Alexa

By : Kalika997

Viera is dead. The Human government has found out the exsistence of vampires, a portal from the Lantakay realm has opened and on top of that, Alexa has to step up and take Viera's place in the Honour Court's world of vampire politics. Can Alexa live up to all that is expected of her, stop an invasion and bring Viera back from the prison of her former glamour? Only time will tell...

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Alexa : Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Alexa

Flying above them all, scaled wings glistening in the moonlight. Fox-like ears pricked listening for anything suspicious, I am unseen. My tail is long, helping me keep my balance in mid-air, it is also fox-like, always shifting its angle behind me as I fly above enemy camp, my eyes sharper than any eagle's eyes could ever hope to be. The human world smells of bullets and iron from where I am, probably because of my situation.

Just complete this mission, then you are free from our unit.

The general had been lying, that I am sure of. But I have no choice. Human rights don't apply to Vampires. The electro-collar I have on is proof of that.

A shout from below me. The enemy has spotted me flying above them. Their eyes widen in shock, fear and horror at my strangeness as they shine flood-lights up at me. Their Halogen lights blind me for a millionth of a second, but my eyes adjust too fast for them to notice any change. I smirk as they aim their machine guns at me and open fire. No bullets will hit me, for definite.

I guess that's why the general won't free me. I'm too good to just give up. I swerve and dive, too fast for their eyes to follow, their lights barely keeping on me, the bullets missing me by miles. I pull my bow off of my back and nock an arrow onto the string. The arrow finds its target in less than a second. Their panic levels rise from panicky to hysteric, and as more and more die, hysteria turns to terror. I dive and land on my feet in front of their leader, wings still spread, arrow on string, ready to fire.

He looks over me, terrified. None of these men have seen a woman like me before. Their light falls upon me, my blue scaled wings throwing the light back at them even brighter than the light that is shining on them. My tail swings side to side as I look at them. Their shouts and screams have ceased. Now they see what I truly am, if not in my form, in my eyes, red with a ring of gold in each. I smile, showing my sharp canines, which get even sharper.

"Who are you?" The leader chokes out finally.

"The end of your life" I reply softly, watching his eyes widen further, the blood draining from his face.

I let the arrow loose.

*

"Your promise?" I say expectantly as the general smiles hugely at my usual success.

"Promise?" He asks vacantly, obviously too pleased at the night's victory.

"My freedom General." I remind him, my patience wearing thin.

"Oh. That. Right..." He looks troubled, but I know he is acting, "There's a problem with that Alexa, you see, we have been fighting this war for years, and we have not lost a battle since you arrived and-"

"General, there haven't *been* any battles for your men ever since you captured me in the desert." I cut in, I am annoyed now, he tries to lighten everything with cheap, meaningless words, making me murder more and

more humans in a war that has nothing to do with me.

He doesn't reply. I am starting to get angry, something that is dangerous for him. If it wasn't for this damn electro-collar around my neck, he'd be dead and I'd be gone. He is acting as if I don't have things of my own to do, wars of my own to fight, a life of my own to live.

I clear my throat, showing my impatience. When he doesn't react, my patience runs out.

"General, I have served you for nothing. You owe me many lives. Without me, you would have lost this war long ago. The least you can do is give me my freedom back." I snap.

"And that Alexa, is precisely why I cannot grant you freedom from this unit." He replies emotionless, "You are too valuable to us."

"This war is almost won!" I shout, "You will win now anyway! It makes no difference whether I am here or not! The war is over! Free me!"

"I am sorry, but you are property of the government now."

"I have to go back to my own kind! I cannot be owned! I have my own life to live! You can't do this!"

"Oh but I can. The new super-soldier, it cannot be killed, too fast to follow, it can fly, doesn't even need a gun. You and your kind are going to save us billions Alexa."

"No! You don't know what you're dealing with here!" I yell as he turns for the exit.

He ignores me and slams the thick iron door shut, locking multiple locks to keep me in this concrete underground room. My head falls into my hands.

"This is all my fault." I whisper.

Memories flood into my head, showing me the why all this happened.

*

"Don't do this! Please Viera! I beg you! Don't do this!" I plead, on my knees next to my dying sister. My golden eyes staring into her tired ruby red ones, her face grey instead of creamy white. Her golden hair faded and dull, her body unnaturally thin, her cat-like ears flattened against her head, her tail limply hanging off the side of her four-poster bed. I know she will not last until morning.

"I want you to know," She said, her voice faint, her breathing shallow, "you will always be my sister, even if I don't remember this Realm in the human realm, you will always see me, just not glamoured like I usually am. I want to be normal Alexa. I want to live like them." My head falls onto the edge of her bed. I plead her to stay, with no success.

"I want you to have these three gifts." Viera said, her voice fading more and more, "First, my honour court placement, I want you to keep my legacy going in there, keep the system as fair as I did, I know you will not want your eyes to be fully red, so they will have rings of gold in to show you are different. Second, a tail, to help your balance in flight. Third, fox-like ears, to mark you as my eternal sister, even when I'm not there."

I cry harder, knowing she is about to die. "Viera, please don't leave me! I need you here!"

But it is too late. She has gone from the Realm.

The painful memory fades to another more recent one...

*

"Are you sure you will be alright Alexa? The human realm is dangerous and telepathy doesn't work very well there." Damon says, worry clouding his gorgeous violet eyes, "maybe I should come with you, just to be sure."

"Damon I'll be fine, it's just to get some extra flight practice and surveillance of the desert landscape." I reply, smiling assuringly.

"You don't need practice flying Alexa. You're the most accomplished flier in the Realm. You know that." He tries to persuade me to stay.

"Which is exactly why I am the perfect Vampire to get that desert checked out. We have got the rest of that country, we just need that desert mapped accurately."

"Let me come with you. You might get caught by the humans government. Once caught, there's little chance of your escape."

"Damon, you have a bigger chance of getting caught than I do." I smile as I say this, I don't want to lose him.

"I need the practice though..." He says weakly, raising his black feathered wings. He looked like a dark angel. My dark angel. I raise my own blue dragon wings to match his. We do this to show each other we are capable.

"Damon, if you were caught, I couldn't live with myself. Stay here, where you're safe." I look up into his beautiful violet eyes, and he looks into mine.

