectar of her body, her heartbeat slowed down to a slow sporadic

drumming. I pulled away, dazed and flushed with pleasure.

"I'm dying." Alana groaned while she lulled her head around to look up at Dresden.

"Hush." I said softly, brushing her hair from her face. She began panting heavily and rolled on to her side grasping for breath.

"Oh, oh it hurts." she said panting all the while.

"Now Alana, listen to me. Look at me. Stop that! Breathe softly." I instructed, twisting her so she lay flat on her back. "Do you want this?" I asked her, she again rolled her head to look at Dresden, staring at him imploringly.

"Allurius, please..." he started.

"It's already begun!" I snapped.

"Take it. Do it yourself. Listen to my blood and let it call out to your hunger." I whispered into the shell of her ear. She whimpered pulling away from me. "Come now Alana." I made a slash across the base of my throat for her.

"Oh no. No." She said concerned for me, lifting her hand to the wound trying to stop the bleeding.

"Do you want the circumstances?" I asked her.

She nodded quickly while fresh tears poured from her eyes. I savored the moment and looked at Dresden. His wonderfully midnight blue eyes clouded with sympathy. His beautifully chiseled face marred by a sorrowful frown. The lights were low and the rain had stopped.

"Very good then." I smiled.

"Drink, drink." I coaxed her mouth to the wound. She was sweating profusely now. Her hair was slick with it. She winced slightly before placing her mouth on my neck. She took the blood sparingly at first while her eyes welled with tears. She was so careless that some spilled from the sides of her mouth. But as the fiery blood hit her throat she withdrew more and more to the point where she was clutching me against herself, suckling at the fount of blood feverishly.

Alana moaned in ecstasy while she took my life, each pull harder and faster than the last. I was becoming faint, having neglected to feed before bringing her to Miami.

"Dresden." I groaned. He was by my side and offering his wrist to me in an instant. I latched on without hesitation. His free arm wrapped around my waist steadying me as I struggled to sit upright.

Alana finally released her hold of me. She lay back down on the carpet. Dresden retrieved his wrist from my mouth and helped me to my feet. We waited for her to start screaming. For the first night of the circumstances is excruciatingly painful.

Instead flecks of violet in her eyes began to blaze and widen. The dark brown nearly all together disappeared. She tried to sit up, as the blood on the corner of her mouth seeped into

her skin but she was thrown back on to the floor with a harsh thud.

“Ah! My god!” She roared. Alana clawed at the carpet, as her nails grew longer and curved. The pain of the transformation took hold of her and terror seized her face.

We quickly went to restrain her wrists and ankles. Alana thrashed about wildly as my blood implanted in her body, turning her mortal cells into preternatural ones. She turned her head to vomit and Dresden let her hands free. She turned on her side and up heaved repeatedly. Her body shook violently with her sobs. Dresden held her and lifted her onto his lap when she was through. I could only stare at the vomit and wonder why I hadn't thought to lie something beneath her ahead of time.

“Quickly get her into one of the tubs Dresden and I'll go fetch a change of clothes” I said.

He nodded and quickly left the room with Alana. I went up the curving stairs and into my rooms where I grabbed one of my shirts and a pair of thick wool socks and went to where they were in the master bedroom. I paused at the door of the bathroom and watched as Dresden tenderly peeled Alana's soiled clothes off her body and placed her in the running water of the large tub.

“Allurius you should get in with her.” He said as I placed the clothing on top of the two bath sheets he had taken the time to get.

“Will you stay too?” Alana asked him hoarsely.

I frowned but Dresden disregarded my look and nodded. “Of course, anything you want.”

Mon Dieu, she looked ghastly. I quickly stripped my clothing and got in the boiling water behind Alana. She collapsed against my chest. I cupped water in my hands and poured it over her hair and face. She quickly fell asleep, her only escape from the pain she was experiencing.

“Her eyes!” Dresden said as he sat on the ledge of the tub, holding Alana's hand.

“Yes it looks as if they'll be completely violet before she's fully turned.” We watched as Alana's slumbering body started to show minute signs of the transformation. Her nails curved severely at their tips and took on lucidity. Her skin became as smooth and flawless as porcelain.

“Let's dry her off and put her to bed, a coffin won't be necessary for a few more nights, the sun will do nothing but sting her eyes.” I began to say as I kissed the top of her head, but Alana's body begun to spasm and convulse.

Dresden gasped and reached into the water to pull her out. “No Dresden, leave her. Its normal, and her body is being rewired completely! You know this!” I snapped holding her body closer to me.

Dresden stood up, his clothes absolutely drenched in water. "Yes! But I can't stand to see her in pain, even in her slumber she's grimacing." He snapped.

"Dresden please go. Prepare her room, she'll be fine. I'll hold her until she remains still." I said through clenched teeth as Alana's limbs thrashed at me.

Despite what I told Dresden, I thought possibly her body was fighting the change but after a short while she relaxed considerably. I had to look at her face to assert if she was still in fact alive.

"Alana, listen to me darling. You must not fight against the change. Relax, it will be more bearable if you just relax." I murmured. I rose with her in my arms and propped her on the vanity chair as if she were a doll. I wrapped a towel around my waist and proceeded to Alana as if she were an invalid.

I took her feet and dried them then her legs and arms. Finally I reached her thick hair. I took care to dry it carefully, it was much too long to wrap in a towel and wind atop her head. The artificial black dye had been shed during the early stages of the change, though I had no doubt she'd dye it back just as soon as she had the chance.

"She looks like a doll." Dresden smiled coming in just as I was buttoning up my shirt around her small frame. He handed me the robe he had in the crook of his arm.

"Thanks love." I said and discarded my own towel sliding on the thick terry cloth garment. Dresden pulled Alana into his arms and began to carry her out the room. Confident that he'd be able to take care of her for the time being I hurriedly went into my own rooms to change so I could join them.

Dresden...

I laid Alana on the elaborate tester bed in the dimly lit room. The dark paneled walls made the room rich with warmth. Her hair fanned out against the pillows and I was just raising the blankets to her chin as she opened her violet eyes, the color was becoming a richer pink color however.

"My, my." I said leaning to kiss her.

"Dresden, my eyes feel like they've been polished, I see everything in a way I haven't before. I've got a cat's vision now. Don't I?" Alana whispered hoarsely.

Her body was relaxed, she wasn't experiencing any pain anymore, and the beginning of the change was complete. Her thick eyelashes gave her face a dreamy quality as she gazed at me waiting for my answer.

I chuckled. "A cat's vision? That's a good way of putting it. It's a predator's vision, love, So that you may move through the night and stalk your prey easily." I smiled.

She nodded. "Oh, okay. Will you lie down with me?" She asked.

Nodding, I settled on the bed beside her. She turned into me and closed her eyes. The veins in her neck showed through her dark skin as she inhaled. She was struggling with a thirst that she didn't know how to quench. I kissed her.

"Allurius will be along shortly love, he will feed you." I whispered. If I gave her my own blood it would confuse the change, it had to be the same blood from the beginning.

"My heart is racing with yours." she said looking at me with glassy eyes.

"Good. My blood is responding to your hunger." I said and swept the hair from her face. She laughed and began to cough. She covered her mouth and turned her head from me.

"Alana are you alright?" I asked. She looked at me startled and I noticed the blood at the corners of her mouth. I handed her my handkerchief and she showed me what she had closed up in her hand. Two of her teeth lay in her palm slick with saliva.

I lifted her head and she opened her mouth. Prominent fangs were growing in where her two eyeteeth had been.

"What a messy ordeal." She said bringing her fingers to her fangs. "Can I have my old teeth please?" She asked and I handed them back to her smiling. "Eh, feel better, the spasms have stopped. I feel different. Not bad just different. Is it finished?"

"The physical phase for the most part. It's different for everyone. The pain is done. I can tell you that for sure."

Allurius came to us just then and fed her sufficiently enough so that she fell back into her slumber. He drew the heavy drapes in the room to a close and turned the lamps even lower. I waited for him in the hallway as he kissed and fawned over his sleeping beauty. He finally came to me with a grand smile on his face.

"Magnificent isn't she? Ah, I've truly out done myself." He gloated over his new fledgling.

I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of agreeing that she was indeed impossibility beautiful the combination of dark skin and long waving hair.

"Those eyes." I muttered. I couldn't help myself.

Allurius' ice blue eyes danced with excitement. "I cannot explain that." he began, tossing his pale hair behind his shoulder, "But aren't they lovely? Maybe Micahlene will know why it occurred."

Allurius continued to babble on. Which he did so often, but no one really minds listening to his melodious accent. He went on about how he had to get Alana things! Lots of new clothing and shoes and cosmetics she didn't need but would surely want. And ah! Her room in Lake Forest we'd have to redo a suite to her liking, for she was ours forever.

"Isn't this wonderful?" He turned to me finally.

"Yes, Allurius. Of course, but you're saying things I know already. She need not ever want for anything, because she'll have everything." I replied.

He nodded. "I'm famished. I must hunt and retire." Allurius smiled and came toward me. "I feel so complete. Did you see her? Micahlene will be truly envious." He laughed. "Seeing as she got stuck with your Gwendolyn." He said her name in disgust. I flinched with the mere mention.

"I'll see you tomorrow evening." He took his leave once again, leaving me standing alone outside of Alana's door. The desire to set up camp outside her room came very strong to me. I shrugged of my unfounded suspicions and retired to my own room.

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 2

We awoke the next night to find Alana in the bed drenched with blood. I had never seen this occur before. It was as if her body had rejected the change. Alana sat up looking at us. Her eyes were a fiery magenta color. She looked absolutely fine. There were even footprints of blood leading from the bed to the bookshelf and back again, as if she had gotten bored and decided to pick up something to read.

Allurius stood looking at her in shock. She seemed perfectly normal, besides her unusual new eye color, but she wasn't a vampire. His blood was soaked into the bed sheets having been expelled from her body.

"How are you still alive after this?" Allurius mumbled, his face screwed in concern. Alana climbed down from the bed. "I still feel how I did last night, I still feel different."

"Alright, let me think." Allurius paced. Alana looked to me and I smiled at her.

"Why don't you take that thing off and get changed?" I said referring to her soiled shirt.

As she passed by me I noticed the small wound on her neck. I grabbed her and brought her closer to me. I frowned as I lifted her waving hair. There was a thin straight cut across the back of her neck. It was healing extremely slowly due to her lack of vampiric blood.

"What? What is it, Dresden?" Allurius said coming behind me. He hissed and I could tell already he was enraged. "Who did this to you, Alana?" He asked roughly.

"Did what?" She mused her eyebrows knitted into a frown.

"This is a fresh wound Allurius. It had to be done while she was sleeping." I said. "It's as if someone drained her of all the blood you put into her before she could be fully turned."

"That is simply ridiculous." Allurius scoffed. "Who? No, not who, why would anyone want to do that?" He started. "And if you know all the answers tell me why on earth her eyes are that color!"

I shrugged just as puzzled as he was. "I'll tell you what I am going to do. We are going to take her out to hunt and see what happens. Since she's still alive she must be at least partially turned correct?"

"Why do you talk like I'm not in the room?" Alana snapped.

"Hush," Allurius said kissing her plump lips. "Now go on and change into something else and we'll go out into the night..."

Alana interrupted him, "Then we'll come back and you'll tell me your stories?" She asked. I arched an eyebrow toward Allurius. He sighed. "Yes, I'll tell you my history, if there is time of course."

"And you?" Alana looked at me.

I flinched involuntarily. My history was a sordid one, but so was Allurius'. If he was willing to bare all then why should I hesitate? "Sure, love. Whatever you want." She beamed and I melted. Yea, she had us wrapped around her little finger.

After she changed into a black empire waist gown, Allurius had her drink from him again. "How does it taste?" He asked.

"Wonderful." She mused and wiped her mouth on his sleeve. Allurius smirked as he brushed her hair back from her face. He looked at me and I shrugged. I had no idea what to do about this limbo she was apparently in. She slipped her hand on his wrist. "But I want to go now Allurius." She said sternly.

He easily relinquished himself from her grasp. "You'll wait." He hissed, turning on his heel and retreating to his rooms to change.

I stared at her dark magenta eyes in fascination. She swept her hair behind her ear and sat her eyes on the window. My admiring gaze embarrassed her. It appeared Allurius' blood was causing her pain again. Proof she wasn't turned at all.

"Will you hold me please?" she said imploringly.

I smiled reassuringly, hearing the faint rumble of Allurius cursing one of his shoes, tossing it at the wall and searching for another pair. "Why of course, Doll." I crooned.

Sweat pulsed from the crown of her head and her eyes were wide open, trembling all the while. "It'll all be over soon, Lana. Just hold on a little while longer." I whispered, retrieving my handkerchief from my breast pocket and gently pressed it against her forehead

She had collected herself minutely. Enough to stand on her own and brush her hair back from her face. As she ran her fingers down the front of her ruffled dress she became aware of my inquiring gaze. "I can't take it anymore. Will you take me to..." she nodded slightly toward the lighted city outside the window.

"Gladly." I replied grabbing her hand. We were just walking out the door, when the thought, Allurius is going to be furious popped into my head.

"I'm right here." He replied appearing beside us and frowning at me as he gathered Alana possessively under his arm. I only smiled in return.

Allurius...

The humid after rain summer air enveloped us as I made my way toward the deepest part of downtown Miami with Alana under my arms. I settled on a dim alleyway. I tossed the few locks of loose hair behind my ear and placed both my hands on her shoulders. Though sev-

enteen years old, she looked at me with the imploring gaze of a five year old. It broke my heart.

"I don't think I can do this." She murmured as I took her by the hand to the entrance of the alley. She fought spasms of muscle pain in her arms. The transformation for some reason had been halted the night before and was now causing her extreme pain. We attracted a few inquisitive gazes from the scarce mortals that passed by us.

She leaned against my side for support. Her tears marring my white shirt, her cheek crushed against the velvet of my black blazer. I looked down at her, her 5 foot 3 height seemed even smaller compared to my 6 feet and 3 inches. She was trembling again. The sweat ran down her flawless skin. The blood of a human would quicken this excruciating process.

"Didn't I tell you I'd take care of you? Come now, trust me." I said, holding her firmly around the waist as we walked side by side into the dank alley. I easily made my way across the pot-holed pavement and I immediately noticed the mortal asleep in the back doorway of a store. I spotted the man quickly, passed out, with his head on a folded cardboard box. He had a cheap bottle of beer tightly gripped in his hand.

"Right there, yes him." I mumbled, kneeling in front of the scruffy old man.

"Oh, but he's sleeping." Alana whispered kneeling beside me. She slumped against my side.

"Don't you worry about it, it'll be like slipping into sweet oblivion for him." I said reaching over and unbuttoning the man's collar, careful so my sharp fingernails didn't mar his skin or my many rings didn't get caught on his clothing.

I stood back with Dresden and we looked on as Alana leaned forward and brushed her fingers across his face. Dresden looked at me and then back at her. His black hair glistened in the exceptionally bright moonlight. "I don't understand." He murmured.

It was working. Despite the lack of my blood in her veins she still craved human blood.

The man looked up at Alana unafraid. "You love me?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Love you." She nodded and he moved over so she could sit next to him. He smiled as she hugged him. Then quicker than the man could comprehend Alana's head was buried into his neck. She was doing it rather sloppy. Why wasn't she even drinking any of it? And the bum didn't seem to be passing out anytime soon. I rushed over to her as she pushed the man away from her.

"Finish him off now, Alana!" I hissed.

She shook her head 'no' fiercely leaping up to her feet. "No I can't do it, I cant!" She cried.

Dresden came up beside her and she clung to his side. He brushed his lips across her cheek. "Why, don't you want him?" He asked.

She began sobbing. "I don't want him to die."

A smirk broke out across my face. "He's going to die eventually if you leave him like this! Do him the courtesy of a quick death." I grabbed the man up by the collar and pushed him toward Alana. She shrieked.

"Allurius, please." Dresden said trying his best to comfort her.

"No, no buts. This will help the transformation along." I replied as I turned her around to face me. She looked up at me with her startlingly Magenta eyes filled with tears and I dropped the man and held her instead.

I sighed. I couldn't believe this was affecting her like this. "I advise we get the hell out of here." Dresden said, kicking the most likely dead man to the side as he lead us out of the alley.

I was severely disappointed. "I haven't the foggiest idea as to what to do with her now." I turned on her as we reached the sidewalk, "You've seen someone die before, what is the difference?"

"What?" Dresden's eyebrow arched my way. Alana pushed me away from her and walked ahead. I took hold of her wrist and spun her around to look at me. "Speak! Say something! Give me some explanation Lana!"

Tears fell down her face. "He didn't do anything to me! Okay?" She snapped.

I looked away, without a feeding and with such a strange circumstance exchange I was concerned if she had at least turned enough to remain alive. Dresden just looked at us silently and Alana stared up at me helplessly.

"Don't cry. Hush. Of course I understand." I said.

She sniffled and wiped her eyes with the back of her hands. "You could ask Micahlene why I am the way I am... She's with Lila in Melbourne." These words spilled out of Alana's mouth and I could tell she didn't realize what she was saying. The mere mention of Lila sent shivers down my spine.

"What? How do you know those names?"

Dresden smiled at her. "If she knows about Micahlene then she must have enough of your blood."

"Yes, but Lila is dead." I said matter-of-factly. "And it's Gwen who is in Melbourne with Micahlene." I frowned. She didn't get these images from my blood.

"Who are these people?" Alana asked.

"Later." Dresden and I said simultaneously.

Alana shrugged. I wasn't going to admit it to Dresden but I was beginning to think he might be right. Someone had drained my blood from her. That didn't explain how she knew those names however. I cursed out loud and both of them looked at me.

Dresden looked just as stressed as I felt. "Contacting Micahlene wouldn't be a bad idea."
He started.

"No not yet. We'll give it one more night." I said quickly, he sighed. "Come now then lets
go home."

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 3

I hadn't even thought about getting Alana her own coffin, for of course she needed one. Dresden's offer to bunk up with her had made furious! I stood over him, as he sat in his black wing back chair, hissing out all of my anger. Half way through my rant even I knew it had no real point just me needing to hear my own voice. Dresden sat somberly, half ignoring me I suspect, until I became quiet.

"What's the issue here, Allurius? There isn't one I was merely being polite," he said wrapping his arms around me, he swiftly placed a kiss on my cheek, and he looked at me intently. Alana had gone off to change her blood splattered clothing so we were alone in the dimly lit bedroom.

"You think something has happened to her, don't you?" He asked.

I broke free from his hold and crossed my arms across my chest. "No need to whisper Dresden. She can hear you anyway." I said, dismissing his idiotic question. Whoever had the wild idea to hurt Alana would have to get through me first. "Alana will sleep in my coffin Dresden, because she is mine! You go find your own—."

"My own what exactly?" He said through clenched teeth. He raked his fingers through his hair as he turned away from me.

Dresden was losing his patience, something of which he had immensely while I had none. "Allurius, why are you behaving like this?" He asked me as if I were a young child. He took my hand in his. "You regret changing her? Making her one of us?" He asked softly brushing my hair from my face, while his own curly, barely shoulder length black locks fell in front of his eyes.

"And if I did, which I don't, what makes you say that?" I asked returning his serious glare.

"Because it's gone all wrong, someone had to have..."

I stopped him. "Or do you regret my making her because she reminds you of Gwen?" I countered, grinning at him wickedly, mercilessly. I struggled to keep the grin on my face. It hurt me to see his eyes downcast in sorrow.

Dwelling on why I made Alana a vampire is a grotesque waste of time, though we have plenty of it. Dresden was looking at me irefully now, and I tried to hold back laughter that was about to pour out of me like water from a faucet. Dresden, the beautiful imp, didn't know how

to be angry. It wasn't in his character. He was far too kind, patient, and humble.

"Oh Dresden, stop. You're killing me." I began to laugh, covering my mouth with my hand.

"Alana is sure to hate you with time and when she does, who will you come running to?" He retorted.

I stopped my fit of giggles and grew serious. "Now listen to me." I hissed at him. "What I do and whom I do it to is none of your business!" I snapped.

"Oh yes it is! You brought her home to me, did you not? Now you're angry because I love her too!" He shouted.

Alana walked into the lush dark green bedroom, fairly similar to the other three bedrooms on the second floor of our apartment. And like the other rooms cluttered with books and such it had a large canopy in the center of the room. She wore a long flowing white gown, with bell sleeves and an empire waist that accented her full breasts. Her eyes filled with tears. I sighed, again with the histrionics. I had forgotten how sensitive newborns were.

"Why are you fighting?" She finally managed to choke out. Dresden made a move toward her.

Don't you dare, I snapped. My eyes cut into him as I took Alana's hand. For a moment I couldn't take my gaze off of her magenta eyes. It puzzled me how they had changed their color so drastically. They were aflame as they had never been when she was mortal. Their depth trapped me and yet they seemed so hollow.

"Stop crying. Right now. There is nothing for you to worry about, you hear?" I said softly gathering her into my arms. "We have all of tomorrow night and all of forever to be together and to have our talks." I murmured. Dresden smiled slightly.

"Yes, your stories about Micahlene?" She asked her mouth parted in wonder, her fangs showing.

"About Micahlene, and Gwen and all the rest." I said bopping her nose.

She frowned. "Well why won't you tell me now?" she paused and bolted up right. She shot toward the window, the birds were chirping, that's what had caught her attention. She turned around her face contoured in horror. "Come on we have to go now, so we won't be burned." She said tugging on Dresden's sleeve.

He placed his hand lovingly on her cheek. "Don't worry Lana we have all of the dawn before we fall into sleep." He replied trying to sooth her to no avail.

"Allurius please!" she cried her eyes wet with tears. She was behaving irrationally.

"Alright, My god. You'd think I'd shoved you out into the sun." I said grabbing her hand and leading her out the door and up a short flight of stairs to the third floor.

Her other hand was firmly latched on to Dresden's pulling him along with us. She was like a young child, everyone giving in to it to make her happy.

When we reached the windowless attic I stopped and turned her around. "Alright settle down right now or I will go completely insane, do you hear?" I asked.

She shook her head and wiped the tears from her eyes. I pulled open the door to a large storage room, a door that a hundred mortal men wouldn't be able to pry open, and revealed two large black wooden coffins.

The room was ornately painted with gold's, blues and greens, drapes hung along the corners of the walls. Alana smiled in relief and followed Dresden, who was not the least bit happy about having to retire early, inside. I ignored him as he passed. I was still pretending to be angry with him. He went to kiss Alana before retiring to his respective coffin. The kiss lingered as Alana parted her lips a bit and held her hand to his neck, he willingly obliged. When they finally parted he could hardly wipe the smirk off of his pretty little face.

I bolted the door and shut off the light before lifting the lid to our coffin. I stepped inside and sat up. "Come in, my love." I said as soothingly as possible. She was trembling as she took my hand and slipped into the coffin beside me, she embraced me as I closed the lid on top of us. She pressed her slender body against mine and kissed my lips as she had Dresden's. It was merely to forget the terrible fear she was feeling.

I held her in my arms as we waited hours it seemed, for the sun to rise. She fell into her slumber first and then I. Alana danced in my dreams that day and thanked me for saving her.

"Now I can truly live!" She laughed, her long legs twirling. I smiled, comforted by my delusions, and reached for her but she faded away.

Alana...

The apartment was empty when I rose. This was to be our last night in Miami. We were finally heading to Lake Forest. The trip back home had been delayed by my strange circumstance exchange. Dresden and Allurius had repeatedly asked me about the wound on my neck that wouldn't heal. I honestly couldn't tell them where it came from, as I had been in a near coma like state after the first night. After the last two nights it seemed I was back on track to becoming a vampire. And I was starving.

I grinned at my reflection in the hallway mirror, something I'm sure my maker did frequently. My freshly dyed jet-black hair fell around my shoulders and onto my black Lost Boys t-shirt. I tucked the house keys into the pocket of my skintight jeans and headed out on the hunt. I knew Allurius would be stalking me so I zigzagged my way around the city.

I trailed behind a tall gray haired woman. Her blood called out to my hunger. Dang, If only I could spare her I thought, repulsed at the thought of killing her. I had yet to have my first human victim but I planned to change that tonight. Her blood was meant for me. She was wan-

dering toward a small motel. She was tired, very tired. The tips from her part-time job stuffed into her purse. She wondered why she even bothered. I was falling hopelessly in love with this woman and her tumbling gray hair. I followed her up the stairs.

She finally turned around. "Hello?" she said.

I smiled. "Hello." I pushed her gently inside the room and down onto the twin bed. She was paralyzed with shock.

She found it difficult to be afraid of me. She didn't understand how she could be absolutely terrified of me, but she was.

"You're tired, close your eyes." I whispered and she did. I buried my face in her neck. I kissed her throat, she passed out and I was close, so close but I pulled away and left her unharmed on the hotel bed. I watched her chest rise and fall and realized how close I had been to ending her life. I was trembling and I couldn't bear to be so near to this almost victim. I climbed out the window and leapt to the ground, running all the way back home.

Allurius...

The lights were ablaze through the whole three-story apartment. I could hear the sound of book pages being turned rapidly. "I don't know why he does this. He doesn't need even one lamp on but he's got the whole place lit up like a damned Christmas tree." I muttered.

I heard her laugh and my heart warmed. "Baby." I smiled as I looked over at her sitting on the floor of the foyer watching the lights play off the walls. Small things like this could hold a newborn's attention for hours. I wondered how long she'd been sitting there.

"You two are like an old married couple. Don't do that! Don't do this, now why would you put that there!" She laughed as I do, all the time over the simplest things.

"You are something else." I said putting my leather jacket on the coat rack. I grinned, as she stood, then tottered, her arms out and hands grasping at small beams of light reflecting off the walls.

I clapped my hands to get her attention and she laughed along with me. I wrapped my arm around her, settling my hand on her waist. She was all but purring as she nuzzled her face into my chest.

"Allurius." Alana said finally. I pressed my lips against her forehead. Oh she was almost unbearably human like. Being such a new vampire and filled with the blood the way she was. Alana tilted her head to stare up at me.

"You promised, remember? Tonight you'll tell me right? Who Micahlene and Gwen are?" She asked her brows knitted in a frown. I couldn't help but smile at the gazed over look in her eyes. She was drunk off the blood. Her lips were flushed and she managed a small smile. "Well are you?" She twirled a bit of her hair on her finger. "You have to, tonight, please Allurius, I'd really like to know."

Of course I didn't want to rehash my past tonight, I didn't want to talk about Gwen or any of the others but her pleading was sincere enough. "As you wish." I answered finally.

She smiled and wheeled around up the curving stairs. I sat down in my favorite chair in the living room. I crossed my feet at the ankles and placed them on the coffee table. Lana came back with Dresden in tow, his hand on her tiny waist. He kissed her head before smiling at me.

"I hear we're in for a tale of yours, Mr. LeBeau." He smiled slyly as he took a seat on the sofa across from me. Alana snuggled close to him and remained quiet, studying me with her intent gaze. She went from my disheveled white hair that fell past my shoulders down to my black suede shoes. I smiled at her. Dresden looked at me with the same stare, but I watched him just the same, his lustrous black hair and dark blue eyes. "Whenever you're ready."

"I know." I grinned.

"I could start with the pleasantries I suppose. I was born January 1st, 1749 to Linder Wilde and Micahlene LeBeau, both fairly wealthy from family inheritances. This was an arranged marriage. My mother was about fifteen years younger than Linder, she was born and raised in France while my father had come from England. But I was born and raised on the French countryside, in a beautiful manor in Vannes. I was the youngest of five children, three sisters and an older brother. My brother and sisters were not good-looking children."

"Now my mother was exceptionally beautiful, with thick chestnut hair and pale blue eyes identical to mine, but Linder was not. He was a stout and ugly, but kind and gentle man. My birth father happened to be Jacque, one of my mother's attendants. No one new this, save my mother and I and because of this I was always my mother's favorite, 'her little love' she would call me. I don't see how it could have been very hard to miss seeing as I was the only child with platinum blonde hair identical to his."

"My childhood was a very good one. I was always happy and carefree. I was spoiled because I was the youngest, kept from doing even the most trivial tasks because of my mother. And I didn't have to serve in the French army to bring honor to our family, my eldest brother, Sebastian, had already done so with much grace and dignity. I didn't have to work because of the family wealth. But there were two things that were expected of me. To engage in sports such as fencing and horse back riding, and to learn all the classics, to read to write. That was a must."

