

# Scarlett Dreams

By : **RussianChick**

Scarlett finds herself caught in a kind of horror movie she never knew existed. The real kind. As she struggles to survive in this house of murder and despair, she finds herself recklessly falling for one of the men. Can she really love the same man she fears? Love knows no boundaries, but the one Scarlett loves may be stricken by what he is. She only prays he'll have the heart to keep her alive. But when she finds out that terrifying secret about him, how long will she really be able to cling to life?



Published on  
**Booksie**

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## Chapter 1: Deluge of Misery

I stumbled frantically through the pouring rain, disoriented and screaming. I knew there was no way out of this vile prison. I didn't care. The torrents of rain, blood, and tears rushed around me. The world was upside down, inside out. Nothing was right.

Scarlett water swirled in pools around my feet, making me cover my mouth and nose to keep from vomiting. This muffled my useless screaming. It was reaching no one but the monstrous men who were pursuing me. All the rest were lifeless, gazing at me with their unblinking eyes and unnaturally pallid complexions.

Dwelling on this would most definitely cost me my life, which could be a welcome alternative. I can't imagine hell being much worse than this. The men's boots slogged horribly through the puddles of curling blood and fresh rain.

I nearly ran into the twenty foot tall, solid wall of brick rising from the depths of my personal nightmare. I spun around, pressing my palms against the cool surface of the wall.

"There's nowhere to run, girl." One of the men barked out, his voice sharp and uninviting. The other tried to sooth me, cooing out sounds that I guessed were supposed to be coherent words.

I squeezed my eyes shut, trying to block out the world around me. Putting up a fight would most definitely result in a painful end.

"Come on Rick, she's harmless. Look at the cowardly way she's shrinking against the wall. It'd be like killing a baby bird." I squinted through the veil of rain between us, trying to make out the face of the man who had just defended me.

"Well we can't let her go." The first man, who I assumed was Rick, snapped. His anger rose with each passing second. Time had never been so painful.

"Let's take her back." The nice one suggested cautiously. "Maria will know what to do."

"Right. Maria will fix everything." This had apparently irked Rick even more. Personally, I thought a woman might be a nice change.

"You selfish bastard! Think of all the things she's done for us!" The nice one shouted, clearly defensive. I kept my mouth shut, willing them to hurry up. The rain was soaking through my skin, and at this rate I'd be waterlogged until I was thirty.

"Fine!" He reached through the watery curtain and grabbed my arms with his huge, strong hands. The rough skin gripped my arm firmly and, struggle as I may, would not let up. "You know she's gonna be pissed at us, Jay."

"Yeah, I know." Jay reached out, obviously aiming to take me. "I'll take the fall. She likes me better."

"Fuck you, I'm her favorite."

"Whatever. Let me take her in. I don't think I can stand another round of scouring for the injured."

"Pussy." Rick spat but pushed me eagerly forward, where another pair of strong hands caught me as soon as the others let go.

"Alright, are you going to walk or am I carrying you?" My voice, despite the abundance of liquid around me, was stone dry. I wasn't physically able to scream. I could barely choke out a breath, never mind form a coherent sentence. With a sigh, Jay released one of his hands. Confused, I turned to look at him. Instead of an answer, I got a blow to the back of the head, and the horror show around me slipped into obscure darkness.

## Chapter 2: Stranger House

I awoke in a dry bed, sunlight lightly warming the skin on my face and arm. Confusion swept over me as I wracked my brain for an explanation to this strange place. When I sat up, deep throbbing pains attacked my head, and I reached up instinctively. My fingers brushed the dried blood intertwined with the strands of my auburn hair. A lump protruded from my skull. I fingered it, struggling to rememberâ

"Dad, this is crazy. We can't just walk around this part of town." My older sister, Jenna, had insisted we take the long way, avoiding the rough part of town. My dad, always stubborn, made us cut through.

"Mom's waiting for us, and besides, it's pouring out here!" We all held our hoods up to block the rain, hustling through the back streets of London. I had to admit; even I was getting nervous out here.

"I still think it's a bad idea." Jenna grumbled, rounding the corner before either of us did.