"You miss her, don't you?" He says after a few minutes. I let my eyes drop, my wings drooping slightly with grief. I nod, a couple of red tears escaping my eyes, leaving tragic red stains down my face. Damon is the only one who truly understands me. He holds me close, stroking my long dark hair. He whispers that everything would be okay, we were in this together, nothing would stop us.

*

A scream jolts me out of my self pitying reminiscing. I stand, not wanting to be caught off guard. An outraged roar echoes through the base.

"WHERE IS SHE?!" A man bellows, "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER?!"

My heart skips a beat. Oh no. This is what the general had meant.

The door is forced open to reveal my dark angel in the doorway. Damon.

"Run! It's a trap!" I scream, but it's too late. So many humans pile on top of Damon, fighting to attach an electro-collar around his neck. I leap towards him, trying to stop them, but the general sees me and smirks as he pushes the button in his hand.

Damon looks up as I fall to the ground, shrieking in agony as the collar shocks me over and over. "*Stop! Please!*" Damon cries when he sees what they are doing to me. "*I'll let you take me! Just stop torturing her! Please!*"

The general pushes the button again and the collar stops. I lie there weeping softly, unable to move.

They hold Damon down and tighten the collar around his neck.

I stare at him through red tears, and he doesn't take his eyes off of mine the whole time.

The soldiers start to leave, when the general holds his hand up to stop them.

"This one," he gestures to Damon, smiling cruelly, "Tried to kill me. I think you all need to see this."

He holds up the button, showing Damon what he was doing. He is going to shock him. He turns to Damon to gloat.

"This is what happens when you step out of line." The General says mockingly. He looks over at me and grins. He pushes the button.

Damon's collar shocks him, and Damon stiffens, but doesn't make a sound. He sits there and takes it, which I knew was extremely hard, as Vampires are *very* sensitive to electricity. The General's smile doesn't falter though, it is almost like he was expecting this to happen.

"Fine. Obviously this punishment is not harsh enough. Hmm..." The general pretends to think for a moment and pushes the button again, stopping Damon's collar.

He turns two dials on the remote. I cower, knowing what is going to happen. The first dial was to turn the voltage up, the other to change which collar it would affect. And sure enough, when he pushes the button, my collar shocks me. Damon's expression turns from careful control to absolute terror, as my screams intensify, due to the General turning the voltage up more and more.

"Stop it! Stop!" Damon yells, sprinting over to me.

"I think he's learned his lesson, don't you boys?" The General sneers. He slowly pushes the button, just to prolong my suffering.

They walk out and lock the door.

I weep quietly, trying to conceal my suffering from Damon. But he knows me better than anyone. "Alexa, I am so sorry. I should have known, I should have come with you in the beginning."

"No," I whisper, tears making my voice crack, "We both would have been caught. This is my fault. I'm sorry Damon."

He gently pulls me up and holds me close. We stay like that for hours, just staying close to each other. Neither of us want to imagine what they will make us do next. I have an idea though. Using our combined strengths and speed, the general is probably going to make us slaughter the rest of the humans enemies. But what the general doesn't know is that Damon is not as good at flying as I am and he cannot keep up the same pace as I can for long, making him an easier target. He cannot dodge bullets either, so he is at serious risk. If we were not careful, Damon would fall right out of the sky, right into the enemy camp.

If I were to tell the general, he would not listen. This I know for sure. I also know that calling for help using telepathy will be pointless. Damon would be the only person to hear me. I could use my powers, but chances were the general would shock me before I could get very far. Snapping the collar would set it off at full voltage, which would weaken us enough to put another, stronger one on us and leave us unable to move for days. If we kill the general, there are government officials ready to take his place with their own controls for the collars. Escape is almost impossible.

Damon reads my thoughts and nods. We have no choice but to follow their orders. For now.

You can only keep a vampire under your control for so long. We are proud creatures and hold pride and honour above anything else. That, and I don't see any blood being given to us any time soon. Bloodlust will win out above electric threats sooner or later. We would drink from the enemies, but our kind believes in enemies having tainted blood, impossible to drink from.

Damon's eyes tighten as he realises how long its been since I last drank. I have been held captive here for over a month, and have not had one drop of blood. My lack of resistance to electricity is partly because my lack of blood. He is strong now, but in a couple of days, it will start to take its toll on him. I am already weak, no human is a match for me, but bullets are more likely to hit me now. My wings are getting dull, the many shades of blue and silver fading slightly, my long dark hair losing its shine and my body has begun to cramp and ache all over, partly the effects of the electro-collar, but mostly the lack of blood.

The door flies open and the general stands there, controller in plain sight, uniform cleaner than clean. We stand, spreading our wings threateningly. He is not phased and says, "You have one hour until sundown. You are going to finish off the enemy for good. One hour. Do *not* disappoint me." Not waiting for a response, he walks out, slamming the door behind him.

"Weapons?" Damon asks.

"They do not supply us with anything." I said, walking over to my bow.

"So what do I use then?" He asks, holding up his sword, which would take him too close to the enemy

"You won't," I say firmly, looking him straight in the eye, "I will do this, you will stay high and hidden. If anything happened to you, I would die. I can't risk it. You're not fast enough to dodge their bullets."

"And you're not exactly in good shape Alexa." He replies softly, worry ruling his face.

"I'm fine." I retort, snatching up my quiver full of arrows and slinging it onto my back, it is shaped to go between my wings. My bow joins my quiver and I sheath my sword and hunting knife.

Damon draws his sword and checks it over. He re-sheaths it and counts his throwing knives.

"You're going to get killed without me Alexa. I'm helping to end this whether you like it or not." He grabs me from behind and spins me round to face him. "We're in this together now. Don't change that by getting yourself killed." I think for a moment.

"No hand to hand combat." I say finally, "Stick to your throwing knives and stay away from the lights and the ground."

He smiled dazzlingly and said "Since when have I ever done as I'm told?"