"I did both of those things whole-heartedly. I fancied long rides on our horses, not coming back for two or three days at a time, any longer then that and my mother might have had a fit. By the time I was thirteen all three of my sisters had been married off and Sebastian was residing in Versailles as a student. We were at peace on our little estate."

“Then one afternoon, when I was about seventeen years old, Linder's father, my grandfather, died. Linder was not a young man so the death of his father was long expected, but he had not been expected to be called back to England to attend to the affairs of his father's will and estate. He left a week later trusting me to run the place while he was away. That was the last time I ever saw him. Micahlene was in ecstasy that he was gone. She and I had the whole run of the big empty house, so large with only two permanent residents. Of course we had a whole slew of servants but they all went to their respective homes at the end of the day. And finally I can be alone with my beloved son, Micahlene often said over dinner.”

“We became constant companions. She'd watch as I practiced fencing and would clap and smile whenever I won matches. My mother could have gone on forever like this but most of the town was asking after Linder and it was very apparent that he was needed back in Vannes. People began to suspect that my mother had had him killed. Finally on the third of January, two days after my 18th birthday and a whole year since Linder had been gone, my mother along with my birth father Jacque and four other attendants went after Linder to London.”

“Before she left, Micahlene sat with me in our elaborate courtyard. I remember that it was bitterly cold. We were both wrapped in our winter wear. She held my gloved hands in her own, No matter what Allurius, I will be back for you. I adore you, my son. You will always have my love. Don't worry. I will be back. She said softly, comforting me for I did not want her to leave.”

“During her absence I was drunk on the regular. Often making trips to and from the nearest city of Orient, with Brigitte, one of the servant girls. She loved me, that was plain enough to see but I only lusted after her. We kept our affair up for months, until about early summer. As we lay nude on the lakeside passing my flask back and forth, she turned over and slurred. Do you think Madame Micahlene will ever return? And I didn't, but I nodded anyway. Yes and yes. She will have Linder with her and everything will be merry. I stumbled over the words and Brigitte laughed.”

“Allurius, she crooned in my ear as she rolled on top of me, kissing my face. Her fingers traced along my cheek. I was unnerved by the devotion that showed in her dark eyes. Her chocolate brown hair fell over her creamy shoulders as she brought her face close to mine.”

“I love you, she whispered. I sat up, gently shoving her off of me. God, Brigitte. I had said in disapproval. What is the matter? She frowned. You are a servant. I replied softly, looking away from her. Really? Because I felt like more than just that around you! She cried, gathering up her discarded garments and storming away.”

“I watched her go. I should have followed after her. I wish now that I had. I wish I had been a lot of things to her. But I lay there and watched her go. In the time that Brigitte was ig-

noring me I gained two other lovers: Corrine, a neighbor and wife of Linder's closest friend Jonathan Barrette. Jonathan also happened to be taking care of Linder's estate while he and my mother were in England.”

“The other was a boy my age, Jonathan and Corrine's son, Christian. He was conflicted about his feelings for me but I knew I loved him. The times we would collapse next to each other, sweaty and spent, he'd whisper, I love you Allurius, whatever this love means.”

“It didn't bother me to be sleeping with his mother and he never suspected a thing. When I met with Corrine he was always off with his father or tending to their horses. Corrine and I literally made love for hours. It was like a sport for both of us and I wrongly believed no feelings were involved. Juggling the two of them kept me preoccupied, I didn't have time to worry about my beloved mother or Linder.”

“My Eldest sister Ellsbeth sent letters often, asking how I was fairing. Did I need her to come home? And had I heard a word from mother or Linder's family? I always replied the same, I can take care of my self quite fine Ellsbeth. No I don't require your assistance at home and of course I hadn't heard from mother yet. I promised to let her know as soon as I found out anything.”

“Then on the eve of my nineteenth birthday I began to dream of my mother. She was in urgent danger and all of her attendants were dead. These scenes came in flashes and they all ended the same way, with Micahlene's lifeless body slumped against all the others. I was of course shaken by these horrid dreams and I often awoke drenched in sweat.”

“One morning, as the sun poured into my rooms, I woke to find Brigitte sitting beside me. She was wiping at my brow with a dry rag. Her eyes were full of concern as she brushed my hair from my face. She smiled a secret smile and I realized she wanted to tell me something. Instead she slipped into the covers beside me and kissed my lips as if she loved me still. I made love to her and she allowed it, looking up at me all the while with her secret little smirk. It infuriated me. I drove into her harder and harder until she cried out my name and I grinned, smug that I had wiped that little smile of her face.”

“I rolled off of her and sat up. She rose up on her elbow and pulled my hair playfully. What? I asked as I looked back at her. Her chocolate hair fell past her shoulder and her hazel eyes misted over with glee. You know I heard something interesting today. She glared at me. Yes? I urged. Well I thought you should know that Monsieur Barrette knows what you're doing with Christian. She came up and tried to kiss me but I shoved her away and went over to the mirror.”

“I turned to look at her. So, what is he going to do about it? I asked matter-of-factly. Brigitte smiled wickedly then. She was so damn cheerful as she slid off my bed and wrapped her arms around my waist. He's sending you to Versailles, to stay with your brother. She hissed. I

pushed her off of me with more force than I had meant to and she tumbled to the floor. Who the hell does he think he is? I snapped, pulling on a pair of pants and looked for a fresh shirt.”

“It was Corrine's Idea! John couldn't care less but it was Corrine, YOUR LOVER! Who pushed for it. Brigitte laughed wholeheartedly. She held onto my bedpost as she twirled around. You thought you could have it all. But not even you, Dear Allurius, can get away with this. She doubled over with her laughter. I glared at her as I pulled on my waistcoat and brushed my fingers through my hair. Look at you! You're angry yet still find the time to primp yourself. I'll be glad when you're gone, your poor brother having to watch you, she observed. I had had just about enough of her. Get out, wench. I sneered throwing her out of my rooms.”

“I hurried over to the Barrette estate looking for Corrine. She must have known I was coming as I found her easily in the sitting room.”

“Her slender arms wrapped around my neck and I screwed my face into a frown. She kissed my face before slapping it and I slapped her back. Her hand flew up to her cheek thunderstruck. How dare you try to send me to Sebastian's? I shouted. She began to cry, her curly honey blonde hair fell, covering her eyes. Why did you sleep with him? What am I not appealing to you anymore? She asked. I rolled my eyes at her. It had only been a few days since I'd last been here. Jesus Corrine, you're a married woman, since when did we lay claim on each other?”

“She had frowned. You could have at least told me you were with someone else. She mumbled. What I do is none of your business. I replied placing my hands on her exposed shoulders. Yes, but what you do with MY SON is! She all but screamed, pushing me away from her and turning back to me. John is waiting for you in his study. She said coldly. He knew you'd be along shortly. I stared after her for a moment before turning on my heel. I went to John and he tried to keep the conversation as short as possible, tip toeing around my affairs with his wife and son.”

“He said he thought I needed to get away for a while to clear my head. He said he understood how I must feel with my mother and father gone for such a long time. I felt bad for the old run down man. He didn't have the energy to care but I refused to go to Versailles. How about Paris then? He asked. After a fruitless try at persuasion, I agreed.”

Dresden...

Allurius paused and looked around the mostly bare room. He seemed almost lost in his memories as we sat there watching him, waiting for him to continue. Alana stayed glued to my side. I had felt her strong envy through out the story as Allurius talked of his former lovers. She was enthralled.

“Are you going to finish?” She asked finally. I too was eager to hear the rest. Of course I knew all of this, but I didn't know how he had found Alana and what made him bring her here.

But from the looks of it Allurius didn't want to even begin again. He didn't want to think about it. It was on the edge of Alana's tongue to ask him again but I stopped her with a swift kiss. Allurius frowned at me.

"Be patient. Its hard for him nearly everyone he has known during his mortal life is dead and have been for a very long time." I said to her softly.

She stared at him and nodded. "Oh, okay."

Allurius cleared his throat. "Ca ne fait rien, Let me just get this over with." He sighed, reaching his hand out toward Alana. She rose and went over to her maker. He held onto her possessively as she laid her head on his shoulder. I couldn't help but smile at Allurius' need to have her next to him.

Allurius...

"I was nearly twenty years old when the house began preparing for my leave. Brigitte and her younger sister Cecile were put in charge of packing my things. I was to take three attendants with me. I chose Brigitte, out of pure spite, Anastasie and Jeneca. All three had long wavy brown hair, chocolate brown eyes and creamy skin. I was thrilled to be leaving Vannes with these three. And despite Brigitte's ill will toward me, I knew she still loved me."

"By this time Christian and I had severed all contact with each other. Or should I say his mother had severed all contact between us. I missed him but I didn't want to cause trouble by going to see him at his home. He no longer came to our fencing lessons."

"But on this day, when Cecile had been packing my last minute necessities, Christian came into the sitting area of my rooms. You're really leaving? He asked, his voice hoarse from lack of use. It looks that way. I replied going to embrace him. He looked immaculate in the light of day. With his blonde-brown hair and gray eyes he looked just like Corrine."

"When he finally met my gaze he looked terribly lonesome and I would have killed to see him happy again. Christian you can come with me. We can be together. I whispered into his ear. He sighed brushing his fingertips down my face. Ah, but if only it were that simple! My mother would be terribly upset. He said, disregarding his father, who wouldn't have given a damn either way. Then don't tell her, or anyone. Just come away with me. I will take care of you. You love me don't you? I said wrapping my arms around him. Yes more than you know, more then you could imagine. His breathing became heavy as he held me. Then come along. Do it for me and for yourself. You're trapped here if you don't and I refuse to leave without you."

"That was all I needed to say. By week's end, the girls, Christian and I were on our way to Paris. We took a ship down the English Channel, stopping at ports along the way. At these little stops Christian and I would rent rooms, inviting the girls along and we shared many a night together. Making love, drinking, talking till we fell asleep tired and satisfied. I remember

the last stop on the boat trip before reaching the city of Fécamp were we would continue our destination by land.”

Allurius stopped the story abruptly. He shifted uncomfortably. He looked from Alana to me. I wanted to laugh but didn't, as I knew what he was about to say.

“One night,” he continued, “I lay with Jeneca. She and I were giving ourselves to each other over and over again until I cried out I could go no longer. She laughed and straddled me anyway, running her hands across my chest. Then in walked Christian, without so much as a knock or call of warning. He was very clearly inebriated and I remember wondering how he could keep himself up on his feet. He stumbled over to the bed, taking off his jacket. He came up behind Jeneca, grabbing her waist. He laughed and moaned at the same time. Jeneca threw her head back onto his shoulder to meet his kisses. After a while she passed out between us and I rose onto my elbow to look at Christian.”

“I picked up a letter from Corrine today. It was there waiting for me which of course means she must have sent it as soon as she found out I had left. She is beyond furious. He laughed softly. She said, and I quote, don't think for a second that Allurius loves you more than I do, you come back home this instant! If your father wasn't such a sad old man I'd have the guard after you in a second, but as you probably guessed before you left he doesn't give a damn whether you are here or in hell! My, my, what a mouth on her. Christian said his eyes dancing.”

"You're not thinking of going back are you? I asked moving a few loose locks of his hair from his face. Of course not! And give this all up? You and the girls. Never! He snapped. I am happy and free, two things I never was when I was with mother. He rolled over on top of Jeneca and spread her legs. Her eyes opened lazily as she smiled welcoming him inside of her. I feel asleep just as Anastasie dragged in a comatose Brigitte. The last thing I felt was Anastasia's mouth on my body.”

“Allurius! Allurius! My little boy behaving in such a way! Have your lovers now, darling Mommy is coming to get you soon. Be waiting. It was my mother's voice that called out to me in my sleep. Her eyes were startlingly radiant and her chestnut hair more lucid. In my dreams I reached out to her. Micahlene! I yelled. But of course she was gone and I woke up with the sun pouring into our room. My four other companions all fast asleep none the wiser. It took us only two weeks to get to Paris from Fécamp.”

“The dreams came more frequently in Paris. Little one, little one. I'm watching you beloved. And I'm coming for you Allurius. Be waiting. She said to me, always laughing. Christian and I acquired a lavish apartment in the heart of the beautiful city. Having the means to enjoy Paris made it all the more wonderful to us. Then she came as she promised. The sun had just

set and the evening sky was crisp and clear. I had just passed my 21st birthday and I was getting prepared to escort Anise LeFanu to an evening performance at the opera house. Anise was the daughter of a very influential and wealthy man who was eager to have his daughter marry into my family. I had initially refused but upon meeting Anise I accepted monsieur LeFanu's invitation to be Anise's escort."

"Christian was furious with me and had been gone all day. I was getting dressed, with the help of our new menial, Gabriel, A young fair-haired boy. He powdered my face and tended to my hair. And just as Gabriel was polishing my shoes, my Brigitte walked into the room. She looked splendid in the new gown I had just bought for her. Her hair was curled and piled onto her hair. Then I noticed her face, horror pure and explicitly written all over it. My God Brigitte what is the matter? I demanded quickly standing up from my seat, causing little Gabriel to fall back on his bottom. I helped him to his feet, still staring at Brigitte. Out with it! I spat."

"Your mother Micahlene, she is here, but Allurius... I stopped her before she could finish, Micahlene is here! Where is my mother? I asked joyfully. She is um, Allurius! Madame Le-Beau killed Anastasie and Jeneca and all the others, thank god Christian left earlier. She hissed. Have you gone mad Brigitte? My mother would never do such a thing! I snapped."

"Look at my pretentious darling, dressed to kill. An ethereal voice said, and it was coming down the hallway. I froze, Brigitte screamed and ran behind me grabbing onto my arm."

"Mother." I gasped when she came in. Her startlingly white skin and her gleaming chestnut hair fell around her shoulders. Her blue eyes looked almost violet now and I could barely recognize her. She looked cold. The few laugh lines that my mother had had were gone and she looked years younger."

"Allurius. She frowned when I didn't come any closer. I backed away from her holding Brigitte and Gabriel close to my side. Oh you must forgive my appearance, it got a bit messy. She laughed and laughed. Christ, Mom! I shouted. What happened? Where is Linder? I asked."

"Dead. He was dead, had been dead, when I left our home and I knew he was dead and I was glad he was dead!' She smiled. But he wasn't your real father anyhow. I suspect everyone knew that, you are far too beautiful to be his child. She doubled over in laughter. Gabriel began to cry and I was infuriated. Micahlene, or who ever you are, I want you to leave this second. Right now! Out! I roared. I looked her over and noticed the blood on her gown."

"What have you done to the help! I shrieked. She glared at me suddenly. The smile fell from her face. Se taire! I am not leaving here with out you, beloved. I looked into her narrowed eyes and shivered. Spare Brigitte and the young one so they may have each other. I

pleaded with Micahlene. I suppose I could do that, only if you agree to come with me.”

“Yes Mother. I answered. She was in front of us in the time it took to blink. Gabriel whimpered.”

“Leave the room Allurius, and wait for me outside. She smiled brushing her hand across my cheek. Her pale dress matched her eyes, it was tight around her waist and any flaw she had was invisible to my eyes. I turned to Brigitte kissing her tears then her lips. Je t'aime, I whispered to her. Si j'avais su! She cried softly.”

Alana...

“Allurius, I can't listen to this for another second.” Alana cut him off.

Allurius looked down at her softly. “Oh, Alana! Don't be stupid.” He said, exasperated. “I love you more. You little fool,” He grinned at her. “Now don't you want to hear of how my mother turned me, right in some deteriorating old cottage.” He asked fussing with the cuff to his shirt.

“Of course I know she turned you into a vamp... ” She began.

“Well just let me finish Lana,” He interrupted.

Allurius...

“My mother took me from Paris, having drained Brigitte and Gabriel enough so they fell into a deep dreamless sleep. She held me in her arms, which had we'd been spotted would have looked abnormal and ridiculous, but she held me as she moved inhumanly fast and like a blur through the street then she dropped me to the ground in front of a deteriorating cottage, I remember recoiling at the thought of going inside of it.”

“I know Micahlene didn't have an exact idea as to where we were. She shrugged when I asked. Somewhere outside of Versailles, I think. She guessed, I thought she looked lovely and whatever she was I wanted it to. I wanted the strength and power but most of all I wanted to be with her. And she created me once again, giving me another life on the dirt floor of the derelict cottage.”

“When she was done I felt beautiful... absolutely beautiful. I had always been a bit amoure proper. But that night it was more than that, for a moment at least. She took me on the hunt almost immediately and having had my first feeding so quickly the transformation sped up. After my first feeding, unlike most vampires I felt invincible I had no qualms about killing for sustenance. The following nights she took me out into the woods and showed me my strengths and how it would take extra care to appear human, how just the slight pressure of my handshake could break a human's hand. You must always make measured movements, you must always be conscious of your every gesture. She told me.”

“We had been together for two weeks and we sat in the same abandoned cottage, as she had resisted my attempts at getting us better accommodations after a long stint of blood and

dancing with the aristocrats of Paris. We had even seen my sister Ellsbeth, she recognized me immediately but not mother. Allurius! She cried, you look wonderful Darling! What are you doing here? I held her as long as I could without making it obvious that I wanted to snap her neck and drink her blood. I was glad to see her, I had even begun to point out Micahlene but mother shook her head no furiously. I never saw Ellsbeth or any of my other siblings again.”

“But Micahlene sat there humming the music the musicians had played as if she hadn't seen one of her mortal children that night. She finally looked at me and smiled. My Allurius, you are still unhappy. You miss, Christian, no? I smiled at her words and shrugged, I missed him but what of it? Well I have him here. I fetched him last night. Oh the poor dear was grief stricken, crying and cursing like a spoiled child deprived of its favorite toy. She laughed. My god Mother! Where is he, you left him alone all day! I shouted. I would expect you to show some gratitude Allurius! Micahlene replied. She walked over to the pantry door and pulled Christian out from inside. He was gagged and terrified. His brown hair was oily and his face was dirty but clean-shaven. I glared at Micahlene. I fell onto my knees beside him and lifted his face up to look at me.”

“Allurius you'll get your lovely frock all dirty, get off of the floor. She said helping me lift him onto the sofa. I wore a dazzling navy blue outfit that matched her dress. Why we dressed so richly in the deteriorating shack was a wonder to me. Christian looked at me as Micahlene turned up the oil lamps. Allurius? You look like a corpse! Even your touch is cold. He said softly, shrinking back away from me. I was shocked!”

“No Christian, it's me. I said inching closer to him. What happened to you? Did you know that all of the servants are gone! Brigitte ran away and took Gabriel with her. She wouldn't even talk to me as she dashed out of the house. And you left and never came back, with out so much as a letter... He raved on and on. I put my hand over his mouth.”

“Se taire. Christian will you be with me in this? I asked. In what? You haven't told me anything! Your mother waltz right into my home, knocks me out with a candelabra, which hurt a lot, brings me here binds and gags me, for hours mind you, then I wake to find you looking like a beautiful monster in this horrid place. You haven't told me anything that would explain any of this! He shouted. Well for the record, I tried to get her to move into better surroundings. I replied. He glared daggers at me and I laughed. Allurius certainly you don't mean to turn him? Micahlene asked. She had been sitting there quietly watching us until then.”

“Well what did you expect me to do with him? I shrugged. I expected you to kill him! She said her eyes wide. Kill him! Honestly mother, are you that dense? I replied. You are so thoughtless! Just think it over before you hand off eternal life to someone. She said evenly. Eternal life? What are you talking about? Christian asked cutting in. Immortality... by way of blood. I said. I sat next to him on the couch and fussed over him, buttoning his shirt and

brushing his hair behind his ears. And if I refuse? he asked calmly.”

“You die. Micahlene replied. We both turned to frown at her. Well then I accept. He said sarcastically. Christian you will not die if you don't want to be turned. I told him. Yes you will, we can't just let him walk out of here like... Micahlene said angrily. Stop, it doesn't matter. I want you to turn me. I want to be with you Allurius. And with those words I pulled away from him to look at Micahlene, I was livid. I had been too hasty. I didn't want to turn him. I wanted him away from me.”

“Then I'll do it” Micahlene said, reading my face for she could not read my thoughts. And I watched her make him. This was a mistake of course. We fought each other all the time, yelling and hating one another. Loving our new lives and mourning our mortal ones. Under the brunt of our accusations Micahlene soon left us, in a flash of fury, to go to America.”

“Without Micahlene, Christian and I co-existed better. We bought a townhouse in Paris and we watched over Brigitte and Gabriel, secretly lavishing them with gifts and money. Brigitte had a hunch I was the one doing so and never fully recovered from losing me, but I was never tempted into bringing her over. She raised Gabriel as her own son even after she was married and had other children. Then she grew old and died the dream death, in her sleep surrounded by her children and grandchildren, while I, eternally ageless, looked on from outside. This wounded both Christian and I inconceivably.”

“It came to the point where we could barely be in the same room with each other without an argument starting up. We were restless and moved through Europe aimlessly, from Italy to Spain. We were in Madrid when Christian left me, off to God knows where, but he never returned. I had went off to hunt after another fight we had about nothing, he hated being around me and I hated being around him, but up until that point we stayed together because we were all we knew.”

“I honestly didn't know what to do without him and I was left to wander Europe alone till about August 1867 when I came to America. I ventured to Savannah, Georgia to stay with my mother who had by that time made two others, Lila Michaels and Dresden Hawthorn.”

“I'll leave it up to Dresden to go over our time in Savannah together, but ever since we have met, Dresden and I have been companions. Our years together were largely uneventful, except for one thing, which I don't care to talk about. So perhaps Dresden will fill you in when he tells you his history. This event however did send me into a state of despair causing me to go into ‘the slumber’ September 1898 and I didn't resurface till March 31st 1993. I immediately went to New York City to be with Dresden, when I found him he was with his Fledgling, Gwendolyn Nona, an unattractive, slinky witch who shouldn't have been brought over in the first place.”

I looked over at Dresden but his face was smooth, not showing any emotion as I continued on with my story.

“Dresden had learned from Micahlene that Christian was residing in Los Angeles and of course I wanted to see him but I refused to go to him when it was he who had left me. Micahlene, thank god, took Gwen off of our hands and they have been in Australia ever since, while Dresden and I bought a home in Lake Forest, Illinois.” He shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

Alana...

“That's it?” I asked.

“Well what else do you want me to say?” He frowned down at me.

“Have you been to see Christian? What made you come get me?” I replied.

“Alright.” He exhaled. “No, I haven't been to see Christian. I find it hard to forgive him for just leaving me. And you, my dear Alana, Dresden and I had just come to Miami to vacation in this apartment we had purchased a few years back. I left soon after just to roam, as I do from time to time. And I happen to find myself in Wisconsin, of all places. You caught my eye immediately. Your flowing black hair was in a sloppy braid down your back. You wore a delightful black swing coat that went to your knees and were walking with a sense of urgency. I followed you effortlessly. I watched as you came to the chain-link fence around a cemetery, you threw your notebook over first then climbed up and down the other side after it, I watched you sit beside one of the headstones open your notebook and write your thoughts down. You would flex your fingers back and forth as if over an invisible piano. I found that very odd.”

“I did this for a week or so, follow you around at night and you were always dashing to that cemetery, high from abusing prescription pills and sitting numb beside a headstone. One time you fell asleep there and I kneeled down next to you and brushed the falling snow from your face. I kissed your cheeks, picked you up and brought you back to your mother's house. When it pained me to leave you there I knew then that I was going to take you with me.”

“Then the night came where I decided to make myself known to you. I waited for you at the graveyard. I knew you'd be along shortly. And you were, but tears spilled down your face. And you could barely control your sobbing enough to walk over to your favorite headstone and kneel in front of it. Oh Miriam, Miriam. You cried. I was enraged, already imaging the ways I would end the life of whoever had upset you. I came up to you then, asked your name and took your hand.”

“You lead me back to your home where I learned the reason. And it explained why you left your home at the same time every night, to escape the beating that was waiting for you when Gideon, your mother's new husband, came home from work. I say this now for Dresden who doesn't know. His daughter, Rachele had run away to escape this abuse, leaving Alana behind to take on the burden. She had promised to come back for her, and after two years

that had yet to happen. Gideon was also the one who had taken her piano away. It was hers and it had been the one thing she loved and now it was gone. Alana longed to play the piano again which explained the way you would still move your fingers as if still playing one.”

“I continued to come at the same time every night, Alana would slide out of her window and into my arms and I'd take her to my hotel suite where we talked until she fell asleep. I always carried her back home and watched over her until the raising sun forced me back to the hotel.”

“This particular night I had decided I wanted to go back to Miami, but not with out collecting her. I did try to resist taking her at first, Dresden. I thought about ways to spare her this. I know that every time you look at her, Dresden, your heart aches for all she could have experienced, College, marriage, children. I know, I see it in your eyes and I want you to know that I honestly thought about those things.”

“It came to the point where I had even started to leave Milwaukee, but I couldn't abandon her. I turned around realizing how late it had become. I raced to Alana's house, imagining all sorts of calamities. Would this be the time that Gideon went too far and she died? I was tormented at the thought of being too late to save her. I peered into Alana's room where she lay crumpled on the floor. I damn near took the window off of the place trying to get to her.”

“Alana, Alana, I said lifting her up. She cringed, badly hurt and sore. Allurius, I thought you had forgotten about me, She smiled the most pitiful little smile. Her eyes were red-rimmed from crying, but I could tell she was truly happy I was there, and I could also hear him coming back. Oh please do come in, I thought as I kissed her forehead, trying to soothe her though I was shaking with fury. Come on, we're leaving. You're coming with me. I said lifting her to her feet.”

“She had looked at me. But he'll be upset with me. She murmured. Don't you worry about him. I growled. Just get your things lets go. She started for her closet door just as he walked back in, with his belt wrapped around his hand. He reached for her arm and I roared. He dropped his belt and looked at me clearly terrified. Alana stood frozen in place. What do you think you're doing? Huh? Est-ce que vous êtes ivre! I hissed in his face as I pinned him against the wall.”

“I— I— I— I'm disciplining her she's, uh, s— -s— she doesn't listen to my rules! He trembled against his will. Oh really! I said. I snapped his neck and let his body drop to the floor. Alana stood with her hands at her sides. I turned to her. Are you okay? Are you alright? I asked. She shook her head and pressed her hands against my chest. Is this real? Are you real? She said her eyes wide and looking at me. I laughed at this and kissed her lips.”

“Yes, yes now come on. Let's go home to Dresden. I told her and she smiled at the mention of your name as I took her with me. We couldn't leave right away of course. I hadn't coun-

ted on killing Gideon. We stayed in Boston for a few days while I covered up his death. Alana was practically attached at my hip.” Allurius smiled a bit as he said this.

“I found it hard to convince her that I loved her and that she was safe. Then we came here, and now I am done.” Allurius crossed his arms in front of his chest, looking down at me.

Lana sucked in her lower lip, twisting it with her teeth. “Stop before you bite yourself.” I chided. Dresden wore a somber look on his face. The last bit of my story upset him. He didn't like the thought of someone having hurt her.

“Gideon.” She mumbled, burying her face into her hands. Then she broke out into sobs, her body shaking with each ragged breath. I suppose my consolation wasn't sufficient enough as she leapt up from beside me and into Dresden's lap. He immediately closed his arms around her. Oh what a dreadfully selfish thing I am! I realized as the jealousy blossomed within me.

He whispered softly to her French. His hand moved in soothing circles on her back. “It's alright Alana, You are safe now, Mi Poupee, no one can harm you. We wouldn't allow it.” He repeated this mantra over and over softly into her ear until her cries subsided. Alana clung onto him for a moment longer before sitting up to look at me. She flinched as she met my glare.

She set her eyes on the floor as she began to speak. “Terrible, awful memories came to me when you mentioned him.” She said to me.

“And I don't care to dwell on it Alana.” I replied rising from the sofa.

“Let her talk about it if she wants.” Dresden said evenly, his hands settled on her waist.

“Je crois que non!” She gasped.

I couldn't help but smile at her. “Since when are you speaking French?” I asked.

“Each time you feed me, I learn a bit more,” She said matter-of-factly. “I don't ever want to remember Gideon again. Take it away from me, the memories Dresden, take them.” She said, bending her neck to his mouth.

I resisted the urge to tear her off him, to slam my fist into the wall so that it cracked. Dresden could see me struggling with my self-control and looked at me imploringly before sinking his teeth into her neck.