Her bloodcurdling scream was the last thing I ever heard from her.

"Oh my god!" I felt queasy. Swaying on my feet. Understandable, I suppose, after watching your sister be murdered.

"Run!" My father took off at top speed, and I wasn't far behind. We faltered, coming upon the scene of a brutal brawl. Bodies and blood flew everywhere, and I jumped back just in time to see my father falling, lifeless, to the sodden pavement.

Screams slipped from my ever-parted lips while I dashed as fast as adrenaline could take me in the other direction.

The slamming of a door woke me from my nightmarish reverie. A small, frail woman strode in with a breakfast tray. It was filled with an abundance of food choices, all of which would've made my mouth water at another time. Now, they all made me sick to my stomach.

"Hi, I Marie." The elderly woman set the tray on a side table, staring at me with huge eyes. Everything about her was faded and grey, as if with age she had been drained of color. Her wrinkles in no way showed disgusting age, but memories of brighter times instead. Her accent was thick, but I couldn't place it.

"I bring you breakfast. Eat?" She slid the tray closer to me, but I shook my head. No way was I taking food from these people.

"No." My voice was hoarse, scratching out of my throat like sandpaper. The woman motioned again to the plate.

"Eat. I make for you, so you have something in stomach. Did men hurt you?"

I swallowed, half out of nervousness and half so my voice could be distinguished from a croak.

"A little."

"Eat, then. You will feel better. More strength. Men will be scolded, don't you be to worry."

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I made no response. Scolding was not in any way satisfying to me, and I didn't want to make Maria mad by saying something offensive. It seemed as though she was saner than her sons. I lifted a forkful of eggs to my mouth with trembling hands. It slid down my grateful throat surprisingly easily. This seemed to satisfy Maria, and she slipped back out of the room.

I sipped the juice warily, my need for liquid overpowering my discomfort. It tasted fresh, and I remembered that I had gone since yesterday's lunch without food. Now starving, I consumed most of the breakfast before pushing myself up off the bed.

There was a window across the room; the source of the warm sun beams haphazardly thrown around me. The latch was broken and it was sealed shut, clearly keeping me from escaping this way.

"Hey!" I spun around, nearly losing my balance with the motion. Fear struck through me as one of the men approached. "How are you doing?"

I guess this was the nicer one—Jay, was it? He stood, expecting a reply. When I didn't answer, he reached out to grab a strand of my hair. I recoiled from his touch, but he didn't even flinch.

"Sorry about that hit. Didn't mean to make you bleed so much." Still I made no reply, so he took my arm in a gentle grasp. "Let's get you cleaned up."

Powerless, I followed him down a short hallway covered with pictures of people and flowers. I thought it was strange; the colorful blossoms lining this horror-filled house.

We turned into a spacious bathroom, and he let my arm drop to its side.

"Here, a nice shower should be good for you." He made no move to exit, so I just looked at him expectantly.

"I'm not leaving." His ice blue eyes softened slightly. "I promise I'll give you privacy."

"I don't trust you." I whispered, barely able to speak through the fear. He took my hand delicately.

"Don't worry about me, okay? Just get yourself cleaned up." He turned, facing the wall. Too disgusting and in need of a nice hot shower to oppose further, I slipped out of my clothes and got the shower running. All the while, my eyes flickered constantly over to Jay in the corner, making sure he was being true to his word. He was. I didn't know what was up with these people, but they were surprisingly perplexing.

After letting the hot water rush wonderfully over me for a few minutes, I went about cleaning the blood out of my hair and the stale rain out of my skin. It was twenty minutes until I was ready to come out. Shutting the water off and waiting a few seconds, just to make sure Jay got the hint, I peeked cautiously around the floral curtain.

He was in the corner, face to the wall. Feeling somewhat confident in his privacy promise, I stepped slowly out from the shower. Steam had filled the room, significantly raising the temperature. It was nice to me; warm and comforting. I noticed Jay had taken his shirt off, obviously not as comfortable in the lavishing heat, and couldn't help but stare at the chiseled muscles and flawless skin that covered his body.