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Alexa

Their searchlights are on full blast as we struggle to keep out of sight. They know about me, but not about Damon. Darting left and right, constantly moving we assess the layout below us. The bunkers and tents are set up at three foot intervals, making it hard to target them all at once. Damon has drawn his first throwing knife and my bow has an arrow nocked and ready to fire. He swings his body down, his wings holding him in an upright position, he won't be able to hold himself like that for long, much less keep up the pace I am about to fly at. I hold my hand up, telling him to wait for my signal. I take a deep breath and dive, folding my wings in close to pick up speed, and let an arrow loose at the first searchlight. I spread my wings and pull up, just in time to avoid the explosion caused by the light. My arrow flies back up, thrown out by the blast. I catch it and renock it to my bow, aiming it at a searchlight operator, badly burned and bleeding. I put him out of his misery, whispering a prayer to the great Vampire goddess, begging for forgiveness. The explosion has sent the enemy camp into a frenzy, one searchlight finds Damon, so I fly through the beam of light, distracting them so it follows me and give Damon a chance to move.

For the first time in this world, I have to use my Powers, to wipe out as many enemies as I can quickly. It's risky, as if the general hears about what I can do and Damon's different Power, he will never let us free. It's bad enough we are how we are. With our Powers kept secret, we have a chance of escape.

I put my bow back with my quiver and make my hands into fists. I concentrate for a moment then unleash a huge burst of fire. The superheated flames engulf most of the enemy camp, killing any enemies in tents, and destroying their guns and ammunition. As I do this, my energy gives out. I begin to plummet towards the ground. I concentrate and lift my hand to the sky. I let a stream of violet fire burst upwards. Damon's signal. He dives, and grabs the strap of my quiver, giving me a moment to right myself. I nudge him with my wing, and he lets go, pulling up but keeping his eyes on me as I risk everything. I carry on diving, unsure of my strength and pull up inches from the ground so I can land and carry on running. I stumble and fall to my knees, but am up and sprinting along again within a couple of seconds. I draw my sword with my right hand and stretch out my left. I make the wind blow harder than gale-force, knocking any survivors to the ground.

"Drop any remaining weapons or die!" I shout, spreading my wings.

"DIE EVIL DEMON!" A man shrieks from behind me, I turn just in time to see a man holding a gun. Not just any gun, a gun with iron bullets. Iron burns. A lot.

He pulls the trigger and I jump to the side. The bullet misses my heart but catches my arm. The soldier laughs as I cry out and drop to my knees, trying to pull out the bullet.

He aims again. With me on my knees, he won't miss my heart or head.

A blade bursts through his stomach and twists. It slides out and the soldier falls, choking. There is nothing there but a slight flicker in the air. Damon appears, he had used his invisibility spell to save my life. I grimace, still trying to dig the burning bullet from my arm. My flesh will not heal around it. I yank it out, gasping as it burns my hand. I melt the cursed thing by throwing it into the remaining fire. Damon runs to me and heals my arm in seconds.

I turn to the remaining soldiers and Damon turns invisible again, probably to make them nervous.

"Any other rebels or are we going to follow Alexa back to camp?" I say mockingly.

The soldiers put their hands on their heads and get up slowly, looking around at the destruction I've caused.

"Good." I mutter, holding my hand out. They flinch, expecting more fire, but I shoot water at the fire, putting it out and making sure nothing remained of my Power. "Now, when we get back, don't breathe a word of what my partner and I can do, or those words shall be your last." They nod, and I know they are being truthful. They know I am not joking when I say I will kill them. "Follow." I shout and leap up into the air, making fireballs in my hands so the prisoners could see where I am.

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The general is shocked when he sees the destruction of the enemy camp. He had commanded us to take him there and had threatened us until we agreed. We had flown, he had driven.

"Who did all this?" He cried gleefully, looking at the charred remains of tents, soldiers and weapon parts.

"The halogen lights blew up" I said quickly, which was partly true, "They started a fire."

"A halogen searchlight induced fire wouldn't be hot enough to melt tanks and guns Alexa." He replied threateningly.

"Well that's what happened general," Damon snapped.

The general did nothing except reach into his pocket, to remind us he was the one who could shock us.

"The war is over now general. Is there any possibility-" I begin

"No." The general says shortly. "As I said before Alexa, you are property of the government now. Human rights don't apply to... whatever you are."

"We're vampires general. And we are getting annoyed. We are not animals, dumb and easy to manipulate. We are intelligent and more complex than you humans." I growl

"And yet you are in *my* control," The general sneers, "Not so intelligent now are we?"

"Not for long general," Damon says bluntly, "Alexa is high up in our political system. She was meant to return to our Realm three weeks ago. I was sent to find her. We have less than two weeks until they send an entire army out to retrieve us. Then your sneering head will no longer be connected to the rest of you."

The general is furious. "Back to base. *NOW!*" he barks. We look at each other and grin, gleeful at his discomfort. Then we leap up and beat our powerful wings, soaring in the clouds, keeping in the generals sight though, to ensure he doesn't shock us with the cursed collars.

Our happiness is short-lived though, because as soon as we get back to base, we are locked in our room, which is later re-enforced with thick iron plates. We can't go anywhere near the walls, and the whole room stinks of the cold biting iron. Our weapons are confiscated and kept in an iron safe the other side of the base. The general is in a state of panic. His 'Super-Soldiers' are going to disappear back to their own Realm and he can't take it. Without my bow, I feel defenceless. The lack of blood is getting to me and I feel weak, desperate. I am on the verge of passing out when the general walks in, still fuming. I lunge for him, biting into his neck, needing relief from the horrible cramps tearing me apart from the inside. He shoves me off of him, disgusted, and kicks me again and again, until Damon throws him away from me and carries me to the centre of the room, away from the iron walls, and spreads his wings, crouching defensively, baring his fangs. The general is

furious but doesn't shock us. He knows the iron is punishment enough. His hand on his neck, he slams the door and locks it securely.

I feel wretched, spasms of pain are racking my body. I need relief from this hell.

Damon doesn't touch me. He knows even the slightest brush of a touch will intensify the pain beyond even the pain of iron. In the state I'm in, I could run to an iron wall and embrace it and it would still be less painful than this. Damon feels helpless. I know this because I can read his emotions. As I writhe in pain, my mind is calmer than my body.

You don't have to watch this. I tell him, using telepathy

I do. This is something you cannot go through alone.

I can bear it. I just can't bear having to put you through this.

I'm not turning away Alexa.

I don't want you to watch this.

You can take some of my blood you know.

Damon, you know I can't do that.

You could. You wouldn't hurt me.

I refuse to take your blood Damon. It would kill you. I don't want to be a murderer.

You wouldn't drain me.

He honestly believes I won't drain him? Has he *seen* my eyes? An honour court member has to drain who or what they drink from, they have no choice, they cannot stop. I may have a ring of my old self in my eyes and soul, but Viera has left me her position, and her curse to match it.

