

Awakening the Blood

By : **Bridget Shayde**

Ever woken up and not known what you were? Well, that's precisely my case. The name's Naomi Roesia. I used to live my life as one of those stupid college girls. You know, one of the girls that you see on TV, drunk, high, and stupid. At least, that's the way I was. Now, I'm some weird as heck demonic creature of the night. I went from clubbing all night to killing all night and have no idea how it happened, but I'm pretty sure that it all started with that hot guy that had bit my neck in a club. Still, after killing a family of four, I'm on my way to a life of hiding and hunting for answers.



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Attention Readers!

Chapter 1: Reborn

Reborn

Neither the cold chill of night air nor the frosty snow that landed on my pale face was what woke me up from my deep slumber. It was the eminent hunger that dug itself so deep into my form that I could do nothing more than flash my wild eyes open. Pale hands, hands drained of blood, helped me lift myself up from the frosted ground, and I clenched my depleted stomach.

It felt like tiny demons had crawled down my throat and were trying to dig burrows into my gut. I couldn't remember what had happened to make me this way. Could it have been that I hadn't eaten in forever? Could it have been because of the person that had been following me for months? Did that man attack me? Why would he?

Ah. So many questions. They made my head buzz like a bee's nest. While I listened to my uncontrollable thoughts, I scrambled my way slowly towards a scent.

It was such a beautiful smell like what one would expect to sense at a Thanksgiving celebration, but the only off thing about it was that it smelt nothing like turkey and gravy. It was a rich smell, a deep smell. It was slightly metallic and made my thoughts go straight to the many variations of the color red.

Weakly, hungrily, coldly, I made my way towards a home. It was a cozy place. A chimney spit out warm, gray smoke, and I could see people chattering about inside happily. Tiny bricks made up its one story hold, and a wooden porch led to a cute set up.

So starved that I couldn't think, I raised my leg to take a step upwards but only could gape when my leg went straight through the wooden stairs. What had happened to me? Just as soon as the thought arose, it was washed away when a shocked person opened the door to gasp out at the sight of me.

I was sure that I looked rough, but I wasn't exactly sure. I had had no idea that I was wearing nothing but tattered clothing that gaped to reveal a vast majority of my flesh. I'd not known that gashes had covered my entire form. I had no idea that I was paler than the snow and had lips bluer than the morning sky.

The male reached out to me in pity, but then that scent swept over me. I had no idea what I was doing, but I pulled him towards me and bit down cannibalistically into his arm's flesh. A moan of pleasure swept through my body and out of my lips as his warmth flooded me like an ocean wave. I could hardly feel his attempts to pull away from me or hear his family's screams. Then, I dropped his completely empty form and looked up at his people. They were like succulent oranges just ripe for the picking, and I picked them all to suck them dry.

It wasn't long before I was inside of the house and staring down at what I had done. I couldn't cry. The idea never occurred. I could only stare. What had I done?

Four bodies were displayed in front of me. I had drained them of color, of blood, and of life. All of those things had been taken from them then placed into me. My color had returned with the first bite, and my blood had flowed with the first taste. Also, my life had been restored after the first death.

I gripped my head with both hands and fell to my knees. Finally, the idea to cry occurred, but I was immediately disgusted at the sight of my pink tears. Water mixed with blood. Yes, they were what poured from my eyes as I screamed and thrashed.

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"What the hell have I done?" I screamed before sinking my claws that had once been cutely manicured nails into the carpet. Instead of just going to hit the carpet, I could only hate myself when I punched holes into the floor with each of my fingers. My body quaked like the earth along fault lines, and I screamed towards the floor.

I sensed a presence but didn't move to see it. I was sure that it was another person that I would soon kill in this violent outrage. Sure to my assumption, the person behind me dropped something heavy to the floor then turned to run. They were going away from meâ I to tell on me for something I couldn't bring back.

Instead of capturing the creature to suck him or her to the core, I just continued to stare at the floor. It was decorated in little pink-red pools like someone had liquefied roses and dripped them against the carpet. How sickening. I was finding beauty in this freakish creation that I had become.

Gulping down hard, I squeezed tight my eyes and rose. What was I to do? The cops were going to come soon. I was positive that the person would run to a neighbor or something to cry out for helpâ I to say that a murderer was on the streets. Murderer, that love forsaken word now applied to me. To me!

I had been such a simple girl, a happy and stupid college girl. I went out on all times of the day and night just to party and get drunk. I'd laughed at humorless jokes and grew angry at silly things. Now, instead of being disappointed in myself for stealing a drug test from a grocery store, I was disappointed in myself for stealing a person's life right out of their body.

My heart hurt, but I couldn't afford to be caught. I would probably hurt someone with my new strength. When the police sirens came, I turned towards the back door of the house. Snagging one of the coats hung up on the coatrack, I shook my pink tears away from my eyes and darted into the snowing backyard.

Chapter 2: Betrayal

Betrayal

Rain poured down on my head as I curled up in the alley. It'd been only a week since I'd killed those people, and the cops were still on my trail. Everywhere I went, I had to be sure to hide from any sort of cop. Although they didn't have a real picture of me aside from a drawing that they'd created and digitalized to make it look like a real human, I was still very, very paranoid.

With blood dripping down my lips, I rested my head against the side of a building and cried. I was a freak, a monster, an abomination. I should be killed for what I'd done, but I was too much of a coward to do so. Aside from that, these strange urges began to arise in me.

I felt the need to travel to places in the city that I'd never been to, and I'd lived in this place all my life. Something inside of me desired to go back to one of the clubs I used to frequent some nights, and other nights I would find myself drifting around in the more uppity and rich places in the city. It felt as if a voice in my head was talking to me sometimes. The voice urged me to come closer to it and hinted things at me, things that I desired: safety, love, sympathy, warmth, and compassion.

Always, I played it off as if it was just me going crazy since I was now a freak, but there were times when I was all alone and giving up to my so-called Instinct, as the voice had said, that the voice felt like someone that was right beside me.

Shivering under the rain and from my thoughts, I wiped a tear away from my eye then quickly tried to flick it off my finger. I cried blood. I was no longer human. I needed to eat people to survive.

I'd tried to eat from animals, even went as low as to kill a sewer rat, but I couldn't compel myself to continue it. Each and every time I drank from stray dogs, cats, and rats my brain always went back to the taste of human blood. My instinct was eating at me.

It wanted human blood, but my conscious mind couldn't stomach the idea. Some nights, I would puke up the blood and wind up starved. After controlling my vomit, I learned to keep the blood down. It wasn't hard to do since my new self thought it was so delicious.

My heart yearned to go home or at least back to my dorm where I was sure my roommate was freaking out since I hadn't come back in a week. She was used to me not coming to class or spending the night at other people's dorms, but she always called me on the third night of disappearance.

The phone that I'd had was now ruined because of my filthy state and the rain and snow that had destroyed it. I had no idea how frantic Lizbeth was at my disappearance. If I wasn't so scared that I'd eat her face off, I would have gone to see her by now and grab some clothes.

If there was one thing Lizbeth was great at, it had to have been keeping secrets. I told her all about my prowess at stealing, clubbing, drinking, and romancing, but she never told a soul. Yes, she'd scolded me for being so horrible, but our conversations were solely *our conversations*. She was the best friend anyone could have. I just wish that she was here right now.

Twenty-one years old, cannibalistic, and homeless, oh, how proud my parents would be of me. Gah. If I saw my mom, my dad, or my little brother, I don't know what I'd do. Probably run, I wouldn't want to scare them or drink them.

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I shook my head. I didn't want to think of my parents right now. It only made the sobbing all the more worse. What should I do? I was a freak show. I sucked blood and heard voices in my head. I had nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, and nowhere to run.

Suddenly, the voice in my head stated, *You would have somewhere if you would just reveal yourself to me.* I shivered when it added, *Where are you hiding, young Naomi?*

Frightened by the thoughts in my head, I rose up and paused again when I heard my name being said. The only difference was that this voice was ominously like Lizbeth's. Although I didn't want to hurt her, I still jumped at the sound and hid in the shadows when I saw her talking to a handsome *human* man wearing a black leather jacket and formal jeans.

"Sir, have you seen a girl named Naomi Roesia?" She dug inside of her bag while tucking her umbrella against her body then revealed a picture of us that we'd taken in an old school photo booth at a hipster convention last month. "Here's a picture of her. She's twenty-one years old and probably has visited a bunch of clubs with people in this part of town. Maybe, you've seen her before?"

The man frowned and ran a hand through his caramel hair. "I've never seen her before, miss. I'm sorry." When Lizbeth frowned and moved to carry on, the man quickly added, "I will let you know if I do though!"

Hanging her head after nodding, Lizbeth near silently muttered, "Why can't I find you?" She ran her thumb over my face and a tear dropped onto the internal rim of her glasses. Her heart thumped in her chest oddly, and I was shocked that I could hear it at this distance. Her beating heart was a song of sorrow as she trudged along the sappy streets in search of me. It made me want to go leap out and show myself.

Amazingly, I found myself moving towards her. Lizbeth was my best friend. I shouldn't hide from her, but would she accept me? Would she be able to accept my strange new self? It was a chance and a great gap to leap, but I had to take it.

I was so tired of being lonely. I was tired of sleeping in the snow and rain. I was tired of collapsing into mud puddles. I was tired of the blood that had been on my ruined clothes for a week. I wanted human comfort, and I was nervous to have it given to me.

Shyly, silently, I rubbed at my arm and followed behind Lizbeth. I was sure that my wild eyes were reflecting an odd color, but I had nothing to hide them with. Pushing back the tears that wanted to bubble at my eyes, I forced myself to stay calm. She would freak if she saw the bloody tears, so I couldn't afford to cry them.

What would I say if she heard me out? What would I tell her of the disappearance? Could I tell her the truth? Would she believe me? What about the blood? Would she run as soon as she saw it on my clothing?

Oh, damn it. My heart bounced in my chest like the bass of dubstep. I prayed she wouldn't be able to hear it although it screamed in my ears.

Gulping, I opened my mouth and my voice cracked when I called, "Lizbeth?" The girl paused, and I looked at the ground to keep a car's headlights from making my new eyes shine like a wild animal's. When she turned around, it seemed to happen in slow motion.

I could hear her heart beating and feel her blood pulsing through her veins. It caused my new canines to grow out long and sharp. Forcing myself still, I glanced up at her shyly once the car stopped making my eyes shine bright green.

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Her blonde hair swayed around her shoulders then fell back away to reveal her almond shaped eyes. Those eyes grew wider and wider and wider until I thought they'd pop right out of her head, and she covered her pink mouth with a gloved hand. A tear ran clear down her face as she stared at me as if she couldn't believe I was real.

Oh, gosh. She's going to run for it. I tried not to cry as she stepped back. I knew it. She thought I was a freak, a mess, damnation, and an abomination to all that was humane. My heart felt like collapsing and shattering in the pit of my empty stomach. But just as I started to cover my face with my hand and turn towards the alley I'd come from, I felt warmth spreading across the open gashes of the shirt on my back.

Arms wrapped around my neck, and Lizbeth held me as if she'd never let me go. "Naomi," she sobbed, "I can't believe what kind of mess you've gotten yourself into." Her hot tears ran down my neck as I stared at the billboard flaunting a club that I'd been to and had met my stalker for the first time at. It taunted me with its name: Crux Shadow.

My hunger bubbled inside my stomach, and my fangs ached when even saliva rubbed against them. Hiding my mouth from Lizbeth, I whimpered, "I want to go home." She nodded against my neck then unbuttoned her jacket to reveal club clothes. Was she going to that club to find me next? I hoped not.

The frost nipped at her skin covered only in black fishnet, silk, and lace. What did she think she was doing walking around the city like that? She could have gotten kidnapped or worse! She could have had the same thing that happened to me happen to her, but I just couldn't get angry at her.

Lizbeth was going to be willing to destroy her conservative, artistic, and good nature to come hunt me down. She really was a best friend.

After she called down a taxi and hissed an insult at the man saying something vulgar about her choice in attire, Lizbeth walked me towards our dorm room and, to my pleasure, hid me from any prying eyes. Sitting me down on the couch and fixing up some hot chocolate that I dreaded drinking, Lizbeth asked, "What have you been doing all this time? I drop you off at the club and then you disappear for three months. Do you know just how worried your parents and I were? You didn't even answer our calls."

My eyes widened. Three months? There was no way. I had only been gone a week, or could it be the truth? I had been walking back to the dorm then the last thing I remembered was crawling out of a hole and drinking the life out of a family. How could I have survived three months out in the cold, snow, and rain then magically pop back up with a thirst for blood? Why wasn't my body trying to decay? How come I looked like the same girl just with freaky eyes and teeth?