I clenched my hands into fists. I couldn't keep my eyes off them. The way she cried out in pleasure, the way she shivered and leaned into him. His eyelids fluttered and he tightened his hold on her. He groaned low and deep. He couldn't have stopped soon enough, and when he finally pulled away both of their glassy sleepy eyes looked up at me.

I sneered, “Finished?” Then she did something I had never expected. She ignored me completely and made no move to relinquish herself from Dresden's hold.

“They're not gone.” She smiled, the same dismal smile that had been painted across Christian's face that long ago night.

“I'm sorry,” Dresden murmured.

“Don't be. It's woven so deeply into who I am, it's something that will literally stay with me forever.” She glared at me for a split second before sighing and closing her eyes.

Unbelievable. I twisted my face into a scowl but neither cast a glance my way. A few moments passed before she heard the early morning birds taking their places in the trees and singing out. She hopped out of Dresden's arms without a word and started hurrying for the door.

“Alana wait!” I called to her.

“Yes?” She asked anxiously.

“We'll escort you.” Dresden replied taking her hand. “You know we have at least two more hours at least before the sun is even high enough in the sky... ”

Alana cut him off with a wave of her hand. We reached the attic and I had to stop her from damn near knocking me over to get to the door.

“Now remain still for a second! One second, please! Stop fidgeting!” I snapped. “When you awake you are to not leave the apartment, we are going home tomorrow I don't want to waste any time looking for you. You hear?”

She nodded at me with wide eyes and followed behind me silently as I pushed open the door and led them to our coffins. And she and I nestled close together as I shut the lid.

“Allurius I will never leave you. Like Christian did. No matter how mad I may be at you.” She smiled wide and pressed her lips against mine. She sighed, the sun was creeping over the horizon and since she was still in limbo she fell into the slumber sooner than I. I kissed her face and crushed her against me.

“Promise?” I whispered into her ear before falling into my slumber as well.

The Eternal Kiss

Part Two

Come over here and let me tell you something

Nothing ever comes of nothing

We pay a price for all our choices made

— Sean Brennan, 'Spider and the Fly'

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 4

Gwendolyn Nona Alden...

Micahlene had gotten up before me; she was most likely in Chicago doing what Vampires did best. Shop. Making a fashion show out of eternity. I wore my favorite pair of charcoal gray jeans and a white baby tee. I had no one to impress. I wouldn't have even bothered coming to this lush town to see Allurius' fledgling if it weren't for Micahlene. Not that I wasn't curious. Christian for some reason or another had found out about the girl first and quickly relayed the information to Micahlene. Micah had been a bit put out by this. "Why didn't he think to introduce her to me first?" She pouted.

I looked around and shrugged on my leather jacket. I popped a cigarette into my mouth, only smoked out of vanity and habit now. I savored the moments when I could stand out on the street and light one up. Micahlene was always on my back about the smell. I found it comforting however and refused to give it up. I started to walk leisurely toward Allurius and Dresden's. I sighed as I looked down the tree-lined street. I couldn't for the life of me remember the address. What was it Micahlene said, 19 something Telegraph Road. Crap! And walking around here at night unnoticed was near impossible to do. Any pedestrian decked out in a leather jacket and combat boots stuck out like a sore thumb.

"Frigging Snobs." I muttered to myself. I had more money than they could even imagine. Man what was the address? 1955? 1957? Forget it. I'd probably know it when I saw it.

"1955, you're going in the complete opposite direction, Ma Cherie." I looked up to see her balancing one foot on someone's wrought iron fence. Her bleach white skin was flushed which meant she must have killed one of the inhabitants in the house behind it.

"I don't think they're gonna like us screwing with the neighbors." I chuckled taking a drag on my cigarette and immediately exhaling. Micahlene smiled, wrinkling her nose. "Yes, they are never any fun are they?"

"Does Allurius know I'm coming with?" I asked.

She cringed noticeably. "Actually they don't know we're coming at all." She replied.

"Micahlene!" I groaned. She took my cigarette and snapped it in half before I could say anything in protest. "So you know he's going to flip shit right. He is nothing but a truculent asshole to me when he knows I'm going to be around. I can only guess..." I cried out, my voice

getting shriller as I went on.

“Gwen, enough.” She linked her arm in mine and led me toward the house. I hadn't even realized we had moved.

I stalled at the archway of the driveway. Three cars were parked on the circular pavement. I saw a beautiful black Maserati Gran Turismo that I could only assume had to be Allurius' as he tended to prefer Maseratis. Right behind it was a silver Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Zagato, which I already knew was Dresden's and I turned to look at the little brand-shining-new black Porsche 997 Carrera S closest to me. It must have been a gift for their little pet. I ran my hand against the sweet ride with longing. I'd have to snatch myself up one of these things. Micahlene dragged me away by the elbow.

I fought to get out of her grasp. “Aw c'mon Micah let me go!” I snapped. She dropped my arm as soon as the door opened. Dresden stood in the doorway shocked. Seeing him always brought on the heartache. It wasn't so long ago when the sight of me would bring a glow to this eyes and he would rush to scoop me up in his arms.

Those eyes of his never cease to knock me on my ass. His face, his body, the only word to describe his cut jaw line and the curve of his full lips was beautiful. His slender muscular build tricked out in a gray tailored suit. His collared shirt matched his black hair. This made his navy blue eyes stand out all the more. He avoided my gaze, knowing my own neon green eyes were sweeping him over. “Micahlene... Gwen.” He began. Before anyone else could speak a teenager came up from behind him.

“Micahlene!” She cried. She was wearing big black sunglasses, but I could tell already her looks were insane. Micahlene squealed in delight. The girl had her wavy hair pulled into a high ponytail on top of her head and she wore a slinky high-necked long sleeve black dress with a black rosary resting on her breast. I can't even describe the look that came over Dresden's face when he looked down at her. I turned away shoving my hands into my jacket pockets. She was a petite little thing perhaps Micahlene's height, so I of course towered over her.

She couldn't be more than sixteen I thought as Micahlene hugged both Dresden and the girl at the same time. What was her name? Alana. Cute.

“Where is Allurius?” Micahlene asked as Dresden led us through the foyer and into their ornately decorated living room.

“He is hunting. He should be along soon.” Dresden said in his same light accent. He finally turned to acknowledge me, looking me over from my wild tumble of curls to my purple lipstick and combat boots.

“Gwen.” He reached out and held me in the stiffest shortest hug imaginable. He then sat next to Alana on the couch and melted into her.

Micahlene pulled me down beside her and I watched Alana as she talked to her. Micahlene mentioned Christian and how anxious he was to see her. Dresden scowled at the mention of Christian's name. I studied Alana's ski-slope nose and full lips. Then she reached up and pushed her sunglasses up on her head. It was such an off-handed gesture. So casual. She wanted to see Micah clearly.

“Shit!” I shouted the moment I saw her Magenta eyes. Startled she looked over at me. “Micah her eyes!” I said.

Micahlene frowned at me. “That's not polite Gwen.” She chided. Didn't she know? But how could she I had never shared the stories Zinnijah had told me with anyone. I couldn't just spill out the significance of this in front of her. They eventually dismissed my outburst and carried on talking.

“Is he still in Los Angeles?” The teenager asked.

“Of course, he will always be in Los Angeles.” Micahlene's musical laughter filled the air. I hadn't seen her this jovial in a long time. It annoyed me.

I couldn't take my eyes off of her, why there had to be other newborns with these eyes, she couldn't be the only one.

“How old are you?” I asked her cutting in. Alana turned her head slowly to look at me. The fierce glare she gave pissed me off. She narrowed her eyes before responding.

“Seventeen,” she replied. I didn't appreciate her tone.

“Sixteen! I bet he forced you to do it huh just like Dresden-.” I sneered.

“Gwen, my god, will you please have some decorum, Mon Dieu!” Micahlene exclaimed.

“I am seventeen and it's none of your business!” She snapped back. “Listen broad— ” I started.

“Gwen.” Dresden hissed. The look in his eyes was enough for me to stop.

As if on cue Allurius walked into the room, his face flushed with fresh blood and his eyes dancing before meeting mine. They fell flat as we locked gazes. He was not pleased to see us.

“Mother!” he said in surprise. He went over to her brushing past me to kiss her cheek and fold her into his arms. “Its nice to see you, Micahlene.”

I watched her flinch, She hated when he wouldn't call her mom. He then proceeded to bend over and kiss Alana's forehead and smile at Dresden before addressing me.

“Hello Gwen.” He said coldly not even looking at me. I nodded in return. I was used to this treatment and I did deserve it.

“Allurius, Christian is very adamant in wanting to see you.” Micahlene said. Dresden sighed dramatically with a roll of his eyes.

“Why on earth would I do that?” Allurius all but shouted.

Micahlene looked at him in disapproval. Micah was the only vamp I knew who still made it to mass every night. She didn't approve of her ‘children,’ for all intents and purposes, holding grudges against each other.

“Allurius won't you show me your gardens, so we can talk this out?” She asked calmly.

Allurius sighed, taking Alana's hand in his own. It was as if she were an extension of him. “I suppose, come on Alana.” He replied leading them away and leaving me alone with Dresden.

Dresden looked painfully uncomfortable being so close to me. I pulled my pack of lucky strikes out of my jean pocket and slipped one into my mouth.

“You can still find those things?” Dresden said looking at my worn box.

I shrugged, smiling as I exhaled smoke. “Barely, I don't know what I'll do when there are officially no more left.” I winked. He laughed. “I've missed you.” The words left my mouth before I could stop them. I looked up to see Dresden had relaxed considerably.

He even allowed a small smile to emerge. “As have I.” He said not at all sincerely.

I knew he only said so to keep from hurting my feelings. He was a gentleman through and through. After a long silence I decided what the hell, it was now or never and for all of our sakes I had to tell Dresden what I knew.

“I know why her eyes are that color.” I said.

“Ha, you do?” He chuckled.

“Yea I do. And if you were smart you would kill her.” I replied.

He didn't find this funny and set his mouth in a thin line. Damn, I had never seen Dresden struggle with his anger before but it seemed like it took every ounce of his strength to keep from drop kicking me out of a window.

“What?” He hissed.

“Her eyes are a signal. It means that her blood, now that she has been turned, is powerful enough too indirectly bring down destruction on all of us.” I looked at him with determination.

“What kind of destruction?” He asked me, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

“I don't know. I know it has something to do with The First and the Primoris Humus.” I replied. “Zinnijah never went into specifics.”

Dresden looked more then a little exasperated, “That is honestly the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard, Gwen.”

“Dresden she has to be killed before a more powerful being sees her!” I insisted.

“You have got some nerve,” He shouted.

I cringed back. Dresden, my Dresden rarely if ever raised his voice, and now he stood over me with such disgust in his gaze. “I know it's true! Zinnijah told me!” I screamed in his

face. Then I realized what he must have assumed. He thought I was jealous of the little bitch. I seethed. "I am not jealous! She is the wimpiest thing I have ever beheld. Its not she who is dangerous, its her blood!" I snapped.

"Are you saying this to get back at me Gwendolyn?" He thought aloud. "Do you still loathe me completely?" He asked. For that split second after he said my name like he had so many years ago, we were as we were once.

"Dresden, she has to be placed in a pyre." I said softly.

"Shut your mouth right now Gwen, Allurius will tear you limb from limb if he hears you!"

Too late. Allurius came thundering down the hallway. "You come into my house, you come into my home and say this!" He was so pissed he could barely get the words out of his mouth, "Who the hell do you think you are!"

Micah was right on his heel. "Allurius, please let me speak to her." She called after him. I jumped to my feet as he neared me.

"You are lucky to still be walking this earth! If I had my way." He looked away from me then and he had the most frightening look on his face.

I noticed Alana standing in the doorway watching me intently. Our eyes locked. "She must be destroyed!" I shouted pounding my fist into my leg.

Allurius grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me violently. I brought the heel of my boot down in the bridge of his foot. He recovered quickly slapping me hard across the face.

"STOP! Stop!" Micahlene shouted coming in between us.

"If you won't kill her you could at least pluck those eyes out and put in new ones!" I said as soon as I was free of him.

Micahlene gasped, "Gwendolyn, How ghastly!"

"Out! Get out of here. I don't want to see you ever again!" He yelled in both of our faces. We all knew he only meant me however.

"My son, settle down." Micahlene placed her hands on his shoulders. He looked down at her and immediately calmed down a fraction. "Now the night is drawing to a close and we would be hard pressed to find shelter on such short notice." She explained.

"I expect you to be gone as soon as you awake tomorrow night." He said through clenched teeth.

"Gwen has to stay in the cellar." Dresden spoke up.

I glared at him feeling pangs of betrayal. "The cellar!" I said, thoroughly insulted. I looked over at Micahlene.

"You threatened their fledgling Gwen, they are taking precautions to protect her." She said sternly.

“Oh, You! Will you look at her eyes? She must be destroyed!” I snapped. I hadn't even seen Allurius lift his hand but before I knew it I was thrown back against the wall from the force of his hit. I crouched down as a growl ripped from my throat.

Allurius made the same aggressive stance in front of me. His feral look sent shivers down my spine but I wasn't going to back down.

“Allurius!” Alana cried out running to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. She didn't like this animalistic side of him. I snickered. He folded his arms around her still staring daggers at me. Was she crying? Unbelievable!

“Downstairs Gwen!” Dresden shouted. He came over and grabbed me by the elbow when I didn't move.

“Oh Gwen.” Micahlene sighed as Dresden led me away, I had ruined her night and for that I was sorry but not about what I said.

Alana's blood was a danger to us all. “Dresden listen to me.” I said as he took me down the stairs holding onto me still.

“Don't say another word,” is all he said.

“Dresden wait.” I whispered. He stood still and dropped my arm. There was one coffin pushed into the furthest corner of the dank cellar. “I don't enjoy this you know. The way things are.” I said.

“And you think I do? But you caused this Gwendolyn. If it weren't for Allurius, I'd be dead right now.” He replied.

I bowed my head. He would bring that up, how many times could I apologize. “I still love you.” I murmured. I closed my eyes under his gaze as I remembered the night we had first met outside that old hole in the wall bar in New York. I want you to come with me Gwendolyn, I want to hear you sing when I wake and when I lie down to sleep; say you'll stay with me.

“I wish I could say the same.” He sighed leaving me alone in the dark.

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 5

Dresden...

Like Allurius requested, Micahlene and Gwen were gone the next night. Alana was a bit peeved that Micahlene had to leave. "Promise to visit again soon." She had whispered to Micah as she kissed her goodbye. Three weeks had passed since that horrible evening and now Alana sat next to me on the terrace watching me read.

"Is Allurius mad at us?" She asked me calmly. She wore a thin flowing white nightgown low cut and long sleeved. I shrugged. Allurius had been gone since the night his mother left. I was used to his wandering but Alana was a wounded creature and had taken it fairly hard. It made him uneasy to even think of the night she realized he was gone.

I watched Alana's face contort in pain. "What... . What? Why?" she choked out. She was utterly frantic. Her eyes wide as she wrapped her hands around her middle.

"Alana, calm down please." I came to her side.

"Where is he? He said he wouldn't leave me. He promised. He promised me." she wailed.

Her pain was affecting me greatly and how I hated Allurius then. "Calm down my love." I murmured brushing my hand across her face, wiping at her tears. She was barely breathing.

"Why! Where is he? He promised me Dresden." She choked.

"I know darling." I said wrapping my arms around her. She tightened her hold on me.

"Don't go, don't let me go." She cried. "I won't, I'm not letting you go Alana. I love you." I whispered in her ear.

"No, don't go Dresden. I need you." She sobbed.

"I'm not going anywhere. I'll always be here, always." I promised. Her body shook with her broken sobs. And she held onto me as if I was trying to push her away.

"I don't know." I answered. I found it peculiar that she would bring him up all of a sudden. She continued to knit the hat she'd been working on for that last few minutes. Soon she was done with that one and tossed on the growing pile next to her. Later she would bag up these hats and donate them to a homeless shelter in Chicago. Crickets chirped in the night. And the clear night made the stars all the more dazzling. Her full-disheveled hair was brushed back from her face and fell down to her waist. She began to hum softly.

"When will he be back?" She asked. She rested her legs on my lap.

"I don't know." I said again.

"Then do you know where he is?" She asked putting down her needles to look at me.

"You know I don't." I replied.

She smiled, "Silly kitten." She said returning back to her work.

"Lana, I'm sure he'll be back soon." I said stroking her leg.

"I only adore you, Kitten," She murmured. A long silence followed. "You know his mother was trying to get him to see Christian." She whispered. I grunted. "Maybe he went to go see Christian!" She hopped up from the bench and sat on the brick fence that went around our terrace. She crossed her legs exposing her lacy underwear.

"If he did then I doubt He'll return." I mumbled. Alana turned around and her eyes were clouded with worry.

"I hate him then, for leaving us, I hate him." She tilted her head. "It doesn't matter Kitten we have each other." She looked at me as she said this gauging my reaction.

"What makes it okay for him to just up and leave us?" She demanded. "Well I'm outtie! Peace!" She said imitating his accent with some skill. I laughed but she disregarded me as she continued.

"Lets go Dresden before he decides to come back! Teach him a damn valuable lesson." She urged.

I sat my book down on my lap. "Didn't you promise you wouldn't abandon him?" I asked her.

Her eyes grew wide with surprise. "Seriously, Kitten. How can I keep my half of the agreement if he isn't even here?" She snapped. She swung her long legs over the other side of the fence, straddling it.

"Where would you like to go?" I asked her, quietly tossing the idea around in my head.

"Where ever we want! We would be together." She looked deep into my eyes. Her magenta eyes hypnotizing me.

"Cut it out," I looked away from her. She frowned confused; she hadn't known what she was doing.

"You'd welcome him back with open arms." I said under my breath.

"I only want you." She said simply, leaping off of the fence and onto my lap.

"Why?" I asked.

She kissed me. "Because you are gentle."

I smiled and stood up to go into the house. Alana, like I knew she would, did the same. Alana had become my shadow since Allurius had left. She went with me whenever I left the house and slept in my coffin beside me instead of her own. She didn't say why, but I knew she was afraid I might disappear too.

I didn't mind this, her following me around. Alana and I had started to build a little life together. It delighted me to take her into Chicago so she could shop to her hearts content. She needed little prodding to do so. We both adored Chicago. She liked to take me for rides in her new little black car. She insisted that I sit in a chair in her suite of rooms while she danced around to Madonna. Then she would allow me to put my Brahms on and teach her to waltz.

She often sat next to me at the piano and we took turns performing for each other. She had even begun to mimic the way I speak. Alana had grown dependent on me in a way she never had with any other person. Alana hadn't killed since that night in Miami and though I knew better then to do so, I fed her myself. She was still in her little limbo and mixing up the blood inside her did little to help, but Allurius was gone and he had known she was terrified of going on the hunt.

So why had she brought up Allurius? I wondered to myself. She quietly trailed behind me as I went up the stairs to the library.

"Lana, what did you do?" I asked as she watched me place my book back on one of the bookcases. She looked away guiltily.

"Why do you ask?" She said without glancing at me.

"I just found it curious that you would wonder about Allurius after all this time." I shrugged. She took my hand and led me to the window facing the front of house.

“Christ!” I gasped. I don't know what she had used, scratch that yes I did, the baseball bat was still lying next to Allurius' ruined crème Rolls Royce. She must have gone into our massive garage and drove it out onto the driveway, and unleashed all her pent up emotion on the poor car. The windows were busted and it looked like she had jumped up and down on the hood.

I didn't want to admit I was impressed. “You did that by yourself?” I asked. She nodded her head yes. It looked like she was coming into her strength as no Mortal could have smashed up a car like that even with a bat. “When did you do that? You know that's his favorite, Lana.” I turned to look at her.

She shrugged. “He had to learn. It wouldn't be enough to tell him he hurt me, he had to see it.” She finally looked at me to gauge my reaction.

I could only imagine what he would do when he saw that mess. “You are some piece of work.” I muttered.

“Are you upset?” She asked. I shook my head no.

Hell it wasn't my car. “Don't you think it was a bit childish?”

“No, you can't just tell me one thing and do another. He caused me pain Dresden. He promised he wouldn't do that.” She choked out. I hadn't realized she had started to cry.

“Dresden.” She said softly. I bent over to meet her lips. She latched onto me hungrily. She ran her fingers through my hair as I lifted her up and pinned her against the wall. She wrapped her legs around my waist. I trailed my lips down her throat, pushing the sleeve off of her shoulders. She thrust herself against me. Her breathing became infrequent and heavy. I pulled away, placing her on her feet.

“You have to remember to breathe Lana, breathe, you're not fully turned yet.” I murmured as I allowed her to pull me down onto the floor on top of her. She only nodded as her eyes glossed over. She rained kisses on my face and I hitched her leg up on my hip.

She had tried this many times. Each time I was forced to resist her. She was still so breakable. One false move and I could crush her or worse, drain the energy out of her body. This had all began the first time when I had foolishly allowed Alana to prod me into skinny-dipping with her in our indoor pool. I had turned around from shedding my garments to see her watching me with her jaw dropped and her eyes wide.

Her urgent hands ripped me from my thoughts. Kiss me, Kiss me she demanded, her lips feverish. “Alana.” I groaned as she sat about trying to get my pants unzipped.

“Please?” she asked me in a tiny voice.

Allurius...

I dropped my walking cane onto the cobblestone driveway in shock. My teeth literally gnashed as I looked at my once beautiful Rolls sitting at the center of the drive like in advert-

isement. I knew she had done it as she had scratched her name into the paint. Point taken, I touched it and the tires fell off and the hunk of metal dropped to the ground. I had to stand there for a while to collect myself. Women! I seethed. I hadn't exactly expected a warm homecoming but this was a bit much.

And now they were in the library, Dresden begging Alana to understand why they just couldn't and she being the little brat that she is was intent on getting what she wanted. I saw her through his mind; her nightgown pushed up around her waist, her tiny white panties, and the determination on her face as she reached out for him. She kept calling him by his newly dubbed nickname, Kitten.

Time to break this little soiree up. They didn't sense me so I slipped effortlessly back into the house and up the stairs without being detected. "Hello Dolls." I sneered. Alana frowned as Dresden helped her on to her feet. Dresden's shirt and belt buckle were unfastened. He looked almost relieved to see me there.

"Where have you been?" She demanded.

I wanted to take her into my arms but I knew she wouldn't have let me. I hadn't known that she would be so wounded by my absence, I should have known however. Any idiot could have sensed her utmost dependence. I just couldn't wrap my mind around the thought of someone needing me in such a crucial way.

"I went nowhere." I replied. Dresden frowned at my tone, Watch your mouth and be gentle with her, he snapped in outrage. I didn't have time to reply because Alana had come to stand directly in front of me.

"But you're going 'nowhere' again aren't you?" she shouted. I looked at Dresden who had yet to say a word out loud, wanting him to say something to reign in her rage and save me from her scolding intensity.

Christian had pleaded with me to stay with him, but I couldn't bear being away from them too long and this was the fury I came home to.

"Leave then, go!" She said gesturing toward the door, my door in my house, I thought to add. Her eyes filled with tears she struggled to keep from falling down her cheeks.

"Lana." I reached out to touch her and she jerked back and into Dresden's arms.

"I'll take care of her, of course, if you wanted to go back to him." He said.

"So you don't want me here, either. Is that right?" I snapped. I grabbed Alana's hand but she snatched it back.

"You left us! You left us!" She cried her magenta eyes aflame. "He abandoned you, left you alone and now you're doing the same to us to be with him. Well to hell with you!" She spat. She brushed past me and out of the room.

My whole being stung with her words. I had severely underestimated the effect my little vacation would have on her.

“You know she loves you.” Dresden said putting his hand on my shoulder.

“Ungrateful little thing,” I whispered angrily, my feelings thoroughly hurt.

“I’ll always protect her Allurius. Don’t stay here out of obligation.” He said almost impatiently as if he wanted to say just go already.

“Do not hate me Dresden, but I need to be with Christian, for now anyway, I’m worried about him...” I started.

“A, Don’t worry about me, you know I don’t mind. Go talk to Lana.” Dresden smiled at me. “Come with me, both of you.”

Dresden stepped away from me and buckled his belt. “No, we’re going to stay together Alana and I.” He replied.

“She is mine, do hear and I’ll take her if I wish!” I hissed. He smiled, giving me the most unintentionally smug look. We both knew she wouldn’t leave Dresden’s side willingly. I turned away from him without another word and sought out Alana. She sat at the bay window in her room.

“What sets you apart from the others?” She asked as soon as I walked.

“Others?” I arched an eyebrow. “My mother, Gideon and Rachelle. You have hurt and disappointed me just as much as they did. Even more so.” She said softly. She didn’t look at me as she said this. Pain assailed my entire body. Was I really the same in her eyes as those low lives?

“You ruined my car!” I shouted at her. I knew I was probably carrying enough in my billfold to buy another Rolls Royce that night but I was thrown off by what she had said.

She glared at me. “I would have given the business to your other cars if I could have found the keys.” She said matter of factly.

“Alana I am not prefect. Even I make mistakes. Did I pretend to have virtues that I lack...” I kneeled down beside her. “Look at me sweetheart.” I brushed my fingertips down the side of her face. “I am truly sorry that I hurt you, I want you to come with me.”

She frowned. “Does Dresden want to go?” She asked. I clenched my fists at my sides and stiffly shook my head no.

“I’m staying with him.” She said softly when she noticed how much her question had enraged me.

“Alana.” I sighed. She dropped to her knees in front of me and put her arms around my neck. I held her around her waist as she pressed me against her. It felt good to hold her again.

“Goodbye Allurius.” She whispered.

“No don't say goodbye.” I murmured. Then I froze as a cold feeling washed over me. I shuddered. Dresden walked in.

“What was that?” I asked.

“You felt it too?” He said his eyes grave.

My cell phone rang. I pulled it out of my pocket and pressed ignore without looking to see who it was.

Barely a second had passed before Dresden's phone rang as well. He took it out of his pocket and placed it to his ear. It was Micahlene and she was in hysterics. His face went blank and he dropped the phone onto the carpet. “Gwen is dead.”

Dresden...

Gwendolyn. Alana wrapped her arms around me as Allurius picked up my cell from the floor. He tried to soothe Micahlene, who had found Gwen's ashes this evening.

“She did it to her self?” Alana said softly.

I looked at Allurius and he had a solemn sympathetic look on his face as he talked to Micahlene.

“I don't think Gwen did it, she couldn't have.” I mumbled, numb.

“Oh honey, I'm so sorry.” Alana said looking up at me.

Alana thought my grief had caused my disbelief but I truly believed Gwen had been murdered. I had always missed Gwendolyn, the mortal Gwen, the girl she had been before I turned her.

“Mother if you don't calm down I won't be able to understand a thing you're saying.” He said.

After I created Gwen I had never loved her the same way I had before, but I hadn't hated her. She was just a constant reminder of the mistake I had made. God, and to think about the last words I had ever said to her. If I only I had forgiven her. I had deserved her rage. I brought my fist to my mouth and bit my knuckles to keep from screaming out in anguish. Alana sobbed silently. Why she cried and Allurius and I didn't, spoke volumes.

“It's alright Alana, we'll find out what we can.” Allurius said to her. He hung up the phone.

“Who do you think could have done it?” Allurius asked me, his eyes dull. He didn't think she had killed herself either, we both knew Gwen was too proud to do something like that.

“I don't know.” I sighed.

“We should go be with Micahlene.” Alana sniffed.

Allurius smiled triumphantly. “Micahlene is going to Christian's and she would like it if we would come too.” He said cheerfully.

Alana glanced up at me. "Kitten?"

"Hmm?"

"Do you think we should go?" She asked.

"I think we should go," Allurius said.

"I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about Dresden and I." She replied evenly.

Man, if looks could kill. I smiled at her, my little imp. "We should, for Micahlene." I replied.

Alana...

I laid across my king sized bed staring down at the sunlight that spilled across the floor from under the drapes. I hadn't told Dresden that I haven't been falling into the slumber at all lately. And he didn't question why I had fitted every window in the house with heavy drapes and made sure they were closed before we retired. I certainly couldn't bring it up now that Gwen was dead. I didn't want to worry him anymore. His eyes had taken on a sort of hollow distance since he had learned of her fate.