Drawing in a breath, I continued dressing into the clothes he had left for me on the sink. They were a size or two larger than I normally wore, hanging loosely from my body as if they were a pair of comfortable pajamas. Nevertheless, I pulled my hair back into a ponytail and cleared my throat.

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"I'm all set." He turned, gathering up the wet towel and my still damp clothes. His sculpted chest and abs caught my attention again, and I wondered idly how someone so awful could be so perfect at the same time.

"Do you need anything else?" His expression was somewhat uncertain, portraying his discomfort in the unfamiliarity of the situation.

"Can you please let me go?" I spoke meekly, praying he'd consider but knowing he wouldn't.

"I'm sorry, we just can't." His eyes were still soft and striking under his shaggy, jet-black hair. I could feel the blush spreading up my face as I thought of him this way; knowing I shouldn't but not being able to help it.

Harsh voices sounded from down the hall, though they spoke in a language I didn't understand. Jay sighed, silently offering me his large hand. I instinctively shrunk back, gripping the smooth edge of the marble countertop for support.

"What's your name?" He asked, a strange undertone to his voice I couldn't quite decipher.

"Scarlett." My voice was a small whisper, barely audible if you weren't listening closely.

"What a lovely name." Jay smiled slightly, presenting his hand again. This time, I took it, but not without caution. My trembling fingers looked so small and breakable within his as he led me into the kitchen area. Really, I had no idea what to expect.

## Chapter 3: Clues to a Secret

Silence fell like a blanket over the room as I walked in with Jay. I saw the other man, the mean one, for the first time.

He had short cut black hair and deep red eyes. I thought this might be a trick of my imagination, so I dismissed it. He also had his shirt off, and his perfectly sculpted body was spattered with crimson blood.

"Ah, hell." Jay muttered from beside me, pushing me into the next room and slamming the door with a thunderous bang. I could hear them arguing, but they spoke in their own language. It was unknown to me; although I wasn't sure I wanted to hear what they were saying, anyway. Tears rolled down my cheeks. They came gently at first; rivulets flowing silently down my face. Choking sobs soon shuddered through me, however, and I hugged my knees to my chest.

I had thought Jay would be different. Kinder, somehow. I guess he was just putting on a show so I'd cooperate. Yet I couldn't help the tiny feeling inside of me that didn't resent him at all. The one that thought he was kind of beautiful. Maybe it was Stockholm syndrome sped up. Maybe it was just because he spared my life, or seemed gentler than the other man. Either way, I ought to stay away from this feeling as best I could. The door was flung open then, and to my dismay, it was Rick.

"Get up, girl." His smile was sinister, despite the perfect teeth that produced it. "It's time for lunch."

"IâI'm not h-hungry." I stammered through the shaking sobs. His depraved smile never faltered.

"Not for you sweet cheeks." He grabbed my arms roughly, yanking me to my feet. Screams emitted from me intermittently, but did nothing to aid my situation. Once out of the room, I frantically glanced around for Jay. He met my gaze with almost sympathetic eyes. Almost. Before they changed to something more resemblingâhunger.

"Maria!" Rick barked, and the little woman came shuffling hastily around the corner. She looked between us.

"This is dangerous thing." My heart rate rose significantly with each passing second.

"Yeah yeah." He shoved me toward her. "Show us what to do." By now I was scared completely shitless. Small screams broke through the crying. That's all my life was now. Screaming and crying.

The woman held me, too firm for someone her age and size. "We no share."

"Fine. We'll switch off for every meal." My head whipped around, shocked to hear Jay's voice participating in this horrible conversation. Rick nodded in agreement and Maria placed her hand on my jawbone, an icy finger finding my pulse.

"Go till pulse change." Tilting my head up, she bent her shriveled lips to touch just above my collarbone. Before I could even process, there was a stabbing pain as I had never felt before. It was followed immediately by an excruciating burning that spread like wildfire throughout my body. Screams I had never heard before shrieked out of my throat as I writhed in absolute agony, and black spots danced around my vision. After a moment, I felt the fangs retract, screeching as they did so. Maria released her grip on my, and I crumbled to the ground.