Chills covered my body, and I had to push back my bloody tears. "I don't know, Lizzie!" My voice faded off when I heard a knock at the door to our dorm.

Lizbeth hissed, "That's probably Jason. I asked him to come over, so we could make posters to find you. Run to your room and get cleaned up. I'll make up a reason for him to leave."

Relief washed over me. Liz was being incredibly cool right now: hiding me from her boyfriend, not running away, and taking me back to the dorm. I didn't deserve such kindness. Would she still be the same way if I told her that I'd killed four people?

I doubted it. That was probably a conversation better left to a different time. For now, I'd go get cleaned up and return to my classes. Liz and I could talk madness later on.

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My heart jerked at a realization. I couldn't eat real food anymore. How was I going to pass that one off? A lack of appetite due to bloodsucking? She'd kick me out if I got hungry.

Worried beyond belief, I peeled away my muddy, wet, and cold clothes then tried to keep from looking in the mirror. I didn't want to see my fangs or my eyes right now. I didn't want to check to see if anything else was different about my face either.

Yet, my hopes were ruined when I pulled my destroyed jeans off and saw my legs were completely bare of the hair that I'd shaved before I'd gone to the party. Awkwardly, I lifted my arm and found there was no hair under there either. Everything was exactly the way that I'd left it. It was like time had stopped my biological clock.

Shaking my head, I was interrupted by hearing Jason and Lizbeth talking in the living room of our dorm. Lizbeth downed some hot chocolate and muttered, "She looks so weird, Jay. Her eyes were so bright that they looked like they were glowing and her teethâ" I heard Jason move his arm to put his hand on Liz. She must have shivered. "They're like a cat's."

Jason stated, "Knowing her, she probably got drunk and got some fangs put in then bought a pair of contacts. You know how she can be, Lizzie. Don't worry about it. Just tell her that it freaks you out. She'll put it up for you." I listened to his hand rubbing against her back. "At least, you found her."

Liz mumbled a sound of agreement. "I want to ask her about that club." She stirred her hot chocolate then I heard her kiss Jason. "Thanks for helping me look for her, but don't come around until we get everything figured out. I don't want her to have to answer anyone's questions but mine. She doesn't need to be put through that."

Leaning my head against the shower as the water ran over me, I closed my eyes in the warmth. I was right. Liz was just doing this to be nice, but that was the way she did things. I couldn't get mad at her kindness. I could just be disappointed. Maybe, I should have followed that voice back to the club instead of coming back to the dorm.

Liz was right. People would harass me with questions, and people would wonder why the digital recreation of the new murderer out on the streets looked like me. They had a right to be nervous of me. I was a murderer now. I was a monster that should be hunted down and killed.

After washing myself and wringing my hair out with a towel, I slipped into a pair of sweat pants and a loose T-shirt then strolled out of the bathroom only to meet the cold metal of a gun. My lips parted to reveal my fangs, and I listened to Lizbeth snicker, "Gotcha red handed, leech." She made a step closer while I backed against the wall of the bathroom. The gun pressed against me colder than the snow. She was seriously going to shoot me. "You may have been my best friend, but now you're as worthless as dirt. Tell me all about your little club downtown, or I'll slowly shoot off each of your limbs."

"I have no idea what you're talking about." My voice cracked. "P-please, put the gun down, Lizzie." What was happening? My best friend was helping me out one second, and now she was holding a gun to my head. What was going on here? I knew I deserved it after what I'd done to that family, but why Lizbeth? Why did she have to be the one to kill me?

Liz glowered at me, clearly thinking I was playing tricks with her. "Stop fooling around. You went to that club plenty of times. You knew what was going on. Don't play like you didn't ever ask to be bitten by one of those parasites. Tell me what you know, or I'll shoot!" She screamed at me, and my heart fell from my chest to my feet.

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I crushed my lids together and balled my hands into fists as tears flowed down. I didn't know what was happening. How could I know what was happening? One second I was strolling around lost and in the woods the next I'm in a hole and crawling my way up to some family's home.

I didn't want to kill those people. I hadn't planned to. I just wanted food and to get out of the cold. I had never intended to harm anyone. How could she be screaming at me like I was a premeditated murderer when she was the one throwing a gun in my face? She was the murderer. She didn't regret shoving a gun at me. She should be the one against the wall and being screamed at. She should get the hell off me.

Emotions were boiling inside of me. It was a mix of betrayal, sadness, and confusion. I had no idea what I was doing when I lunged out at her with my fangs ripping out from my originally human teeth. I had no idea what I was doing when I lunged out at her with my new claws sinking into her flesh.

When the bullet sunk into my brain, I didn't feel it. I had one thing in mind, and that was get out of here and take whoever you needed to down. Lizbeth, my best friend and only real comrade in the world, stood in my way, and I didn't mean to rip her skull off her shoulders. I promise you. I swear that I didn't mean to kill her. It was never my intention to do so.

Chapter 3: Acceptance

Acceptance

A male's voice was what woke me up this time, and I heard him say, "You were a hard one to capture, young Naomi." Something about his voiceâ It made my heart beat faster and my new blood to run hotter. Popping my eyes open, I stared directly into a man's bright yellow eyes.

My first Instinct was to run, but something else, something deep within me, kept me from doing so. A new voice that I hadn't heard in my mind said, *He's your sire*. Although I didn't understand what that exactly meant, it comforted me and got me to melt in his strange, golden gaze.

His eyes were the color of golden quartz and reflected as if they had been faceted. Those eyes were full of age and wisdom as if they'd seen many years, thousands and millions of years, yet the man owning the eyes looked only to be in his late twenties.

Only a black vest and jeans covered his body, revealing the strong and thick arms that held me cradled to him. He was so strong and tall even as he had me curled into his lap as we sat in a limousine.

My hand pressed against his chest, and I wriggled around to look at my surroundings. "What the hell?" I whispered. My body was gently released while I sat on his lap, completely forgetting that I was sitting anywhere at all. "Where am I?"

The man leaned against his fist and smiled at me, just a slow curve of his lips, and I was instantly enthralled by his looks. *Ah, damn*, I thought and wanted to open my mouth until it hit the floor.

He was sensual incarnate. Everything about him was so hot he was on fire. His body? Perfect. His face? Perfect. His clothes? As simple as they were, perfect. The man looked to be chiseled out of the hardest and smoothest granite imaginable. He was a sculptor's dream, and something I could fantasize about all night long.

"Naomi Roesia," he stated with a voice as smooth as silk then kissed my hand, "welcome to our world." Gingerly, he allowed my hand to fall limp at my side, and I felt the need to sit right where I was although I did scoot from his lap to the leather. "A shy one, I see. Interesting. You weren't so shy when you were at my club."

My face flushed. I didn't remember anything about the club aside from its name and a handsome shadow that had started to follow me ever since leaving it the first night I'd appeared there. Was he my stalker? Although I didn't recognize anything about him, something about him did seem familiar. Maybe, the broad shoulders, the tall frame?

Turning my head away because of the heated way he was looking at me, I muttered, "You're the reasonâ Lizbeth wanted me dead." I couldn't look at him. Every time I did my head blanked and went off into another dimension. I couldn't ask him the questions I needed to.

He frowned in the corner of my eye but stated, "I am sorry about that. How was I to know that she was one of the Exorcists?" At my curious glance he added, "There is much for me to teach you, my fledgling. Much that I will teach you, but for now, let's go to my mansion. I'm sure that you can relax, and we can enjoy blood wine by the pool. It does look so grand in the moonlight."

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Tapping on the window that divided us from the driver of the limo, he leaned towards an intercom and said, "Herald, if you would be so kind as to disobey the speed limit, I would enjoy being in the comfort of my mansion with my new fledgling. She needs to be taken care as soon as possible."

A voice that sounded like the one that I'd heard in my mind, said, "Of course, my master; as you wish." My heart sped as the car did in tune to my heart.

While the man poured two glasses of some red concoction that smelt of alcohol and blood, he realized, "I haven't yet given you my name, sweet child." After handing me the drink in a wine glass, he added, "I am Durand Radegond, king of the Dracos, and royal cousin to the Chiropterans." His glass tapped against my own. "To your rebirth and many meals shared between us."

My heart pumped in my chest. This was not something on my top priority list of things to do right now. I wanted answers. I wanted to know what an Exorcist was. I needed to have Lizbeth's actions explained to me.

I had been cautious, careful not to expose my glowing eyes, bloody tears, or fangs, but she had still come after me with a loaded gun. Despite the blood on my clothing, there had been no evidence of my feedings. How had she been able to know?

The male named Durand downed a sip of his glass of blood wine then paused as I only sloshed it around in my glass. "You must still be disgusted at yourself. Many of my fledglings are." He placed his drink on a table that amazingly held it perfectly steady despite the turns that the driver was making. Sliding closer to me and laying a gentle hand on my knee, he squeezed it. "It's a natural thing, young Naomi. You will learn to accept it and become strong with it. Rejecting it will only make previous events occur like what happened to that family."

My eyes grew wide. He knew it was me. Were the cops that hot on my trail? Disrupting my thoughts, he eased, "I had some disposables take the blame. Don't worry."

Turning my eyes to the leather seam in the backseat, I muttered, "Disposables?" I could only guess at the connotation that word had in his mind. He was so nonchalant about this, sipping his blood wine and telling me to daydream about a secure mansion and a moonlit pool.

He rubbed my knee, and I finally noticed that it was bare. When Lizbeth had shot me, I was not wearing a dress. I glanced downwards and found a black dress wrapped around me. How could I have not noticed this?

The dress was little more than a towel on me and hugged me everywhere it could. It was designed to flaunt curves, and flaunt it did. My waist was constricted while it made a heart around my breasts. Had he undressed me and put me in this sexy club dress?

"Do not fret, young Naomi. I did not undress you. I had one of my maids do so. That gown was one of yours that we collected from the dormitory you had shared with Exorcist. We also confiscated some of the tapes that she'd videoed of you. It seems that someone had hired her to be more than just your friend. She bugged a lot of your clothing." He smiled towards the moon roof. "She could have made a very great voyeur if she were interested in such things."

My face burned a fiery red, but my body did little in anger or embarrassment. Instead, I could only imagine Durand's eyes on my body as I went about my daily routine. It sent shivers down my spine. To have this handsome creature find me so divine. My heart beat just a tiny bit faster.

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The car halted, and the driver, I assumed, opened the door with a bow to the man as he stepped out, holding my hand lightly in his own. "Thank you for getting us here so soon, Herald. I will be sure to give you a pay raise next time your check comes around," Durand politely thanked his escort then turned to me with the tamed giddiness of a boy hiding behind a man's mask in a toy store. "I have so much I want to share with you, Naomi. Please, drink the wine. It will only make you stronger."

My eyes glanced down to the red liquid that reflected my face. Little ripples bounced back and forth in circles inside of my glass, breaking up my reflection as I gazed into the crystal. My face really had changed. Seeing that now, I could understand why Lizbeth would have wanted me dead.

Although I had covered up things about me that were obvious about my change, I hadn't known about the disappearance of the freckles that used to dot across my nose. Lizbeth frequently told me about how she wished that she had cute freckles like that, but I'd always hid them beneath make up. Now, my skin was perfectly unblemished and silky to the touch. My eyes, though not glowing, were a much more vibrant green like a rose's stem.

If I had been Lizbeth, I don't know what I would have done once I'd found me. After seeing my demonic reflection in puddles, I'd known how creepy I'd looked. Blood had soaked my ripped shirt and jeans. My hair was a tangled and dark autumn red colored mess. My claws were bloodied and stained brown from dirt that had also caked around my feet. I looked like a sewer rat with rabies.

Although the blood was gone and the dirt was too, I couldn't help but be disdainful at the looks of myself. I was so much older, more regal looking, like a queen of some wicked kingdom. I didn't look like the foolish girl that had tasted drugs and alcohol to get a kick out of my boring existence. Oddly, I missed looking like her.

She had the life. She didn't kill people on accident like I'd done to poor Lizbeth. She didn't drink people down to the pit of their existence then throw their body away to rampage about her new life. She ran around with her friends, went to parties and clubs with ignorance about the creatures that lurked inside. Her life was so much more pure than the life I lead now, and I was just beginning to scratch the surface of my rebirth.

At my silence, Durand squeezed my hand as he led me up to a large porch that kissed the entryway of his mansion. "Please keep from harming yourself, fledgling. It will only make it harder for you to learn how to prevent future mistakes."