And Allurius had left just as soon as he knew we would follow behind him. So I sat now, trapped in bed thinking over the latest dream I had.

When I did fall into a light sleep I kept seeing the red man come toward me. He had long auburn hair and bright red eyes. He would grab me and stroke the back of my neck before taking a knife to it. Mimicking the wound I had that still hadn't healed and that I didn't remember getting. The Red Man would shake me like I were some type of bottle of ketchup until I was near weak from lack of blood and I would awake screaming and it would be daylight and Dresden would be stone cold next to me.

It was infrequent this dream but it always took place in Miami and it always went the same.

"Never here." I thought to myself confined to my bedroom. I heard the creak of a door opening and closing. I tensed up immediately and brought my knees to my chest. No foot-steps so it had to be one with the circumstances. Then I saw his wavy black hair and his blue eyes and exhaled in relief. His muscled chest was bare and he wore only black pants that were sitting low on his waist. I bit my bottom lip, taking in the glory of his toned physique. Just the sight of him sent a jolt through my body right down between my legs.

"Promise to never stop looking at me like that." He smiled.

I realized that my jaw was hanging open like an idiot. And the funny thing was I've seen him often in various stages of undress. Yet every time felt like the first time.

"Dresden!" I said, regaining some functional use of my brain, "What are you doing awake?"

He frowned before shrugging. "I could ask you the same thing. Baby, how long has this been going on?"

“Four. Five days.” I said counting backward.

“This can only really mean one thing.” he shuddered sitting next to me.

“What?”

“We fall into the sleep because the Primoris Humus are day walkers. They never rest they never sleep. We take on their exhaustion which is why we fall into the slumber.” He said.

“The prima what?” I frowned.

“The Primoris Humus is the first group. They animate us all. So if one were to be destroyed... then there would be less exhaustion. Then we would awake... early. Why you would probably not need to sleep at all, since you aren't fully turned.” He looked away confused.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It is impossible to destroy one of the Primoris Humus.” He replied simply.

So then there was nothing to worry about. I snuggled up closer to him. The sun probably wouldn't set for another hour. Oh what to do to pass the time, I giggled to myself.

“Silly girl.” Dresden looked at me, the smile returning to his face.

“C'mon.” I pulled him down to kiss me. He wove his fingers into my hair as he crushed his lips onto mine. I thrived on his intensity. Maybe he would finally, finally, finally— .

“I love you.” I squeaked as he made a move to back away.

“I'm not going to continue unless you promise to breathe.” He replied grinning. Now that he had brought it up I was feeling a bit dizzy, I exhaled shaking my head yes.

“Promise.” I arched my back so that our bodies were pressed tightly against each other. He brushed his lips down my neck and to my collarbone, sucking it lightly.

I dug my fingers into him as he nudged my legs open and put them up around his waist. I moaned softly as He pressed himself against me. I was putty in his hands as I gazed into his tender blue eyes. His satin black hair fell around his face and he held himself above me. I forgot about any sensuality or romance as I used my feet to slide his pants down.

Dresden smiled then lightly kissed my forehead. “Are you absolutely positive?” He asked me, his hand resting on my cheek.

I turned my face into his palm. “Yes!” I breathed. I felt secretly victorious, but wouldn't say anything while he still had the chance to change his mind. I wanted nothing more than for him to be my first. My body responded eagerly to his touch and I whimpered with longing.

I was terrified he'd stop now, that he'd pull away and leave me here with this pent up need. I held on to him. He trailed butterfly kisses down to my waist.

“You have to tell me if I cause you any pain.” He said gently hooking his fingers around the band of my panties and sliding them off. I could barely find the words to answer him so I nodded fiercely instead.

Of course, anything you want. I tried to say but I couldn't concentrate on breathing enough to speak. He chuckled softly as I pressed up against him. "Dresden." I whimpered, burying my face in his neck as he teased me with his fingers. I bit my tongue to keep from crying out at the cold smoothness of his touch, like stone draped in silk.

He cradled my feet in his hands as he trailed kisses down my leg. "So delicate, so lovely." He whispered against my skin.

He gazed up at me desire thick in his eyes. "I love you." He murmured tracing my mouth with his and then I felt him, very tenderly, very slowly enter me. I was more than ready and I willed him to continue. Each thrust was short and measured and I lifted my hips to meet him.

He wove his fingers in my hair. "This will only hurt for a moment." He whispered, and then he buried himself to the hilt inside of me.

I gasped with the searing pain, tears stinging my eyes. He froze, studying my face. His own full of concern.

"No keep going." I encouraged. I didn't want him to stop. I kissed his full lips as he entered me once again. I watched his eyelids flutter as he groaned and whispered my name. I felt like I could very well explode, the feeling of giving him such obvious pleasure swelled within me. I became bold and rolled my hips against him. Our flushed lips met each other over and over again as he rocked gently inside of me and there was nothing else and nothing mattered but us.

The sudden waves of pleasure washed over my body and my vision began to fail. I clung to this foreign sensation and I cried out as my toes curled up, digging my fingers into his back.

"Dresden! Dresden!" I called out.

He shivered, he was close and I writhed underneath him hoping to help him to climax. His nails ripped into the mattress as a low growl escaped from his throat. I placed kisses down his neck. He went very still, his lips pressed on my forehead. The tremors flowed to my fingertips and I lay gasping for air. We stayed wrapped in each other arms.

Then Dresden rolled over and sat upon his elbow beside me. "Are you okay?" he said softly, trailing his fingertips up and down my arm. "You're trembling."

"I love you." I sighed. I looked over at him and my gaze swept up and down his body. He must have caught the look on my face.

"No Lana." He said simply kissing the tip of my nose. I sat up and frowned.

"Why not!" I asked.

"Because we have moments till the sun sets, and we need to get on the road just as soon as that happens." He replied.

"What? We're driving to Los Angeles!"

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 6

Allurius...

I paced back and forth down the hallway.

"You're going to wear a hole into my floor." Christian pointed out.

I frowned. "I knew I should have stayed behind and come with them, look the sun is rising what could be taking them so long?" I murmured.

"When I last spoke to Dresden he said they were close." Christian reached out put his hands on my shoulder. The drive should only have taken a few hours for Dresden, ten hours max.

"Relax I hear them now." He said and pressed the numbers on the keypad next to the front door and the gates to his home in the Hollywood hills opened up. Dresden's Aston Martin sped up the driveway. I heard the Rap music blaring out of the car before I saw it actually. Alana's doing no doubt. I flung the glass doors open. The early morning sky was a pale blue.

"What took you so long?" I shouted like an old hen. Dresden smiled, his black hair whipping in the wind, his driving gloves still on as he reached for Alana. She came around the car and attached herself to his side.

I frowned, why on earth was she limping? Why did Dresden look slightly guilty at her doing so. I wrapped my arms around her waist just as soon as she came through the doors. I lifted her up, kissing her hair while Christian patted Dresden good-naturedly on the back. Alana laughed as I sat her down, taking off her sunglasses.

"Will you look at that." Christian said in awe of Alana. He couldn't take his eyes of her magenta orbs.

"Come in, Micahlene is here. She hasn't been sleeping, none of us have so please excuse the unsightly black curtains pulled across my walls." He explained. His home was made up of nearly all glass. Alana smiled at him. She found him charming.

"Will you take me to Micahlene?" She asked him.

"Of Course, ma belle." He hooked his arm with hers. Alana looked back at Dresden with longing, her eyes betrayed the depth of love she had for him as he gave her a parting kiss. Soon as they were out of sight I turned to Dresden, who was pulling his gloves off and stuffing them into the pocket of his blazer.

“So how was it!” I snapped.

“The drive? Not long... fast.” He shrugged.

“The drive! You know exactly what I mean! It's written all over you, and she can barely walk straight.” I hissed.

“Don't even start.” He replied walking past me. “How could you...” I began.

“How could I?” He turned around his eyes a flame. “How could I? I'm all she has! How can you even look her in the face after taking off without so much as a word? You didn't see her the night she realized you were gone, I did! I will not let you do to Alana what you did to Lila.” He snapped.

I curled my hands into fists, counting backward to remain calm. “I don't want to argue with you.” I managed through clenched teeth.

Dresden nodded. “You said on the phone you wanted to talk to me about something.”

Oh. I relaxed considerably with the change of subjects. “It's about Gwen. Micahlene is almost positive someone else did this to her.” I said.

“Someone who didn't want her around, perhaps. She knew a lot about things she shouldn't have. A lot of stuff Zinnijah told her.” He replied shrugging his shoulders.

“And then with this not sleeping thing going on, I wonder what's going on with the Primoris.” I said off handily. Dresden frowned, his gaze far away. “What is it?” I asked.

“Nothing, it's nothing. I was just remembering something Gwen had said.” He raked his hand through his hair.

“Well I'm glad she's dead. She was never fit for the circumstances anyway.” I crossed my arms in front of my chest

“Please, don't.” He said, his voice thick with emotion. “How can you say such a thing?”

I realized then that just how hurt he was over this lost. Even though he would never again have to look at Gwen and see the grave error he had made in turning her, he would instead have to think about how he had ultimately ruined her life.

I went to embrace him. “Do you want my help finding the person responsible?” I whispered. He nodded.

“I owe her that much. I forced her into it. She was helpless and I...” He trailed off. I fought back the urge to roll my eyes. I doubted Dresden had done any of that.

“Do you know what bothers me most about this whole thing?” I cut him off.

“What?” He asked. I could tell he was still a bit put out by my previous comment. “That no one knew this was happening to her.”

“I've been thinking about that the whole way here.” He shuddered.

I led him back to the room Micahlene was staying in. Micahlene was where she had been the last time I had been in here. On the bed sitting against the headboard with the blankets

pulled up around her waist. Christian and Alana flanked her on both sides.

“My sweet, gentle Dresden.” Micahlene said as we came in the door. Dresden quickly went and placed a kiss on her cheek.

“Micahlene.” He said softly, looking into her eyes.

“What took you two so long?” Alana asked me.

“Just talking.” I replied eyeing her knowingly. She only grinned impishly in return.

“I only wish you all could have known the kind girl I knew.” Micahlene said hoarsely. She pressed her lips in a thin line. She didn't want to sob in front of us. She was referring to Alana and I. Dresden was the one who had turned Gwen so I assumed he had loved her at one point and Christian happened to be great friends with Gwen during her immortal life.

“Why didn't you like Gwen?” Alana said looking from me to Dresden. I didn't answer and Dresden sighed.

“I suppose it's my turn,” He said placing his arms on the back of the chair closest to the door. I sat down beside Alana who shifted so that she was leaning against me and we both waited for him to begin.

Dresden...

“I was given these circumstances by Micahlene LeBeau on the night of September 18, 1825 four months after my 21st birthday. I can still recall that day vividly. The sun was setting and the sky was shades of pink and light hues of gold. I was sitting on my porch of my family's Plantation house.”

“My mother had just died and my Father was very ill, near death himself and as the only male child I was the acting Master of our estate, right outside of Savannah, Georgia. I sat there listening to the sounds of cicadas and the noises from the slaves in the field when I noticed an extraordinarily pale blonde woman standing near the gate. She was leaning against the post, watching me intently.”

“I called for Alyssa, the head housekeeper, to come outside. Go down there and see who that is, I said leaning forward in my chair to get a good look at the woman. Alyssa grabbed up her many skirts and walked down to The Blonde woman. I watched as she timidly walked over to her. I could already tell something wasn't quite right with this woman. I rose from my chair and began to go to the gate but Alyssa came back meeting me halfway.”

“Massa, she say she here to see you. Her brown eyes were wide and I realized she was afraid of this visitor and that it took every ounce of her to keep from running screaming back into the house. I frowned and waved her away. That'll be all. I said walking over to the woman. She was breathtakingly beautiful with green eyes as clear as crystals. Ma'am. I greeted. Call me Lila, Dresden. She grinned at me. I backed away from her. It will do you no good to run. Lila reached out and grabbed my wrist in her hand. I tried my hardest to pull away from

her but it seemed like it took little effort on her behalf to keep me in her grip.”

“Will you behave? Or will I have to bribe you with the lives of your nieces and nephews inside? She tilted her head referring to my sleeping kin in the rooms upstairs. I shuddered at the thought. What do you want from me? I said and I stopped trying to pull away from her. That's better. It so much easier when you cooperate, my sire wants to see you. She has been watching you. She put her hands up to my face tracing the crease in my forehead caused by my frown.”

“Watching me! I cried. Shh, be quiet. Tell that girl to go away and stay away or I will kill her. She hissed pointing toward my house. I turned around to see Alyssa standing where I had left her. Go back in the house! I yelled to her. When she still didn't budge I walked towards her with Lila directly on my heels. Alyssa, do as I say. I pressed gently. Go inside and do not come back out here.”

“With a moments hesitation Alyssa turned and ran back into the house. Now follow my directions and don't think you can fool me or slip away. Go dress in your riding clothes, tell your father you need to go into town, say something vague. Lila pushed me roughly down the path to the house and finally through the door. I'll be waiting and watching so be quick! She hissed slamming the screen behind me. I stood stock still in disbelief.”

“Dresden! My sister Robin cried, her baby on her hip, as she came toward me. Both my sisters and their families were here on account of my mother's funeral. My heavens! You'll wake the children. She said. Robin, I have... uh... to go into Savannah. I said as she handed me Josette. But it'll be dark soon, Dresden. Can't you wait until tomorrow? She frowned. I remembered Lila's threat and handed Josette right back to her.”

“No I can not and don't worry father with it. It's an urgent matter. I mumbled turning around to go up the stairs, I watched Lila lean over the second floor banister.”

“Faster! She mouthed before disappearing. I was terrified at this point. Not for myself, but for my family if I kept this beast waiting a second longer. Virginia! Robin called coming up the stairs behind me. I groaned. I would have not one but two sisters making it hard for me to keep them safe from harm. They wouldn't even leave me alone to change. Robin and Virginia kept up their tirade and little Josette stared at me in what I could only guess was sympathy. I kissed Josette in her head of dark curls and pushed past Virginia as I made my way down the stairs.”

“Dresden, have you been drinking? You are sweating buckets! Virginia shrieked out. I looked past her and at Alyssa. We locked eyes and at that moment I knew she knew who was waiting for me and her dark face went a shade of pale. There were things I wanted to say to her but couldn't because my sisters were still there glaring at me.”

“Virginia, Robin I implore you both to please shut up. I kissed both of their cheeks as they stood there fuming and made my way to the stables, mounted my favorite steed and took off.”

“I was barely off of the property before I was pulled off of my horse and roughly thrown down on to the dirt road. Christ! I rolled over on all fours and struggled to rise to my feet. Was that really necessary? I barked at Lila's laughing figure. She came beside me and pulled my head back by my hair. Her gaze went soft as she stared down at me. Oh you're so lovely, so beautiful. She murmured brushing the beads of sweat from my face and then she buried her head into my neck, I felt two sharp pins sink into my skin before I passed out.”

“Dresden, Dresden Darling. Lila's musical voice came through clear as bells. I opened my eyes and my head was in her lap. I sat up and immediately jumped away from her. We were sitting on the floor of a dimly lit dark-paneled bedroom. Candelabras were placed sporadically against the walls. I turned around to look around the room. There was a four-poster bed pushed against a window and open coffin beside it. I knocked her hands away from me as I tried to stand but stumbled back to the floor like a drunk. My limbs screamed out in protest as I made a move to get up again. Darling, please you're injured lay back down. Lila cried restraining me on the ground.”

“Mother will be very upset with me if I damage you any further. She placed my hands at my sides and brought my feet together. I screamed out at the pain of her doing so. I'm sorry. Your ankle is sprained. I had to pull you off of your horse that nosy girl was still watching you. I took care of her... She stopped and smiled with the memory. I was enraged. You killed her! You monster! I shouted as I threw my fists at her. Lila cupped my ears and pounded my head into the floor until spots decorated my vision.”

“Suddenly she was torn away from me and thrown against the window. I said I wanted him unharmed, you little idiot. The other one snapped. But Micahlene! He started it! Lila cried out. He is a mortal! Mon Dieu! He looks all banged up! Out! Get out. Micahlene yelled at her. Lila glared at me before scurrying out the door. Micahlene came toward me slowly. Her chestnut brown hair was piled on top of her head and her lovely pale blue eyes were very soft, nothing like the coldness of Lila's green eyes. She kneeled down beside me, the bell sleeves of her flowing gown fluttered across my chest as she placed my face in her cold hands.”

“You're hurt badly. I'm going to help you feel better. She said and she gently kissed my lips before I managed to turn my face away. No. I mumbled. I put my palm flat on her face and tried to push her back from me. She didn't budge. Micahlene sighed as she pulled my hand from her face. Dresden, be polite to me. She chided. You killed Alyssa, she was with child! I screamed at her. Micahlene frowned and pulled me into her arms, carrying me over to the bed and placing me on my back. I began to cry out in pain and she covered my mouth with her hand.”

“I cursed her still even as she lifted my wrist to her mouth and latched on. Jesus Christ, what are you doing? I cried out, my words muffled. I clung to my failing eyesight and watched in silence as she unsheathed a knife from inside her sleeve and cut a long slit down her forearm. The running blood fell over my face and on to my chapped lips. I winced and turned away from her. Come now Dresden, you don't have to fight me any longer my son. She crooned lifting me to the wound.”

“It didn't take long for me to turn, a week at the most I believe. It was Lila who led me from Micahlene's sprawling swamp side home and into town to feed. I began to suspect that Micahlene had made me to keep Lila out of her hair. It was Lila who was perched on the banister outside my room waiting for me to wake.”

“Lila also taught me how to make use of my new strengths. She took me out by the swamp and told me that I should try to leap across it. Like this. She bent down and put her hands on the ground in-between her feet and pushed off sailing into the air and landing without a sound on the other side.”

“You see? She called out. I watched her bend down again and come back over to where I stood. Your turn. She put her hands on my shoulders and shoved me down to my feet. I've got it. I snapped pushing her away from me. She sailed into the air just as I did and crashed into me so that we both fell into the murky swamp water. Lila laughed out loud splashing water my way. You are absolutely unbearable! I muttered leaving her behind and going back into the house. Oh you're never any fun! She yelled after me.”

“She followed me around relentlessly like a little sister, she did begin to remind me of somewhat of my mortal sisters. Lila leave me alone! I would hiss to no avail. I remained sullen and refused to be won over by either of them. I felt oddly cheated like I was coerced into this life with out knowledge of what was happening to me.”

“Micahlene could hardly stand to be in the same room with me. Accusations prominent in every glare I gave her, for I rarely, if ever spoke and I couldn't bear to be cruel to her. I did love Micahlene, in many ways she was the mother I had lost. Years went on this way, me closed up in my room with my many books and only venturing out to feed. Then Micahlene informed me her son Allurius was coming to stay with us.”

“Why the hell should I care? I muttered turning away from her. Lila was delighted, and I was beginning to toy around with the idea of leaving them behind. The night Allurius was to arrive Lila came thundering into my room. Dresden, I implore you! Please pretend to love us for just this night. She said. How could I ever pretend to love one such as you? I replied. She acted as if I hadn't said anything and leapt into my lap.”

“She wrapped her arms around my neck and looked into my eyes. I didn't know it was your baby. She whispered into my ear. I stood up effectively releasing myself from her hold. I

went over to window and stared out trying to get a hold of my emotions before I spoke. I did everything you asked of me that night; there was no need to hurt anyone. I told her.

“You really cared for her? Her and your child conceived from rape? She said softly. There was no condemnation in her tone, she was truly curious. I did not force her!”

“How could it have been anything but? It's not like she could have told you no, Master. She sneered putting her hand on my shoulder and spinning me around to face her. You blame me because you feel guilty. That child would have been unacknowledged by you, why it's better off! She cried. I looked right through her. Is this what you hoped to accomplish tonight? Did you wish to make me dislike you more than I already do. If you would have asked me if this was possible just an hour ago I would have said no, but look you've proved me wrong. I walked passed her and opened my door. I want you to stay far away from me, Lila. I closed the door behind me.”

“Allurius was already downstairs with Micahlene sitting beside him, his hand in-between hers. She kept talking and talking, even I could tell how thrilled she was to have him there. He looked exactly like her, except for his pale hair and angular jaw line. Two identical pair of eyes turned to look at me as I entered the room. I smiled and took a seat near them, Micahlene returned to what she had been saying but Allurius didn't take his eyes off of me.”

“Allurius don't stare It's rude. Micahlene said when she realized he wasn't listening to her. I'm not staring Micahlene, I'm admiring. Then he winked at me and I couldn't help but laugh out loud.”

“Finally Lila joined us, doing everything short of turning cartwheels to get and hold Allurius' attention. I'm sure that they had exhausted him that night. He was infinitely more jovial and entertaining than I was. They were relieved to have him around, someone who didn't weigh them down with guilt. But I began to dislike him immensely! Allurius was very fond of mortals. He liked to be surrounded by humans as he found them charming and witty. He complained that we bored him literally to death. It wasn't uncommon for him to come home each evening with four or more guests in tow.”

“Lila would play hostess to these fools and they would drink wine and carry on merrily while Allurius went from one to the other, drinking just a bit from each until they each dropped dead. I found it ghastly that he would bring them to our home to do such a thing.”

“I thought him to be a bit of brute and detested the way he talked to Lila, which was really no different than how I talked to Lila, but she was in love with him and he knew as much. He thought it nothing to bed her and take off for days at a time without regard to her. Then I was left to deal with Lila and Micahlene was left to deal with me. I wanted him to leave but she refused to see the flaws her son possessed.”

"I'm leaving you then. I said to Micahlene in her study. She rose from the desk and came toward me. I thought as much. Is this because of Allurius? She said putting my face in her palm. Honestly no. I can't stand to be around you and especially her. Micahlene's mouth turned down at both ends and her eyes welled up. Is there anything I could say that would make you stay? I held her close to me. I was going to miss her, No, its time for me to go."

"After Allurius and Lila were informed of my pending departure, Lila threw a vase at my head that I narrowly missed and stormed out of the room. Micahlene followed after her. Allurius and I were left alone. After a long silence he asked that he might join me. I told him absolutely not. He laughed at this. You'd rather be alone? I don't think you'd rather be alone. He mused. I told him I didn't like his dining habits and he asked why should it bother me as long as he left me alone. In the end I agreed to this arrangement, Why not? He promised not to be seen and not heard, this would be a joy after living with Lila for all these years."

"I know now that if he hadn't left with me he would have left anyway. He was a wanderer and refused to be tied down to one location too long. But as you can imagine she didn't take it to well to it, Lila, us moving on without her. Allurius was better at avoiding her than I was. He tried his best to remain kind but I could see she wasn't making it very easy. You are the biggest thorn in my side, woman. He shouted one night as he ushered her out of his room."

"Knowing she'd soon come after me I hurried down to the swamp and climbed up into one of the weeping willows. I settled on a branch and pulled out my Dickens and carried on reading, even as I heard her slam the front door shut and walk down to where my tree stood."

"You both are being terribly unreasonable. She muttered sitting down at the base of the tree. Am I? I didn't look up from my book. Yes. She cried. Lila you are the most tiresome being I've ever known! Tell me do you ever get worn out from just being you? I would! I tell you, it would just take it out of me to be so dramatic every second of every day. I said and jumped down after her as she tried to walk away. I grabbed her arm. Lila, wait. She turned on me and gave me a blank stare as if she had vacated her body. You'll regret every word you've said to me Dresden, you and your Allurius. She said simply and tore herself away from me."

"Lila made good on her threat. She was always a woman of her word. We rose the next night to find the front door open and Lila's charred remains in the foyer. It looked as if she had worn her most powder blue beautiful gown and all her favorite jewelry and lay down on the floor in front of the door as the sun rose. I could only stand there and stare at the thing that had been Lila. All that was left was the soft satin waves of her blonde hair."

"Micahlene was disgusted. What a moron! What a moron! She cried. Her cascading brown hair and face were covered in soot as she fussed over Lila's body. Allurius hadn't said a word. He stood at the top of the staircase motionless. I pulled Micahlene up by her shoulders and crushed her against my chest as she cried her tearless sobs."

“Suddenly Micahlene pulled away and screamed to Allurius that he was a heartless brute and this was his doing. Then she turned on me and made me crush the remains under foot and scatter them in the swamp. It was a ghastly task but I didn't dare fight her on it. Not the way she was yelling at both Allurius and I. She wanted us gone that very night. She all but pushed us out of the door. So we went to New Orleans as we had planned.”

“Lila's death effected Allurius greatly. I couldn't bring myself to feel the same guilt he must have felt. I rarely saw him come out his room and when he did he always looked disheveled and misplaced. The first time I had seen him like this it shocked me into silence. Allurius used to take hours to primp and he always chose his garments with great care, it wasn't uncommon for him to change two or three times in one night. But now he would mull around in the same outfit for days at a time until I pointed it out. He would shrug and sluggishly go into his rooms to change.”

“After a year or so he went and dug himself into the ground beneath the porch of our home and stayed there. After a while I had even stopped crawling down there and asking him if he needed anything. This is the way he grieved so I left him to it. I lived as a recluse for years and years, the 1900's came and went I only ventured out now and then to feed and even that was few and far between.”

“The world didn't start to interest me again until around the 1980's. Allurius was still in his hibernation and powerfully bored with New Orleans, I left for New York City. I got a hold of an investor and accountant to manage my vast fortune left for me in a trust left behind by my grandfather. I bought apartments in downtown Manhattan and Greenwich Village.”

“Mortals began to interest me in a way they never had before. I wanted to be around them, to hear them speak and feel the soft press of their limbs against me in a crowded club. I spent time at the Jefferson Market Library listening in on their conversations and asking people about their book choices.”

“I seemed to intrigue them as well, which I must admit wasn't very hard to do. They liked my black hair, my blue eyes and alabaster skin. I was told frequently how beautiful I was. I had to learn the precise point to end a conversation before a mortal began to fall in love with me. I didn't want to be drawn to anyone and risk the chance of hurting him or her as severely as Lila had been. That is until I met Gwendolyn Nona Alden.”

“It was purely by chance that I saw her. It was March of '88, it was bitterly cold and had snowed the night before. The city night was alive with noise and the lights from buildings and passing cars. I was going to a hole in the wall pub for an open-mic night. I settled in the back of the room at a table beside the bar and watched as she took the stage.”

“She was tall, about 5'9 or so. Her fiery red hair was a wild tumble of ringlets around her face and her eyes were the most astonishing shade of green. They were so bright they looked

almost neon. Her nose was just a bit too large for her face and her lips were rose petals against her freckled skin. Her guitar was fastened to a sling across her back.”

“She brought the microphone to her bare lips and said in a low raspy voice that her name was Gwen Alden and she was going to sing ‘What difference does it make’ by the Smiths. She settled down on the lone stool and strummed her guitar before opening her mouth to sing. Gwen sang beautifully, I believe and will always believe she had been blessed with an extraordinary gift. The devil will find work for idle hands to do. She crooned into the microphone, her hands still playing the guitar. I was enraptured with this girl and her hypnotically haunting voice. The room erupted into applause when she finished.”

“I knew I couldn’t just let her leave. I wanted her to sing for me. I wanted her to come to my home and fill it with the sound of her voice and guitar. The crowd coerced her into performing again. A blush blossomed from her neck to hairline, it was a done deal! I had to have her. She sang the same song but this time without her guitar and instead used her fingers to snap the rhythm of the song. I stood up from my seat and swiftly made my way outside the club. For the first time in my existence I was at a loss for words as to what I could say. What I could do to make her come back to my loft with me. I needed the words that would make her fall in love with me.”

“It was about another hour or so before she came outside for a cigarette. She only wore a tattered wool trench coat and black and white checkered scarf. Her guitar was slung across her back and her hands trembled as she brought her lighter to her cigarette. Hello. I said. I don’t have any change. She started but then she turned to look at me and stopped. Her cigarette fell from her lips.”

“Hi. She said. Dresden. I smiled and took her gloved hand in mine. Dresden... no I’m Gwen. She muttered. I laughed. She let me usher her back inside but she wasn’t so easily won over. She was suspicious of me, of my kindness and attraction toward her. I only want you to sing for me. I would tell her. I remained patient with her of course. She was 22, a struggling artist and didn’t want anything to do with me she said curtly.”