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"Wow." I could barely make out the sound of Rick's voice through the lingering pain. I twitched and screamed.

"Is quite pleasurable."

"Sweet. Dibs on dinner." I could hear Jay and Rick arguing as they left the room. Arguing over who would get to torture me.

I lay on the floor in pain, feeling utterly alone and betrayed.



## Chapter 4: Happy Beginings?

Unlike this morning, I woke right where I had been left. On the dirty floor of my captors' kitchen. My head spun as I tried desperately to lift myself off the tiles and I gritted my teeth, trying to push through the pain in my neck.

"Hey, Rick! She's awake!" I gasped, my eyes flickering toward the voice as I collapsed back to the floor. I knew it was Jay, but I couldn't find those ice blue eyes.

"If we did right, she be good by dinner time." That was Maria. I could tell by her strange accent and broken English. Everything was coming back to me now, including my strength. I still got a head rush when I moved, however, so I figured I wouldn't risk it.

"This is ridiculous." Rick stormed in, his heavy boots smacking the tiles and making me cringe. "We all can't just share her!"

"Well, what do you suggest?"

"More. We get two more, and we all have our own blood whores."

"Sounds good to me." Slowly, I shifted to look up at Jay. He gave me a smile that was unlike anything I'd seen cross his lovely face before. It was terrifying. "I get Scarlett."

"Fine with me, bro. I can get someone so much hotter."

"Whatever. Go, and take Maria with you. She needs to pick one out as well."

"Yes, is good with me." Shuffling steps and clonking boots grated against my nerves until the door slammed and the sounds faded away. I stared pleadingly up at Jay.

"We'll have to do this quickly." He stooped down, gently lifting me from the floor with strong arms.

"Please don't." I whispered, keeping my unfaltering gaze on his crystal eyes.

"It's not what you're thinking." He smiled, apparently satisfied with this. I clung to his shoulders, feeling my stomach twist with strange emotions.

"What is it, then?"

He paused, beaming at me like a child who's just won something amazing. "We're leaving."

I was speechless. And for the first time, it wasn't completely out of fear.

We entered a bedroom that I presumed to be his, and he sat me on the bed. The place looked as if a bomb had exploded, and I watched warily as he pulled out a suitcase.

"This will only take a minute, I promise." He patted my knee and set to packing. I watched his fluid movements, his focused expression somehow making him more appealing. I prayed he'd never put a shirt on. But what was I doing? I had no idea of his intentions, despite the nice demeanor that had so easily fooled me last time. And of course, there was the fact I had to face. He was a monster. Not just a bad person, but a creature that craved the taste of human blood. I refused to think he was a vampire. It sounded so unreal, so fantasy. Vampires didn't exist. But Jay did.

"Where are we going?" My confidence was rising slightly to the point where I could speak without my voice shaking, that is.

"You'll see." He smiled sweetly. "Don't worry, though. We have lots of money and a nice house I bought for emergencies, back in the day."

"Oh. Okay." I played with a strand of my hair, ripping the rest out of the ponytail and braiding it. It was nice to be doing something, and I fingered the pleats gently, remembering how my mother used to do my hair, when i was younger.

"All set." Slings the bag easily over his shoulder, he scooped me up from the bed.

"I can walk, you know." I snapped, regretting it immediately. Seriously, I would pretend to faint if he ever put me down.

He chuckled, a sound like silver and honey. I had never really heard him laugh before, and it startled me.

"I know you can walk." He paused, serious now. "Would you prefer to do so?"

"No!" I exclaimed, a little too quickly. He chuckled again, leaning over me as we stepped outside. The rain drizzled down, not pouring as it had been that first day. We approached a small black car, and he trotted over to the passenger side, hesitant.

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"Would you like to sit in the back, or is the front fine?"

"The front is fine." I avoided his eyes, trying to sound nonchalant this time. Nodding, he slid me into the seat and shut the door.

I'm not sure what happened then; maybe it was just being outside that triggered it. But I realized that I was insane. What was I doing? Running off with a guy who I knew was extremely dangerous, just because he was good looking? My mom was out there somewhere, no doubt looking for me. Maybe she was looking for my father and my sister too. Unlike them, I could return to her. I could be there for her and her for me. I didn't even realize I was crying until Jay brushed a finger across my face.