My eyes rolled at that statement. He had no right to be this sweet to me. Why was he doing it? What was a sire? Why was a sire so important? "Don't call me fledgling, Durand. It pisses me off," I bit out to make him smile. I glowered at the sight of that smile. He looked even better when he did that.

As we strolled through the mansion, he randomly dropped his vest to the floor, and my eyes grew wide at the sight of just the bulging muscles in his back. *How could one man be this hot?* I wondered as I analyzed his body. Plates of thick muscle decorated his body like armor. Just looking at him was like staring into a protective fortress. It was like I could be protected for eternity in his arms.

Once we were outside and in the moonlight, he turned to me and asked, "Would you join me for a swim, Naomi?" My face flushed as I studied his face. He was completely serious.

"Uh. You can, but I'll just drink my wine on the side. I'm supposed to be getting stronger. Right?" I tried not to dip my gaze to the plates of muscle along his abdomen and sat myself down on the edge of the pool, dipping my feet in the deep end.

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He nodded then disappeared behind a panel to change his clothes. At least, that's what I thought he was doing. I hoped that was what he was doing.

Alone, I placed my glass off beside me to stare out at the moon. I really wasn't hungry, and the full moon was much more interesting than whatever creature had spilled its blood for my pleasure. Still, my fangs ached for the drink at my side and my instinct cried out for me to drink it.

Conscience burning, I waved my feet around in the water. It was warm, and just as Durand had said, it was beautiful. I just wasn't ready to go swimming with some random guy I'd met in a club. It was too awkward.

I wasn't that dumb girl anymore. I needed to be perceptive, cunning, and predatory. That's what I was, and if I didn't embrace it I would only become more of a monster. I needed to develop ways to refrain from killing my prey. Just because I was a monster didn't mean that I had to act like one.

My mother, father, and brother must be worried sick about me. I know that I would be if my little seventeen year old brother ran off and started slaughtering people for sustenance.

My gaze dipped to the glass. Well, it was better than drinking someone. Deciding to give into Durand's offer, I tipped the wine glass and allowed the rich taste of blood to soak my tongue and water my dry throat. I would accept what I was and become better than I'd ever been.

Chapter 4: Mate

Mate

Appearing suddenly in the water was Durand, and I instantly wanted to pounce on him as he floated. "Are you sure that you don't want to join me, Naomi? This pool's big enough to house a hundred sirens." When I didn't make a comment, he muttered, "So much to teach youâ!"

I placed my now empty wine glass beside me and felt its effects slowly creeping their way into my body. Great, vampires can get drunk. How come no one had told me this already? Oh, yeah. Lizbeth might have known, but I tore her head off her shoulders. Whoops!

Swiftly, Durand appeared between my legs and held my knees in his warm and large hands. Mind swimming, I asked, "Teach me then. What is a siren?"

The man gave me a fang flashed smile before looking into my eyes. "Sirens are Greek beasts. They are either mermaids or winged women. Their voices are beautiful and most are as attractive as their voices." His head tilted for a second as if he was recalculating what he'd just said. "But, of course, young Naomi, none are quite as beautiful as you are."

My heart fluttered like an unruly butterfly, and I attempted to settle it down in vain. The crazy internal beast just went on a pacing rampage in my chest. This manâ! he did some interesting things to my insides.

Drunkenly, I leaned forward until our faces were just mere inches apart. Ah. He smelt so good. I wanted to bury myself in his rich scent. He was indescribably delicious. His blood even smelt astounding in the wine glass of his body. "What makes me so beautiful to you, Master Durand?"

He grinned as he placed his forehead against mine, and I tried not to fall forward when his hands slid up my silken legs then paused to hold my waist. "Your hair is the color of rich blood, your skin is as soft as silk, your lips are as plump as a peach, your eyes are as wide as the moon, and you are as curvy as sin."

My breath nearly ran out in the space between us. I had to remind myself to breathe as his seductive gaze strolled leisurely over every inch of my exposed skin. Whoo! Was it hot in here or what?

"Will you teach me more about this life?" I accidentally let slip through my parted lips then had to hold back my surprise at the deeply sensual way my words sounded. The way his eyes gleamed in the moonlight made me realize even further that my words had sent a wave of desire through his body.

Durand's hands drew me to his glistening chest, and I could have fallen out then and there. Leaning in towards my ear, he whispered, "I will teach you so much about this life that you won't be able to remember being human." His hands were hot on me as his index fingers made lazy circles between the straps along the back of my dress.

We were too close and getting closer. My instinct had no response to this, but my conscience was going haywire again. I needed to pull back, but it was so hard to do so. He felt so good. His hands were incredibly warm as they made languid motions along my bare back. Ugh. I had to get away from him. My brain wasn't functioning properly in this too near distance.

Slowly, I shook my head and tried to rattle my bearings back into place. My shaky hands rested in tight fists across each of his broad shoulders while I stared behind him towards the glistening water that looked red due

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to the color inside the tiles of the pool.

"You are nervous, Naomi," he realized then drew himself beside me to stretch out his hand. "Would you like to go to bed? I know that it's early, but you took a bullet to the head. You should rest."

That was definitely not something I wanted to do right now. I wanted to hunt for answers and wanted to clear my mind of these hedonic red hazed thoughts. Besides, my already sealed up wound wasn't doing a single thing to me as long as I stayed steady.

I readjusted myself then shook my head. "I'm fine, Durand. I just couldn't think." My thoughts drifted to the voice in my head, and I asked, "What is a sire?"

A look of relief bathed Durand's features while he settled back down beside me. He explained, "I am your sire, Naomi. It means that we exchanged blood for you to become a creature like me, a vampire. You are my fledgling. To some, it's a more parental kind of relationship, but with you Naomi, I wouldn't want to feel like your father. You're my mate."

My head decided to go for another dive in the pool of my thoughts. "Uh. Okay. You can explain that next. What's a mate and how did you change me to be a vampire exactly?"

Running a hand through his dark hair that was more of a caramel streaked in dark blonde, Durand explained, "To become a vampire, you have to die. I wasn't sure that your body would be strong enough for the change, but I did it anyway. After we exchanged blood that third night you came to my club, I waited until you were on your way home and snapped your neck. My heart nearly broke at the sight of your blood on my hands and your body in the snow, but I knew it had to happen." He cradled my shocked face in his hand and his steady gaze settled deep within me. "You are my mate, Naomi, and many people will attempt to kill you to hurt me since I am the king of the Draco. I had to make you strong enough to fight against them. I will not have my bride be killed easily."

His eyes were doing something to me, willing me to believe this nonsense he was speaking, and I believe it would have worked if his statement wasn't so outrageous. Brides, mates, blood, and death, it was all something straight out of some romantic Goth movie. There was no way that I was going to fall for someone's romance story.

He kept on, "I know that it must sound ridiculous to you, but, Naomi, I feel for you unlike any other woman before. I want to protect you and make you mine. You're my queen, and we will rule our people together. When you're with me, I feel invincible and young. I don't feel like I've lived in the time of the Roman Empire and led them to war. Every time you came into my club, my heart would beat so loud it echoed into my eardrums, and I haven't heard my own heart beat for years, Naomi." He stared off as if in a daze. "My blood began to run for you, and I want to share that feeling with you. Your body instantly woke. You haven't had to endure your own lifelessness because I had you the moment you reawakened from the dead. It's hard to comprehend, I know, but try to for me."

This was all too much. His obvious desire for me had me tingling all over, but I still couldn't get it. How could just a couple of nights spent together make him feel this way? Was his wine getting to him? I didn't sleep with him from what I remembered. He couldn't feel attached because of that.

I frowned more to myself than him, but I saw the disappointment flicker in his golden gaze. He knew that I thought he was crazy. But, really, who would believe this insane story?

Awakening the Blood

Life wasn't a romance novel. There was no way that he already loved me. All we'd ever done in the club was dance and share hot whispers between cold drinks and steamy kisses.

Gradually, my memory of the club was reviving, and suddenly, I was replaying the night that I'd first stepped into that club.

The lights flashed all over the place and a chilly fog hissed between the shadowed bodies of the dancers. Not a single feature could be seen in the darkness, and it made my heart pump rapidly while I walked towards the bar where I saw a man sitting alone.

Careful not to mess up my dainty manicure, I eased up the barstool then had a drink magically appear in front of me. The bartender grinned as he said, "A present from our owner, miss."

Gone in a flash, I was mentally teleported from my memory then back to sitting beside Durand who was still cradling my face. I pulled away from his grasp and muttered, "You've got to be kidding me, Durand. This is all so crazy. I barely know you."

Chapter 5: Dominance

Dominance

Pacing in front of the bed that Durand had explained was now ours was the creature that had become my sire. His gorgeously sculpted form went left then right over and over again as I feigned sleep. Even with the little movements he made, my insides went buttery as I watched him.

The thick plates of muscle along his form flexed, and a muscle in his jaw ticked. He looked like he was trying to solve a complicated problem while he paced at the foot of our bed. My instinct demanded for me to call him to our bed and soothe his problems with more than words, but my conscience howled out for me to stay where I was.

Slowly, I worked myself upwards and looked down at my barely covered body. I had agreed to Durand's request to wear one of the scantily clad corsets and thongs that he had delivered to our bedroom, but I hadn't complied with sleeping with him even as he'd stroked my skin the whole night.

"Durand?" I asked and froze when his golden eyes met mine. They were brimming with desire and a famished hunger as he looked my way. I gulped.

When I didn't say anything else, he stepped to my side and stroked my red hair. "Yes, Naomi?" he wondered with a voice full of the same hunger I'd seen in his eyes.

"Am I able to go outside now?" I covered my body with the blankets, and he grinned at me, the hunger disappearing for sympathy to arise. Why would he feel sympathetic?

The vampire sat beside me and said, "Yes, but I'd rather you stay in our bed. I've already prepared myself to be your breakfast." He pressed my head closer to his neck, and I felt my fangs aching to pierce his skin.

Gulping nervously, I clenched his shoulders, trying to keep him pulled away. I didn't want to bite him. What would I do if I drank him until he died? "You're a vampire though," I mumbled as I tried to keep myself from looking at the vein pulsing beneath the thin layer of his skin. I could so easily puncture it.

"I know, and most vampires don't drink from each other. Since we're mates though, we can do this. It will help heal the headaches you get from having iron shot directly into your skull. You'll still need to drink other blood for nourishment. I'm just good for healing." He pushed me until my lips were brushing against his skin with every one of my shaky breaths. "I promise you won't kill me."

My fangs shot out until they were the threatening translucent tips I'd seen before, and I parted my lips to keep from busting them with my new teeth.

His hand on the small of my back and other on my neck sent shivers through my insides, and I wanted to curl against him like a pet to its owner. My lips felt the dampness of my tongue while I attempted to keep myself from reacting on instinct. As his thumb pressed into my neck, I could hear my heart beating rapidly at the closeness. My veins thrummed inside of my body, and my heart serenaded the heat within me.

"Durand," I breathed until I skimmed my fangs over his flesh. My eyes dilated into a diamond shape then I dug my teeth into his skin. A bead of sweat drifted onto my tongue, and I shuddered at his thick, rich, and powerful taste. Losing myself, I dug my hands into his shoulders until I could feel them slicing his skin. My tongue lapped at his skin as I sucked him hard and deep into me.

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Beneath my clamped grip, I could feel his large chest rise when I pulled a groan from his mouth. His body readjusted until I was straddling him, and Durand muttered foreign words into my ear. Though I couldn't understand them, I knew they were rough and desirable words of the needs he felt towards me.

His hand slid down my body to cradle the backs of my thighs, and I could barely register it when his finger slipped beneath the thin string that was covering me. His fingers stroked me lazily as I suckled his neck.

He tasted perfect, so much better than the raunchy blood I'd been sucking before. His taste was thick and flowed deeply into my throat before spreading throughout my insides. The only few things that I could compare his taste to had to have been like the juice of maraschino cherries, but it was thick like slow running honey dripping down the sides of my lips. My body shivered to his taste, and I couldn't think of prying myself off of him.

Beneath me, I felt Durand's moans turn into gasps, and I felt his finger wriggling between my lips and his skin. "Ungh," was the intelligent noise I thought to whine with when his hand was forcing me off him. My grip tightened while I heard him growling strained words under my forceful hold.

"Young Naomi, you are strong," he grunted and grabbed the nap of skin on the back of my neck. "Release me, woman!" His finger went back into my mouth then coaxed me to move in vain.

I could feel him weakening. I could suck him completely dry. His taste was undeniable. I needed it in me, and I would have it. He could just keep wriggling. He was all mine, and there was no way I was going to give up this taste.