“Yet she kept coming back to the bar night after night and she would walk right over to my table and sit down. She wouldn’t let me take her out to dinner. So we sat and I spent most of the evening persuading her to fall in love with me. She thought this hilarious of course, who wouldn’t. Then the lease on her closet sized studio apartment was up and she didn’t have the money to rent it out any longer and I successfully persuaded her to move into my home in downtown Manhattan.”

“It was an interesting thing, to live with a mortal and try to keep my secret from her. The house was soon filled with things I had never seen such as toothpaste and toilet paper, food was in the cupboards and the heat was actually put into use. She didn’t make it easy for me

to take care of her however. I had to press a credit card on her, she said it was unnecessary for me to give a car when she could take a taxi or ride the subway.”

“She did allow me to buy her art supplies without complaint, her paints and canvases as she needed these things more than she needed air. Gwen cursed a whole lot, every other sentence was punctuated with a swear word. I told her it wasn't lady like and she told me to piss off. She was maddening really, but I loved her. Especially when she would sing. Her voice drifting up to me from the kitchen and onto the rooftop where I sat watching the city below.”

“Gwen wasn't fooled by the excuses I gave her as to why I wasn't around during the day. I remember the night when she accused me of being a vampire. She was in the little room next to the one we shared, painting one of those abstract ugly pieces that were all the rage then. She had the stereo in the corner turned on and she was dancing back and forth between the canvas and her paints. I've got to let you, I've got to let you know you're one of my kind. She sang. Then she noticed me leaning against the doorframe.”

“Babe!” She exclaimed immediately dropping her paintbrush and jumping into my arms wrapping her legs around my waist. She crushed her lips on mine and wove her fingers through my hair.”

“I swiftly placed her on her feet and she frowned. I used my thumb to wipe a smudge of Kelly Green acrylic off of her cheek. Why do you always do that? She asked me. And what is that, Gwendolyn? I smiled at her brushing one of her red curls from her face. You know what I'm talking about. We have yet to have sex Dresden, It's been a whole year now. She followed after me as I had abruptly turned around and left the room as soon as she uttered the word sex.”

“You're gay aren't you? She accused when she cornered me in our living room. I am not gay. I laughed. She frowned at me, Do you have AIDS? She asked. Christ, woman. No! I sighed as I sat down on our long L-shaped leather couch and pulled her on to my lap. Her arms went around my neck and I kissed her throat.”

“You always tease me.” She hissed as I laid her down on the couch. I lay in between her legs and trailed my hand down to the waist of her leggings. She wiggled out from under me and stood up. Gwendolyn. I groaned as she started to pace in front of me, I sat up and prepared myself for her tirade. You appear out of no where every night. Suddenly you're just there and you expect me to believe you're not married. She shouted. I am not married! I said exasperated. I want you to tell me the truth.”

“I stood up and looked down intently into her bright green eyes. She looked contemplative for a moment. Oh! Oh! She called out stepping away from me, her eyes danced wildly. Oh! Of course! Of course! You're impossibly beautiful! You're ridiculously rich and I know nothing of

your past. You're uncomfortable being too close to me during my period! You're a walking Anne Rice novel. She pointed one finger at me then covered her mouth with both hands."

"I remained frozen to my spot. I don't know what to say. I replied simply. Gwendolyn came over to me and kissed my lips. Show me. She demanded softly. I turned my head away from her. Show me! She said again. I bared my fangs to her and she didn't flinch at all. She stood perfectly still. She had even reached up to touch them but I slapped her hand away. Don't be foolish. I warned. Why didn't you tell me? She asked softly. How could I? Could you have believed me? I bent down to kiss her and she returned my affections eagerly."

"I love you. I frigging love you! She insisted. And so she stayed with me continuing on as if I hadn't said anything really significant at all. She still flew into my arms every night when I materialized in the door. It's been unbearable for me, waiting for you, longing for you as I do in the day when you're away from me!"

"We rarely fought, maybe about little things as to why I needed four televisions and all the most up-to-date electronics. She abhorred technology of any kind while I relished in it. It was like moving mountains to get her to agree to the home movie theater I wanted constructed in the loft it. Gwen did enjoy my laughter though. She would always watch me with a smile on her face and didn't mind when I would rewind Young Frankenstein or Monty Python's-The Holy Grail over and over again while shaking with amusement."

"There is one thing that she enjoyed really and it was the swing that I had tied to the exposed wooden beams in the ceiling. She would hold on to me as I vaulted over our bedroom's railing and on to the swing and she would settle on it beside me and we would sway gently back and forth not speaking a word for hours."

"We shared a special bond, one she signified by getting a very elaborate stylized tattoo on her hip of a vampire bat with my name in script inside of it. Despite the fact that I told her I couldn't shape shift or fly, and that I could see my reflection in a mirror and 'holy' objects had no effect over me. She had stopped insisting upon sex when I told her I could quite possibly kill her during the act. I did what I could to please her with out full intercourse and this seemed to be enough for her."

"But as time wore on I knew that I would either have to let her go or turn her. Gwen didn't want to be turned into a vampire. Or at least she never asked or voiced any desire to be turned. She was happy with the way things were and I knew she felt no need to change it."

"She wanted things that would be taken away from her if she were to become vampire, she wanted people to see her perform, she wanted to go back to college one day. And she wanted children. She desperately wanted children and would talk casually about it frequently. When I have a child I hope he will be a little boy with dark curls and blue eyes like yours. She would say smiling at me."

“I decided to let her go. I knew if I truly loved her I'd want her to have the life I would be unable to give her. She came home one night loaded down with shopping bags, the tall heels of her shoes clicking against the polished wood floor of the loft. She smiled at me and my heart clenched up. This was my fault I reminded myself, I had always kept a distance between others and myself for a reason. This heartache would be a lesson learned.”

“I simply came up to her and told her I was leaving. That she would stay here in the loft and that I would still financially support her always but I felt that she needed to be free to live her mortal life. She did not take this well at all. She rejected it as if it were a business proposal. I want you to stay here with me, Dresden. I love you. She wrapped her arms around me kissing my face and my lips. Gwendolyn, Gwendolyn. I murmured as I she led me into the bedroom.”

“I buried my face into her neck and drank from her. I had never done this before, nor had I ever left anyone alive after doing this. She pressed herself against me and held my fingers down between her legs as I had my fill of her. Don't go Dresden, please don't go. She said as she curled up on her side and lazily fell asleep. I didn't stay. I couldn't very well stay with her. If I stayed I would turn her. I can't say that it went well.”

“I don't know how she reacted when she woke up the next night and I still wasn't there. I think when it finally dawned on her that I had meant what I said is when she started her drinking and acting as if she had no sense of self-preservation. I knew she did little things to bait me to see if I was still around, which of course I was. She would go to the bar where we met and sit at our table and tell anyone who would listen about her vampire.”

“He was so exquisite and he was so gentle. You should hear his voice. Oh his voice sent shivers up and down my spine. She would slur. She was always drunk then.”

“During the few sober moments she had Gwen began to research the occult. She had even begun to practice witchcraft. This maddened me. Instead of moving forward as I had wanted she was regressing into someone I didn't even recognize. Her voice singing Alice in Chain's 'Would?' in the dark of the loft was distorted and eerie in a way that I couldn't bear to listen. It was a little over two months that I had been gone when she stood on the rooftop terrace of our loft contemplating whether or not she should jump off.”

“You're being pretty ridiculous. I said coming up the stairs to the roof. She looked over at me and shrugged, What do you care?”

“Why don't you sing or paint. Do you care nothing about your future anymore? I demanded. She walked right up to where I stood and slapped me as hard as she could across my face.”

“Don't you come up here lecturing me, you ass. She walked past me and down the stairs into the loft. I followed her immediately. What so you'd have me stay? You can't function un-

less I'm around. I would expect more from you than that. She never took the frown off of her face while I spoke.”

“I want you. She murmured. You want me? I am a predator Gwendolyn. I bared my fangs. She grimaced. This whole relationship goes against my basic nature. We kept this up until almost sunrise, she was crying and sloppy and I wanted her to stay home, but she wouldn't unless I promised to stay. I refused and she left the apartment. I started after her but the sun was creeping over the horizon and I was forced back into my hidden coffin.”

“A terrible thing happened to Gwen when she stumbled out in that early morning. She had been followed, beaten and robbed while I lay beyond reach in my comatose state. She did fight valiantly. When she could have turned and ran she continued to fight her attacker. I believe this is the only reason he didn't succeed when he tried to pull her pants down around her ankles but she was inebriated so he ultimately gained dominance over her. I don't know how with her injuries, she managed to come stumble back home and crawl into bed. Gwen didn't call the paramedics because she didn't know the extent to her injuries and she was still very much in shock.”

“No words can begin to describe how I felt when I saw her and the bruises blossoming on her arms and legs. She wanted me to hand her the pack of cigarettes in her coat pocket. She said she couldn't get up because it hurt too much to move. She was crying tears of anger. She was cursing, asking me if she looked bad. Was she hurt really badly? I handed her the pack of lucky strikes as I tried to adjust my voice before speaking to her.”

“What did he look like? I asked her evenly. I was going to absolutely ravage the person who had done this to her. I tried to take her hand but she snatched it away. Some scumbag! I don't know. Christ! My arm hurts like hell. Don't look at me like that! It was an unfair fight I was drunk. The asshole, I could have taken him easily... . She raved on and on.”

“This was entirely unacceptable. I'm sorry Gwendolyn I should have been there. I should have been there to save you. I said softly leaning in to kiss her. I don't need you to save me Dresden. She hissed trying to sit up. I heard cracking noises and pushed her back onto the bed. We can't risk this again, and why did you try fighting him back? He could have had a knife or worse. I leaned forward and she tried to push me away again. I placed her hand by her side and she finally looked me in the face and grew absolutely terrified.”

“Dresden, no! She said sternly. I can't risk losing you. I murmured. She fought against me hard. She called me every name in the book. But I wouldn't be deterred and I drained her so that her breath was shallow. She pressed her lips in a thin line and turned away.”

“Gwen I love you. I said kissing her face. Then let me die. She whispered hoarsely. You wanted me back, so now I'm back. I said bringing her head to the wound on my neck and after a moments hesitation she began to drink from me.”

“Gwendolyn turned astonishingly fast. She had no qualms about killing to feed. She wrote it off as something that had to be done. I can say things went well for a short while. We even made love frequently, which was thrilling for the both of us. We had lived together for five years and could finally be intimate.”

“It is hard for me to pin point the exact moment things began to turn sour with her hatred. She never outright told me she hated me but you can always feel a person's disdain especially in such close quarters.”

“Soon she fell into staring at me for hours on end in silence. Sometimes she did this from the swing hanging from the ceiling. Don't just sit like an owl leering out at me! I would shout at her, but she acted as if she had no ears and I had no voice. She grew cold towards me and would rarely, if ever stay in a room if I was in it. This wounded me considerably as she was acting toward me the way I had with Micahlene and Lila. I realized I had robbed her much as they had done to me. But I had done so out of my love for her. And with her preternatural abilities she took to witchcraft more quickly then she would have had she been mortal.”

“It wasn't until she began to mutter about a ‘Zinnijah’ that she outright voiced her dislike of me. The feeling wasn't mutual. I was still devoted to her although her singing voice didn't sound the same as it had when she had been mortal. It lacked the same emotion and it sounded mechanical and forced. She smashed her guitar to pieces and left it out for me to see one night. I didn't give much thought to this Zinnijah character until it dawned on me that she was very real.”

“I wanted to catch a glimpse of this Zinnijah for myself. Gwen's indifference to me came in to good use. It was nothing for me to follow her as she hunted, as she had not bothered with letting me teach her how to use her new abilities. Gwen feeding was an interesting thing. She seemed almost detached from what she was doing, as if she took no pleasure in the kill at all. She didn't savor her victim's blood or her victim's swoon. She was in and out and moving on before I knew it.”

“I followed her to Brooklyn where she came up to a lovely four-story brownstone and unlike the ones around it, it wasn't broken up into separate apartments. Gwendolyn walked up the stairs and into the dark apartment as if she'd been there many times before. I waited across the street until she appeared again. She stood at the top of the stoop and looked directly at me. Gwen only glared and she didn't say a word before disappearing down the street.”

“I frowned and immediately went over to the brownstone not taking a moment to knock before entering. There were a few dim lights turned on in what appeared to be the living room. There was an altar built into the wall where a television might have set. Then I heard it coming down the stairs and I grew immediately defensive.”

“I wouldn't think you to be so rude Dresden. A woman said. She came down the stairs into my full vision and I had to keep my jaw from dropping to the floor. Zinnijah was a vampire! One of the most exquisite vampires I had ever seen. Her pin straight black hair was parted down the middle and left to hang down her back. Her brown skin glowed and she wore a simple pink negligee and robe. She tilted her head waiting for me to speak.”

“Zinnijah? I asked. I am she. She smiled flashing her brilliant white teeth. I was anxious to ask her millions of questions but I didn't want to be friendly with this woman. I considered her to be the source of all the problems between Gwendolyn and I. Why are you bothering my Gwen? She is acting erratically and I think you are to blame. I said and she passed me to sit on her Victorian style sofa. Gwen doesn't want to be your Gwen any longer. She replied. She gestured for me to take seat across from her but I declined. I demanded to know how she found us and she told me that Gwen was the one who had found her.”

“I knew about you however, I've seen you before. You are always the picture of perfection, Gentleman death. You're always dressed to the nines. She smiled at me again. How many pairs of Italian leather shoes do you own? This was her little way of letting me know she had seen me much more then one time. I found her infuriating of course, with her cryptic answers.”

“You are a gentle soul, so I left you alone. I thought you had learned from mistakes past. Then I saw your mortal consort and I knew, knew you'd do something foolish. And you have and now you are in the spot you're in. Zinnijah rose and advanced toward me. It's a shame really. We could have been great friends you and I. I frowned at her and went towards the door, never turning my back to her. Stay away from us, the next time Gwen comes turn her away. I demanded.”

“I am only trying to help her Dresden. Zinnijah started but I waved my hand to cut her off. I will give her any help she needs. Stay out of it. I hissed. I slammed her door behind me and went home. It was still early in the night perhaps ten o'clock or so but I was exhausted. Gwen wasn't in the loft when I came in. I took off my shoes and tie then loosened the collar of my shirt and settled down on the now rarely used bed in our room. I was so deep into my mortal sleep that I hadn't heard her come in and tip toe into the room.”

“I did however wake with a start when I felt the press of a cool blade against my throat. I looked up to see Gwendolyn holding the handle to the butcher knife placed at my neck. Gwendolyn! I shouted out in indignation. Don't speak. You did this to me. She began to press the blade down and I grabbed both her wrists and pushed the knife away from me.”

“Gwen stop! I roared as she continued to try and thrust the blade into my torso. We went on like this for mere moments before she was suddenly thrown back so hard into the glass wall of our bedroom that a spider web of cracks blossomed behind her. She thrashed around

trying to get herself down as her body slid up to the ceiling. What are you doing to me?" She yelled. "What are you doing?"

"I was just as bewildered as she and I looked to see Allurius standing in the doorway of our bedroom glaring at her furiously. He looked all disheveled and his frock coat and lace flounce were caked in dirt. It looked as if he had come here directly from his resting place in the earth. He turned to look at me and Gwen dropped from the ceiling with a thud on the floor. She hissed before vanishing out of the loft altogether. Allurius looked from me to the knife and then back to me."

"Holy Hell! She's trying to kill you isn't she? He exclaimed. I sighed and went to take him in my arms. "It's been... a while." He said smiling his same impish grin. Looks like the old Allurius was back. I nodded without enthusiasm."

"Alright we'll have to go after her you know. He mused and walked around me into my closet. I stood there trying to recover from the events that had just occurred."

"Don't just stand there like a buffoon Dresden, help me get cleaned up so we can go finish off that harpy. He turned back to the closet, took one look at my belongings and sighed. Your clothes are so boring. Allurius finally settled on a black pinstripe suit, black button up shirt and a white tie. He was thrilled with my shoe collection and I showed him how to use the shower in the bathroom. He took care to dry off his shining platinum blonde hair and I sat on the bed motionless as he primped himself in the mirror."

"What a horrid looking thing she is. To think you wasted good blood on her. Allurius said glancing up to look at me. I wanted to defend her, to say how lovely she was but the words were pushed back by my bitterness. I loved her. I shrugged my heart broken. I worried that I would never hear her sing again. He snickered and turned toward me looking very pleased with himself. Alright, lets do this thing."

"I took him to Zinnijah's, as I knew Gwen would show up there sooner or later. Zinnijah was adamant she had nothing to do with Gwen's assassination attempt. She eyed Allurius curiously. He did not like her and stood over in the corner as she and I talked. It was you. He shouted suddenly. You filled her with her delusions. You could have stopped her. Zinnijah glared at him but turned to me instead."

"She was lost and needed guidance, I knew things she should know. She took my hand and began to tell me of the Primoris Humus and The First. The First was the mother of us all, she explained. No one but the first knew how it came to be. But it was only The First for a long time until she created the Primoris Humus. There were five of them; they are extremely powerful and dangerous. The Primoris created more of us then so on and so forth."

"Zinnijah's voice was so soothing that soon even Allurius came forward to listen to her stories. Then she stopped abruptly and looked toward the door. Gwen is approaching, let me

talk to her. She said. Gwen came in and immediately shot towards me. Everything happened in the blink of an eye, Gwen dropped lit matches on Zinnijah's coffee table, and the antique thing went up in flames in seconds. Gwen then reached for me. Allurius grabbed Gwen by her jacket just as Zinnijah blocked me from view causing Gwen to accidentally catch Zinnijah instead and pull her down into the raging flames.”

“Allurius released her immediately as he and I rushed to find a way to put out the fire. Gwen howled in pain reaching into the fire to pull Zinnijah out. I snatched her back and told her to stay still. By the time Allurius got the fire under control it was too late and Zinnijah was dead. Allurius turned on Gwen but I stopped him. She was trembling with a sudden realization of all she had done, she looked at me and began to sob. Things could never and would never be the same between Gwen and I again.”

“I didn't want her to wander alone aimlessly however so I contacted Micahlene who had been alone in Melbourne all this time. The few times afterwards that I saw Gwen I was always filled with such guilt, such shame of what I had done and how things had turned out. After all was said and done Allurius and I settled down in Lake Forest. Allurius for the most part went back to being the person I knew before Lila's death and he rarely, if ever mentions her or Zinnijah. Which is for the best I suppose, to leave them in their places in history. No need to drag them around for eternity.”

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 7

Alana...

I felt the tears rise in my eyes. I could hardly look Allurius or Dresden in the face. My heart ached for Lila and Gwen. Is that why Dresden always looked so somber when he watched me when he thought I wasn't looking? Was it why Allurius was so anxious to make things right between him and I? They were terrified things would turn sour as it had with Lila and Gwen. I finally managed to meet Dresden's gaze. He looked lost in his memories and I was anxious to talk to him alone.

"Gwen did have a wonderful singing voice." Micahlene smiled lightly. "She would sing 'O Holy Night' for me. It was like pulling a teeth to get her to do so but it was always worth it. She never failed to move me to tears." And with that Dresden turned and left the room.

Allurius and I both rose to go after him. "No leave him alone." Micahlene said to us.

I slumped beside Allurius who remained silent as well. Christian tried to salvage the day with a light banter but it was of no use. Micahlene was miserable and Allurius was talking softly about Lila. I silently slipped out of the room with out being noticed. I was shocked to see the black curtains had been moved from the windows and the glass walls of Christian's sprawling home boasted the beautiful skyline of Los Angeles under a full moon. Had we gotten that swept up in Dresden's story?

Christian's home was perfectly modern, nothing like the old fashioned elegance of our home in Lake Forest. He did have a lovely piano however. I eyed it knowing I would play it just as soon as I had the chance.

"Alana... Lana." I knew this voice that was whispering my name. I tensed immediately. It was The Red Man's voice. A low snarl ripped from my throat. "I didn't mean to upset you." Dresden said coming from the opposite direction. It hadn't been him calling me.

He came up to me his eyes clouded with concern. "You're shaking, did I scare you that badly?"

I shook my head no. It was the red man, I saw him before you, I struggled to say, but my words were stuck in my throat as if someone's hands were wrapped around my neck. Okay I wont say anything, I thought and at that precise second the pressure eased and I could breathe again.

Dresden was still watching me intently. "Baby?" He reached for my hand.

"It's just your story, it made me sad." I murmured.

"Yes it wasn't very pleasant was it?" He smiled sadly and I went to put my arms around him.

"I can't bare your pain. I want to hold you until we become one person, one single body, and one heartbeat. I want to take your sadness into me so you won't have to shoulder it alone." I whispered against his chest.

"God, I adore you. I will not fail you the way I did her..." He said this almost to himself. It was so low I wasn't sure if I was meant to hear it.

I wasn't sure of the minutes that passed us standing there. I was holding on to him it seemed like for dear life, but he didn't make any move to release me.

"Are you thirsty?" He said, breaking the silence. I nodded my head and he took my hand and led me to the two stairs that the front doors were sat upon and out into the night.

Allurius...

Mon Dieu. I sat in Christian's parlor, looking out at the Los Angeles night. What would it take to get myself back in my spot, I wondered. How could I have not known that leaving her would completely write me off in her mind? I couldn't let Dresden shoulder the burden of her expectations alone. And being reminded of Lila made Alana's well being a top priority once again. I looked over to see Micahlene trailing quietly in the room, she was looking behind her and down the brightly lit hall.

"I'm not sure. I feel his presence. But that's really silly," She laughed nervously. "Well anyway." Christian rolled his eyes. I hadn't even seen him come in here. "I have to attend to some affairs, trivial mortal matters. Make yourselves at home," He smiled then left as quickly as he had come.

I frowned, he had barely left my side for the whole of my visit and now he left and hadn't invited me along. Micahlene still fidgeted uneasily which was completely out of character for my statuesque mother. "Who is he?" I asked her. She wrapped her hands around her middle. Once again she wore a blue empire waist gown that complimented her eyes wonderfully. Her brown hair was half swept up into curls at the crown of her head and half left flowing down her back. "My sire, Kascien." She replied as if I should have known.

"I thought you said he was dead." I tilted my head in curiosity. Micahlene didn't like to talk about Kascien, he had truly frightened her beyond repair. He had killed all of her traveling attendants on that long ago day in the French country side, why had she barely made it out of Vannes, save for her because she was the only one who had fought against him to the very last breath. "He was red all over," was the only thing she would say when asked about Kas-

cient. 'He had copper hair, leathery skin and ghastly eyes'.

"I thought he was or at least I wish he was." Micahlene said. She left then was back again then left and came back again. "You don't notice anything? But you're never on guard are you? You're so arrogant." She laughed again a bit more steadily then before.

I watched her go over and lock the glass doors. I laughed out loud at this and from where I was sitting unlocked them with my thoughts. "Some good that will do! Micah— Mother you are being exceptionally ridiculous. Maybe you should go rest."

"No, and where is Christian? He's blocking his thoughts." She cut me off.

I sighed; we had all only been together a night and I already wanted to take off. I could only guess Micahlene's mental state after losing yet another of her companions to the fire.

"Micahlene can I help you to your room?" I asked.

"No, shut up." She told me, sitting down beside me for exactly one moment before hopping up again. There were too many candles, she had said. She detested too many candles. God, I hate vampires. I seethed.

The glass doors opened and Dresden came in with Alana, she acted as if she was drunk and hung on to him hungrily. "It's the blood, the vessel had had too much wine." Dresden explained, bringing her into the parlor.

"She drank from a mortal?"

Dresden shook his head no and smiled. "She still won't do it, she won't even take cats." He put her in my lap and I eagerly put my arms around her and she smiled still mute with glassy eyes.

"I'm still starving of course, having had to feed her." He placed a kiss on her forehead before turning to leave again.

I brushed Alana's hair back from her face. "Wait Dresden." Micahlene called coming from the shadows. She looked as skittish as a rabbit caught in a trap. He stopped and stared at her in bewilderment.

Her eyes danced wildly as she spoke, "Do you sense anything, anyone around?" She asked him.

He was still for moment and closed his eyes. "No, but now that you mention it I think Alana saw something earlier."

"I didn't see anyone!" Alana called out in panic. Dresden and I stared down at her.

"Is something bothering you?" I demanded, "Tell me what it is."

Alana's eyes grew wide and her breathing became sporadic. "No, there is nothing. I saw nothing." she insisted. Dresden locked gazes with me; we both knew she was lying. But he was starved, the blue veins in his neck were prominent against his skin and it would be hard for him to pass as human unless he had a drink immediately.

But as Dresden turned to the door again Alana let out a cry of panic. "No don't go!" She leapt up from my arms and over to him.

I watched something in his eyes break as she said those words: don't leave me Dresden. There were no adjectives in the English language to describe the tenderness in which he looked down at her. He'd drop dead before he'd intentionally hurt her. She was Gwen all over again and this time he would do it right. He smiled and remained silent as she took him by the hand and led him away. I heard their low murmurs behind a closed door. He was assuring her in a soft voice and she was grateful for it.

Micahlene watched them disappear and came to sit next to me. "I want to tell you something, but you must listen and not speak until I finish." She said putting her hands over mine.

I turned to look at her, more hurt by Alana's display toward Dresden than I cared to admit.

"What Gwen said about Alana's blood is true, I know this because the night I was made, Kascien told me about 'the coming'. He told me I shouldn't worry about such matters, but the signal of 'the coming' would be magenta eyes in newborns all across the world." Micahlene looked at me to see the reaction on my face.

"Are you listening to me?" She demanded when I didn't reply quickly enough.

I sighed. "I can't help but hear you Micahlene, you're yelling directly into my ear."

I told her as gently as I could that after she had some rest we would talk about this more. She glared at me as I pulled her from the couch and took her back into her room.

"You like to ignore things! You think if you don't face it, it will just solve itself." She slammed the bedroom door in my face after yelling these words at me. I didn't like to think that she could be right about Alana's eyes. Why was she acting so sporadically! I couldn't very well trust anything she might say now!

I went down the hall to the guest room. I was anxious to tell Dresden about Micahlene's little outburst. He would know what to make of it. His door was slightly ajar and I glanced in to see two naked beings entangled on the bed. I couldn't help but stare, shocked to see Dresden sprawled on top of Alana, her legs around his waist, his hand traveling the length of her soft brown body, cupping her breast then her buttocks. Alana clutched his back, clawing at him passionately. She rolled her head from side to side as she moaned in pleasure.

"Dresden, Dresden." She whimpered his name each time he thrust into her. Her legs quivered as he kissed her, His eyes watching the emotions washing over her face with a burning intensity. They were oblivious to me as if they were only living for each other. I couldn't bear to watch anymore and turned away just as Dresden rolled Alana on to her hands and knees.

I walked almost in a daze back into the front room and waited for hours it seemed before they finished. Alana was tired and fell asleep as I'm sure Dresden had hoped as it gave him a chance to finally feed tonight. I didn't say anything or look at him as he passed me to go out the front door. I feared I wouldn't be able to talk with out my voice breaking.

Dresden...

Finally alone with my thoughts I could only think of Gwen, her neon eyes haunting me. Her voice from that long ago night crying out 'you did this to me!' My sweet angel, how could it have come to this? If I had known I would never see you again I would have forgiven you and apologized for all of my damnable errors. I had to find out what had befallen Gwen but I hadn't a clue as to where to begin.

Later for that, I had to feed. Alana had been my first priority this evening and I had only drank enough to satisfy her thirst. My Alana, my second chance. I smiled thinking about her. When I came to the gates at the bottom of the driveway my defensives went up. There was someone standing down the street watching me.

It was another with the circumstances. She was tall, nearly my height and was clad in a black leather jumpsuit. It was ridiculously tight and hugged every hill and curve of her body. Her hair was an artificial fire engine red and was pulled into a sleek bun on the back of her head. She stood under the streetlight as if she had been waiting for me to come out of the gates of Christian's house. No bare skin, besides her moon shaped face, showed even her hands were covered with matching leather gloves. Her arms were crossed under her breasts and she stood impatiently as I approached. She had been waiting for me.

"Hawthorn, I've been sent here to talk to you." She said formally, she had a ludicrously thick jersey accent.

I arched an eyebrow her way. "You've been sent by whom?" I asked.

"Vallen Webb." She said matter of factly.

I seethed, The Webbs! What the hell do they want? I was livid at the thought of Vallen Webb wanting anything to do with me. The Webb Dynasty is scum as far I'm concerned. No self-respecting immortal has anything to do with their human slave trade and other various shady dealings in the mortal world.