He lowers his head at my thoughts.

I can't let you die Alexa. His mental voice moans.

I cry out as the most painful spasm yet rips its way through me. Red tears fill his violet eyes as he watches me suffer.

Alexa, PLEASE!

I shake my head and try and sit up. He puts his hand out and stops me. But I force myself to sit up. I have a plan in my head. He reads it and shock fills his features.

"Don't you dare!" he whispers.

But before I can rip off the collar to set off the electric shocks, (which wouldn't affect me in the state I'm in), the iron door comes flying at us. I stop it with the last of my Power energy, blowing the strongest gale-force wind at it I can muster, it drops to the ground an inch from us. In the doorway, a blonde vampire with cat-like

ears and a cat-like tail. Her nostrils are flared, her eyes blazing at the state we're in, the iron walls, the fact we have no weapons, the lack of blood.

"What the hell?!" She cries, absolutely horrified at what the general had done. "Where are your weapons? When did you last drink?!"

"Our weapons were taken from us," Damon began, "I last drank two weeks ago, Alexa drank six weeks ago."

The vampire is beyond fury, beyond shock. She turns to me. "Can you stand?"
I nod and struggle to my feet, spreading my wings slightly to keep my balance.

"Lets get out of here." She says.

"We can't," I whisper, terrified of what will happen the moment we cross the door threshold.

"Why not?" Asks our rescuer

I pointed to the electro-collar around my neck, "If we cross that threshold without permission from that general, these collars shock us with high voltage electricity."

The blonde vampire shrieks with fury. She has a murderous glint in her eye and I know that if the general were to walk down the corridor now, he would be in pieces on the floor within seconds.

"If we try to take them off, they shock us with such high voltage, we would be rendered helpless for weeks." Damon adds.

"We could lure the general here and get that controller off of him," I offer, "If we use our Powers and show him that we are stronger and more useful than he thought, he will be distracted long enough for us to pin him, and as long as he can't reach the controller, we should be able to turn these damn things off and get them off!"

"That is actually a pretty good idea!" the blonde exclaims. Another strong spasm of pain engulfs me and I gasp, falling to my knees. Damon helps me up and the blonde is full of fury.

"You need blood to make this plan work Alexa. How are you going to use your Powers if you have no life essence to make them work?" Damon asks me gently. I just try not to cry.

The blonde says, "Hold on. I'll be right back." She flits away silently. She will not be caught off guard, she is too alert. She returns minutes later with an unconscious soldier, one of the soldiers that had grabbed Damon and forced that collar on him. "Drink." She ordered. "You too." She looks pointedly at Damon, as do I, not wanting to if he doesn't.

He reads my thoughts and agrees.

"I'll keep watch," The blonde says, walking out of the room. We look at each other and fall upon the evil soldier. We;re lucky his blood issn't tainted by his evil deeds. We finish draining him as the blonde walks back in. Her timing really is superb. Without a word, she picks up the body and starts to walk away with it, but I stop her.

"Give it here," I say, strength building rapidly. She hands the body to me and I set it on the floor in front of me. I make a fist and concentrate. I let loose the most powerful stream of fire I have ever made, letting all the anger and hate go into it. The flame is red and gold, and reduces the body to a tiny pile of ash in seconds. I

then create a breeze to blow them away, they won't be found again.

"That saved digging and burying," The blonde mutters, smiling slightly. She reminds me of Viera, and it hurts.

"I think you should hide now," I say, " Lets get this over and done with." Damon and the blonde agree and she walks away to hide nearby. I spread my wings carefully, not letting them touch the iron walls. I shout for the general, saying I have something he may want to see. He walks in cautiously, noting the door on the floor instead of in the door-frame.

"What's going on?" He says in a guarded tone, the controller in his hand.

"We don't just fly and dodge bullets." I say, "We are more dangerous than we already seem." I nod to Damon and he disappears.

"Where did he go?!" the general barks, finger twitching on the button.

"I am still here," Damon's voice says from thin air, "I know a spell which makes me invisible."

The general's eyes widen and the blonde vampire creeps in through the doorway.

"My Power is very different," I say, trying to keep his attention in case he gets wise and kills us all. "My Power is the manipulation of all Elements, Earth, Air, Fire, Life, Water and Spirit." The blonde gets a little closer.

I create a fireball in each hand and throw them up into the air, creating patterns in the air, which I blow away with the wind. Water is easy, I point to the ground and it appears around us, like a mini ocean, which disappears to reveal plants and foliage, which vanish when I stop.

"What about Spirit?" he asks, very intrigued, and completely distracted.

"One example of Spirit is seeing into the future." The blonde is almost right behind him now, "And yours contains a very early death." The blonde grabs the controller, and disables the collars. The general turns to see her crush the controller in her hand. He turns back to me and Damon, and we snap the collars off. I incinerate mine in my hand. The general finally realises what he's dealing with. Three angry, strong, blood-thirsty vampires, circling him.

"This one," I begin, echoing the general's words when Damon was caught, "Tried to kill us. I think we all want to do this." I sneer at the helpless, terrified human general.

"Is there any chance you will let me leave with my life?" The general pleads.

"No." Damon says shortly.

One, Two, Three. We lunge, the general screams, and we take our revenge slowly.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Alexa

My alarm disc goes off, waking me up. I snap it and throw it in the bin. It has been three days since we escaped from the human army's base and I have been drinking excessive amounts of blood. Probably to build my strength up to full again. Damon has been quiet ever since we got back, and has been insisting on making me drink. I decide to talk to him today. But when I go downstairs, he is nowhere to be found. I search the huge house from top to bottom, but find nothing. Lastly, I walk into the kitchen and spot a small note on the counter. All it says is:

'Gone to flying practice in the training arena, remember to drink!!!'

Helpful. I wonder...

I make myself some toast, remembering what Viera used to do at breakfast, and smile. I sit in my usual seat, facing Viera's. It makes my heart ache to see it empty, but it's what she chose. She had committed Zenkantha, which is the giving up of one's Vampire self, giving the soul no choice but to turn into its glamour form and go to the Human Realm. So I do still see her, but only when I go to the Human Realm, at the human school I have to attend until I am seventeen. I wear a toned-down version of myself for a glamour, but it's not very strong. In the sunlight, depending on how strong it is, you can see my true self a little. My glamour eyes are brown, but sunlight turns them bright, glistening gold. My fox-like ears don't show up clearly, but you can see them slightly, and they are very clear in my shadow. My wings are quite easy to hide, I just keep them under my clothes there, but they show up. My tail is similar to my ears, in that you can see something, but not very well, unless you look at my shadow.