Durand's fight began to weaken until my body went flying against a wall. Eyelashes fluttering, I dazedly looked upwards to find him looming over me.

His eyes glowed hauntingly as I stared into his yellow orbs, and I immediately lost all contact with my brain. His fangs hung down in his mouth. They were long and more intimidating than my own. Everything about him was intimidating.

He was close to two feet taller than me and much, much bigger. His entire body was a weapon, a deadly machine, and that machine was looking at me like I was a threat.

What had I been thinking? Was I crazy? Obviously, because I'd just been thinking seconds ago that I could kill this guy. Oh, gosh, what had I gotten myself into?

My heart thundered inside of me, and I cowered beneath him. "You are my fledgling, Naomi!" his voice boomed as I wished I could shrink to the size of an ant. He dragged me up to him by my throat. "You will not attempt to harm me! Do you understand?"

I nodded as much as I could since his hand was so big it covered my entire throat and croaked, "Yes, sire." My legs dangled uselessly until he gently placed me to the ground.

His deadly hand went from my throat to my hair as he pressed me against him. Confused but complying, I allowed myself to curl into him and stared awestruck at the hardwood floor.

"Sweet Naomi, I am sorry," he muttered then kissed my ear. "I had to defend my dominance. You understand that? Even humans do it."

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I nodded even though I had no idea what he meant. The last thing I wanted was to have him hovering over me like that again. I'd do anything to keep that from happening.

I had to control the urges that wracked my body when I drank. I needed to have Durand teach me. As frightening as he was, I was positive that he didn't kill when he drank. Something about him didn't seem that heartless to me.

A knock at the door had Durand glowering when a male randomly appeared in the bedroom. How did he do that? I didn't see the door open an inch.

The man grinned then crossed the room to lean down to study my face. "I'd heard an argument and expected to see my young brother fighting with more than just a fledgling." He held my chin but had to immediately let go when Durand whipped around to punch the male. Amazingly, the stranger just held Durand's fist and wagged his finger in the air. "Ah-ah, Durand, you know better than to punch your older brother over a baby. Now, let me examine my new sibling."

Durand's hold slowly released, but he wrapped a protective arm around my waist as the odd male bent down to study me with interested eyes.

"Hmm," he muttered, "quite the specimen you have, brother, but a little short you'd think. I'm surprised that she could lock you into a corner." His yellow eyes continued to scan my body. "Beautiful and curvy. I always knew you had a thing for innocents with no knowledge of their attributes."

My face flushed, and my instinct called for me to hide behind Durand. Something about this yellow eyed male with long hair was bugging me. It was like an itch you couldn't scratch. Obliging to my instinct, I hid my face and half of my body behind the tall male holding me.

"You haven't mated her yet, and she still hides behind you. Your bond must be strong." The vampire ran a hand through his long hair that only flowed back to its place. "Well, you'll have to put your new toy up for the night. We have important matters to discuss that revolve around the Thanatos demons. They're acting a bit stupid, and I'd like to squash out any chance of rebellion before it catches fire."

Durand turned towards me with a look of dismay. After holding me by my neck and throwing me across the bedroom, I'd guessed that all romantic intentions had been called off. Well, apparently I was wrong.

"I am sorry, Naomi, but Felix needs my help. I will explain this all to you later. You're free to roam the grounds, and find the maid Liza if you get hungry. She's good with young vampires such as you." He ran a hand through my dark red locks before disappearing behind the male that winked at me behind Durand's back.

All alone, I uncomfortably rubbed my arm. Well, I was free to roam. I guess, I could start with that.

Chapter 6: Reule

Reule

The vast amount of space that was a single hallway in Durand's mansion stared back at me as I looked down it. If only I had the talent of disappearing and reappearing like Durand and that guy named Felix, this would not be a pain in my immortal ass. Shrugging my shoulders, I walked down the hallway as many glowing eyed maids curtsied at me while I made my way to a set of stairs.

Nodding to each maid that curtsied, I wondered why they were all giving me the royal treatment. Guessing that it had to have been the fact that I was sleeping in the same bed as King Durand, I pushed the curiosity aside and grinned at stair rail that met me in the hall. I wonder how royal they would think I was if I rode that rail all the way down to the main floor.

With a grin, I hopped on the rail and felt the fabric of my jeans flapping against my legs as I made my way down the curved railing. Giggling maids smiled at me and stopped curtsying when I front flipped to land perfectly and gently onto the floor.

"Good gloaming," I greeted to each of the maids then paused when one of them waved me down to pull me off to the side. "Hey, what's up?"

"I am pleased to know that you are not a bitch like the many women that Felix brings here, but please be careful not to break anything. I'm Liza, Durand's constant companion and first fledgling. I know all about the strength and hunger. If you have any questions, please, feel free to come to me, but make sure not to do anything irrational with the new strength you have."

Her eyes were wide and concern brimmed inside of them like a caged animal. They made me think back to the sympathetic expression that Durand had inside of his own core. Why did everyone look at me like that now?

I nodded. "Of course, Liza, I'll try not to mess anything up. Sorry." My hand went behind my head as I self-consciously brushed my hair down.

Geeze. Looking at this girl was like staring into the eyes of your nanny. I was totally feeling like she had an iron grip over everyone and everything over this place. Even though she looked cute and sweet, there was something right beneath the surface of her skin that had my instinct telling me to stay on her good side.

The maid grinned, a sad movement of her lips. "Is there any questions you would like to ask? You're still so young. The hunger must be a constant distraction," she examined and sat the basket of laundry she'd been carrying on the steps.

Thousands of questions that I'd needed to ask Durand appeared inside of my head, and I chewed on my lip with my more human teeth. Remembering my deceased friend, I asked, "What is an Exorcist exactly?"

The maid nodded, her golden hair tumbling away from her face. "Of course, you wouldn't know. The Exorcists are either a pain in the ass or a blessing. It all depends on who you are in the Underworld. They are the trackers of the creatures, including humans, which have become rouge. You'd placed a bounty on your head after killing all those mortals. Many young Exorcists will come after you, but the older and more informed will leave you alone since Durand has taken you under his wing. Your friend Lizbeth was just a child in the Exorcists ranks. She had no idea that you were one of Durand's fledglings. If she would have known that, she probably would have taught you how to control yourself."

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My hand flowed to my hip. What was Durand's placement in the Exorcists? What kind of influence did he have on them? I decided to ask. "Why is Durand so amazing to them?"

The maid smiled once more. "Durand is a powerful political figure. He controls all of the Draco vampires even some of the Chiropterans, they are our bat shifting cousins. Since not all Exorcists are humans, Durand can bribe the Exorcists to do what he pleases. He used disposables to hide your identity until Xavier, the leader of the Exorcists, and Abigail, the second-in-command of the Exorcists, can round up everyone to call off the bounty on your head."

"Alright, and what's Felix's story? That guy gives me the heebie-jeebies."

"Felix is Durand's older brother. He was supposed to get the right of control over all Dracos, but since he was unable to be trusted among the ranks of their father, King Reule gave all of his power over to his second born child, Master Durand. He's a jealous prince and is trying to do anything possible to unbalance Durand's control over their people. Right now, he's plotting to get Durand to permit him control over a bushel of the militia to earn more respect and then attack Durand's ranks after he defeats the rebellious Thanatos."

"Whoa! How do you know that? Does Durand know that?" I thought back to myself. How could a maid know more than a king? The only way for her to know this kind of information would be if she was more than just a maid. Besides, it didn't make sense that she was telling me all of this. Could it have been because of my relationship with Durand? Did they really not expect me to ditch out on my crazy leechy lover?

The maid nodded her head to me and explained, "I may be a maid, but even I am permitted to walk in and out of Felix and Durand's quarters without supervision. The master frequently requests for me to snoop through his three brother's items."

Slowly, I shook my head. I was right; the instinct was right. There was something much darker inside of Liza than what appeared on the surface. Still, I just couldn't understand why she would trust me with all this knowledge. I could easily decide to get out of this mansion by joining Felix or someone else of power.

I wonder if all of this would have been any different if one of Durand's other brothers would have come calling for me. It probably would have been. I'm sure that Liza wouldn't trust me with the information she was giving me now.

The maid picked up her laundry and turned towards a hallway that had just randomly appeared. There was no way that hall was there before. I would have noticed that. Breaking me out of my mental confusion was Liza saying, "If you have any more questions feel free to ask, but I have to leave. Durand's calling me to the meeting room. Do as you wish. Anywhere you're not supposed to get into is already properly sealed. You shouldn't get into any trouble."

A wave of spite went through me. What a bitch! I was not a child. I didn't need boundaries. Gah. Was it just so awesome to boss people around?

As soon as Liza disappeared my tongue stuck out, and I turned around to meet face to face with a small boy with fangs. He looked like Durand's mini me as he gazed up at my face with his golden eyes and dishwater blonde hair waving around his face. "You must be my new sister," the boy stated, and I realized that the stuffed animal he was holding was headless. Creepastic. He stretched his free hand out to me and explained, "You will come with me. My big brothers are gone, and I have no one to play with."

Before I could protest, the child snatched my hand, and we suddenly appeared in what I suspected was his bedroom. It was completely normal as long as your eyes didn't drift to the coffin on a large stone pedestal. As

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my head continued to reel from the strange change in backdrop, I scanned the area of the average bedroom then had to keep from jumping when the kid grasped my pant leg.

"Would you like to play tag?" the strange, glowing eyed child asked. "You cannot trace yet, so I believe that I would win easily." He grinned, and I noticed the creepily adorable fangs in his mouth. He looked devious, a troublemaker.

I put my hands on my hips and leaned down to the kid's level. "Listen, little guy, I'm not your new sister. I'm just visiting before I hijack it out of here. Now, take me back to where we were, and I'll carry on with my business."

The kid stared at me like I was an alien. "A fledgling is telling me what to do?" he wondered and cocked his head to the side like a confused dog would.

"Yes, I am," I explained. Carefully, I studied the child. He was an odd one, a bit of a brat. "So, are you going to take me back or what?"

The kid gave me one of the cutest and most innocent smiles that I'd ever seen on a child. "Sure, Naomi, you're not a wimp like the other fledglings." He laughed. "This was all a test to see if you were worthy of my brother or not." His tiny hand reached out to me, and we appeared inside of the foyer that we'd started out in. He looked up at me with innocent yellow eyes. "Where are we going next?"

"Uhâ !" What was wrong with this kid? He was totally whack. "Where should we go?" I asked as the kid continued to hold my hand as if I was his babysitter.

The young vampire put a hand to his mouth and vaporized with me. Appearing in the kitchen that was the size of three of my classrooms slammed together, the kid said, "Since I'm not immortal yet, I have to eat mortal food along with blood. We have pitchers of blood in here if you're thirsty."

Despite the fangs growing sharper in my mouth, I shook my head. I wouldn't want to harm Durand's little brother. He'd kill me for sure if I did something crazy like that. Besides, I was warming up to the brat. He was kind of cute when you passed his test.

"Tell me more about being a vampire, little guy. How many times do your brothers drink blood?" I flipped one of the extravagant chairs around to straddle it without any extravagance whatsoever.

The kid pulled a pitcher of thick, delicious blood out of the fridge before snagging a pack of cookies off the counter before dragging it all to the table. "Felix is always drinking blood. If he's not drinking the maids or from the pitcher he's out hunting for blood. Durand drinks two times a day, dusk and dawn. I drink once a day. Elliot drinks three times. It varies. Most newborns like you drink like Felix or Elliot." He took a bit of the cookie, and I tried not to smirk at his fangs sinking into the dough. It looked so out of place. "I'm Reule, by the way. I was named after our dad because he died the day I was born."

I nodded and grinned at the cute little kid, waiting for him to talk more. He was so cute. I could just hold him all day and spoil him like crazy. He reminded me of my little brother back when we were younger. I sure did miss the little brat.

"What was it like being a human? Did you eat cereal like me and walk in the daylight without getting sunburnt?"

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"Well, yeah, but I could still get a sunburn. It would just take longer for me to get one." Amazing, vampires were just as curious about humans as we were them. It could almost make me wonder if they wrote mortal stories while we wrote their stories.

Chapter 7: Family Problems

Family Problems

After chatting with young Reule for what seemed like moments, Durand appeared in the kitchen and grinned at me. "I've been looking for you for hours, Naomi. I had no idea that Re would have already kidnapped you," he explained with a relieved tone to his voice.

I mentally rolled my eyes. Humph. Leave it to a guy. Ditching me then claiming to have been looking for me when he was probably off playing with Liza. Oh yeah, vampire, I've got your number.