"Which would make you?" I glared at her.

She pulled her lips into a thin line and then I knew who she was. "You're Shay aren't you?" I grinned at her. I couldn't help it. Shay had been a very fierce vampire hunter, one of the best of the Protettori, an ancient sect of vampire slayers, had ever come across. She was specifically gunning for vampires in the Dynasty which is why she was left unharmed by the vast majority of vampires and also why Vallen Webb had ordered Shay's capture and to add insult to injury he turned her himself. Now she was a central part of the vampire's very own

version of the mafia, the Webbs, the very beings she had been committed to overthrowing. The Protettori had become laughably inept since her departure.

“That's Webb to you, Hawthorn.” She spat.

My eyes narrowed. “Say what you have to say.” I replied.

“Vallen suggests you send Alana to him, as all newborns with her eye color are being taken from their Sires. We are trying to protect as many as we can.”

I laughed at her. “And by protect you mean kill. You think me to be a fool Webb?” She smiled in return.

“We have to do what we have to do. It's one of the Primoris that are taking these newborns, and what ever he has in mind can't be good for the rest of us.” Her cell phone rang at that moment; she flipped it open. “Yes I'm talking to him now... hold your fucking horses! I'll report back soon.” She snapped. Shay looked at me waiting for my answer.

“You must be out of your mind if you think I'm going to give her to you.” I sneered.

“You have to think about the rest of us! The aura penetrating from Alana is outrageous. She's a walking billboard to the Primoris who is doing this! You think he doesn't have anything to do with the fact that it's taking her so long to fully turn?” She hissed. She wasn't going to yell at me, lest we bring attention to ourselves.

“You're wasting your time here, go to Vallen Webb and tell him I said to keep far away from us.” I said walking past her.

“You should ask Micahlene what she knows! What Gwen told her, Hawthorn! You can't ignore this!” She called after me.

I shuddered and turned around to face her. “Stay away from us Shay, or you'll have me to deal with.” I hissed.

“I can't do that Dresden, I have to take her with me.” She unsheathed a weapon and I lunged for her throat.

Alana...

“I love you.” I murmured as I twirled one of his white blonde curls around my finger. Allurius grunted but his eyes betrayed his hope.

“You are blood of my blood, yet you betray me time and time again.” He replied.

“Is it not enough that I love you? Do I have to love you more then anyone else?” I frowned.

“Yes!” he cried and crushed his lips onto mine. I yielded to his embrace. I had missed him more then I cared to admit.

“I caused this. I know, I wounded you in some unseen way.” His hands cupped my face and he looked into my eyes. The intensity was scalding and I had to turn away.

“Can't it be enough that I adore you? I always have and I always will.” I said softly.

“I saved your life!” He snapped.

“I wish you hadn't! I wish you had left me to die then. You make me feel guilty and wrong for wanting Dresden. You know you made me for him.” I said pulling away from him. He remained silent unsure of what to say.

“I made you for me. I found you for myself. You are my first fledgling, Alana. Tu es ma joie de vivre.”

His voice went soft and I frowned. “Then why did you leave me?” I choked out.

“I didn't mean to hurt you! You know that!” He snapped his voice harsh again.

I flinched at the sound of it, and folded my legs against my chest. “I am God, and you are my Adam and look, look what you've done. How you've betrayed me.” He hissed. I pulled away and didn't answer as the front door pushed open. I gasped and threw my hands into the air.

“Oh! Dresden,” I cried out at the sight of him. He was bleeding and his coat was torn. He was walking fine as if he didn't know he was hurt. Allurius's jaw dropped when he saw him.

“What happened?” He shouted going over to Dresden.

“I would have healed by now had I had a chance to feed before she showed up! Its nothing just a superficial cut on my arm.” He was saying over Allurius's questions.

I knew I was getting increasingly hysterical as I touched the wound and then his face, my tears and hiccups drowning out all other sounds in the house.

I tried to control the pitch of my voice but found it impossible in my panic. I knew the Red Man had done this to Dresden! I was trying to talk but the pressure on my neck returned and I stumbled against them. Allurius took me by the arm and ushered me to the door.

“You're just in the way right now!” He snapped.

“No! Bring her back in here!” Dresden shouted at him.

But I took off, out of the glass doors of the house and didn't stop until I reached the sunset strip. I was infuriated. My body felt electric with my anger and I knew I had a hunger that had to be slated. I had the urge to feed myself tonight. It was nothing to get into Whiskey A Go Go and strike up a group of male callers. I had them in the palm of my hand and I let the thirst rule my body. I took his hand; his greasy brown hair fell in his face.

His blood was calling out to my hunger; this would be simple, easy. I was so close my tongue tasted the salt of his skin before I felt hands as powerful as steel clamp down on my shoulders and pull me away.

I growled in protest only to see The Red Man. He put his hand over my mouth before I could scream. I thrashed wildly in his arms but it was of no use.

“You nearly ruined everything! No human blood for you little one, I can't very well let you turn. Now you must come with me sooner than I had expected.” He said hoarsely as if he hadn't used his voice for centuries.

I slammed my fists into his face but it had little effect on him.

“And it's Kascien, not the red man.” He snapped and buried his face into my neck.

“Dresden!” I cried out and faded to black.

The Eternal Kiss

Part Three

To the centre of the city where all roads meet,
waiting for you,
To the depths of the ocean where all hopes sank,
searching for you,
I was moving through the silence without motion,
waiting for you,
-Ian Curtis 'Shadowplay'

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 8

August

Dresden...

"You'd take care to listen to me!" Shay said standing on the dais of Christian's living room. Christian stood in front of me while Micahlene held onto Allurius by his shoulders, trying to keep us both from tearing Shay limb from limb. Alana was missing, she had run out of the door after Allurius yelled at her and she had yet to return. It'd been three days since this occurred and we were damn frantic about getting her back. Especially if what Shay and Micahlene said was true. I was almost sure Shay was the one who had taken her. After our confrontation on the street I thought she would back off and leave us in peace.

Allurius snorted. "You tell us what you did with her then we'll listen, Webb." He replied.

Shay's very red hair was cut into a sleek bob tonight. She still wore a black jumpsuit except this one had showed off her cleavage and the sharpness of her collarbone. An elaborately done tattoo of two pistols adorned her chest with the words 'bang bang motherfucker' written in curlicues in-between them.

She frowned at Allurius. "We do not have Alana. If we did I would not be here, now would I?" She replied not moving from where she stood. She swept her gaze over to Christian and stared at him a long while before looking to me.

I calmed a fraction. "Who has her then?"

She smiled at me mockingly. "Who do you think, asshole? You've fucked us all Hawthorn." She snapped. "The Primoris has her and two other magentas that we weren't able to capture and exterminate in time."

"Do you know what he wants with them?" Micahlene spoke up.

"No but we know he has managed to slay three of the five Primoris." She looked at her.

"You're a liar! How could anyone have managed that?" Allurius shouted at her.

"You would know these things if you kept in touch with the community, LeBeau. Vampires the world over haven't been sleeping as the sun rises. Vallen has reason to believe Callistus, Dominic and Emmanuel have been killed as they are the weakest of the five and therefore easier to dispatch. Only Azriel and Kascien are left."

The silence was deafening. Allurius, Christian and I turned our eyes to Micahlene who stood wide-eyed. "My sire?" She said meekly. Shay frowned at her. "What?"

"Kascien is the vampire who made me." Micahlene replied. Shay nodded, confused. "Of course, why do you think vampires clear out of every city you people inhabit? No one will fight you for claim; your blood is too powerful." She looked at each of us and a smile split her face in two.

She began to laugh. "You didn't know did you? You didn't know your maker was a Primoris!" Shay shook with amusement.

"Sober yourself quickly." I demanded and went up to her.

She glared at me. "Vallen will send us information as to Kascien's whereabouts as soon they become known."

Allurius scoffed, "Who is 'us'? You're not staying here!"

"Yes she is, she's our only chance of getting Alana back." Christian replied.

I opened my mouth to agree just as the scent of two mortals came pouring into the room. They were close, in the driveway I assumed. I reached to pull Shay down into the living room with the rest of us but she snatched away and threw the glass doors wide open to the night sky.

"Protettori!" Christian hissed. The male and female duo slipped out of a large black Mercedes and toward the door. They were foolishly fearless as Protettori always were. No matter how laughable the thought of 'vampire slayers' was the Protettori considered themselves a force to be reckoned with. They were rarely discreet and never classy. The woman was a Saudi of average height with copper skin and outrageously long eyelashes. Her ink black hair was in marcel waves around her face and her full curvy figure was clad in a simple black shirt-waist dress. The man was very plain in black jeans, shirt and brown blazer. He had very artfully designed facial hair, a goatee and sideburns. His mousy hair looked as if he'd just rolled out of bed and left it as is.

They were both armed to the teeth. A look of recognition flickered across Allurius' face as the woman stepped into the foyer.

"Shay." She said.

"Rachelle." Shay nodded toward her then the man who was named Adam. Rachelle. Rachelle.

I grinned at her. "You're Alana's stepsister." I said.

Her mouth set into a thin line as she glared at me. "Are you the beast who turned her?" She snapped.

“No. That would be me.” Allurius’ blue eyes danced wildly in amusement.

“I don’t want Protettori in my house!” Christian shouted. “We are not acting on behalf of our organization. Rachele is here to collect Alana.” Adam said firmly.

“You had your chance, Alana is mine now.” Allurius remained nonchalant as he said this.

“Besides she has gone. You know she’s gone.” Shay replied.

Rachele narrowed her eyes before speaking. “I know that! I am here to offer my services in finding my sister and then I’m taking her with me.” She set her eyes on Allurius, then me.

“Vallen isn’t concerned with saving the magentas. He only wants to keep Kascien from achieving what ever goal he has in mind.” Shay cut in.

Rachele, Allurius and I glared at her. “She isn’t a magenta, she has a name.” I snapped. “And we are going to get her back.”

Alana...

“She’s waking up.” A voice cut into the blackness. It was a sweet high-pitched voice. She was concerned and I could feel her hands on my face.

“Get away from her Eloise.” A gruff voice told her.

“No Eden, I don’t want her to think she’s alone.” Eloise said softly.

It didn’t take the edge off her voice however. I opened my eyes and sat up slowly. I was on a grand four-poster bed and the girl Eloise was sitting beside me on the velvet bedspread.

For a split second I thought I might have been back at home in Lake Forest. The room was the extremely large and had the same 18th century furnishings as home. The floor lengths windows were covered with heavy drapes and hints of sunlight showed around the sides. A grand chandelier came from the domed ceiling and provided dim lighting. I gasped at the sight of the ornately painted ceilings, cherubs against a night sea-green sky.

The boy, Eden sat on the farthest side of the room on a chaise lounge. They both looked about my age and also seemed to be in the limbo I was in. His skin, though pale was probably soft to the touch and I could hear him breathing. He was tall and very handsome, though his eyebrows were a bit too bushy and his nose slightly too wide. He glared at me with a burning intensity.

I turned to Eloise. She smiled at me her peach lips pulled back revealing all of her teeth. Her hair was the same dark brown as his except hers was wavier and framed her face wonderfully. His was in disarray on top of his head.

“What’s your name?” Eloise said. I only stared at her still in shock. We were both wearing the exact same long sleeved high-necked flannel nightgown. Eden snickered and I realized she was still talking to me.

“Alana.” I said to her. They both looked so similar. “Are you twins?” I asked. Eloise’s musical laughter filled the room. She nodded. Why was I here? I strained to remember the

events that had led me to this room, to this bed.

I looked at the door. It was steel and gray and horribly out of place. There was no knob. It had to be locked from the outside. Why would someone want to lock me in a room? I finally looked her directly in her eyes. They were magenta, as were his, the same dark shade of pink as my own.

“The red man put us here didn't he?” I asked, my eyes wide. I brought my knees up to my chest. I had fought off thinking of Dresden and Allurius the moment my eyes opened. I couldn't let the panic set in.

Eloise looked at me sympathetically. “The red man? What are you four?” Eden snickered, Eloise shot him a look and put her cool hand against my face. “Kascien did put us in here. We have been here for weeks you've been here for a while but you've been sleeping,” She said in her unintentionally shrill voice.

“Allurius... Dresden.” I mumbled. I could feel my insides twist into knots.

“Are those the one's who take care of you?” Eloise asked. I nodded numbly. “They sound nice, those names. Can I see them?” She asked me. Again I nodded not quite understanding what she meant until her teeth where in my arm. I didn't make a move to stop her. What did I care about the dizziness?

“Eloise!” Eden snapped not moving from where he sat. She pulled away from me with a soft look on her face.

“Aye, I've never scene such stunning creatures.” She smiled sadly at me.

Tears were fighting to pour out of my eyes but I refused to cry, if I started I wouldn't stop.

“Why did he lock us in here!” I demanded.

“He unlocks the door at night, we are free to roam the grounds then. He just doesn't want us in the rest of the castle while the sun is in the sky, lest we kill ourselves.” Eden said gravely.

“I want to go home.” I said meekly. Eden only stared at me.

“We haven't the strength to go very far from here, Alana. He hardly gives us any blood. He is trying to keep us in limbo.” Eloise said. She unfolded her legs from underneath her bottom and slid off the bed. She went over to her brother and brushed his hair from his eyes. He gave her a half smile before returning to his solemn demeanor.

“So what, we just sit here? For what?” I asked. They both shrugged at the same time.

“Are there others?” I asked.

“There were.” Eloise said, her face sad.

“Did Kascien kill them?”

“Some yes, others were destroyed before Kascien could get to them.” Eden said harshly. I shuddered.

“Be nice to her Eden.” Eloise frowned down at him.

“Why? I won't coddle her like her makers did. Look at her trembling like a dried leaf in the wind. It's all she can do to keep from crying.” He exclaimed.

I burst into tears. I couldn't have stopped it if I wanted to. I turned my face down into one of the plush pillows and I curled myself around it and sobbed until I became exhausted.

“Now look what you've done.” She reprimanded. I felt her hand move in circles on my back.

After a long while I was composed enough to turn my face up, but that didn't stop the panic. “I'm sorry. I just miss them.” I murmured.

“Of course.” She smiled down at me.

“Don't you miss the one who made you?” I arched a brow her way.

She flinched. “God No.” She muttered looking toward the window.

“Why?” I arched a brow her way again.

“We know nothing of him. He randomly took us from our home turned us and handed us over to Kascien.” Eden replied.

Eloise sighed wryly. “We see him sometimes here, but he doesn't acknowledge us.”

I sat up and leaned against her. She put her arm around my shoulders and placed her head on mine. “Do you know his name?” I asked.

Eloise nodded. “Christian Barrette.”

I gasped. Eden's glare became even more pronounced. “I know him! Why, I was just at his home...” I started. Did Dresden know? Did Allurius know this? I didn't like the sickening feeling creeping over me. Was Allurius in on this? God, was Dresden? I had to sober myself quickly.

“We have to save ourselves.” I said to Eden.

“And how do you suggest we do that? He only gives us one pint of blood each night. We can barely walk down the stairs without getting winded.” Eden snapped.

I pulled away from Eloise and wrapped my arms around myself. We sat in silence and watched the traces of sunlight disappear behind the curtains. Eden instantly relaxed and stood up. A small smile even crept across his face. Eloise however tensed and jerked her head around to look at the door.

I smelled the blood before I heard the door unlock. I cringed back out of habit as Kascien came in with three IV bags in hand. The bags were filled with blood and Eden snatched one out of Kascien's hand and tore into hungrily. Eloise went over to him unafraid and waited for him to hand a bag to her. I watched her take it and turn away least we see her drink from it.

I sat frozen on the bed as Kascien stared at me impatiently. His tan leathery skin seemed to be stretched against his skull. His copper hair was tousled around his face and his thin lips

were pursued in annoyance. His eyes were large and ringed with dark circles. I shuddered under his gaze. He might have been beautiful once but the inherent evil he possessed made it fade around the edges.

“LeBeau, come here and get your drink.” He snapped. It took a second to realize he was talking to me, addressing me by my maker's name. I took the bag from his hands and stepped away from him. I sniffed it warily.

“Whose blood is this?” I asked to no one in particular.

“Mine.” He replied and I tossed the bag at him in disgust. He scowled and reached to thump the back of my head.

“Ow!” I cried out. “Let's see how long you can go with out it,” Kascien said clearly amused.

“I'll take it!” Eden said eagerly.

“Shut up.” Kascien told him and grabbed my wrist in his iron grip and made me trail behind him as he descended the narrow staircase just outside the door of the room. Wordlessly Eden and Eloise followed behind us until we reached the wide gray stone corridor below.

Eden vanished within a second but Eloise remained behind watching Kascien closely.

“Girl.” he barked suddenly.

She and I both jumped looking up at him with wide eyes. “Go.” he hissed.

I turned to leave just as she did but he snatched me back. “Not you fool!” He said pulling me down the hall. He moved so fast that I was tripping over the hem of my too long night-gown.

“Will you slow down?” I said exasperated.

Kascien brought me into what looked like a grand dining room. The table could have seated at least 25 people. He flung me roughly into the seat beside the head of the table. There were even place settings and crystal goblets. I picked one up and threw it at him. Kascien dodged it looking less than amused.

“Stop, before I murder you.” He said, meaning every word. I pouted slumping in my seat.

“I want to go home!” I wailed.

Kascien cringed. “I hate the sound of your voice, really I do.” He replied.

The dining room was brightly lit and I took a closer look at my captor. He was dressed in a way I wasn't familiar with on Vampires. Dresden always wore finely made three-piece suits and Allurius dressed like an eccentric and it was very common to see him in skintight leather pants and nothing else, but Kascien wore a simple brown long sleeved shirt and worn jeans. He looked at me in a pained way as if he'd rather be anywhere but sitting there with me at the moment. “Why... ” I started.

He sighed. "Why have I brought you here?" I nodded.

"No one ever has new questions! You're here as are Eloise and Eden because of all the fledglings with your eye color, you are only three whose blood will be able to help." He replied.

"Help with what?" I urged. He muttered under his breath before meeting my gaze.

"Stop asking me questions." He said out loud.

"Are you the one who cut me in Miami?" I asked.

He frowned and his hands curled into a fist.

"Am I speaking a foreign language to you? You do speak English correct?" His eyes grew wide. "You can't kill me." I snickered.

"I can't kill you yet." He corrected. "It would be very foolish of you to grow too bold Alana, perhaps I'll bring you Dresden's head to teach you your place." His lips twitched with suppressed laughter as the horror crept across my face.

"Will I have any trouble from you from now on?" he asked.

I shook my head no and he smiled. "Are you thirsty?" He asked.

I tensed considerably. I was ravenous! But I did not want his blood.

"I thought as much." Kascien said making a grand gesture with his hands. He was gone and back before I knew he had left, he handed me a glass that was filled to the brim with blood.

"Whose is it?" I asked. It was cold, it had to have been kept refrigerated before he'd given in to me.

"Not mine." He replied and it was enough for me to take the blood and down in it in one gulp. It wasn't enough though and my body screamed out for more. I groaned low and deep and he sat there watching me.

"More." I demanded in a voice not my own. I only heard myself saying it as the thirst thickened within me. I was becoming dizzy with need.

I leapt on to Kascien and sank my fangs into this arm. He effortlessly peeled me off of him. I could only stand there thoroughly satisfied and ashamed. Then I was moving against my will. I was on the floor sitting at his feet like an obedient pet. He even patted my head. I had his blood inside of me, now it would be easier to control me. I realized this as I tried to stand but was unable to.

"Stop squirming." He said simply and my body ceased any movement. Soon enough he stood me up and took me back into the room atop the stairs. He shoved me in without a word and shut the door behind me. Eloise was lying on the bed, when she saw me come in she sat up on her elbow and stared at me. Eden stood in the corner watching me as well.

"This could work." Eden said to no one in particular. I looked at him in shock; it was the first unharsh thing he had said since I'd known him.

“What, Brother?” Eloise asked him. She reached out her arms to me and I immediately went over to her.

“Kascien likes her. Did you see that? I wouldn't say like, more like tolerates her. I watched them in the dining room, why he was even caressing her hair absentmindedly.” Eden said his eyes dancing wildly.

I flinched. “He was?” I replied.

“Yes! And you were sitting there as if in a daze. It could work you see! We could find a way out of here or better yet find out what he plans to do with us!” Eden pounded his fist into the palm of his hand.

“I thought we were too weak to escape!” I snapped at him. He only flashed a dazzling grin my way.

“Kascien let you drink from him, look how warm you are compare to Eloise and I. You could feed us!” He replied and he came over and pulled me into his arms and turned in a grand circle around the room before placing me on my feet.

Eloise clapped her hands in delight, “Oh Eden!” She exclaimed.

“How am I supposed to get him to talk to me? He threatened to kill Dresden!” I cried out.

Eden let a scowl pass over his face before coming to me. “How do you know Dresden didn't hand you right over to him? What about the other one, Allurius? What makes you think they are coming for you? We have to help ourselves, Alana.” He towered over me looking down into my eyes.

“They love me.” I replied meekly.

A slow smile crept across his face. “Really? I don't believe that and neither do you.” He said so low I doubt even Eloise heard him.

No they love me, I wanted to say but I found my protest drowning in my uncertainty.

“We're your family now.” He whispered and put his arms around me. I stayed frigid until Eloise came up and hugged me from behind. “We have to help each other, Alana.” She whispered.

My Dresden, My Allurius slipped past my grasp as I warmed to their embrace. I had to help myself.

Allurius...

I tapped my fingers against the top of the piano. I stared at the keys thinking, had she gotten a chance to play it? I know she would have loved too. I couldn't get the nagging thoughts out of my head. Was she okay? Was she happy? Was someone hurting her? Was she being feed?

“Christ!” I snapped out loud. It did no good to pace. I couldn't find anything to keep me occupied. It didn't help that we were damn near crowded out here.

Shay and the two Protettori were as useful as furniture. I sneered at the sight of Rachelle watching me from across the room. It'd been weeks since she first came but she still found a way to crawl under my skin.

“What are you looking at!” I barked.

Rachelle didn't move a muscle and her male companion Adam glared my way, tensing for attack if need be.

“You predator, you preyed upon my impressionable sister and stole her away.” She hissed.

“Not before I killed your father.” I replied. I could tell that meant very little to her. She even shrugged her shoulders before going rigid again. “You talk about her as if she were a dummy.” I added.

“She is too trusting. I bet she is nothing more than a play thing to you.” She shouted.

“I am not sleeping with her!” I said through clenched teeth.

“Oh that's likely!” Rachelle snickered putting her hands on her hips.

Dresden came into the library then with Shay, wearing only a tank top and jeans so that her arms with their sleeves of tattoos showed, trailing behind him. The sight of Rachelle made him tense and he walked over to me without acknowledging her.

“Has Christian showed up yet?” He asked. I shook my head no and Shay rolled her eyes.

“I keep telling you two that he's in on it! He practically handed Alana over to Kascien.” She said.

I frowned, her heavy accent was grating on my nerves and I refused to believe Christian would betray me in such a way. “Has Vallen told you where Alana is?” Rachelle asked Shay.

Shay sighed before turning toward Rachelle. “What have I told you time and again Vallen is not searching for her? He is looking for Kascien. If Alana happens to be where Kascien is then so be it.” Shay replied.

I kept my composure and looked over to Dresden, he nodded slightly. We would be looking for Alana and had no plans to help Shay just as she had no plans to help us.

“But,” Shay continued, “Vallen believes that Kascien has made his home in Death Valley.”

“Cool, let's roll.” I said starting out of the room, Dresden was right behind me.

“Wait you two.” Micahlene called to us. “We can't just go storming the gates! He could very easily take her back. We have to wait until the night of the coming. If we strike then there would be no reason for him to come back after her.” She said reaching for the both of us.

“Micahlene is right we have to wait until Hallow Mass, that is the only night he has to execute his plan.” Shay said.

“What plan?” Dresden snapped.

I would have looked at him in shock just months before but since Alana's disappearance he has been barely functioning and with a threadbare patience.

“Answer him!” I shouted at her.

“What am I fucking deaf over here? Watch your tone.” She hissed. “He plans to use their blood to bring back Isra.” Shay was met with silence.

“Isra?” Adam asked.

“The mother of all Vampires.” Micahlene replied. “We can stop him and get Alana back if we work together.” Micahlene said looking to Shay and me. Shay frowned and turned away from Micahlene's gaze.

“How do you know all of This, Mother?” I frowned at her.

“He told me, very long ago. I didn't realize what any of it meant until all of this occurred.” She answered.

“How close to Death Valley can we get with out being detected by Kascien?” Rachelle came closer to us.

“Mojave Desert.” Shay replied. “I don't want to discuss anymore of what we know in this house.”

Dresden looked slightly surprised. “Why not?”

Shay drew in closer to him. “You know why.” She said curtly.

I opened my mouth to protest but Micahlene cut me off. “I believe Shay is right about Christian, and even if she isn't he's done nothing to prove her wrong. It would be best if we depart and find a place in Mojave.” Micahlene said. Shay looked at her gratefully and it looked as if Dresden was agreeing.

I sighed. “Whatever you feel is best Mother.” I replied. Shay took Micahlene and Dresden aside, after a moment she and Micahlene vanished. “Where are they going?” Rachelle glared at us. Dresden brought his finger up to his lips telling us to be quiet. They locked gazes for a moment then she nodded.

She took a step back and Adam stood up just as Christian walked into the Library. Christian's clear gray eyes look strained and the smile on his face was painted on. His brown blonde hair was cut short tonight and he looked from each of us before coming over to Dresden and I.

I met his stare, my own full of curiosity, could it be true? Could he betray me in such a way? He immediately turned to talk to Dresden. Dresden's answers were short and curt. He had never liked Christian to begin with and had to work hard to keep the anger from rising in his face. Rachelle only stared at him in disgust and Adam's face remained blank.

“I know we'll find her. Everything will be alright.” Christian said these empty words before leaving again.

“You see?” Dresden said looking at me.

I nodded. “Yes, I see.”

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 9

September

Dresden...

The house in Mojave was adequate enough. It was just the size we needed so we weren't always tripping over each other. Micahlene and Shay had taken care of the mortals who had lived here before we acquired the sprawling mansion, but their scent still clung to the furnishings and the clothing overflowing from the closets. I was thrilled to not have to see Rachelle and her glares. Oh never mind here she comes.

"Wait." She said when I started to leave. I looked over my shoulder; damn we were alone.

"Yes, Rachelle." I said surprised at how calm my voice was.

"I would like to talk to you about Alana." She said tentatively sitting at the chair across from mine. The most pained expression came across my face. Please anyone come in and interrupt us, I thought. But for once we were blissfully alone.

"I can't." I replied my voice thick with emotion, "I can't talk about her. I can only concentrate on getting her back to me."

Rachelle leaned forward, her dark eyes soft, for once. "Dresden, I want to explain to you how things were for her and I. So you can understand why she needs to be with me." She replied.

"Are you deaf? She is not your kid sister anymore. She is not the girl you left behind to get beaten and abused! She is a vampire! The very creature you are sworn to destroy." I snapped. She had ruined my calm now, my whole evening was shot to hell.

"You don't understand her the way I do." Rachelle insisted. I stood up and raked my hands through my hair. I couldn't kill her. How could I explain that to Alana for surely Allurius and Shay wouldn't mind, but I wanted her away from me!

"You left her to be killed, Rachelle! Two years you were gone." I replied.

"What was I to do? I could hardly take care of myself let alone another." She shrieked.

I started to walk away. I would not stand here fighting with her like Allurius would have.

"Dresden!" She grabbed my arm and I stiffened. "Let me go, I haven't killed you because that would severely diminish me in Alana's eyes. I don't wish to kill you, I want you to let me go and then never address me again." I hissed.

She dropped her arms at her side and started to walk away. Seeing her so defeated softened my cold broken heart. "Wait." I called out.

She reluctantly turned around and allowed me to cup her hands in mine. I inhaled sharply. "Forgive me for being cross with you, Alana came to me in pieces and it's up to me to put her back together again, understand? I won't let her go with out a fight." She stared at me wordlessly as I dropped her hands and turned my back on her.

Still heated I went down the cobblestone floor hallway and into the kitchen. Shay, as she always is, was standing with her back to the wall as if at any second she might need to spring into battle. Allurius was right next to her and he even looked slightly relaxed, comfortable near her. They were both looking at the wall closest to the door.