"Hey there, Scarlett. What's wrong?" How could he ask such a ludicrous question? Is he completely blind to the injustice of his actions?

"I can't do this." I sobbed, tears streaming down like the raindrops on the window. We were driving now. "I have a motherâ I have friendsâ !" I looked into his eyes for the first time since we got to the car, no longer afraid of what I'd see. "I want to go home."

"I can't let you go." He reached out to me, and I turned away.

"Yes, you can. All you want me for is my blood, anyway. I promise I'll tell the police I escaped, and I don't remember a thing. I won't tell them anything, just please let me go."

"Do you know why I didn't let Rick kill you?" I made no movement, frustrated that my speech had been in vain. He sighed. "I thought you were absolutely stunning. You were covered with rain, blood and tears, you were crying and screaming. But you were more beautiful than anyone I'd ever seen." He looked at me, sadness in his eyes.

"I don't believe you." As much as it pained me, I just couldn't submit. He had to be lying; a creature this incredible couldn't possibly think I was as beautiful as he claimed.

"I don't care. I know I'm telling the truth." His voice had an edge to it that I couldn't place. I wanted to think there was sadness and irritation, but he was probably just upset that I was the one girl in the entire universe that wouldn't buy into his little charade. But I didn't want to spend the car ride, and possibly my life, this way.

"I'm sorry, Iâ I didn't mean it." He sighed, chuckling slightly.

"You're a terrible liar."

"Yeah." I confessed. "Most of the time I can't even convince myself."

"So you really don't trust me?" He mused. "I can understand that. Seeing as I abducted you and most likely convinced you I was a cold hearted monster that only wanted you for your blood." I cringed when he spoke of hisâ conditionâ so casually.

"Well," I gulped. "That would put a person off."

"I suppose I'm a fairly good actor. But how could you believe the lies and not the truth?"

"Maybe because the 'truth' is so discreditable. Am I honestly supposed to believe that, despite your previous actions and family history, you love me and you only kidnapped me because you thought I was beautiful? Not to mention the" I winced. "âfeedingâ that I provide if you take me."

"That's a good point." He stared straight ahead. "In that case, I'm going to do something now that I should have done a while ago."

"What's that?"

"I'm tired of being a monster, Scarlett. I'm tired of going out every day and killing innocent people because I thought I had no choice. Well, I do have a choice. I can sustain myself on human food, though it is tasteless and dissatisfying. When I do crave blood, I'll hunt animals instead. And, I will neverâ feed off of you unless you give me your permission."

"You'd really do that?" I questioned dubiously, doubting that I'd ever give my 'permission' for him to torture me. He nodded, clearly intent on going through with it.

"I will. And in return, all I ask for is you. Do we have a deal?"

"What's my end of the deal?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said all you wanted was 'me'. What does that entail?"

"Just your presence. And that you won't fight or try to run away."

"On one condition."

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"Which is?"

"You have to return me to my mother, and then we can live in the normal world."

"How on earth do you see that working out?" He stared at me as if I had three heads.

"Simple. You carry me in, saying you found me on the street, thus being my hero. My mom will be grateful and already like you, so that part will be easy."

"I don't know." He looked incredibly nervous. I hesitantly put my hand over his.

"Please? This is all I'm asking for; to return to my life with you. Nothing in your little plan changes."

"Yes, but you have to remember, I'm a vampire." I bit my lip, hating when he said it aloud. It made it sound more real. I hadn't truly believed it before. Now it seemed pointless to avoid the fact.

"So? She'll never know." There was a brief silence as we drove along the winding streets.

"This would mean risking everything." He cautioned, more to himself than me.

"Tell me one reason that it wouldn't work." I folded my arms across my chest.

"They could figure out that I'm a vampire and an accomplice in your kidnapping."

"How would they do that?" He contemplated.

"I don't know."

"Exactly." A thought crossed my mind just then. A thought I'd been suppressing for a while now.

"I have a question, though. And I want an honest answer. Do you promise not to lie?"