It's risky doing that in the Human Realm, but I need to be there for Viera.

I smirk as I think of what she would say right now if she saw me eating so little. I close my eyes and picture her scowl as she would stalk into the kitchen and grab a load of food, setting it in front of me and forcing me to eat. For a second, just a second, I forget that she is gone and go to look up at her and chuckle. But the laughter dies in my throat at the empty space above me. I sigh and leave the dining room, too disheartened to eat, leaving my toast on the table. I go to the living room to find Nix, Viera's adopted daughter.

"Hi Nix." I say quietly. She turns and smiles a little, her ice-blue eyes glowing as if lit from the inside. She gets up and hugs me. She is four years old, or looks it anyway; her long black hair matching her wolf-like ears and tail, her skin is creamy ivory like mine. Vampire ages are hard to guess, as our physical ages are completely different to our true ages.

"Hi Aunt Alexa."

"I told you Snowflake, call me Alexa." I smile, using her nickname. Nix means Snow in Latin, which is fitting as she comes from the mountains of the north. She smiles and nods. "Would you like to go to the training arena?" I ask, knowing it would take our minds off of the empty space in our lives.

"Okay." She says quietly, running off to get her arrows while I grab her sword, my weapons already at hand.

We are out of the door within two minutes, and stop by the Honour Court on the way, to check the situation and get Nix's weekly check over with. Vladimir looks at Nix with sad eyes as he checks her mind for any instability or depression. She is fine, but he watches us leave with worried eyes. Nix's real mother had died to

save her daughter from the Lantakay that attacked their village in the northern mountains, going weeks without sustenance, dragging herself all the way to the city I live in, dying on our garden wall to get her daughter to us. Viera had found her and adopted her, wanting to give her a normal life. But when Jacques disappeared in the northern mountains, she had lost all sense of reality, and eventually, she had decided to end it all, reverting to the simplicity of a human's life, killing off her vampire side, going into her glamour. I could bring her back, but I don't know how yet, I need to get to a library and read it up. Nix and I head over to the training arena, and spot Damon, just managing to pull out of a dive, but nearly breaking his ankle landing.

"Alexa!" he calls, Nix giggles but we act as if we had not seen his bad landing.

"Hi Damon!" I smile as he approaches, his black hair is windswept, his eyes bright. "I was just going to help Nix with her training."

"I'll help if you want," He says lightly, "I have a couple of little *tricks* I can teach her!" He winks as he says this, and I know he's going to teach her how to trip her opponent up without getting caught or something. I roll my eyes and we walk to the sword fighting area. We teach her to parry and defend, something Viera should be doing right now. She should be here for her daughter, not going round the human realm living the easy life. No demons to fight, no punishments to carry out, no Honour Court, no worries of being discovered and exposed as a vampire, no duties, no blood drinking, no clue what a Kalenta fruit is, let alone having to eat them to avoid madness and death, the list goes on. All she has to worry about is what homework she's got to do for the next day, what her friends think of her, petty little things that won't matter in the long run. My temper flares as I think this, and my sadness threatens to engulf me, but I force it down, I need to be there for Damon, Nix and the rest of the Realm.

"Heads up Alexa!" Damon shouts as his hand whips out towards me. An object comes flying at me and I catch it reflexively and find myself clutching a bottle of fresh blood.

"Damon...!" I whine.

"You're drinking it, end of story!" He says firmly, looking straight into my eyes, even though little Nix is 'duelling' a dummy under his supervision.

I sigh, roll my eyes and open the bottle. He waits until I'm halfway through it before turning back to Nix and giving her pointers. I laugh as she attempts to roll and stab the dummy and fails dramatically. She sulks and stabs her sword into the dummy and leaves it there. She walks off and sits on the wall, crossing her arms and huffing melodramatically.

I smile, go over to her and sit next to her. She ignores me, her full red lips in a hugely exaggerated pout.

"Sulking doesn't get you trained you know!" I chuckle and she almost smiles, but settles back into a sulk. I pull an arrow out of my quiver and poke her gently, she squeals, grinning, then realises what I did. "See? You can smile!" I laugh and she can't help but join in. I take her tiny hand in mine and lead her to the shooting range. "Now let's see what your aim is like."

*

It's getting dark by the time we get home, Nix is so tired, you can practically see her internal struggle to stay awake. Damon carries her to her room, which used to be Viera and Jacques' room. Jacques returned too late for Viera, and was so angry and heartbroken that he left the house, unable to cope with the strong presence she left behind. In a way, I feel the same. Every room and corridor has yet another memory to plague me with, it's a wonder I haven't gone mad yet.

I sigh and sit on the sofa, Damon joins me after a while, and we say hardly a word. Before long, we decide to call it a night, back to the Human Realm for school tomorrow for me, another long day with nobody but Nix to talk to for him. Oh fun. I'm almost dreading tomorrow, seeing the glamour of Viera without the vampire underneath, her new green eyes and toned down voice. It's so depressing! But I have to be there for her, just in case.

And until I work out how to bring her back as a full vampire and not a half, that's how it's got to stay. I've looked through so many books it isn't even funny, but still haven't found the right way to do it. I lie down on the sofa, exhausted, and try to settle into sleep. When I finally drift off, visions plague me.

Another blow to the back of my head, and I cough up blood. "I'm sorry!" I wail, and am answered with another blow. "I did my best, please, no more!" But an even harder hit is my only answer.

"*You failed, Onyx, and you must be punished." My master growls above me, lifting the weapon yet again. I coil into a ball and try to shield my head with my hands, but the shackles barely allow me to cover my face. The chains tighten, and I stare at my furious master like a mouse stares into a cobra's eyes before it eats it.*

"*Please! I'll do better! I promise, PLEASE!" I beg and scream, but it is no use, he beats me and beats me, then leaves me half dead in the chamber to think about my mistakes.*

I try to wake up, but another vision drags my consciousness down again before I can even cry out.