I looked to see Micahlene on her hands and knees crawling up and down the wall from the vaulted ceiling and back again. She had a thick black marker in her hand and I noticed the web of names she was writing,

'Isra' was in big bold letters across the top, and then five lines went from her name to Azriel, Kascien, Callistus, Dominic and Emmanuel. "What is she doing?" I asked them.

"We're trying to figure out why he picked the fledglings he did." Allurius said not taking his eyes off of the growing map.

"I thought he only chose them because of their eye color." I looked at Shay.

"No we killed all of the ones we could get to as a precaution, then he began to kill nearly all the ones he had acquired. Except for a pair of twins and your Alana and we don't know why." She replied.

I looked at the map intently. "Well it's obvious! Alana is directly descended from Micahlene, Kascien's only fledgling." I pointed out.

"Of course! He has probably stored the blood of the other three or kept their ashes. He needs the magenta's blood to take his place in the ceremony, but the other two if they are of his blood, who made them?" Shay frowned.

Micahlene was writing my name under hers and then beneath mine, Gwendolyn. I looked away. I glanced over to see Allurius watching me.

"Do you think perhaps Kascien killed Gwen." He said.

"Why would he do that?" Micahlene exclaimed climbing down from the wall. She put the cap back on the marker and tossed it to Shay, who was still thinking about the fledglings.

What did Shay care about Gwen? She didn't even care about saving Alana's life. I could always see the disdain creep up into her eyes whenever we mentioned her. The Webb's were only concerned with protecting their greedy existence.

"Look at you darling, you seem the perfect picture of misery." Micahlene said wrapping her arms around me. I buried my face into her soft brown hair. I could close my eyes and re-

member Gwendolyn. Her fiery red hair and piercing green eyes.

“Dresden, my Dresden.” Gwen mouthed as my lips trailed down her side. “Dresden, I love you.” Now it was Alana who crooned, her lips flushed from our urgent kisses.

“Don't go!” They both said in unison, though two completely different scenes. Gwen was adamant and Alana was afraid. “Don't leave me Dresden,” They said softly. I looked up to see Allurius poke Shay playfully in the side. She flashed a rarely seen smile his way before turning back to the board.

I won't leave you, Alana.

Alana...

I sat next to Kascien and watched him mumble incoherently to himself.

“Why won't you leave me alone!” He shouted to me suddenly.

I smiled at him, used to his outbursts so they didn't startle me anymore, and tilted my head. “I like to sit next to you.” I said half-heartedly and reached to touch his hair.

He slapped my hand away. This creature was starting to dislike me as much I loathed him. But I had to try and find out something, anything that would help us get out of here.

How many nights had I trailed behind him only to have him shout at me? Threatening to push me down a flight of stairs? But Eden had been right, Kascien tolerated me and allowed me into his study. Then when the sun started to rise in the sky he would grab my wrist and happily place me back in the tower with Eden and Eloise.

“Do you think you could catch me before I made it back to Los Angeles?” I asked in teasing voice. He gnashed his teeth before looking my way.

“You could try, but I would grab you by your ankles and bring you back where you belong.” He replied after much consideration.

I shuddered under his gaze. “And why do I belong with you?” I asked. I held my breath waiting for his answer, he had yet to reveal a single thing about why he had taken me. Instead he reached over to grab me. I ducked and he caught the chair instead, pressing it back so that it and I fell to the floor.

“You beastly man!” I snapped rising to my feet as he sat back in his velvet lined gold lacquered chair. I debated whether or not I should continue with this as it was getting me nowhere. I frowned at him as I took my seat. I wasn't going to leave just yet. “I bet you came to be in the darkest of ditches made from the blackest of coals.” I muttered.

He looked over at me and let out the heartiest laugh. It was waves crashing against stone, the way it resounded through the octagon book lined room.

“You don't even know the half of it.” He said, his eyes still glistening with glee. I perked up. I was a glutton for a good story.

“Tell me the whole of it then.” I urged.

His fist came down hard on the table. “No!” He glared at me.

I stood up and brought my hand down on the table also except mine hadn't been as measured as his, mine caused the table to crack down the middle and break in two.

Kascien looked at me curiously before grabbing my arm, leading me back up the stairs. He shoved me roughly in the room and like the nights before Eloise and Eden were already there waiting for me.

“What happened?” Eden demanded after the door was shut and locked.

“Nothing, same as before. I broke the table though.” I sighed. Eloise looked alarmed.

“How could you have done that, did he let you drink from him?” She asked. I nodded and shrugged.

“He didn't tell you a thing?” Eden said his eyes wide. He came over and took my hand. I pulled away from him and sat on the chaise.

“Nothing!” I insisted. Then I gathered them to me and they both latched on to my wrists. “Be gentle.” I sighed as Eden withdrew more and more from me.

Finally Eloise shivered and pulled away then Eden stood and turned away from me as if we hadn't just shared this intimacy. We always sat in silence as the last tremors of pleasure from the blood pulsed through our limbs. The orgasmic rush always caught Eloise off guard, as she was still a virgin technically in human terms.

Eden had glared at me when she asked. “Aren't you? You're as old as I am Alana how could you have— .”

Eden cut her off. “Oh she's probably been passed back and forth between those two vampires of hers.”

“You shut your mouth or I'll do it for you.” I hissed and he surprisingly obliged and that had been the end of that conversation.

The sun rose and we sat as still as statues. Eden again insisting we stay clear of the windows. I didn't care. I ignored Eloise's hands in my hair. I watched us in the mirror. Both in flannel nightgowns, our hair in soft waves down our backs. Her hands smoothing my hair back into a two long plaits. She was talking softly about what we would do when we were free of this place.

I couldn't tell her that I wouldn't stay with them, that I still longed for Dresden. That I could still feel the trace of his finger tips across my cheek. I closed my eyes and smiled remembering how it had been when it was just he and I in that grand mansion in Lake Forest. How he had knelt down in front of me and whispered, “When you're sad. My heartbreaks and right

now you're sad over losing him. Over losing love, when I'm right here and I love you. Oh, I love you, Alana more than he ever could."

Eden was also visible sitting on the bed watching us intently, in his long sleeved white shirt and gray lounge pants. Our identical eyes locked before I glanced away.

"We couldn't go back home, Eloise." He said finally.

I woke from my ambulance. "Home?" I asked. Eloise bit her lower lip.

"It hurts me deeply to think about how Mom and Dad are doing, to wake with their children gone, just like that." She choked.

"We still couldn't return to them in this form. You think I don't want to go back to our old life? Our friends, school. I would welcome back school with open arms, Eloise, but if we make it out of here we will have to make a new life for ourselves." He said softly.

"But Eden." She started. But the look on his face made her stop.

"Where did you come from?" I asked him.

"Redding. You don't know where it is. It's small. We weren't there when Christian took us. We were in Los Angeles for a cousin's wedding. I don't know where he saw us but I know it was I who attracted him first and then he saw Elle and took her too right from the motel room while our parents slept next door. He changed us here in this very room and we were left thirsty for days until Kascien came in and gave us his blood. Never enough though, we're always hungry." He snarled.

"I will kill Christian for doing this to us." Eden looked up, his eyes a shade darker with his anger.

Eloise took his hand and stayed there for the rest of the day. Finally night fell but Kascien didn't show. We waited and waited. Eden went up and pounded at the door. Still no Kascien. The days and nights began to blur together in our burning starvation. The room swirled around us.

We bit each other to little and no avail until by the end of the week we laid on the bed pressed together. Eloise in the front me in the middle and Eden behind me, our arms entwined. What hunger, we lamented silently. What unbearable torture. We didn't know how to survive adrift out on this endless sea.

"I know why he's doing this." Eloise said meekly. We didn't answer, what desire did any of us have to talk or to go on? How welcomed death would have been right then.

"You broke the table, you were getting stronger." She replied. Eden groaned and slowly rolled away from us. Eloise began to grow sicker than he and I.

"If only we could get human blood so we could turn her fully, then she would be fine." Eden would say very low into my ear as so she wouldn't hear, as he cared little about himself or even me, it was Eloise that mattered.

Soon the procession of days ended, the door opened and two mortal women were pushed in. I stood and the floor spiraled up to my vision, Eden caught both Eloise and I. He draped me over the first woman and my old qualms died away as I sank my fangs into her neck.

Allurius...

The sun had just disappeared into the horizon. Shay led us out among the scrub plants and dried land behind the house. "We have to come up with a combat strategy." She began.

"We will only submit to this if you acknowledge that we are going in after Alana." Dresden said as she walked toward him.

She stopped and turned to look at me, "Does he speak for you as well?"

"Of course!" I exclaimed.

She turned to Micahlene who nodded. She didn't even have to ask Rachele or Adam who stood watching her silently.

Shay sighed. "Alright, well I want you to know that my main goal is to kill Kascien. And if you want Alana back you'll want him destroyed as well." She replied.

"He's one of the first correct? You three would need to work together to take him down. I can take Christian and Rachele and we can gather the magentas." Adam replied rousing from his usual silence. He noticed the look that came over Dresden's face, "Or I could get them and Rachele could take on Christian." Adam quickly corrected.

Shay nodded. "That could work." She walked over to Dresden and sprang at him in attack. He met her blow for blow, ducking under her fists and circling her around waist. He took her to the ground and pinned her.

Shay frowned as he stood and held out a hand to help her up. She ignored it as she jumped back to her feet.

Then she turned to me, I anticipated her attack and she stopped in her tracks. It wasn't by choice however, she looked as she was pushing to get toward me but couldn't move. "What are you doing?" She asked.

I shrugged, "I don't know how to control this skill. I used it against Gwen long ago when she was attempting to kill Dresden, It just sort of happens." I replied.

"Try again." She began walking toward me. I frowned on her, concentrating on my goal. After a moment she was stopped.

"Good!" She said and she smiled for a split second. She raked her hand through her fire engine red hair and turned to Micahlene. "Now we have to figure out what exactly it is you can do." Shay tilted her head.

"What do you mean?" Micahlene demanded in indignation.

“I told you how powerful your blood is. Dresden's possesses strength and combat skills despite never having been in battle. Allurius posses a strong enough telekinesis that he can move people.”

Shay circled around Micahlene. After a moment Micahlene put her arms around Shay's waist. Shay went stiff as a board in her arms before falling forward onto the ground. “She's dead!” Rachele exclaimed.

We watched in silence as Micahlene took her hands off of Shay. Shay then opened her eyes and sat up as if nothing had just happened.

“Holy shit.” Adam said. Shay stood wide-eyed with a smile that showed off all of her teeth.

“Fuck! If Vallen knew you could do that! Damn.” Shay said over and over.

My jaw damn near hit the ground. “Micahlene,” I said and that was it, I didn't know what else to say. Shay was pumped up.

“This is fucking great. Fucking great!” She hugged Micahlene and high-fived Rachele.

“Could that work against her own maker?” Dresden asked, his eyes shining with hope.

“I don't see why not,” Micahlene said.

Shay was so thrilled she forgot about putting together any sort of plan as she flipped open her cell phone. Dresden took Micahlene's hand and they followed Shay back into the house. I watched Adam step clear out of Micahlene's way as she passed.

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 10

OCTOBER

Dresden...

"We could get her and just take off." Allurius said to me, clapping his hands together. I smiled. We sat in the conservatory, just he and I. I looked over to see him smiling back at me. Who would have thought that on the long ago night in Miami the events that had been set in motion would come to this? I reached over and squeezed his hand.

"Just a few more days and this will all be behind us." I said. He nodded and we sat in a sort of blissful silence. Was he thinking about her, how she had looked that first night when he scooped her up from that cemetery and brought her to his hotel? Or how she breathlessly said his name over and over while he drank her blood. Did he think those would be his only fond memories of her if she were to die?

Maybe that's why he looked at me in envy sometimes. That is perhaps why he had grown closer to Shay. Because I had the comfort knowing even in death she had loved me most. None of that mattered now though as we sat there listening to Rachelle totter uneasily in the front peach painted rooms and Adam's soft reassurances. We would never speak these things aloud either, at least not now in front of the others. We had to present a united front.

Rachelle stood and began to pace despite what Adam was saying. The reinforcements were coming, Shay in the lead. Vallen didn't see fit to come himself but he didn't mind lending other's to his cause, destroying Kascien at all costs. I know Allurius was glad for Shay to be back from the Webb estate, Ash Hollow. She wasn't allowed to disclose the location and Allurius was alone frequently since she'd been gone.

I'll protect you, Adam was saying to her. Rachelle sneered at this. "We'd better go in there and put our two mortal companions at ease." I said to Allurius.

His face crumpled. "Must we?" He sighed and stood. We didn't want the unbearable task of explaining to Alana that we had let her sister get killed under our watch.

Rachelle watched as we came into the brightly lit living room. The tall floor length windows were open to the unseasonably warm weather. She looked strained and dead tired, that made two of us.

“Relax, we won't let any harm come to you.” Allurius said to her. She frowned at the ice that laced his words.

The gravel of the driveway began to rumble underneath the parade of sleek dark sports cars that made their way toward the house. “Why am I risking my life and fighting a fucking Primoris to save some bitch?” The first one said to the passenger beside him. “Shay said we aren't going in to rescue anyone, in and out.” The other vamp laughed and they high-fived while they waited for their comrades.

Some bitch! I started to walk out the door, I was about to break this fool's jaw when Micahlene grabbed both Allurius and I. “I see them, I'll remember them. I'll even hand them over to you later, but now is not the time.” She told us.

“Shay has one more time to say some dumb shit...” Allurius hissed under his breath.

I nodded, we would leave her to take care of Kascien herself if she kept insisting on disregarding Alana. Shay threw open the front door and walked in with 6 or so men with her. Three were vampires, the others looked to be mercenaries and all were clad in black each holding a duffel bag that I assumed held their weapons and assorted armor.

I grabbed the one who smirked at me condescendingly. I put my hand around his neck and shoved my fist down his fucking throat.

“Dresden!” Shay snapped as I wrenched my hand free taking the guy's jaw off in the process.

“Any of you say anything derogatory about Alana again and you'll join your friend here, got it?” I snarled looking them each the eye. Everyone nodded stiffly and I turned to see Rachele and Allurius' satisfied glares.

After a brief tense silence, Shay rattled off the names of all the men. All had aloof gazes. One was sizing up Rachele, who stared him down until he became uncomfortable and looked away.

Shay began going over the game plan until Allurius interrupted her.

“Don't forget about Alana.” He snapped. She tensed noticeably and after a moment exhaled.

“There is one magenta of average height with black hair and dark skin, she is to be left unharmed. Understand?” She said to the group. They nodded in unison, looking less than thrilled.

I opened my mouth to protest her minimal description. Alana's hair would be a rich shade of auburn when we got to her of course. How could she have dyed it while captive? And her skin is a glowing earthy brown and from the look in Allurius' eyes he wanted to say the same thing.

Shay asked Adam and Micahlene to come outside with her to run simulations with the boys. "I don't see why we need extra help." Rachelle snapped as they all filed out.

Allurius snickered. "You think Kascien is going to let us just waltz right in? Don't be a complete idiot." He said watching from the window as Micahlene dropped a few of the mercenaries to their knees.

Rachelle sighed and sat down and wove her fingers through her black hair. "Can't I request one thing?" She asked.

"Of course." I said just as Allurius shouted no.

He frowned at me then shrugged. "Fine, what is it?"

"That you let her choose who she wants to leave with." She said.

Allurius broke out into a pleased smile. "Of course."

Alana...

We were vampires, finally and took full advantage of our new powers to entertain ourselves during the day. What was it to climb the walls and jump from the floor to the ceiling? As long as we didn't do it in front of Kascien it was harmless fun. But it was Eloise who was the favorite now. She was the one who Kascien pulled down the stairs behind him leaving Eden and I watching after them in the large drafty corridor. This upset Eden at first but Eloise was infinitely better at playing the airhead than I was. Tonight Eden wanted to show me something.

We didn't know what month it was or even what day but Eloise told us Kascien said Halloween Mass was almost upon us.

We waited a long while on the red carpet of the stone hallway before he grabbed my hand and laid me through a zigzag of hallways before coming to a set of descending stone stairs. He handed me a candle from the holder on the wall and we crept down them quickly. He hurried me along the cold floor. Light was spilled unto the floor from behind a double door at the end of the hall. Eden and I pushed at the heavy doors until they finally gave from under us.

I gasped at the sight of the room. It can only be properly described as a ballroom, as it was that big and that grand. In the middle a wide square tub was sat atop marble dais and three humongous large urns were spaced evenly in front of it. Eden walked over to the urns while I turned around and around looking at the ornately painted walls.

"Look here." He pushed one of the urns into my hands. There were ashes in these large grandiose urns. "Don't drop it! Hand it back to me." Eden hissed when he saw the disgust come into my face.

"Those aren't regular mortal ashes either, they're vampire ashes." I said.

Eden snorted. "I know that."

"When are we going to leave?" I said looking behind my shoulder.

Eden eyes went soft. "He isn't feeding Eloise like he was you, especially now that we've turned we cant risk leaving and not having the strength to find shelter before dawn." He said squeezing my hand.

I nodded sadly, he was right we were stuck here. Then I felt his lips on mine. It was quick, I was about to speak and he took that opportunity kiss me.

"Don't!" I snapped pushing him away from me. Push is putting it mildly, as he flew back and landed with a thud on the floor yards away from me.

He climbed to his feet and laughed as he came back toward me. He crouched just as I did and we both sprang at each other at the same moment. It was easy enough for me to gain dominance over him, pinning him to the ground, as he was shaking with laughter. I had never looked at him from this angle, or actually I had never seen him laugh. He looked lovely.

I placed my lips on his gently and he turned me so that we were lying face to face. We lay there holding each other, kissing each other hungrily before guilt washed over me quick and strong. Dresden's blue eyes replaced Eden's magenta ones and I pulled away. I stood up and brushed down my nightgown.

"Will you take me back into the room, I don't exactly know where we are." I said evenly. He frowned but nodded walking silently ahead of me.

Soon Eloise was shoved into our room after us. She looked pink cheeked and bright-eyed. She ignored our solemn demeanor.

He told me!" she said excitedly.

Eden's head jerked up like a puppet on a marionette. How could he be so eager to learn of our assuredly fatal fate?

"He plans to bring back his mom, Isra or Kali she was known as Kali the Indian goddess but her real name is Isra and she is our mom too! Isn't that exciting!" She exclaimed.

"Except for the part were he kills us as the sacrifice, yes everything sounds just peachy," Eden said rolling his eyes.

"We aren't the sacrifice" Eloise insisted.

"Eloise, honestly, are we truly supposed to believe that he is keeping us for any other reason?" I said.

Eloise looked at me glaring. "We are not the sacrifice." She said low, thoroughly insulted by our accusations.

God what a dummy! I thought flopping face downward on the bed. What could it be three, four more nights till this was all over? I began to welcome the thought.

The next night Eden went off without me while Eloise followed after Kascien. I was left alone to explore the castle, so strange to live in a place where I didn't know what it looked like on the exterior. I didn't meander long, I already knew where I was headed. I felt a certain calm, almost resigned to my fate. So we were being used to bring back Isra or Kali or whatever hell her name was. I was so engrossed in my thoughts that I didn't hear Christian come up behind me. But he stood at the entrance of the ballroom waiting for me to notice him.

I glanced up then looked away, unimpressed. "What do you want?" I said half heartedly, I pushed my hair back behind my shoulders. He shrugged and came to sit beside me.

"They're frantic you know. Very anxious to have you back." He said to me. I grimaced. I didn't want him talking to me and lest of all about that. What could I do to ease their pain when I didn't even know where I was?

"Telling me only burdens me, you could at least let me die in peace." I muttered.

He cleared his throat. "I can help you."

I snickered. "Its insulting how little you think of me."

"You think what they think, that I've betrayed them, it isn't so. If it wasn't for that unbearable woman... " He trialed off.

I scowled deeply, he adored Micahlene there was no way he could be talking about her. "What woman?" I demanded, my stomach turning in knots.

Christian sighed. His dirty blonde hair was left in its long mane of curls down his back, as he gave me a stern look. "Shay Webb, she's with them in Mojave." He said finally.

I waved my hand for him to stop as he opened his mouth to continue. I didn't want to hear anymore. I could just see her now, young maybe my age a pretty little thing with long hair and a tiny waist.

I was Gwen. I was fucking Lila. I curled my lips in disgust. "Tell them I've been fucking killed!" I snapped, tears falling noiselessly down me face.

Christian looked as if he wanted to crack my skull in two. "You're no Gwen. Gwen went on and lived a life after Dresden." He sneered.

Some life! I wanted to cry out, what kind of life is it when you're left in such a bottomless well of pain? "Why won't you leave me alone and crawl back in the ditch you came from." I muttered.

"Fine, rot then!" he snapped disappearing instantly.

I stood and walked sluggishly back into the main corridor and down the labyrinth of halls. I followed Eloise's voice and came in the dimly lit dining room. She was at his feet and I sat down beside her.

"Very good then." Kascien mumbled. Eloise beamed, oh Alana oh Alana, she talked incessantly until finally it was dawn and I was his zombie to be lead back to the tower.

Eden watched me intently and I only sat with glass eyes picturing the candle lit room Dresden would lay this Shay down in, the soft silk of the sheets as he made love to her as he did to me. I imagined this until the pain became foreign to me. Like a film I was watching.

“Alana, why are you shivering?” Eden said coming over to me.

“She's only nervous.” Kascien said.

“It's almost time.” Eloise said.

Eden brushed her aside, he was careless with his movements and the push was harder than he intended and she landed with a thud on the floor.

“No its something else isn't it, thinking about your makers. You better get your self together.” He demanded coming to stand over me.

“Back off.” I hissed.

“Don't waste your time with stupid shit. Our lives are on the line Alana!” He yelled.

“I never promised you anything!” I wailed and shrugged away from him. I went into the furthest corner and brought my knees up to my chest.

Eden glared at me from afar “Some vampire!”

I pressed my hands to my breast, “Can't you see?” I cried out. “Cant you see my heart is breaking, I haven't a breath left in this body! Dresden has abandoned me! This life is colorless.” I murmured closing my eyes from his uncaring gaze. My hands clutching my chest as I rocked back and forth. Time passed slowly as they watched me curl up, moaning in mental agony.

“Alana.” Eloise said softly coming to where I knelt in the corner.

She waited for me to open my eyes. I refused but still she stayed beside me. And I knew from wherever he was perched in the room. He glared at us, the two balls on his chain trapping him here.

Allurius...

“I don't believe you!” Rachelle thundered.

Dresden looked as if the wind had been knocked out of him. He turned on his heel and immediately left the room.

“How does he know where we are?” Shay hissed staring the informant down irefully. The courier looked terrified. Shay snapped her fingers and two mercenaries appeared. “Show him out.” She said. They would kill the man no doubt. She looked at me and then at Micahlene who stood with her mouth slack.

“Christian is a liar, he's only saying this so we won't try to stop them.” She began pounding her fist in her hand.

I couldn't find words, really I couldn't let the thought to even begin to process in my mind. Where was Dresden? My hands began to tremble. I turned to see Rachelle looking lost.

Adam was saying something, how sorry he was, did she want to go now? We locked eyes and she collapsed into his arms and began to sob.

“Allurius... Micahlene listen to me, it's imperative that you both know how unlikely that is. There would be no reason for Kascien to have killed her already and Vallen would have let me know if he had.” She said over Rachele's screeching cries.

She couldn't even look me in the eyes as she said this and Micahlene still stood speechless, her mouth still slack. What was this feeling creeping over me, what was Shay talking about, why was Dresden crying his broken tearless sobs, breaking anything that he could get his hands on, the crashing thundered throughout the house. Micahlene just stared at me. They were all watching me. Waiting for me to say something. Micahlene tilted her head.

“Did you hear what that man said Allurius?” She asked me. I nodded. His words were coming back to me. “Alana is dead, my sweet prince.” Micahlene said coming over to me, she took my hand and walked with me into the shadows outside away from the rest and held me against her as I buried my face in her hair and fell to pieces.

The nights fell away and then Dresden a hallowed out husk of his former self meandered back into the house. He and I stayed close, wordlessly, we hardly looked at each other but when one stood the other stood and Micahlene was always close. We didn't talk about her, what we would do after we killed Kascien, how could we go back to Lake Forest as if she had never come into our lives. Rachele never spoke and her face took on a certain cruelty. She paced and Adam watched her helplessly. She would still help to kill Kascien.

Shay came into the darkness of our little coterie briefly keeping us updated then she would leave us to our grieving. Not tonight however, she wanted us outside practicing.

“Tomorrow night is the night.” She told us. A malicious grin spread across Dresden's face at her words. He was thrilled at the thought of avenging Alana. And so was I.

The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 11

October 31st

HALLOW MASS

Dresden...

We entered Death Valley while the sky was still on fire from the sunset. The five humans had taken sleek black cars into the Valley while we waited for nightfall. Now they waited for us at the mouth of a large canyon. We were all clad in black clothes. Shay's hair was in a smooth bun behind her head and she was done up in one of her leather cat suits. She had a sword slung behind her back and knives were sheathed at varying points on her person. Shay also had on her leather gloves and breakneck thigh high boots. It made her even taller and at that more menacing.

Micahlene left her hair flowing around her shoulders and was in her customary empire waist gown. Anyone looking at her wouldn't suspect she could hurt a fly let alone render them paralyzed from her touch. The mercenaries had on all of their protective gear and were holding semi-automatic shotguns against their chests. Rachelle and Adam were in armor similar to Shay's, which means she still held strong to what she had learned from the Protettori.

Shay pointed to the grand structure a few yards deeper into the canyon. It looked like an abandoned power plant. "You five will stay directly behind me, Micahlene, Rachelle in the middle. Adam, Allurius and Dresden will bring up the rear."

She tossed tiny phones to Micahlene and I. "We are to find the tabernacle. That is the place where he will perform the ceremony. Destroy all who get in your way." She instructed. Then we were off racing toward the castle gates Shay and the mercenaries scaled the walls and we were up after them.

Rachelle climbed after Micahlene who then grabbed her hand and carried her the rest of the way. Allurius and I helped Adam over and we came to the ridiculously tall wooden doors. Shay tensed as she pushed them open, she took her sword out of its holder and held it before her as she poked her head inside.

"Alright. Wait here, we'll go in first." Shay said. She and the mercenaries vanished behind the doors.

Not a sound was made before Micahlene's cell phone vibrated. Allurius squeezed his mother gently against his chest before she and Rachele went into the doors after Shay.

"Why do we have to go in last?" Allurius hissed.

Almost on cue my phone went off. "Let's go." I said. I pushed the doors open and slipped in as Shay had.

There was nothing in the all-stone foyer except one of our mercenaries who lay dead on the floor. We stepped over him and down one of the myriad of halls.

"How are we to know where they are?" Adam said his soft voice still bouncing off of the walls. Allurius glared at him.

"Get your damn hands off of me." A girl snapped. We whipped our heads in that direction but I didn't dare to hope, could it be her voice? We came to a set of stairs that went up to a single door.

"Alana!" Allurius said running up the stairs without another word. Adam and I set off after him.

Allurius threw the door open to the grandiose but empty room. But she had been in here, very recently. I went over to the four-poster bed as Allurius went around pulling open curtains and over turning furniture. I brought the discarded flannel gown on the duvet up to my nose. It was Alana's scent.

"We can't stand around here. We have to get down to the tabernacle!" Adam said to us both as Allurius had come over to take the garment in his hands. He was right and yet it took him two more times to say it.

"Your mother is out there Allurius!" He hissed.

That snapped us to attention. I decided I would come back for the nightgown when this was all done. I was out of the door and leading us down a hall that very well could have just sprang up out of nowhere, there was no rhyme or reason to this place it seemed. We passed over more bodies, people we didn't recognize so we took that as a good sign.

We came to an abrupt halt at the top of a set of the stairs that spiraled downward. "There are several of them down there." I said in warning.

Adam unsheathed his sword and Allurius and I went down the stairs before him. One leapt from the dark of the passageway below and right toward me. I lurched toward the figure and we tumbled the rest of the way down the stairs. It was nothing to subdue this obviously newborn fledgling and twist his head off with my bare hands.

Allurius had too pressed down to the ground with the force of his gaze alone as Adam beheaded them with his weapon. I looked up to see more fledglings headed our way. I was a glutton for this.