"I promise."

"You have to really mean it."

"I do. Trust me." I figured at this point, I could. Taking a deep breath, I continued.

"Did you kill either my father or my sister? I just have to know, and I hope you understand that I need a completely honest answer."

"I did not kill either of them. I was preoccupied." He sighed. "Honestly? I was killing someone else at the time."

"Do you swear on your mother's life?"

"No. But only because my mother and my brother's lives mean nothing to me. I do, however, swear on your life, that what I said is nothing less than the absolute truth."

"Good." The thought of them lifeless, however, caused me to weep quietly until I felt the car pull to a stop.

Looking up through the rain streaked windshield, I could make out the sign. It was the police department.

"We're here." Jay said nervously, gazing at me with all of his trust and eyes, all of his love.

## Chapter 5: The Crushing Truth

I woke to the same haphazard sunlight as I had that first day. The pains in my neck were dull, and my body felt as if I had been sleeping for too long. Dazed and confused, I took in the room around me, hauntingly familiar. How did I get back here?

The voices I could hear in the hall - yes, voices - were those of the three people who had captured me. My head spun with confusion and betrayal. We had been at the station just a moment ago, it seemed. I wracked my brain, searching for memory of something, anything that would've gone wrong to send me back to this horrible place. The voices were drawing nearer.

"All I'm saying is if she's too weak, I'm going out tonight and getting someone else." Jay pushed open the door, cutting me with his caustic words. I glanced to the bed, spotting me in a sitting position. "Well hello there sleepyhead. It's about time you woke up."

"What happened?" I hissed under my breath, distraught by the fact that he would do this to me after what we'd been through. Why would he take me back here?

"Well, Rick and Maria left to find feeders. Then, before I could even touch you, you passed out again." He sighed, clearly annoyed. I was stunned. Completely speechless. How could it have possibly been a dream? There was no way. Everything was so vivid, so real. The promises he made - well, I couldn't have made them up, could I? Yet it was true. As I looked into his eyes, there was no trace of the love I thought I had seen. How strange and disorienting this was!

"I'm hungry." I breathed figuring that would buy me a little more time before - well; I didn't even want to think about it.

"Fine. Eat quickly, though. I'm hungry too." A sinister grin spread up his flawless face, and my heart sank. Fantasies are a drug. The high is wonderful, taking you to an alternate reality where your wildest dreams come to life. But the crash takes you sinking back to the pain of reality, which in my case will never match the reckless daydreams I conjure.

Jay came back in, interrupting my contemplations with a plate of food. It was smaller this time, and he tapped his foot impatiently while I ate. The food was tasteless to me, meaningless in that the life would soon be sucked out of my body almost entirely.

The tray soon lay upon my knees, completely cleaned of food. I didn't look up from it until I heard the ominous click of the door locking.

"I hope you ate well." He chuckled, slowly stalking over to the bed. "Stand up." My throat became too dry to beg, so I stood, making him snicker. "Good girl."

His hands encircled my wrists, pushing them behind me until my palms touched the sheets. He leaned in, trailing his lips down my jaw, down my neck, down my collarbone, until his face was buried in my shirt. My breathing hitched. I couldn't take much pleasure in the experience, knowing the torture I was about to endure. He slid off my blouse slowly, dropping it beside the bed.

"Mmm - His nose brushed my chest, apparently smelling the blood flowing rapidly through my veins. - very warm." He slid back up until he was at the nape of my neck, feeling for my pulse. I imagine it wasn't hard to find. The rate my heart was going could hardly be healthy. His cold fingers pressed lightly on the point of my pulsation, while his other hand explored the area around my bra.

"This will only hurt a bit." He chuckled, deadly fangs grazing my skin as he did so. Sharp agony shot through me, producing a murderous screech as Jay, the one I thought I could trust, dug in his villainous teeth. It was like being stabbed in the neck with a salty blade, while also sitting in a raging fire.

A few torturous moments passed, burning pain ripping through me, before I finally succumbed to the blackness.

## Chapter 6: Partners in Pain

It seemed as though the line separating my conscious and unconscious was blurred, permanently putting me into a state of pain and confusion.