This time, I can't afford to mess up, he'll kill me as slowly and painfully as he can if I do. My heart pounds at the thought of this next task, they're so strong and fast, and if they catch me, I'm done for. I take a shallow, ragged breath and shake my chains a little, hoping to ease them a little on my wrists, but if anything, the pain increases. I remember the last girl who failed five tasks in a row, he killed her and made us all watch, the memory still haunts me to this day. This is my fifth, and if I fail this, he'll increase the level of torture and humiliation as a lesson to everyone else.

The snow is so cold on my bare feet, but right now, I have more important things to worry about. I've a knife in my hand, and the house isn't far away now, maybe twenty paces away. Just a knife, against those creatures! What was he thinking?! There it is, I can hear them inside, laughing and joking, at ease with each other.

I'd run away now if I could, try to disappear from the Realm, but the chains are enchanted, and I have no choice, it's do the job or die. I raise my pitiful weapon and bang on the door. It goes dead quiet in there, and I hear movement. The first opens the door, and I falter, he's at least 6ft tall, maybe even taller, and well muscled. His eyes are bright red, and his hair looks like fire, which is fitting as his wings are made of flickering flame. He looks angry and intimidating, and I steel myself for the worst.

"I'm so sorry," I whisper, "but it's you or me." And stab the knife into his abdomen, yank it out and stab him again, and again. The other yells in horror and shock and runs over to his fallen companion. This one has silvery eyes and hair, with matching ears and a tail, and I let the knife fly at him. It's made of iron, and burns him when it buries itself in his throat. "I'm so sorry!" I sob at the two dying vampires before fleeing the area, horrified at what I've done, but glad I'm not going to be brutally murdered by my master.

I wake, screaming, as the dying thoughts of Prince Tonla explode into my mind. It's beyond terrible, I can feel every burning wound, and his utter bewilderment, it's one of the most horrific things I've ever experienced. I can't keep my consciousness from his, my mind keeps falling back into his dying thoughts as though it is being pulled in by an unseen force.

"Alexa, what the hell?!" Damon roars, sprinting into the room. I realise I've fallen off the sofa and am sitting on the red and gold carpet of the living room, still screaming. It's not one long scream either, it;s a volley of screams in quick succession of each other. I manage to stop and take deep, gasping breaths, before I can stop myself I'm sobbing, and try to make sense of Tonla's scrambled thoughts. They're becoming so incoherent, and the last thing I make out before his soul leaves the Realm, is his confused question to no one in particular: *Why?*.

"Prince Tonla's dead!" I cry, to Damon's shock and horror, "I saw it, I saw who did it!"

*

"Princess Thorn, you're not making any sense!" Prince Vladimir cries, interrupting me yet again. My new title of 'princess' annoys me, but I can't exactly turn around and tell them not to call me that, it's regulation.

"Vladimir, I have visions, present or future, and I saw who killed Prince Tonla!" I say for the third time. "A woman called Onyx was forced to murder him, she used an iron knife to kill him and Etengi. She was chained up hand and foot, so she could move but was still hindered, it was sheer desperation and their complete surprise that caused her to win the fight."

"From what perspective did you see this woman?" He asks, his eyes fixed on me.

"I could read her emotions and thoughts, but I was standing beside her, like a shadow."

"Interesting.. Do you know why or how she was forced to do this?"

"Yes, her master, I don't know his name, beat her senseless because she failed her last task, and if she or the other women who work for him fail five tasks in a row, he tortures them to death in front of everybody else. This was her fifth task, and she managed not to fail, so she will still be alive." Vladimir looks troubled.

"The late Princess Flame failed to stop a man from escaping us once, and he would happily do the cruelties described by you, oh... what *was* his name..."

"Malachy Donner, sir." Damon says, and I agree.

Vladimir begins to pace back and forth along, his footsteps silent on the stone floor. "Ah, yes, forgive me, I am becoming rather forgetful as of late." He says, still pacing. I stretch and shake out my wings before folding them back into a comfortable position.

Vladimir's head snaps up, it seems he's struck by an idea. "Alexa, would you be willing to track this Onyx down? You're the most accomplished flier in the Realm-"

"Prince Vladimir, she got captured in her last mission! What if that happens with this one?! You can't possibly be thinking of sending her to a place where she could either be enslaved or murdered!" Damon shouts, interrupting him, something nobody, *nobody*, has ever done. I stare at him, openly shocked, and dare myself to peek at Vladimir's reaction, expecting him to be beyond angry, expecting to have to plead for Damon's sake. However, there is no anger in his face, surprise, yes, but no anger. Instead, there is humour.

"My good man, you don't really think I'm going to send her without an escort do you?" He laughs, but Damon does not look amused. "I'll send Demios or perhaps Prince Cole with her!" Damon looks ready to argue, but a quick sweep of my wing keeps him silent. For now.

"Prince Vladimir, I do not think it is necessary to send an escort. So long as I am in the vampire Realm, I can outfly and outfight anything and anyone in my path." I say confidently, but Damon hisses quietly at me. I nudge him with my wing, but he does not heed my warning.

"Prince, I may not be an Honour Court member, and I may not be a warrior of the standard Demios is, but I am willing to go as her guide and protector. After all," He looks at me, "She is more important to me than anything." This is so not the time Damon! I think, half flattered, half annoyed. The other Princes are evaluating my influence as a member of the Honour Court and if I am portrayed as a weak woman, I will never be taken seriously. A serious amount of stubbornness and assurance rushes through me as I make my final decision.

"I will leave alone, in one day's time. If I need assistance, I will call for it." I tell them both decisively, and bid the stunned Princes goodbye before dismissing myself.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Alexa

"Alexa, please! Let me go with you, you can't possibly risk getting captured again!" Damon begs, following me around the armoury as I prepare my weapons. "You've made your point, I shouldn't have made you look weak, and I'm sorry, I can't stress that enough! I'm sorry! But seriously, this is like suicide! You can't expect your luck to hold out forever!" He puts his hand on mine as I am polishing my sword. "Please, I'm begging you, if you really have to go, let me come with you." His violet eyes meet mine, I can see the sheer desperation in them, and the very slight flinch as they fix on my red and gold ones. I know how he feels about the red, he hates it, he hates that Viera has left me her problems, and most of her eye colour. I've seen his nightmares as he's slept, of me turning out just like my sister, leaving him utterly alone in the world.