Whoa! Was that jealousy in my mental tone? Uh-oh. No way, it could be that. I didn't know this creep.

Frowning, I leaned on the base of my hand and growled, "How was your meeting with Liza?" I didn't mean to reveal my jealousy, but I couldn't help it. The guy was hot as hell and had some super sexy vampiress creeping around with him. Hello? Even though we weren't romantic I believed that I had a good reason to be a bit jealous. Geeze. The guy was saying we were mates. Shouldn't that mean something?

Durand reached his hand out to grasp mine, but I slid it inwards to my body. He frowned. "We were just in a meeting, Naomi." His eyebrows drew together.

"Will I be able to see my family sometime soon?" I wondered only to have Reule grip my shirt. He didn't want me to leave. How cute was that?

Serious, Durand stated, "No, Naomi. You are not yet strong enough. If you tried to touch them, you would shatter them. Do you want to kill your family?"

Oh! Low blow from the vampire. I flashed my fangs. "Well, maybe if someone wouldn't have smashed his teeth into my neck without permission then this wouldn't be a problem? Why couldn't you have just dated me like a boyfriend would?"

Durand shook his head, sending those gorgeous locks around his perfectly chiseled face. "Mates are much more important than boyfriends. Boyfriends can leave. You are mine, Naomi. Forever."

Angrily, I rose up and snarled, "That still doesn't explain why you weren't a gentleman to me. Did you ask if I wanted to be a vampire? And if you did, did you make sure that I wasn't saying something when I was drunk?" My hands slammed down on the table, crushing it beneath my flat palms.

Reule grasped my pant leg and tugged as hard as he could. He nearly uprooted me from the floor. Trying to get me to leave? Why?

Rising, Durand took a step towards me and interrogated, "Why now? Why weren't you like this earlier? What's your problem, female?" As he took another step forward, tiny Reule was pulling me away from the kitchen and to the hallway where I heard whispers.

Without knowing so, we had gotten a crowd to congregate in the dining room and hallway. People peered in. Maids whispered to one another. Felix leaned against the entryway and grinned. Two more of Durand's mini-me brothers were pushing away at servants to get a look in at Durand's latest conquest.

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Little Reule wrapped both arms around my left leg like he was a ball and chain; he attempted to move me towards the dining room for a hasty escape. Although, I didn't oblige, I mentally thanked the little guy for looking out for me, but I was a full grown female! I could handle myself around this brutish jerk that decided to bleed me out and leave me in a hole to kill some random group of humans.

Yeah, humans! I used to be one of those. Why didn't he ask? Come on, leech; give me the answers.

"My problem? You don't think that I have an excuse to get pissed at you for killing me and putting me in a hole to wake up hungry for blood?" I took a half step forward, forgetting the innocent child around my leg. "If you would like to know something about women, Oh-Great-Master, we don't like sleeping on big problems!"

Durand reached out for me, but Reule pulled me one step out of his grasp. Sinking his claws into what was left of the kitchen table, Durand flashed his long fangs. "It seems that my fledgling still does not know her place," he hissed.

Laughter was heard in the background, but neither of the three of us turned to see Felix snickering like a schoolgirl. Instead, we recognized it when Reule cried, "Don't you touch her!"

My eyes grew wide when the little boy traced between us and put both arms out like he was going to be my shield. He stared up at his older brother with his tiny fangs flashed but didn't move no matter the depth of Durand's snarls.

"Get out of the way, Reule! She is my fledgling and mate. You cannot separate me from her. It is code." He reached towards me, but the little boy didn't budge an inch.

Instead he said something that made Durand freeze like an ice statue. He howled, "Do you want to kill her like Dad did to Mom?" The child still stared up at his brother as the entire mansion fell silent, including the creatures outside. It was like the aftereffect of a bomb. Once the ears stopped ringing and everything was gone, all became infinite silence. Not even a single heart could be heard beating.

Amazingly, it was not Durand who was the first to move after the ten minute pause. It was not a maid. It wasn't me. It was not even Reule who looked near tears. The person it was? Well, that person was Felix.

The male gripped the tiny boy and held him by his throat. His other fist rose in a flash, but the two other brothers of Durand held his hand from striking the boy.

I stared at the scene just inches away from me. I couldn't believe it. What could have happened that would make an older brother want to punch his younger brother? There couldn't be anything in the world that dramatic? Could there be?

Pinching the bridge of his nose, Durand was the first to calm down. He muttered, "Let go of Reule, Felix. He didn't do anything wrong. No one did anything wrong here." He turned to everyone that was staring in a dead silence. "Everyone, nothing happened here. Go back to work. None of this had happened tonight."

Something about his words. They were more than just a voice commanded comfort. They were like a song, something that could get the people watching to actually forget what had just happened. What kind of power did this vampire have over all of these people?

They became brainwashed after his statement. The only ones that still seemed shocked by this whole interference were Felix, Durand's two brothers, Reule, and me. Reule had traced to hold my pant leg but with less strength than before. Felix was bent over the counter and resting his thumb against his jaw. Durand was

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looking out one of the various full length windows that showed off the beautiful backyard scenery. Their two other brothers were sitting in the chairs in front of what had been a gorgeously crafted table.

Me? Well, I on the other hand was still in the same position as I had been the entire time. My legs were braced to snag Reule out of Felix's grasp, and my hands were stretched out to flaunt my painted claws. I looked like I was photo bombing a typical picture.

Durand looked at me curiously, and so did the other males once the place cleared out of the dazed people. "Why have you not forgotten everything?" Reule asked as he tugged on my pant leg.

I looked at him with a raised eyebrow. "Why would I forget what just happened?" I turned to look at the boy. My eyes reflected a mother's concern. "Are you okay?" I brushed down his black collar to gape at the fact that the red hand print around the boy's throat was already gone.

"Yeah, I'm good." He grinned at me and held my hand. "You're a really cool fledgling, Naomi. My big brother was smart when he mated you." The boy looked to Durand who wasn't paying any mind to either of us. "Let's go to my room."

The little vampire appeared sitting on top of his coffin as I appeared in a desk chair where a computer had the screensaver of Dracula moonwalking down a Transylvanian sidewalk. Ah. Leech humor. The young boy wagged his feet in the air and stared down at the floor. He looked serious in thought and out of place in the norm of his bedroom.

"I bet you're really confused about all of this," he murmured and tossed me a sad smile. The expression looked so old on his young face. How old was this little boy?

Instead of asking, I nodded and watched him chew on his lip. His fangs were gone. Retractable. Well, that would explain a lot since mine only hurt on occasion.

"Uhâ ; My mom and dad are Durand's and my other brother's same mom and dad, but Felix has a different dad. His dad wasn't a vampire. He was an in-incu-incubus. Anyway, my mom was mated to my dad, and she kept Felix a secret. One day, Felix ran out of his bedroom in a hunger rampage, and my mom couldn't hide my big brother anymore. Our dad thought that Mom was cheating on him, and killed her in a violent rage." He went silent, and so did I. What could I really say to that?

The little boy curled up and looked so scared and frail as I watched him. My heart ached to see him like that. As much of freakish monsters the both of us were, I couldn't leave him to curl in a ball and stare at the floor like that.

Just like what I used to do with my younger brother after every time my parents would argue, I sat down beside Reule who stared at me like I was from outer space. "Don't move, little guy. I'm used to taking care of younger brothers," I whispered as I scooped Reule into my lap.

Awkwardly, he settled against my body, resting his head against my shoulder. "Nobody touches me, Naomi. You're very warm like my bear, Acrylic," he mumbled and wrapped his little arms around me.

"You named your bear Acrylic?"

"Yeah. It just sounded cool." I smiled against the silk of Reule's blonde hair. He nuzzled against my neck. "Could you make me a promise, Omi?" My mind rocked at my new nickname, but I nodded, attempting to ignore the fact that my brother called me the same thing. "Don't be too hard on my big brother. He's never

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talked to a full blooded human before. He doesn't know what to do with your kind."

Chapter 8: Kiss

Chapter Eight

For the next couple of days, I didn't see much of Durand. I wound up spending all of my time babysitting the amazingly mature Reule. Every now and then my so-called mate would nod at me to at least acknowledge the fact that I was still kicking, but aside from that Reule was the one that taught me to control my strength.

The little boy explained why Acrylic was a headless teddy bear, and I had to laugh at the pink flush that came across the boy's face when he told the story of a nightmare that made him cry to see Acrylic headless.

Reule was by far the sanest of the Radebond males that lived at this estate. He introduced me to Elliot and Delray who were shockingly average for twin teenage boys. Elliot was friendly and played soccer most of the time that he was awake and not drinking. Delray on the other hand was a bit more reclusive, spending more time playing the piano, painting, or sculpting from memory.

Both males seemed to accept me with open arms but kept their distance when Reule wasn't around. It must have been because Durand was a shadow on the wall when I was on my own. If the guy was good at anything it was stalking. Occasionally, I felt his presence when I was in the shower or on my way to meet up with Reule.

My instinct felt our separation and cried out for me to hunt him down, but the times that I did go looking for my sire he would always say he was busy or needed to go to a meeting in the mysteriously disappearing hallway beneath the stairs in the foyer.

The kitchen table was replaced after an hour of scolding by the sexy vampiress that was always two steps behind Durand's ankles. That day she'd been wearing a silky black dress, creepily similar to the one that I'd shown up here in, and a suspicion slithered up my pant leg. It screamed that she was dying for Durand's attention.

Running my hands through my hair after soaking it in shampoo, I watched as the suds dripped down the ends of my red-brown hair and smiled at the accidental thought of Durand's hand going through my locks. Ashamed at myself, I blushed to no one's amusement.

My mind slipped down and down and down some more until it was completely in the gutter. I fantasized about the heated looks he'd give me in the hallways when he'd see me in tight shorts and a tank top, a nightgown before bed, a towel after a bath, or a short skirt on the one day I'd really, really wanted him to look at me. If only he could have just snagged a hold of my hand that day and traced us back to the bedroom. Then, we could share one of those drunken kisses we'd had in the club I was remembering.

Lost in my reverie, I didn't register movement until a large figure opened up the bathroom door, and Durand pulled the curtains away. Redder than blood, I attempted to cover myself at this random intrusion and barked, "What do you think you're doing?"

The man just shook his head and reached to pull my body against his half bare one. "I missed you," he breathed. His calloused hand ran from my dampened rib to my hip where he held my thrashing still.

Eyes wide, I could only stare when his mouth came down hot and needing against my own. The vampire's tongue dabbed against my mouth, and I gasped when he bit teasingly against the plumpness of my bottom lip. I'd accidentally allowed his tongue entry and had to suppress a groan when his perfect tongue taunted me.

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My instinct thrummed hungrily against my brain, but it was no match for the questions in my head. Why was he doing this? What was he thinking? Why now? Why was he avoiding me to do this to me right now?

"You cannot understand how many years I've waited just for a taste of you," he grated against my mouth. Before I could do anything to protect myself, Durand whisked us away and into his bed.

After fighting for a grip, I finally planted both of my hands firmly against his chest. "Stop!" I cried out in fear. My legs smashed together with his hand between them, and I stared up at him with a look of betrayal atop my face.

The man shook his head again and looked at me. "Why are you scared? You are my mate." Durand went back to pinching the bridge of his nose as he did when he was confused or stressed.

Pulling a pillow over myself, I eased up to gawk at the male. "I'm only human, Durand. I don't understand what you mean!" I exclaimed and attempted to inch away but Durand's hand was a manacle against my thigh.

"Why don't you want me like I do you?" He pressed me beneath him. His strong hands fanned completely over my shoulders, and I stared up at him. He looked confused, completely lost.

I chewed on my lip. I wanted to help him. I wanted to wipe that look away from him and replace it with something else, anything else. Seeing him confused made my instinct desire him all the worse.

My instinct wanted him to bury his fangs into my neck and get me writhing against him. It wanted me to sink my claws into his naked hide and do nasty things with him.

Carefully, I reached up to him, to the hardened features of his face. Touching him was like touching a wild animal for the first time: thrilling, scary, and unforgettable. He leaned against the cradle of my palm but still looked confused, dazed.

"Durand," I breathed in wonder. He was amazing, something completely original. My heart leaped in my chest like it was trying to reach out to his heart. Nervous, I pulled him down, down, down, until his chest brushed my sensitized skin.

Gulping, I had no idea what I was doing when my instinct had me pressing him against my neck. His tongue licked and rubbed against my skin, but his hands still held me frozen against the blankets.