Now I awoke in the small room near the kitchen, the one I had been pushed into that first day. My stomach churned, hunger gnawing at it incessantly. That was no match for the pain in my neck; the dull ache I was expecting. Instinctively, my hands flew to the spot, tenderly fingering the two small bumps. It was Jay's first time at this I guess, so there were drips of dried blood down my torso and splotches on my neck.

I looked around for the first time, starting at the sight before me. A little girl was quivering in the corner, tears streaming noiselessly down her cheeks. An older girl lay across the dusty floor, blood spots covering her neck. My breathing hitched as the stale, rusty smell wafted up to my nostrils. I crawled over to the little girl. She couldn't have been more than seven years old. Judging by the cleanliness of her clothes, and the fact that they were still on her body, I could assume she was Maria's.

"Hey." I whispered, my voice raspy and weak. She flinched away from me. "Don't worry; I'm not going to hurt you. See?" I stroked her hair, cleaning the tiny flecks of crimson in the blonde curls. She looked like a tiny porcelain doll, so fragile she could break at the slightest touch.

"What's your name?" I prompted, cupping her little face in my hands.

"Ch-Charlotte." She stammered. Her voice was barely a whisper.

"Hi Charlotte, I'm Scarlett." I smiled as warmly as I could, more strength flooding through me with each passing minute. She sniffled, resting her head on my lap. I stroked her head gently, humming an old lullaby my mom used to sing to me.

Time passed, and Charlotte's breathing lapsed into the even fluctuations of a sleeping child. Her curls parted, revealing the bite marks that looked somewhat larger on her tiny neck. I brushed them tenderly with the tips of my fingers, silently fuming at the thought that they would ever do this to a child.

The figure on the floor stirred, rolling over and moaning with a pain that I knew well. Her eyes fluttered open and I put a finger to my lips, gesturing to Charlotte who was still in her well-deserved slumber. The girl blinked, a hand flying to her neck.

"What the hell is going on?" She hissed. "And why do I have the world's worst hickey?!"

"It's not a hickey. We've been abducted, and the people responsible...well, you're not going to believe me, but they drink our blood."

"That's bullshit. Vampires don't exist."

"They do here. How do you explain this?" I pointed to my marks on my neck, and watched as her eyes followed the bloodspots.

"Oh fuck no."

"Okay, well there's kind of a seven year old girl here." I snapped.

"She's asleep!" She retorted, voice low. "How can you be so fucking calm in this situation?"

"I've been here longer than you have."

"Well, I imagine it still hurts like a bitch!"

"More than that." I sighed, shuddering at the memory of the agony. "What's your name, anyway?"

"Tiff. How bout you?"

"Scarlett."

"Cool. How do you know her?" She gestured to Charlotte.

"I don't. I woke up and found her with us." Pulling back the curls, I displayed the bite marks so Tiff could see. I heard her cuss under her breath.

"To a baby?!"

"I know! It's infuriating!"

"Damn straight! I'm gonna kill these bastards the first chance I get!"

I rolled my eyes. "Nothing would make me happier. Unfortunately, they're - oh, I don't know - supernatural monsters!"

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The door slammed open just then, and Maria stepped through. My arms automatically encircled Charlotte, who had woken from the noise and pulled her closer.

"Lunch for human." She bent down and set the huge silver tray on the floor, slipping back into the hallway as quickly as she came. I bent down to take a piece of fruit, and Tiff smacked my hand away.

"Are you mental? What if it's poisoned?"

"I wish." I muttered under my breath, and then added. "Besides, if you don't eat before the feedings, you'll become frail and sickly."

She grumbled to herself, but reached toward the tray anyway. Charlotte tugged on my hair.

"Yes sweetie?"

"Can I have some food?" Her little voice would have been absolutely adorable if it wasn't so sad. I maneuvered so she could get at the plate.

"Here you go. Did you have a good sleep?"

"No." She mumbled, her mouth full of food. I waited for her to swallow.

"Why not?"

"I had a nightmare." I fell silent. How could anything be worse than this? She looked at Tiff. "Who's that?"