"Damon, I have to go. Besides, I'll be in this realm, I can take anything." I say in earnest. He doesn't believe me, he's trying to, I can see the internal war in his eyes, but still he pleads.

"Alexa," He whispers, "please don't do this." I almost cry at the look of pure terror on his face, but pull myself together.

"Damon, I have no choice. I have to go, and to prove myself, I must go alone." As I say this, a part of me tells me not to care what they think, and to just let Damon come along. I try and ignore that part, until it reminds me that I would never have done it alone before Viera died. Why isolate myself from him? What is the sense in it?

"Alexa, the thought of losing you again.. it's tearing me up just thinking about it! I'm coming with you even if you tell me to stay." He vows, holding my gaze. I try to resist him, but know he means it, I can't win. I let my eyes drop and carry on polishing my sword. "And before you try using Nix as an excuse to make me stay behind, I've managed to get Prince Sharkin to look after her, you know how good he is with kids." he says, picking up several throwing knives.

I sigh, dread roiling around inside me, something's going to go wrong, I just know it. I sheathe my sword, grab my bow, load my quiver with as many arrows as it will carry, and pick up a hunting knife as an afterthought. I test the string on my bow and put on my wrist guard to be sure.

Damon takes me into his arms and holds me close a moment, I know he can sense my anxiety. "It's going to be okay, I promise." He whispers in my ear, and kisses the top of my head before taking my hand and walking with me out of the house. We do a last minute check of our weapons before grabbing a Kalenta fruit each and taking to the skies. I sense someone watching us, but cast that thought aside, after all, who is there to watch us?

The red sun in the sky catches my blue scales, making them glitter as I fly. Damon bats me with his wing and dives, laughing. I follow, trying to do the same, but he's getting good at evasive manoeuvres, though not as good as I am. I manage to dive, bump my wing against his, and pull up and away before he can get his revenge. He manages to grab me from behind and I let him think he's winning as he pulls me into a spiral dive, and I even let him think I'm scared, by squealing a bit, but then I spread my wings wide and pull up, then I break free and before he can react, I pin his wings and pull mine in, putting us into a seemingly uncontrollable freefall. He swears, but trusts me, and about a metre from the ground, I take control once more, pull up to a safe height, and let him control his own flight. He doesn't try anything else, and I laugh.

"Does this mean I win?" I call.

"Hmmm, I'll have to get back to you on that!" He chuckles, and we fly in silence for a while. We are heading north, not as far as the mountains, but to about the location of Prince Tonla's death. The howling of the wind in our ears is deafening this far north, so we use telepathy to communicate instead.

So, any luck on finding a way to bring Viera back as she was? Damon asks.

Unfortunately not, every book I've read just says little snippets about the amount of venom you have to inject for certain circumstances, but it warns that only half vampires can be made or brought back that way, so there's got *to be something else involved!*

Are you sure that Viera being a half vampire would be that bad?

Of course it would be! She wouldn't be able to take back her title or her Honour Court placement, leaving me stuck in there! I hate it, Damon, I've already had to execute three criminals, it's horrible, they plead and beg for their lives, and I hate being the one to have to, well, kill them.

Ah, I didn't think about that, sorry.

Don't worry about it. We are silent for a while, just flying north. It begins to get cold, which is bad for my wings, as they are dragon wings, and dragons are cold blooded. They get a little resistant to my demands, but I push on stubbornly, determined not to stick around in the North for long, just to get the mission over and done with.

Be careful there, you don't want to damage your wings. Damon warns me, sensing my discomfort, and slows a little for my sake, but I am sure to make it clear that slowly freezing wings are not going to slow me down, I've had worse than this.

*

"I told you so." Damon mutters, dumping his pile of wood on the snowy ground.

"I know, I know, stop rubbing it in!" I moan, trying to hold back tears as my aching, frozen wings give an uncontrollable spasm of movement to try and warm themselves. He looks pointedly at me and I light the fire for him, before curling up on the snow, a small, pained whine escaping me as my wings refuse to fold against my back. Damon sighs and heals the worst of the damage, but he can't do anything about the temperature. Normally I'd set myself or my wings on fire to warm them, but in the North, that's like wrapping yourself in lights and holding up a giant sign saying 'EASY TARGET' in big red letters. So really, it's pretty much a 'suck it up' attitude from here on out.

It's getting dark, but we keep the fire going for a while, trying to warm up. There is one point where my wings hurt so much I nearly put them into the campfire, but Damon stops me before I cause them more damage. He pulls me close as the fire burns down, and tries his best to keep my wings from freezing through the rest of the night. He hums a tune I recognise, it's an old song, he plays it on the piano at home. I've always loved that song, every so often I'd even be lucky enough to hear him sing it along with the piano. I've tried learning it of course, but it isn't the same when I sing it. He hums it for quite a while, while the glowing embers of the fire go out in the snow that has started to fall, I close my eyes and let the song play in my head as well as in Damon's voice. Though I'm freezing cold, we're in the middle of nowhere, at least a day's flight away from any civilisation, and my wings hurt like hell, I'd love it if this moment could last for longer than what's left of tonight. Damon seems to agree, and soon his song changes into a song we both remember well, the song I was playing when he proposed to me. It was the day before the battle with the paranormals...

"Damon, stop that!" I laugh as he presses the highest key of the piano again. I'm trying to play something, and he keeps distracting me.

"Why? I think it adds a certain depth to the song." He chuckles, and does it again.

"If by depth you mean extra-annoying-note-played-by-my-cheeky-boyfriend, then sure, why not?" I grin, and he laughs as I try to start the song again. Opening part... shifting down an octave for the verse... back up again- one of the notes makes a funny noise as I hit it. I hit it again, with the same result, it sounds like there's something wrong with string. Damon looks slightly nervous as I open the piano to find what's wrong. "Could you hit that note again for me, please?" I ask him, and he hits the highest note, smirking. "Damon, you know which one I mean." He chuckles and plays the note I need. I find the string has something on it, something silver. "What..?" I mutter, picking it up. I turn to see Damon smiling sheepishly at me, and I have to look at it twice to see why. It's a silver vine bracelet, with little emerald leaves, a traditional proposal bracelet. It has a sticky note on it too, saying, 'Alexa Kali May Thorn, will you do me the honour?'