I'd never wanted to be touched as badly as I did now. My blood raced, and I could feel everything. The bed sheets felt like every fiber was caressing my bare skin. Durand's warm body felt like a pulsing heater against my chest. The hair on his body tapped at my skin. It made my insides melt. I could hear everything. His heavy and ragged breaths against my neck as he suckled and nipped at my body were like bells signaling his need for me. My own breaths must have been causing a part of that need because they were just as rough as his.

The vampire leaned his body down against me, and I felt a part of him prodding me. I bit my lip but allowed the touch. "Just a kiss for tonight, Durand," I pleaded. Although I felt his resistance, I heard his grunt and felt his nod. He would oblige.

Slowly, he pulled himself upwards and slipped his hands until they were on both sides of my head. Again he shook his head. The man growled, "So beautiful but only a kiss." His words were full of anguish, and my heart weakened, will too.

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I felt the distance between us closing, and I let my instinct slip through my hold on it. Tingles ran all through my body at my nervousness. I'd never thought that the first time I really was to kiss this male would be when I was naked and in his bed.

His shadow bathed my body, and I impatiently leaned towards him. His strong jawline pressed against my chin, brushing skin. Finally, Durand's warm, soft lips met mine, and my entire body internally shivered.

The kiss started off gentle, but that went up in flames. As soon as I felt Durand writhing against me, I sunk my hands in his blonde hair and locked my legs around his waist. His tongue ravished my mouth. I couldn't get enough of his taste while I smashed him so close against me that there was no way that we looked to be two people. His grunts and moans made me shiver as our tongues twisted against each other. My heart hammered in my chest, and his responded with an even more intense strength.

Briefly, he pulled away, muttering something about control, but I forced him to return. He did so without much of a fight. His mouth grinned against mine at this single triumph on my control, but I bucked my hips against his waist to make him to cut that out.

The vampire groaned deeply at that, and I snickered when he rolled me on top of him. The sheets warped around us as we continued to roll all over the bed. Durand's fingers playfully skimmed down my body, but I ran my leg against his core unconsciously.

The male's hips rose, but he held his control. Durand broke the kiss once more, and I chased him until he moaned his surrender. "Damned tease," he growled, low and deep in his chest.

We kept twisting and twining, but finally, Durand traced away to slam his back against the wall. Desire made his lips part. I rose up on the bed to gape at his body. "I-I'll," he fumbled, "see you later tonight." With that, Durand traced away, and I wondered just to where when he was soâ€¦ turned on.

Although my internal sensor was going off like wild, I was way too happy to pay it any attention. Ignoring the ache inside of me, I flipped the tornado woven sheets off me and dizzily walked to the huge closet that Durand had stocked with clothes he'd bought me and clothes he'd taken from my dorm.

A short black skirt and low cut blue blouse called out to me, and I strapped on some blue heels. I pirouetted in the mirror then snickered, "Durand Radegond, eat your heart out." Replying was his voice in my head, *I'm sure that I will, lovely Naomi.*

My lips were singing as I replayed Durand's mouth hot on my own. He had been writhing and squirming against me. He was desiring and needing me. No male had ever been like that with me before. Durand had been the first male to see me completely naked.

I languidly rubbed towards the heated spot below my belt. If he kissed me with that desire again, I think I could give it up to him. He could use that against me if I let him. Well, all that I had to do was keep him from doing that. Strategy. Strategy. Strategy.

Abruptly, I thought of Reule. The young boy was so much like my brother had been years ago. I wondered how he was, what he was doing, and who he had a crush on this year. My heart felt a surge of pain.

I needed to get out of here. Durand had said that some disposables took the blame for my murders, so I should have a free ride out of here. Now then, I needed to find out just where I was and what I would need to do to get out of here.

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Reule had said that I was advancing, and I didn't break my clothes when I put them on anymore. I'm sure that I could take holding onto Mom, Dad, and Aspen.

Chapter 9: Captive

Captive

Lightly, I drew my finger up to my lips and bit down on it. It was a stupid habit. I know, but at least it was one of the few things that made me feel human. I was a monsterâ no, not a monsterâ a vampire. I was a powerful creature of the night, and although I drank blood I still had a conscious mind.

As long as I knew right from wrong and did the good of it all, I was no monster. My previous mistakes were only mishaps, things that could have made me a monster. It really was thanks to Durand and Reule that I was able to get this far. Even Lizbeth taught me a lesson with her death. Yes, I was no monster. I was still Naomi Roesia, inside and out.

Opening my door, I ran straight into a tall figure. It was hard yet warm like Durand's massive body, but it was darker. My heavily lashed eyes looked upwards, and I saw Felix grinning down at me. "Now, Ms. Naomi, just where are you off to in such a hurry?"

A wild grin stretched over his features, highlighting each and every tooth in his head. From the moonlight that poured into the hall, only his mouth and clawed fingertips were visible in a streak of pale silver. The sight of him was that of a nightmare in the flesh.

My chest pounded over and over again. It was like my heart wanted to rip free of its skeletal cage. Felix only grinned. He could hear my heart. I was positive of that. Why? I was sure because with every pace gained his fangs grew longer, longer, and longer until they gleamed in the moonlight like daggers.

"I was just going to see where Reule was," I answered and backed up against the door that Felix had closed for me. My hand gripped the doorknob loosely, sweat beading across its smooth surface.

The male ran his hand up to cup my jaw. Slowly, he drew my face towards his until we were inches apart, and I could feel his minty breath upon my skin. "You're lying, young vampiress. You were going to try to get out of here without my brother knowing." My eyes accidentally widened, showing off my surprise at his perfect guess. "Ah. That's what I thought."

Against his grip, I snapped, "What are you going to do about it?" This guy was freaking me out. Why did he always have to pop up at the weirdest of times? After Durand showed dominance over me, during the argument I had with Durand, and now when I was going to run away from Durand?

Felix explained, "I can get you out of here, Naomi. I can do it in a way where Durand won't come looking for you too."

Warning bells blasted, but I couldn't help myself from asking, "How?" The words had already escaped my mouth before I could even make them stop. My body had betrayed me.

The vampire traced until we stood in a large garden full of roses of all colors, including colors that shouldn't have been able to grow naturally. Blue roses, red roses, yellow roses, lavender roses, pink roses, and orange roses all bloomed around me at night. It was a gorgeous sight. Their green stems were dampened with glistening dew.

Felix drew one up, a bright red one with red tipped thorns to match, and handed it to me. "This was the one place that my mother and I were permitted to meet on King Reule's grounds," he explained. "Any other time, I

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was banished to the dungeon where I was forced to feed on whatever corpse the mighty king threw my way. My brothers would frequently meet me out here as well. As their numbers grew and I saw the love that my mother was allowed to give to them, I became enveloped with a rousing jealousy. Why was I forced to the dungeon whereas my brothers were permitted to be with my mother at any time? I'd never known my real father and had been led to believe that King Reule was that man. Hatred brewed within me, and I plotted my revenge against my father. The more he condemned me, the more hate I buried inside of me. Young Reule was just a baby when I sent the Thanatos demons inside of the city. He didn't have any idea what was happening and was told only the smallest explanations of my torture. He didn't know that I sent the demons to kill his father nor did he know that his father had killed my mother, thinking it was her idea at revenge for sending me into that dungeon for a hundred years."

I nodded my head, completely missing the point to his story. "Then," he added, "you came. You made a perfect distraction for Durand, and with you I can get the crown that should have been mine to begin with." It clicked then.

He was using me for his gain. Get the girl out of the castle then take over the place while the real king is away on a wild goose chase to find his lover. It was smart, butâ Was I really going to betray Durand for Felix's gain? I knew I could do it for Aspen, Mom, and Dad. I just didn't know about the other part.

As little as I knew about Durand, he seemed like a nice guy, a little hot tempered, but a nice guy. Reule was cutie and hurting him wouldn't be on my to-do list. The others, well, they were the others. I didn't know too much about them.

Still, I wouldn't be hurting myself if I let Felix have his way with the kingdom he wanted so badly. Besides, maybe he could knock Durand off my case. The guy's stalking was super creepy, and I'd live my life a little more comfortably if I could take a shower without feeling eyes on me. As sweet as Reule was, I didn't know him either. I didn't know anything about these people. Losing them wouldn't hurt or harm me. I'd be okay without them. It wasn't like I was losing anyone in my family.

I bit my lip. Where was Naomi Roesia now? I wasn't thinking like myself. Then again, I was much different from the girl I used to be. Still, the old me wouldn't be endangering the lives of people to run back to the family that she didn't know would accept her or not. Would it be in vain if my parents just called the cops on me and the others die? I wouldn't have any backbone to lean on if I got rid of Durand.

Besides, the guy was being a prince to me with his clothes buying and kindness. Even though I'd felt the hardness of his desire earlier this evening, he hadn't reacted on it. He was a good man. Naomi Roesia wouldn't let a good man get hurt without a legitimate reason to it. I wouldn't let a good man get hurt without a legitimate reason to it.

Felix broke my train of thought. "What would it really hurt if you lost Durand? You're only a fledgling. I won't affect you." Why did those words feel like a lie? "Take your time, Naomi. Just call for me when you've decided to agree."

After a rush of wind, I was standing back in the hallway, but Felix was nowhere to be seen. Shivers crept up my spine. That guy was completely weird.

Slowly, my gaze went from the darkness of the wall in front of me to drift to the damp rose shimmering in the moonlight. I had been holding this thing the entire time without realizing it. The petals shifted, and I watched the living flower's petals reach up to the moon. She spread out her vibrant red layers then basked in the moon's beacon gaze.

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This place was very strange. The men of the household could mind control the servants. They all drank blood. Flowers bloomed in the dead of night. Hallways and doorways appeared out of nowhere for servants to weave in and out of them. People spoke to me mentally, and I could hear them as if they'd whispered right into my ears. Yeah, it was very, very strange.

My attention went back to the rose and then the figure that was leaning forlornly in the windowsill. Delray had a maid draped over his lap, and a cello leaned against his leg that was still in the mansion. He looked exactly like one of the vampires of ancient legacy. He was the image of darkness and unfeeling sorrow as he petted the woman's fire red hair.

Heart freezing over, I reminded myself that blood drinking was a natural part of their life and my own. It's just the sight before my eyes betrayed me. The maid was so limp. She looked to be dead. As reclusive and watchful as Delray was, I didn't expect him to kill a woman without a purpose to it. He seemed like a strategist not a murderer.

Although as scared as I was, I couldn't tear my eyes away from Delray as he murmured a lulling song to the female. His lips hardly moved, but the sweet melody moved me and apparently so did the woman in his arms.

Her hand reached up and ran slowly down his face, but he didn't move his attentions from the moon he was gazing up at so lovingly. She looked like she was being controlled as her middle finger pressed against the smooth surface of his skin then lazily flowed until she was skimming the silk of his shoulders, finally halting her trace when he reached a ring on his left ring finger.

I wondered just why Delray, claiming to only be nineteen, would be wearing a wedding band on his left hand, but there was no way I was going to interrupt this beautiful yet melancholy moment he was having.

He was just as handsome as Durand while having much more of Felix's attributes. Gently waving in the moonlit air was his dark, black-brown locks. His body was made with broad shoulders then trimmed down to his powerful legs covered up in black dress pants. The man looked very much like the weapon his two older brothers were, but his attitude was much different from Felix and Durand.

If Felix would have been holding the maid, he would have been over her, and if Durand would have been doing so, he would have been standing up with her. Felix was more aggressive in his feedings whereas Durand was gentler. Delray seemed to be the median of the two older males.

Making a note of the blood dripping down her neck and from the corner of Delray's mouth, I left the two of them alone. The scene made me think of so much. Hunger was a driving force when it came down to being a vampire, but why did we drink without knowing what it did for us? Surely, there was more to being a vampire than drinking blood. What exactly in living blood caused us to have our preternatural senses?

I made my way into the library to find Liza sitting in front of the fireplace with Durand beside her on the couch. Attempting to ignore the smug look she gave me and the unreasonable jealousy that the sight had wrought into me, I went to one of the many bookshelves to examine some of the interesting novels that Reule had shown me before.

His remembered voice chimed, *We've got all kinds of books, Omi. We've got some on werewolves, faeries, ghouls, druids, and even vampires. You should check them out some time. There's lots of cool stories about my family in here.*

Even as he'd told me all of those things, I didn't really feel the need to research my new species, but now the tides had changed and my curiosity had sparked a flame. Drawing out one of the books on vampires, I felt

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Durand's presence behind me.

His large hand covered my grip on the book, and he leaned down to whisper, "May I help you study, Naomi?"