“Come get some.” I grinned as I leapt up into the air and down into the thick of them. I grabbed and twisted off arms and limbs were tossed back behind me as I worked my way through them. Soon Allurius and Adam were there fighting their way through the masses.

We were drenched in blood as we came to the double doors at the end of the hallway. Allurius put his hands against the door without opening it. He looked at me and nodded.

I produced the cell phone from my pocket and punched in the numbers to Shay's phone. “We've found the tabernacle.”

Shay was silent for a moment and I was able to hear a chorus of glass shattering screams.

“Alana?” Allurius whispered hoarsely.

“Wait until we all get there it is imperative that we all go in together.” Shay said rapidly, she must have known she was losing my attention. The chorus turned into low yelps. Adam reached and grabbed my forearm as I crushed the cell phone in my hands and went toward the door.

“Dresden, please wait for the others,” Adam hissed.

Each scream was like a knife into my chest. “Well she better get here in three damn seconds.” I snapped.

“No I can't bear it. What if that's Lana screaming?” Allurius said as if his heart were breaking that very moment.

“I'm here, we're all here.” Shay descended down the stairs with just three mercenaries flanking her. The humans hadn't made it. Micahlene's face was a grim mask as she came forward.

“Where is Rachele?” Adam asked softly at first then screamed it directly into Micahlene's face when she didn't answer.

“Hey, back up now.” Allurius pulled Adam by his shoulder.

“Adam, Rachele is dead. Okay? She decided to break away from Micahlene and head out on her own and was ambushed, she did it to herself.” Shay said as soothingly as she could. She wasn't particularly the emotional type.

“Get your damn hands off of me.” He muttered as he pulled away from her bringing his fist to his mouth.

“If you want to stay here and wait that's fine, just don't try to leave without us.” Micahlene took his free hand in hers.

“No, I don't want her to have died in vain, she wanted her sister safe. I will help get her back and leave her in your care only because I know how much you love her.” he said then after a pause. “Lets go.”

Alana...

“Get your hands off of me!” I thundered as Kascien's servant came over and placed her cold hands on my shoulders. She of course didn't listen and held me still as the man who had just cut off all of Eloise's lovely hair made his way over to me. He gave me the same choppy hack job hair cut and we sat motionless, the feeling of such violation washing over us. Eloise even looked slightly embarrassed to have her hair cut in such away. She looked nearly identical to her brother who sat scowling beside her.

Kascien watched emotionlessly as his orders to place us on the dais in the center of the ballroom were carried out. I clawed and bit at my captor but she effortlessly restrained me and sat me beside Eloise and Eden on the dais. Eden was curiously quiet and I supposed I was nervous enough for the both of us.

“Strip them down.” Kascien said in his harsh voice.

“No!” Eloise and I shouted out. Eden sprang into action grabbing at the servant who came toward Eloise. The servant continued to pull Eloise's gown into shreds off of her even as Eden successfully drew blood. The woman stripped me down to my underwear and backed off as I went to put my hands around her throat.

“Stay still!” Kascien commanded and we against our will went stock-still. Eden was left in his underwear as well, so was Eloise who cried in long jags.

Kascien commanded the servants to pour the ashes from the urns in the square tub behind us. And as soon as they were finished Kascien himself came over and pierced their hearts with a dagger and let them bleed into the tub. The servants writhed in agony, I gasped, why they were still alive even as they bled forth! Kascien slashed their throats and twisted off their heads.

I joined in Eloise's crying, my body shaking with my dry sobs. “I won't let anything happen to either of you.” Eden said loudly eyeing Kascien down.

I began taking in short shallow breaths, how curious I thought, who is screaming? Short piercing screams were pounding through my head. It was I. I was the one screaming drowning out Eloise's low groaning. Kascien snapped his fingers and Christian came through the side door with a band of vampires behind him. He stared at me as we continued to cry out and scream helplessly.

“Shut her up.” Kascien said calmly to Christian. Just as the monster made his way toward me the wooden entrance doors were pushed off the hinges. “Dresden!” I cried out as he, Al-lurius and host of others I didn't recognize came through the doors. My heart felt as if it were beating out of my chest.

“Alana!” He exclaimed his eyes wide with surprise. I tried to stand and run to him but I felt practically glued to my seat.

"I can't move, help us." A very tall woman reached out and held both him and Allurius from coming forward, they looked as if they would fight her off before Micahlene came forward and whispered low and rapidly to them. They stepped back reluctantly, tensely.

"You came." Christian said emotionlessly as he eyed Allurius and Micahlene.

"Of course. I love her." Allurius smiled at him tilting his head to look at him meaningfully. How you've betrayed me.

"You can't imagine what you've put us through, I will tear your heart from your chest and carry it with me out of here." Dresden snapped.

Eden tensed, his hands flexing into fists. Eloise still cried as they went verbally back and forth but my tears ceased as soon as I laid eyes on them. We would walk out of here.

"Christian, my sweet love." Micahlene came forward her eyes soft and watery. "You have been like my own son. How could you... "

Christian cut her off yelling out. "Which is precisely why you should forget about that waif and side with me!"

Dresden's face was a mask of fury as he addressed him. "As I said before, I will carry your heart out of here."

Allurius turned to me. "Come here Alana."

I reached out to him helplessly. "I can't move."

Christian frowned and stepped forward. "Enough with this prattle. You couldn't comprehend what is going on, walk out of here now!" He demanded.

The tall woman came forward and threw her middle finger in the air. "Fuck you, Barrette!" She produced a magnum so fast I didn't even registered it in her hands until the shots started ringing out.

Micahlene led the charge against Christian and his group. Eden pulled Eloise and I into the inlay tub of blood as the vampires engaged in combat. We pulled our eyes up just over the ledge and I noticed Eden seemed oddly anxious. I kept my gaze on Kascien who stood aside watching with an amused grin. While looking around for a glimpse of Dresden or Allurius I noticed a splash out of the corner of my eyes and turned to see Eden leap into the thick of the fighting. He glanced back only once to look at us, his eyes full of meaning and then he disappeared.

"Eden, No!" Eloise whimpered.

She started after him but I grabbed her wrist and pulled her back to me. "Stay." We wrapped our arms around each other and watched hopefully for any sign of him.

Then the woman, the tall one with the dark red hair crouched and literally roared as she leapt into the air, unsheathed her sword and impaled one of the vampires with it. She was by far the most brutal of the group, killing one while killing another. Eloise and I watched her in

shock and finally Eden showed and he had Christian.

Christian was badly injured, there was a knife in his chest and in the side of his leg. "I told you I'd get him!" Eden said triumphantly. Christian twitched in pain and Eden looked as if he were struggling to keep his maker under his control.

The fighting settled and the people that had come in with Allurius and Dresden were all that was left. There were seven of them total. Had there been more? I thought and gasped as a loud screeching noise sliced through the air.

"Alana, come here." Allurius shouted, but I stayed beside Eloise and looked toward the sound. Eden had cracked Christian's skull and bled him into the tub.

"Now!" Eden cried out as he took a dagger from Christian's body. "You can spare the girls!"

"No." I cried out rushing toward him as I realized what he meant to do. It was like moving through concrete as I watched him lift the blade to his collarbone. He then put the knife directly into his throat. The force of the blade nearly severed his head from his neck. Eloise's blood curdling scream filled the room.

"Eden!" I roared.

Allurius...

I shuddered as Alana and the girl shot over to the boy's convulsing body. Shay swore in frustration.

"Lana come here!" Dresden snapped. Then we noticed the still figure that had been slumped against the wall spring to life.

"All my work!" All my work!" He thundered walking toward the dais.

This was Kascien, I assumed. We took our cue from Shay who ran over and threw herself on top of him. I did the same as did Micahlene, he buckled slightly under her touch. I was able to slow him down and slowly we subdued this nomadic creature.

The blood in the tub began to bubble as if boiling even as we all four worked to get Kascien's head detached from his body, even still he could fling one of us off of him and try to claw himself back together. Dresden's arm was nearly severed from his body. He simply popped it back into place and put his foot on Kascien's neck.

"Start a pyre quickly." I shouted to Adam, who promptly took a lighter out of his pocket and sat one of the unhinged wooden doors ablaze.

We sat about gathering Kascien's limbs and throwing them into the raging flames. Kascien's body still twitched as if trying to put itself back together. Shay hissed and used her sword to sever the limbs further. There was utter silence. It was an unsettling eerie air as we looked at each other.

"I don't understand." Micahlene murmured.

Shay stood looking into the fire confused. "Something's still wrong." She muttered and we all had that same creeping feeling as we turned slowly to see an extraordinarily pale gangly man holding Alana and the girl down in the tub of boiling blood.

"Oh allow me to introduce myself, Azriel, charmed I'm sure." He said, smiling maliciously and rising from the dais. The girl was still thrashing around when he let her go, she even began to sit up but Alana lay face down in the tub absolutely motionless. I saw red as I lunged toward the being.

Alana...

I sat up slowly with a rising fear of what I was to behold. A wind whipped around me as I stood under a sunless blue sky. My hair fell down around my shoulders as if it hadn't just been cut off an hour ago. I looked around the lush green meadow and even knelt down to gather some of the fallen roses in my hand. They were in full bloom, which delighted me, I rarely had the chance to see roses in full bloom and they were always so lovely. It didn't dawn on me that I was in the sun until I raised my face to be warmed by it.

I immediately began to panic. "No reason to be afraid, it's a false sun, this is a false field even the wind is an illusion." A silvery voice said to me. I turned around to face her.

"Isra." I smiled and she nodded in acknowledgment.

"It is I." She smiled exposing straight even teeth, no fangs. Her pin straight hair was extremely long it even reached the back of her ankles.

I could have stood there for eternity studying her, her artful shade of hair that was a mix of all colors red, copper, orange and auburn, black and chestnut brown, chocolate brown, white blonde, golden blonde and flaxen blonde. It was really very extraordinary, even the curve of her very full lips and the shape of her sharp cheekbones had me enthralled.

"Am I dead?" I asked her nonchalantly almost hopefully. She laughed out loud and took my hand.

"No you are not dead. As a matter of fact I'll be sending you back very soon." She said and dropped my hand to draw a square in the air with her fingers. A scene flared up before me, it was the ballroom and Dresden was pulling me from out of the tub of blood.

Allurius hands were cleaning my face off, they were both crying out my name. The red haired vampire hovered and I noticed another body part burning in the pyre beside Kascien's. Azriel's armless body was being heaved in by Micahlene. I looked away and toward Isra in her white Grecian gown.

"What happened?" I asked and she sighed. The moon in the meadow replaced the sun, the night sky was bright with stars.

“Kascien was a simple pawn Azriel used to keep himself safe. I'm afraid you missed his very flowery announcement to the others. How he had been in Milwaukee when Allurius met you, how he was the one who kept draining you of your blood when you were first turned. He had sent Kascien to do his bidding however, killing Gwen capturing you and so forth, just to keep himself inconspicuous and his plans to bring me back and destroy me.” She laughed

“Imagine that it would be that easy, to overthrow me. I could come back whenever I felt like it. I wouldn't have to wait for any special eyes.” She said and I stared at her eyes, of course they were magenta.

“Alright time to send you back!” She patted my leg and stood me up.

“Wait, where did you come from? What is this place?” I asked.

“Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?” Isra said playfully squeezing the end of my nose.

I stared at her. “You're quoting the bible?” I asked and she winked.

“Why not? It's as good a book as any.” She brushed her fingers through my hair.

“Could I stay here with you?” I said finally.

“Absolutely not, you'll go back and all my children will be safe from extinction, as always. I wouldn't allow anything to happen.” She took my hand and led me to a clear pond.

I heard my name coming out of it. “Alana, wake up baby.” It said softly.

“Wait, I don't understand, why did he kill Gwen?” I frowned looking away from the pond and back to Isra.

“You're not a very bright one are you?” She quipped. “Gwen knew way too much, she was an inconvenience to Azriel. Why she even realized that someone must have dazzled Allurius into turning you so quickly, it was very hasty and sudden even for someone like him.” She watched varying emotions flicker across my face. So what did that mean, had Allurius been tricked into turning me.

“Isra... ” I began but she put her finger to my lips and then kissed my forehead. She put her hands over my eyes and then pushed me backward and I fell down into the pond.

Allurius...

Alana's eyes sprang open, her eyes were their original deep rich brown and she exhaled deeply. She was glowing, literally. She began coughing as Dresden and I seized her into our crushing embrace.

“Alana.” I said softly and she held us both as best as she could. She was shivering and her nearly nude body was slick with blood. Then she wiggled out of our arms and ran over to the girl who was quiet and standing alone.

“Eloise.” Alana said softly and brought her over to where we stood. Shay was on her tiny phone standing apart from us and Adam remained silent, we had decided against telling

Alana about Rachele's death too soon.

I noticed Shay standing over the tub frowning. Curious, I ventured over to see that it was utterly and completely empty. Shay locked eyes with me and we both turned to glance at Alana who still had a halo of gold light around her skin. We seemed to be the only two who noticed this as Dresden had taken Adam to the side and began talking to him low and rapidly.

"You'll take her with you wont you?" Alana was saying softly to Micahlene. I think we were all amazed by her calm. I was relishing in it however and I wasn't looking forward to the posttraumatic stress that would surely set in eventually. Micahlene of course agreed, it seemed she would always take in our cast offs, and after hugging Alana began to talk to Eloise very gently. Eloise didn't answer however, and kept looking toward her twin's limp headless body on the dais.

Alana then leapt into Dresden's arms again burying her head into his neck.

"I missed you, I missed you," she murmured over and over again. He took off his blood splattered suit jacket and placed it around her shoulders while he spoke softly to her.

Shay abruptly informed us that we should leave the building immediately as Vallen was going to have the place swept through then imploded. We that were left went back to the house in Mojave. Adam left as soon as he was cleaned up. Alana watched him silently and even went to stand outside as he drove away. We were tense that she would make some sort of connection but she never said anything.

Shay treated us very indifferently not even acknowledging Alana. She considered her weak and therefore didn't exist especially since Alana wouldn't talk about her time at the castle or what had happened after she had been drowned, and was gone the next night with out so much as a word of goodbye. She did take Micahlene aside and whisper something low, to which Micahlene gasped and nodded her head in understanding.

Shay had been wrong about Christian she told us. Christian had been undercover for the Webbs, which is how Vallen got all of his information. I bit back my bitterness and the things I wanted to yell at them on account of this. I knew Alana was glad to have Shay gone. Soon when Eloise, with her sea green eyes, was as near to 'okay' as she was going to get Micahlene gathered her up and went back to Melbourne. Then Alana, Dresden and I were left to go back home to Lake Forest.

The Eternal Kiss

Part Four

The sun has come
The mists have gone
We see in the distance our long way home
I was always yours to have
You were always mine
We have loved each other in and out of time
-Maya Angelou 'In and Out of Time'
The Eternal Kiss

Chapter 12

Dresden Joseph Hawthorn...

Alana had been fine at first, she had even warmed back up to Allurius allowing him to hug her and kiss her before she retired into the room we shared together. The golden aura around her had disappeared and she started to smile again. Then suddenly one day she wasn't the same. She didn't seek me out to talk or make love and she didn't return Allurius' snide remarks with one of her own.

She only talked softly to me sometimes, when she felt overly generous she would even cuddle up with me as I sang Nights in White Satin softly in her ear. Only wearing a soft secret smile on her face as she stared up me lovingly. While we slept she clung to me hungrily, her arms around my waist her face pressed against my chest over my heart. No matter how withdrawn she became she never slept alone, she always came back to me knowing I was waiting with open arms.

One night when I rose from a light nap when the sun was orange in the sky, and the clouds were pink and purple and night was slumping forward. I went over to the window and watched as Alana, dressed in a flowing gown of white with a crown of chrysanthemums in her hair, followed a small creek through the blooming garden and disappeared into thick trees and greenery just past our backyard, it would warm my heart to see her do this and I hoped maybe she was growing better accustomed to her immortal life.

But there were many early hours, just as the sun was set to rise, that Alana could be found sitting on the porch, unmoving until Allurius or I would grab her and snatch her back in the house. Allurius wasn't as delicate about this as I was.

"Stop with this damn pity party and get your ass in here." He would snap, grabbing her by the collar and dragging her up the stairs to her room.

Though we didn't fall into our coma like sleep anymore, it was still necessary for us to rest in our coffins, even if for a little while for the sun was still very lethal. She never fought us on this. She would remain limp as we carried her to and fro. It was behavior like this that kept us from telling her about Rachele's demise, why make it worse?

I could only stand by and watch helplessly, I didn't want to say or do anything to upset her. If she saw that her words of fury had hurt me she would only retreat more into herself.

We took solace in the fact that she still played the piano faithfully but the way she played Chopin's Raindrop Prelude would send shivers up both of our spines, the dark and ominous feeling behind it. The feeling in which she would bare down on those piano keys and she would play this song for hours. Putting the weight of her turmoil behind those notes. She would glare at us from the piano as she pounded the keys with fury. She said Chopin had written this piece with her in mind. And she would laugh mechanically never breaking stride.

"Maybe you should shower and get dressed." Allurius might say to her.

"Maybe you should go directly to hell." She'd answer, her fingers never pausing or missing a beat. One night, quite fed up with this unending melody, Allurius had even pushed her off of the bench and taken a hammer to the keys. She slumped to the floor in tears and he of course bought her another piano that very night.

I knew he was anxious to just go, but he didn't dare leave while she was like this. Not when she would drive her Porsche unto the lawn then hop out leaving the car running, the radio on and the door open while she slumped in the shadows of the house. So he hovered growing restless as the days and nights passed. She wouldn't go into Chicago with him and I didn't want to leave her alone.

He yelled at us calling us boring, telling us we were acting as if we were at a perpetual funeral and he would go into his rooms and slam the door behind him. Alana would stare after him then disappear into the night. Leaving me behind waiting for her as always.

Sometimes I went go after her, still a bit over protective from the events that had accord. She would only go out to feed and return home but tonight she had a special kill in mind. Allurius was thrilled as I described to him the way Alana rounded up a group of mortals and played the naïve call girl as she allowed them to lead her into a hotel suite.

"Now tell me where she is taking these men so I might watch this magnificent kill," He said lightly placing his hand on my cheek.

"Watch?" I asked.

"Well surely you didn't think I'd pass this up! You're coming along to aren't you?" He said dropping his hand to his side.

"No I can't bear to watch her feed, she turns into someone else entirely." I replied simply.

"Fine." He frowned.

"Be off then, mother hen." He chuckled and took to the sky and was gone in a matter of seconds, heading toward the hotel where Alana was entertaining her meal.

I sighed and fought the urge to join Allurius as I made a beeline straight home to wait for them to come back to me.

Alana...

I followed behind them as we made our way up to the rented hotel suite. The red head pushed through the others to open the door for me, revealing a spacious layout of black carpet, the walls were stark white and the windows were covered with black curtains.

“Do you like this, is it fine?” One eager voice asked, taking my elbow and leading me toward the black leather sofa.

“Yes, it is fine.” I said smiling, stifling my hunger.

“Music?” The short auburn haired one said, much younger than the others, 18 maybe 19.

“Yes.” I smiled.

As soon as the first song came blaring through the stereo speakers, the pretty red head, his hair half covering his face, in a black button up shirt and gray jeans, sheepishly reached for my hand. I smiled knowingly and allowed myself to be lead into the master bedroom. I tried not to laugh uncontrollably, just as Allurius would in this situation, as I climbed onto the plush king-sized bed. The willowy white bedding enveloped me as the boy unbuttoned his shirt. He was too excited, I could tell as he hurriedly stripped himself of his shirt and unzipped his pants. He covered me, his slim hips against my thighs and his lips pressed on to my neck.

The heat from his body surrounded me and I eagerly returned his kisses. He placed his hand on the small of my back, forcing me to arch to his body's proportions.

His eager breath was hot and muggy against my neck.

“No more.” I cried unable to take the sound of his heartbeat any longer, the way his blood in his veins assaulted my senses. I ran my fingers along his shoulders before biting him right above his collarbone. He didn't scream, as I took him over, turning him on his back so that I lay straddled over his body.

He even reached up to run his fingers through my hair. Yes. Wonderful. Quiet. Sleep. I released him and slid off the bed. Sweat still glistened on his body as he lay there with his eyes closed. His breathing was slow but steady. I left him curled up under the covers. He'd be dead when I returned.

“You!” I snapped, opening the bedroom door, and looking out at the slew of men I had waiting for me on the couch.

“Me?” The auburn haired blue-eyed boy asked.

“Yes.” I smiled. “You come here.” I moved away from the door so that he might come in. He glanced at his slumbering friend, whose heartbeat was becoming more and more faint to me.

“Don't be afraid.” I said to him, he was trembling now, was death written across my face? Or was my hunger clear in my eyes.

“What are you? And Brandt, he's dead isn't he? He... you killed him!” he cried.

“No!” I roared grabbing his neck. “He killed himself, as did all of you the second you walked into this flat! Shut up.” I hissed placing my hand over his mouth. He fought me so hard. I was almost unable to control him.

“Settle down now, my love. Settle down.” I whispered eventually subduing him so that I could get my mouth on his neck.

“You'll like it, I promise.” I kissed him on his lips, parting his mouth with my tongue. I slit his tongue slightly, taking the warm blood from our kiss. He fell to his knees and then finally out of my arms. I sat him on the bed next to Brandt.

“Where are the boys?” Green eyes asked, his speech slurred by his drunken stupor

“They are... Indisposed.” I said slipping out of the bedroom door and to the three others left waiting in the parlor.

“That's alright, now we can have our fun.” He replied, his lids heavy-lined in kohl eyeliner. He slipped his arms around my waist. I smiled, “You don't know what you're getting yourself into.” I wrapped my arms around his neck.

“Oh I think I can handle you.” He laughed. He bent down to kiss me. I slit his throat with my teeth. He fell to the floor in a matter of minutes. I kneeled over him quickly, placing my mouth on the wound, taking the blood that was pouring forth like water from a faucet.

I sat back on the heels of my toes and threw my head back in laughter. It was all too much, their blood polluted with liquor, the feeling of having fresh new blood run through me so quickly. As I stood to my feet with his blood still on my lips and dripping down my chin, I looked over to see the other two watching me in terror.

“Us too?” The blonde one asked. I nodded my head, knowing that my eyes were startling now, now that they were filled with blood lust.

“You too my love.” The other one sighed, his brown eyes weary, he boldly stood and turned off the stereo.

“But why?” He said as I moved over to him, running my fingers down the nape of his neck.

“Because sweetheart.” I grabbed a lock of his hair and moved his head to the side. I ran my tongue along his pulsing jugular. “Because I am hungry.”

I pulled my hair back behind my ears and rose from over the corpse of the tall blonde man. I looked around and grinned, there wasn't a drop of blood on the bleach white walls.

“That was absolutely resplendent.” Allurius said swiftly slipping in the room through the open French-style window. I frowned slightly, how long had he been out there.

“Thanks.” I shrugged modestly and went over to hug him. I hadn't seen him all night, he had risen before me. He kissed the top of my head and placed his hands on my shoulders, “Now let's clean these mortals up.” He went over to the pile of gentlemen in the corner and lif-

ted one to his mouth.

“What?” I asked him as he licked his tongue across the gashes on their necks.

“Ah, yes. Me amour, you must clean any trace of your being here. Like this for instance, little Alana, you've nearly ripped his head clear off his body,” He twisted the blonde man's head on correctly.

“That simply won't do! You must be sure not to tear off any more heads. And that one over there, I watched you nearly crush his arm, you must steer clear of that too.”

I watched him go into the bedroom and then come back out to take my hand. “Yes?” I asked.

“That is perfect. You see how you have them under the covers sleeping. You have left no visible markings on these two. All your feedings should turn out as flawless as this.” He smiled and brushed my hair out of my face.

I stared at him as he prowled the room, taking in his gray tweed suit and cashmere scarf, he was going to leave again and offer me no explanation. He never felt the need to give anyone any reasons for why he did anything, “people always feel the need to explain themselves, it's very tiresome and always boring,” he'd told me many times before.

“All right we are finished here lets go home.” He said as I wrapped my arms around his neck, he went over to the balcony and vaulted over the banister while holding me in his arms. Allurius...

“You're itchin' to leave aren't you?” She said to me as we walked hand in hand down the tree-lined street. I sighed, how to tell her it did not reflect on how much I loved her. That is was just in my nature.

“What can I say to you Alana, to make it better? You know I love you, you know that right?” I said looking down at her. She nodded her head and met my gaze her soulful brown eyes looking at me from under sinfully long eyelashes. I gathered her in my arms and kissed her gently.

She reached up to weave her fingers into my hair and met my kisses urgently. I took this as her acceptance of what I said. At least this time I had said goodbye. I pushed her against the brick fence of some person's yard and lifted her up so that we were looking into each other's eyes.

“I promise I'd stay if I could.” I murmured and I trailed kisses down her throat and to her shoulders. She moaned low and deep as I pressed against her. Her legs wrapped around my waist.

I pushed her long gypsy skirt up over her hips and tore into her stockings as she shivered against me. “I love you Allurius.” She said softly as I pressed her panties aside and eased myself inside of her. She inhaled sharply and wrapped her arms tighter around my neck.

“Am I hurting you?” I whispered as I slowly thrust into her.

She looked as if she didn't know the correct answer to my question, yes and no she wanted to reply as moans escaped past her flushed lips. We made up very gently. Alana holding me against her as if she were trying to merge into my body. Then she shivered and cried out my name and she lay limp against me as the sensations washed over her body.

“I love you, Lana.” I sighed into her ear as I too climaxed and we stood slumped against each other for who knew how long before she rained tiny kisses on my face.

I cradled her in my arms as I sprinted the rest of the way back to the house. “I'll return to you soon, I won't be gone long.” I said to her as we climbed the stairs into the foyer. I kissed at her tears and brushed her hair from her face.

Dresden came down beside her and she melted into him. “Take good care of her.” I said as I embraced him. He nodded and smiled lightly. Alana opened her mouth as if she meant to say something but then sat it in a firm line. Maybe it would have been better if I had left her untouched in the cemetery that long ago night.

At least then she wouldn't be there watching me with such sorrow. I know she wanted to say what was on the tip of her tongue, don't go Allurius. I stared at her for a long while. What had kept me from taking her blood that night? I didn't want to believe Azriel had truly swayed me in any way, yet I had fought the thirst that burned in my throat when I put my hand on the pulsing artery just under her jaw, her sweet fragrant blood assaulted me yet I left her unharmed... physically at least because I had already felt such an overwhelming burning love for her.

Dresden glared at me with a searing intensity. You're going to hurt her, he said with out saying anything at all.

“Allurius.” She began slowly then stopped. I stared at her for a moment before walking out the front doors and slipping into my beautiful little Maserati. No matter the distance I put between me and the house I still thought about her, growing angrier with myself.

Who was she to have this hold over me, this girl who preferred to read Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to Great Expectations. Who played the piano beautifully but would blast god-awful popular music from the sound system in her room. The very one who could hide my things away and laugh sheepishly as she watched me search for them?

But how could I stay there? I wouldn't baby sit her like Dresden did. He didn't mind having to pull her out of the shower after she had been standing under the water like an invalid for hours on end. It didn't bother him to have to dress her or force her out of bed. He loved her in an almost worshipful way. His eyes never clouding with disdain when she wouldn't answer his questions, but oh how I could scream at her.

Did she even need me? Why would she want me around if she had her precious Dresden? I heard them frequently behind closed doors, her soft kittenish moans and his whispers, "Tell me what you want me to do to you." They were insatiable. No, I would not cater to her insanity. I sighed, hell I was the one who had brought her to the banquet.

I slammed my foot on the brake and turned the car around. They were there when I returned standing right where I had left them. A smile split Alana's face in two. Dresden simply looked relieved.

"Allurius." she said softly as I fell to my knees in front of her. She came into my arms and bowed her head into my neck.

"I'll stay, I'll stay Alana," I said very gently to her. "You are the joy in my life." I murmured and just like that all was right and night didn't seem as dark.

The Eternal Kiss

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by Christina Kelly

Romance

The Eternal Kiss

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Part One

Did I need to sell my soul

For pleasure like this

Did I have to lose control

To treasure your kiss

Did I need to place my heart

In the palm of your hand

Before I could even start

To understand?

-Martin Gore "Only when I lose myself"