"So, um, what do you say?" he asks, unable to maintain eye contact. He's nervousness is a lot more obvious now, and I gasp as I realise what he's asking me.

"Oh my god Damon, really?" I can't believe it! He nods, managing to look into my eyes. I gasp again, smiling, and nod vigorously, beyond words. His eyes light up like Yule tree lights and he hugs me tight before fastening the delicate bracelet around my wrist, where it will stay for the rest of my life. I've never been so happy.

As the memory ends, we both smile at each other, glad for that decision. My wings spasm and a sharp pain shoots through them, but I ignore it. Damon notices and sighs, but knows there is nothing he can do. As a distraction for him, I think back to my human days, and dredge up a song from one of my old favourite bands, Paramore. I hum it for a while, and grin at his surprise at hearing a song he doesn't recognise. He's heard and played every song ever wrote in this realm, so I know I've definitely sparked his interest.

"Sing it to me?" He asks, completely distracted and suitably entranced. I laugh, and start singing it for him. I get to the second chorus and he starts to sing along, but only in the chorus, his perfect memory helping him for that part.

I sing songs from my old favourite bands for him long into the night, until the first streaks of dawn begin to light the sky. I know my mistake now, he's going to ask me to sing him every song I can remember from the Human Realm, just for new material. I swear, I'm going to have to get him an MP3 player or something to entertain him. Just before the sun rises fully, we kick dirt and snow over the ashes of our camp fire, and take to the skies, flying slightly slower than yesterday, so as not to strain my wings, which are aching already.

As is my way, I ignore my discomfort and decide to mess about as usual. I dive when Damon is not looking and grab a couple handfuls of snow, pack them together into a snowball, and lob it at him. It hits him in the back of the head and explodes with a smacking sound; he whips round and spots me laughing, scowls playfully and dives down for his own snowball. I'm faster and manage to get him in the face. He splutters, takes aim as I rocket skyward, and throws it as hard as he can. It hits my wing and I smirk at him, holding up a snowball I picked up before I took off, I take meticulous aim and hit him, once again, square in the face. Laughing, he grabs yet more snow and flies up to me, so I dive, get a snowball and throw it. He manages to dodge another splat in the face, but gets it in the shoulder. He dives, but pulls up short as I scoop up more snow, and to my surprise, he drops all the snowballs he has in his hands, making me pause for a split second, which is all he needs to snap his wings to his sides and dive as fast as he can go. I can't get out of the way in time and he takes me down into a snowdrift, rolling over and over in the snow to soften the impact of our crash-landing; he rolls to his feet, leaving me lying, slightly dizzy, in the snow. He laughs as he looks down at

my surprise and slight annoyance. He looks so funny with snow in his hair, and I laugh with him. He beats his wings, showering melting snow all over me, and helps me up. As revenge, I shake my hair out as violently as I can, smiling smugly as the melted snow gets all over him.

"Shouldn't we be getting on with the mission?" He chuckles as I dust myself down. I grumble half-heartedly, I hate Honour Court missions, and I don't want to stop messing around, the old Alexa would carry on, and after all, I hardly ever get to see any snow. But, the Honour Court doesn't care about snow, or my personal dilemma over who I am, or anything like that. They want this mission done, so we may as well get on with it. I sigh, Damon takes my hand, and we leap into the air once more.

*

He stands in the chamber full of young women, musing over who will be next to go and do a mission. Onyx came back successful, and so avoided a bloody death, but he has plenty to choose from. He hears running footsteps behind him and ragged, shallow breathing. Clearly the runner has been running very quickly for a long time. No matter.

"What is it?!" he roars, rounding on the young girl who skids to a stop, gasping for air.

"Master," She pants, "I've just seen... two airborne intruders... near the Honour Court member's home... vampires." She abruptly falls silent at the look of fury and excitement in his face.

"Vampires?!" he grins, "Honour Court vampires?!"

"Um, a male and female, I couldn't see their eyes, but they were both winged-"

"A female? What did she look like? Tell me *exactly* what she looked like!" The girl trembles, but pulls herself together enough to answer him.

"Sh - she has black hair, big blue dragon wings, carries a bow and arrows, and has fox ears and a fox tail." Internally he curses, it's not the female he remembers, however the fox ears and tail are a big clue as to who she is. He smiles savagely and calls Onyx forward. She runs to him like a scared dog runs to its master, and he orders her and Wren to find the vampire intruders and bring them to him, alive. They rush off as though scared he'll beat them, which to be honest, they probably are.

He walks out of the chamber at a leisurely pace, to his study with the south-facing window, waiting for his new captives.

*

Damon reaches Tonla's home first, and I flinch at the sight of it, remembering Tonla's agony, Onyx's fear and desperation, Etengi's confusion. Generally, not a nice place for me right now. However, I ignore my uneasiness and follow Damon as he lands about thirty paces from the front door and turns to face me. I land funny and twist my ankle, but nothing major, I simply stamp my foot a few times to get myself used to the slight pain that comes with it.

"So, what now?" Damon asks me, and I smile at him.

"Now, we find Onyx, take her to Vladimir, find the cure for Viera and get her back, and skip off into the sunset." I say half-sarcastically. He smiles a little at that.

"If only it were that easy." He sighs.

"Yeah." I sigh. Suddenly, I am once again forced into a vision I really don't want to see.

Great, now I've got to track down two vampires and somehow take them to Master alive. Honestly, it'd be easier to wrestle a Minotaur blind and limbless. All we've got is a simple rope and a little knife each. They're not even iron knives, they're silver! We're so dead!

Either way, we head off in the direction of the Honour Court vampire's home. I can see the figures dart across the sky every now and then, and my stomach clenches with fear and dread at the sight of their glittering weapons. The snow is colder than ever on my bare feet, and I have to grit my teeth to keep from moaning. Wren is the same, she is a close friend of mine, or at least, as close a friend as I can afford to have. In this kind of life, you can't afford to get too attached to someone, it could mean your own demise. She glances at me now, and we see the vampires dive and twist and turn in the sky, the female behind the male. I can tell them apart very clearly now, but I still cannot make out their eye colours, so we cannot decipher their identities just yet. Suddenly the female stops, and looks in our direction, Wren and I freeze, and she watches us as we watch her. She knows.

I drag my consciousness away from Onyx's and shiver, watching the area I know she is. They can see me, and I know where they are. Now the only question is, what the hell am I to do?!

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