Inwardly, I grinned at Liza's loud huff and escape to the hallway, so I turned to nod. "Teach me how to be a vampire, Durand."

The male cracked me a heart stopping grin before tracing me back to the couch. He stretched his arm across my shoulders to press my body against his. It was strange at how perfectly I fit against his body. It was like he and I had been made for one another.

My instinct thrummed at the closeness and studying vampires had suddenly become second interest to studying Durand. His body was warm against mine and felt perfect. In the bend of his arm, my body relaxed while my conscience was wracking my nerves.

Half of me wanted to get away from him while the other half needed me to bond with him. Gritting my teeth mentally, I allowed the touch. Being this close to him made my pulse race and my body weaken. Although my heart wasn't in for the closeness, my instincts were.

I raised my eyesight to him and saw that the book was no longer in his grasp. He was just gazing down at me as if I was a goddess. He looked awestruck. "Naomi," he breathed. Before I knew it, he had me pinned to the couch.

Shyly, I peered out from beneath my hair to see his desire flashing throughout his golden eyes. I wasn't ready for this kind of intimacy, the kind that he was wanting.

The scene was surprisingly romantic as I tried to distract myself from his attention absorbing body. The fire crackled lightly in the darkness. The couch was warm beneath my body. He was warm on top of me.

Moonlight peered in from the few open windows to highlight his face and my breasts. Durand's hand lightly swept over my skin, feeling every inch of its exposed surface. His touch wasn't rough or harsh. It was soothing like balm on a sore.

I wanted to be touched by him, but it was forbidden. I didn't know him. This wasn't me. Although I frequently flirted and flaunted myself, I had never truly considered myself easy. Of course, I had been called a slut before, but I'd never allowed any male entrance to my core. Now, I was gazing up at this magnificent stranger and desiring something that I'd read about, watched on television, and daydreamed out. I felt weak.

He could do anything to me right now. He was in the perfect position to do so, but instead of acting on that, he asked, "May I take off your shirt, Naomi?"

Eyes wide, I looked up at him. Blush covered my face, but I nodded. His calloused hands worked my shirt up and off me until it slithered to the floor. Shy once more, I peered at him and watched his awe at my body. He looked at me like he was seeing a female for the first time. It sent waves of desire through me.

His hand pressed down on my hip, and he nuzzled my neck. "You're so beautiful," he breathed against my skin. "I want to make you mine forever." The vampire's hand ran up to trace against the fabric of my bra.

Face flaming I looked down, down to where his knee was between my legs. "How can you say that when you don't even know who I am?" My heart berated my rib cage, but I couldn't stop it. It was going crazy at this unfamiliar closeness.

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Durand leaned his hardened lower half against me and explained, "Men love their mates with the first meeting. We cannot live without them after that." His dampened lips touched my collarbone. "Naomi, it all sounds like a fairytale, but you made my heart beat. When you came to the club, I felt a presence, but it wasn't an enemy. My instinct hunted for you, and when I saw you, you were like looking at the sun for the first time. I felt like I was alive. All I wanted to do was touch you, feel what life felt like. When we danced that first night, as unromantic as it was, you made my heart beat."

My head went back to the club and when Durand's silhouette came to me asking to dance. His body had felt cold that night. He didn't feel alive that night. Now, he felt very much alive. If I had been dead for thousands of years and some chick had woken me back up, I'd want to screw her too.

He had a point. Vampires weren't like humans. Reule had shown me that they died after some point in time. He'd explained to me that they lived like humans until their body was at its strongest then they died.

"Why didn't you ask me if I wanted to become a vampire?" I wondered, hand unconsciously slipping to his neck.

The man looked down with a sad grin. He was ashamed. I guess that he should be for what he'd done to me. "I didn't ask because my enemies were on my trail. I would have dated you, Naomi. I would have been the perfect lover, met your family, and stolen your heart, but they were so hot on my ankles that I had to change you. It was for your protection. Felix had done some researching and found that they'd figured out that you were my mate. I had to keep you safe."

A sad smile cracked my features, and I ran both of my hands down until they were planted firmly on his shoulders. "Will I be able to see my family soon?" I asked, breaking his moan at how good my hands felt on him.

He looked at me with a look of fierce protectiveness gleaming in his eyes. "Naomi, it's not safe enough. If you got out, my enemies would hunt you down and kill you. Then, I would be forced to go to war with them. I'm keeping you here until you're safe to go out alone, but you will always have a bodyguard from now on."

My lips twisted to a look of disapproval. He was going to keep me away from Aspen, Mom, and Dad. How could he? He had his family around him at all times. That was so unfair.

I moved myself upwards, and he allowed it. His back bowed to give me distance from him, but our hips still touched. The heat between us was like a forge. I wanted to give up and into it. I just couldn't let myself do it. How could I? He was going to hold me away from my parents.

"Durand, I like you. I really do but keeping me away from my family isn't helping that," I attempted to explain, but he only placed himself in a way that I felt trapped beneath him. When I tried to back off this time, he moved with me, coaxing that oh so distracting part of my anatomy. "I'm not like you. I can't think the way you do. I'm human."

He cut me off. "Human no more."

"Okay," I sighed. "I still think like a human. I don't know anything about this life. I don't know what it's like to have the big bad wolf huffing and puffing at my front door. You can't keep me away from my family. If you doâ I-I'll hate you forever."

Finally, he had a reaction to that. So, he didn't want me to hate him. That was a start. Maybe, I could get the best of both worlds: my family and this sexy vampire.

Awakening the Blood

He flashed his fangs, growing angrier. "Hate me is what you may say now, but you will live forever, Naomi. You will learn to forget about this because it's just a small moment in your vast future." The vampire adjusted himself, and I wound up wriggling so much that I tumbled onto the library floor.

I backed up with my legs sprawled out in front of me and my arms behind me. He stepped closer, and I backed up more. I backed up until I was pressing myself against the wall.

"You may not understand me, Naomi, but you will. Locking you up will help you understand," he snarled and snagged my hip. In an instant my hands were pressed against his chest, locked between our bodies.

I squirmed, but again he became a giant manacle. "Locking me up will only make things worse. You think I'm confused now, but you're just going to make me hate you!" I screamed.

He didn't seem to hear me at all. The vampire just traced until we were someplace cold and damp. Iron bars were all over the place, they decorated each and every empty cell. Tossing my shirt at me, Durand snapped, "I will be back down here later on to feed you. Don't even look like you're trying to escape, or the punishment will be even more severe."

Chapter 10: Abducted

Abducted

Around and around I paced in the cell that bastard had locked me inside of. *Lock me up and throw away the key*, I thought to myself. With my hands balled into fists behind my back, I bent my head back and plotted the ways that I could escape this dungeon.

I'd known that Durand was crazy, but I didn't expect his feverish temper to drive him this far. What had I done that had been so horrible? Nothing, I can promise you that. All I wanted was to see the parents that had given me this life that he'd stolen away from me. I missed my younger brother who was probably ransacking my room, searching for clues as to why I was gone.

Aspen! Little Aspen Jace, the boy who wouldn't have been alive if it wasn't for me. I'd promised him that I'd always be there for him, but look at me now. I was trapped beneath some rich guy's mansion. What would I do to save him now if he jumped in front of another car on his dirt bike?

My body leaned up against the iron bars, and I rested my head upon them. Gazing up at the long set of stone stairs that would lead to another mysterious hallway, I bit down on my lip.

Durand was true to bring me food that first night he'd locked me down here, and he was the next. I'd wound up spending a total of seventy-two hours down here. Durand had explained how much he wanted me back up on the surface with him and his brothers who were beginning to question where I was, but when I asked if he would let me see my family, the answer was still no. As long as he told me no, I would be happy to spend time down here by myself. I didn't need his company no matter how lovely and endearing it was to have him around me whispering deadly compliments and delivering fiery hot kisses.

If he thought that he was stubborn, he would see it from a true blue Roesia. My family was notorious for their bullheaded nature. It'd been passed down to each female from my father's side, and I was the next in line to be delivered that strength. My aunt had been horribly stubborn, running it straight through five marriages. Yeah, if he thought he was bad, he should meet my Aunt Madeline.

I slumped down to the cold floor and felt something warm and soft meet my bare skin. Reaching beneath my bottom, I prodded the soft pillow that Durand had delivered to me. Trying to win me over with comfort was he? Ha! Never in a thousand years vampire. I don't care how sexy you are; you can't make me like you.

A sound made my attention scatter to the sight of Felix appearing in my cell. He gave me a smug grin and wondered, "Are you ready to make the deal, Naomi?"

My arms crossed beneath my breasts as I glowered at the sight of his hand in the darkness between us. "I just might be," I hissed but made no movement to grip his hand. "Put that thing away before it gets bitten off."

The man slipped his hands into his pockets then turned to slide down beside me. "The pillow was actually something I gave you," he explained with another wicked grin.

"Thanks," I mumbled, "now I know why it should burn."

The vampire beamed towards the stone ceiling. "You really are charming. I hope you know, but that won't help you in getting away from my brother. Face it, Naomi. You need me. I'm the only person that can help you and get away with it. All you have to say is yes."

Awakening the Blood

"Then sign me up, leech! Let me out of here!" I felt something cold on my arm, and my heart felt like it was going to fall straight out through the bottom of my shoes.

Suddenly, we were standing in front of the alley where I'd first met Liza as a vampire at. The ice cold vampire pulled my hand up to his lips and kissed them. After that, he was nothing more than a breeze in the wind. His voice chimed, "Keep your eyes open, Naomi. There's no telling when something could go bump in the night."

Rolling my eyes, I was suddenly staring into the many curious faces of people around me. Although it was spring, it was still too cold to be wearing a skimpy skirt and body flaunting blouse. I probably looked like a well-paid stripper to all these people.

Although the cold was nothing to me, I still covered my bare arms with my hands and feigned the chill of the night air. Biting on the inside of my lip, I kept my eyes away from the lights of the cars and headed towards the streets that I knew would take me towards my family.

Right now, Dad would be at the hospital since they'd changed him to night shift. Mom would probably be sitting up with Aspen, attempting to help him with his geometry homework. Hopefully, I could meet up with them before they went to bed, but I had no idea how long the walk would be since I'd always been driving from the dorm when I wanted to go to the house.

Nervous, I used my inhuman speed to swipe a coat off of a female that looked to be about my size and slipped it on. She didn't look like she needed the extra material anyway. She had someâ attractive man adoring everything she did.

I thought back to Durand. Why was I thinking of him right now? How many times do I have to tell myself? We didn't do anything for me to get this attached. Yes, he'd taken me shopping. Yes, he'd played the piano for me. Yes, he'd delivered unto me some of the best, hottest, and most unforgettable kisses I'd ever tasted, but we'd never done anything.

Mentally, I slapped myself to get my head back into the game. I was here to find my family, and I was going to find them. No male would ever make me turn away from my family. Mom and Dad will always be there for me. A man could leave me. Durand could leave me. He'd locked me up for three days in his dungeon then claimed that he loved me. The audacity!

My parents had picked me up one night after some guy had put some kind of drunk in my drink and tried to rape me. They had believed my story and didn't think I was just on some high and trying to avoid getting in trouble. I had the best parents in the world, but I wasn't the best daughter. They could have punished me similar to what Durand had done, but they didn't. That made them on a whole other level than what Durand's version of love was.

I was not someâ possession to be locked up in a case and played with when my owner got bored. I was a woman. I needed to be taken care of when I wanted to be taken care of. He couldn't keep me away from my parents.

I needed to see them. I had to see them. That was my mom and my dad. They needed to see me. They needed to know that I was alive.

Whatever Durand may have thought about me breaking my parents with my weird new strength was wrong. I wouldn't do it because I couldn't. I loved them. There was no way that I could hurt them.

Awakening the Blood

Lost in my thoughts, I barely heard it when a set of footsteps had begun to follow me around. The only thing that had me coming right out of my daydreaming was the fact that those squeaky sneakers weren't sneaking at all.

The delicious sent of human blood caught my nose and turned me right around to stare into the blue eyes of my blonde headed little brother. "Dude! My sister got hot!" Aspen exclaimed as he poked my forehead.

"Aspen!" I nearly screamed and smashed him to me uncontrollably. Remembering quickly about how Durand said I could crush my family, I released him and watched him hiss with a wincing smile.

Rolling his shoulder, Aspen hissed, "Woo! Somebody got strong! You join the mafia or something?" The kid picked up his skateboard that he'd dropped on the ground and just looked up at me with this excessively goofy smile on his face.

"What? Do I have something on my face?" He punched my shoulder, and I didn't even feel it. It was nothing compared to Reule's claws in my pant leg. So strange. Aspen's punches used to leave bruises on my tender skin.

"Nah. I just can't believe it was you that I was following. When you turned around, I was totally expecting some chick to blast about how I shouldn't be following gals around. Where've you been, sis?" He leaned against my shoulder, pushing me down the streets.

Quickly, I tried to devise a story that would have me missing for a little over three months without answering anyone's calls. "My phone got trashed when I was going with some of my friends down to Hanji City for their senior trip," I explained, since most schools in Jasonville started in January and ended in December. He nodded and hopped on his skateboard to lazily push it beside me. "What are you doing outside and not at the house?"

"Some friends of mine called for me to come to the skate park, but they were doing drugs and stuff. I ditched them and wound up here to find you. Pretty cool timing. Right?" He snickered and flashed those perfectly white teeth of his.

I rubbed my arm guiltily. If only I would have been like Aspen maybe none of this would have happened to me. A voice in my head didn't think so, but I couldn't let pessimism drag me down.

The boy noticed my silence and stopped skating to ask, "Is that the real reason you didn't come home? Did you get knocked up by some dude?"

I waved him off. "Stop! You sound like Mom. I'm not on drugs, and I'm not pregnant. Chill. I was just out with my friends and dropped my phone in the ocean." I rolled my eyes, faking my nervousness at the talk of drugs.

Even as an immortal, my highs had always been something that I'd been afraid to admit to my younger brother. I wanted to protect him from my idiocy. I didn't want him to be like me. It looked like I was doing a pretty good job.

After moments of walking, Aspen stopped skating and frowned. "Looks like I took a wrong turn. Ha. Oops." He smacked the base of his hand against his skull then his eyes went abruptly wide. "O-Omi, l-look out!" he screamed then jumped behind me, and I gawked when my brother's limp form flew across the sidewalk to smash against a fountain.

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A hand clamped down on my shoulder like a vise, and a voice snickered, "Looks like the king let his queen out of the castle. What should we do with the pet, lah?"

"Sell her! She'd make us a great deal of money." A shadow appeared in front of my eyes, and I gawked at a beast with four curved horns prodding out of his head. He leaned up to my height with his clawed toes. His beady red eyes analyzed me then he reached out, took a lock of my hair, and pulled me down so that he could take a small bit of flesh from my neck. "Mmm. Tastes good. We should bottle her up and ship her to hungry people, humans even. They'd pay good money for vampire blood. It's good for healing."

The other monster, the one that I couldn't see, grunted his approval of the little one's idea. He spun me around, and I froze at the sight of him. He was the bigger version of the little ones. His entire body was caked in muscle. The monster was a giant weapon, and not like the kind that Durand was. This one screamed enemy tank. "Never seen a demon before have you, missy?" he asked as he lifted me up by my neck to carry me towards a wall of swirling black. "Well, you'll have all sorts of fun looking at all of us after you get to our home. The only problem is that in this zoo, you're the exhibit."

With my legs flailing in the air, I could only scream as I saw the other one dragging my younger, unconscious brother towards the portal. Would they eat him? What would they do with a poor boy like my innocent brother? He'd never done a single thing wrong in his life.

Regret swamped my body. I wished I was back in that dungeon, waiting for Durand's body to be my sensual feast. I wished that I never would have let Felix bring me back here. If I wouldn't have shown up, Aspen wouldn't be here right now. He'd be on his way home. He'd be safe, and I'd be safe. Everything would have been okay if I wouldn't have screwed up. Felix probably planned this.

Chapter 11: Alvah

Alvah

My hands grappled the bars that the monsters had locked me behind, and I tried not to throw up when my foot went straight through the skull of some poor creature they'd probably tortured then fed on. "Leave the boy alone! He didn't do anything to you!" I cried as I watched the little demon creature jump up and down on my unconscious brother's abdomen.

Bloody tears washed my face as I watched the little monster play with my brother's limp body. They were starting to make a puddle on the stone floor at my feet as I watched the freak pry open my brother's eyelids to see if he was awake yet or not. I wanted him to stay asleep. He was okay if he was asleep. He could see the monsters. As long as he kept his eyes closed, he wouldn't freak out. He'd be alright.

The larger demon leaned against the bars and stated, "You didn't do anything to us, and we still locked you up." A smug grin swept across his face, and I tried not to flinch at the sight of his large fangs. They were wicked, serrated like a shark's teeth. I wanted to be the one unconscious as he kept smiling at me, looking over my body like he was undressing me mentally.

Ignoring his vainglorious statement, I looked back to my brother with the demon sitting on his chest. Oh, what I'd give to have him back up at the house instead of here. I belonged here not him. This was my world now. It wasn't his. This world could kill him, but Durand made me strong enough to at least attempt to fight these freakish abnormal monsters with horns twining their heads and tails swaying at their ass ends.

"Get off of him!" I screamed. My fists bashed at the bars without avail. They just kept on ignoring my attempts to break the iron bars. "I'll do anything if you just let my brother go," I pleaded, sinking to the bottom of my cage.

With the bones, blood, and body parts decorating the place where my body sat, I could only feel useless until the large demon turned to grin at me. He said, "Anything? Hey, lah, get off the kid. I want to hear this." The creep settled to my level and reached through the bars to lift my chin up.

"W-what do you want me to do?" I stammered. I needed anything to get my brother out of here. I wanted him safe, sound, and secure. This all needed to be some bad nightmare for him. It didn't have to be reality. As long as he stayed unconscious, it didn't have to be that way for him.

The monster turned to his younger friend and grinned. Both of their mouths seemed to stretch in a wicked grin from ear to ear, Cheshire style but with fangs.

My brother's body moved, and I flinched. He couldn't be waking up. No, no, no! Don't wake up, but no matter how much I prayed, he still opened his eyes to scream at the sight of the skeletons and limbs scattered around him. He screamed like he had when he'd snapped his leg the day that I'd saved him from being smashed under the car. He screamed like he had when he'd had nightmares and claimed monsters were under the bed and in the closet.

The demons smashed their hands over their pointed ears, and the bigger one hissed, "Shut him up!"

With my hand stretched out, I snagged a hold on the little one's tail. After a good tug, I'd wrenched him so hard that I snapped the little demon's tail right off. His scream joined the heart shattering one of my brother's, but I didn't hold back when I reached to snap his neck.

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"You kill my brother!" the large one howled as he charged towards Aspen. "Let me see how you like it when I kill your brother!" In one single sweeping motion he lifted my brother right up from the ground.

In horror I watched as the monster put his claws into Aspen's neck and blood poured from the gashes. My heart shattered like broken glass, and shards of it stabbed into my gut when I heard the popping sounds of his skin tearing even further.

My brother's legs flailed and flailed uselessly as the demon began popping his head off his shoulders. He screamed directly into the freak's ear without any usefulness. His body grew limper with each and every slow tug that the monster made.

"Stop it! Stop it! You're killing him!" I screamed in vain. Nothing could save my brother now. Nothing. He was as good as dead.

My blood soaked eyes slammed shut. I couldn't watch this. I wouldn't watch my brother being killed by that monster. What was left of my heart vanished when I heard a body fall limp to the floor, but I had to look.

When I did look, I could only stare in astonishment when another demon joined the large one, but this one was even bigger and even more frightening. He held my limp brother's body up from the ground by his arm and shouted, "You come back into my house, stain my dungeon with your useless blood, and attempt to behead a mortal child all without my approval! Get the hell out of here before I decide to do the same thing to you in your home! You served your purpose now get the hell out, bastard!"

The demon scampered like a sewer rat and cursed me as he lunged into a dark spot in the wall.

The demon lifted my brother, looked at him carefully, and opened my cage to gently lay him down on the only clean spot in the dungeon. Astounded at his kindness, I could only stare. As he tended to my brother's wounds by applying some thick slime to his throat, the monster greeted, "I am Alvah of the Thanatos demons. Welcome to my dungeon, Queen Radegond." He leaned back on his haunches and put his clawed hands behind him.

Amazingly, this monster wasn't as ugly as the other two had been. He was oddly attractive and kind of ghostly. His horns swept back with his hair, and he only had two of them. His hair was as black as his horns. It made me wonder if his skeleton was black.

Pushing the thoughts aside, I quickly moved to prod at the already sealed wounds on my brother's neck. "What was that gunk you put on him?" I asked in amazement. If only human medicines worked so well then he wouldn't have had to limp for two months.

"Trust me, queenie, if you knew you'd barf up your lover's blood. You okay? I can't believe those twoâ" He coughed. "âthat one bastard locked you up. You gave Iah a good run for his money." The demon's left hand reached over to flick at the remains of the four year old sized demon.

I couldn't help but feel charmed by this oddly attractive creep watching my hug my brother. He saved my brother from dying by a monster's hand and from dying by blood loss. I owed my own life to him. "Yeah, I'm fine now that I know my brother's going to be okay," I said in a daze while dragging Aspen's body onto my lap.

He cracked a grin. "Human memories still reside in your immortal body." The demon put his large hands behind his head and watched me pet my brother's blonde head. "You love your brother quite a lot. It's cute." Hearing that small word come from such a big man, I couldn't stop my grin from easing up my face. "Smile as

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you will, queenie, but I call it as I see it no matter how degrading it may make me seem."

"Thank you for saving him, Alvah." I brushed Aspen's hair out of his face and planted a kiss on his forehead that bore the scar he'd earned from my hand accidentally hitting him with a flatiron. He'd gotten a little teardrop shaped scar from that day and hadn't lost it since although it'd faded over the years. Aspen was always falling into the wrong situations because of me. He was my accidental soldier, the guy that wandered into my nightmares and saved me when I needed it.

The demon brushed my words off like they were a gnat in the air. "Chill. It's the least I could do since you're going to be trapped here until Durand saves you. Make it look like I've been torturing you when he does come. Okay?" He closed his eyes and looked as if he was about to doze off when I smacked him in his steel chest. "What? You didn't expect a get out of here for free card. Did you?"

"Uh. Yeah! I don't want Durand to come save me. I want to take Aspen and my happy ass right back up to wherever we were before your pets kidnapped us. I was trying to get away from Durand. Can't you get that?"

The demon stroked his chin, something I thought only people with facial hair did. "Huhâ ! So, let me get this straight. You're running from your mate, the dude that lets you drink directly from him, spoils you with clothes and money, and has this awesome mansion on the hills, concealed from all enemies." He gave me a look like I was an idiot. "Earth to Queen Radegond. Get your happy ass and your little brother back up to Durand before the big bad wolf huffs, puffs, and blows your life away. There are all sorts of freakish monsters that hate Durand, things that would make me look like Reule's Acrylic. Heck. I loved Durand and his guys. Those guys are great. I didn't even have to worry about dirtying my hands anymore when I was allied with them."

I rolled my eyes. "If they're so amazing then why'd you leave them and kidnap me?"

He shrugged. "Felix owns me. I do what he says, take the blame, and get the punishment. I owe it to him. I'd be dead without that dude." He pulled a stick of something out of his pocket and lit it to take a long drag then blow the smoke up into the air. "Want a hit?" he wondered, nodding towards the slender thing.

As I watched this guy, the only thing that I found I could compare him to was a stoner, no worries, no cares, just flow. He was a real piece of work. "Uh," I mumbled, "no thanks. My party days are over."

That made him smile then he said something that made my eyes widen. "Damn. I remember you. You were hot. I used to toss drugs in your drink to see how crazed you could get."

"That was you!" I cried, a bit too loudly since Aspen's eyelashes fluttered.

He leaned closer to me and nudged my shoulder. "Don't you remember me, Naomi? Oh. You would probably remember Ryan better." His form changed briefly, and I covered my free hand with my mouth.

Pulling me out of my shock was Aspen asking, "Omi, where are we, and why is one of your stoner friends here?"

Alvah kept his façade up and smiled with flat, human teeth towards Aspen who just stared at him like he was a freak. Could my life get any weirder?

Chapter 12: Attention Readers!

I'm rewriting this story under a new title. If you have been or are interested in reading this story, please look at its revised version that I will have posted up shortly. It gives better insight into how Naomi meets this mysterious vampire lord. Also, I have changed his name to Draegan. (Just in case you have already read the original rough draft version) My computer lost the original version of the story when it got a virus, so I'm going to try to make this new version much better and detailed. Thank all of you for reading this. If you would like to help me out with writing the new version, please post comments to either the rough draft version or the new version. I appreciate all of my readers, and I will try to make sure that I reply to each one of ya'lls posts.

Awakening the Blood

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