"That's Tiff."

"Hi Charlotte!" I could tell she was trying her best to be friendly, and I appreciated it.

"Hi Tiff." Charlotte answered quietly, reaching for another piece of food.

"Oh Tiffany!" The door burst open again, and Rick stepped through. Tiff slipped back to the corner and I scooped Charlotte up again, covering her ears.

"Get away from me you cannibalistic bastard!"

"Get over here you sexy bitch." He growled, lurching forward and dragging her out of the room.

"Get off of me! Fuck you!"

"Oh don't worry." He sneered. "You will." She continued to screech but I looked away, not wanting to meet her pleading gaze. The door shut with a bang, and the voices were muffled.

"Where's Tiff going?" Charlotte looked up at me with her big blue eyes, true confusion clouding them. I didn't know what to say at first, figuring that "that man is going to suck her blood and probably rape her" was not an appropriate response for a child.

"Don't worry, she'll be back. Let's just rest for now." I placed my hands gently over her ears to block out the haunting screams that filled the air just a moment later. I wish someone was there to cover mine.

## Chapter 7: Terrible Twists

"Scarlett!" I jerked up, snapping instantly out of my light doze. Blinking, my eyes focused just in time to see Charlotte disappear out the doorframe. Rage overcame me as I lurched forward, pounding my fists on the wood.

"Let go of her you bitch! Pick on someone your own fucking size!" Screams of pure anger rose from my chest until they melded and nothing made any sense. The door flew open then, sending me flying forward. Screams echoed through the house; little screams, that were defenseless and full of searing pain. I covered my ears. "Shhh, shhh." Jay lifted me from the ground, despite my attempts to hurt him or fight him off. He smirked, carrying me to the room and placing me gently on the bed.

"Please, you have to help her, she's just a little girl!" Tears streamed down my face as choking sobs stifled my words. Jay surprisingly wrapped me into a hug.

"I know. Shhh, it'll be okay. Maria knows what she's doing." I couldn't answer through my weeping and Charlotte's blood curdling screams.

"Please don't do this." I begged, gazing at him with watery eyes. He softened slightly, placing a hand gently on my shoulder.

"I must." He slipped the shoulder of my blouse down, and the sobs overtook me. "You're the lucky one." Jay cupped my face in his huge, rough hands. "Rick is rough and he rapes the girls he feeds on."

"Was that supposed to make me feel better?" I blubbered.

He chuckled slightly. "Yes." His lips brushed my skin and I gasped, shaky, uneven breaths. His one hand pushed up my jaw while the other rested on my collarbone.

"I'm sorry Scarlett." He whispered into my neck.

"Are you seriously bipolar?" I choked out, unthinkingly. He pulled up his face.

"Excuse me, what?"

"How can you be so horrible and disgusting one second, and then relatively nice the next? I just don't get it."

He sighed. "I get awful when the thirst takes over. Unlike now, when I can control it. May I proceed now?"

"No?" It came out as more of a question, though I seriously doubted anything I could've said would have dissuaded him.

Instead of an answer, I received a sigh. He bent back down, pulling me toward him and brushing strands of stray hair off my neck. He once again framed the area with his hands, pressing his soft lips to my skin and digging in the fangs. Horrific screams slipped through my lips as venom seared through me and with it, pain. At this point, the only thing I looked forward to in life was unconsciousness. And so, as the fire raged through my being, I prayed for the blackness to come.

I really hated this. All that was left of my life was pain, fear, and frequent bouts of unconsciousness. Trust me, I loved being unconscious. Until I woke up. Still, I wish I had dreams to escape to. Lately I hadn't been having them. Perhaps my psyche knew that no nightmare could compare to the hell I was living in, but had forgotten what happiness and goodness were.

"Breakfast." The voice startled me, partly because I was deep in thought, and partly because it wasn't Maria. My heart lurched when Jay's face poked through the door frame, and I hated the reaction. I should've also hated him. I thought I did. But something inside me, a very small voice, was saying things I didn't particularly wasn't to hear, but was already well aware of. I was falling for him.

Love sucks. And yes, pun intended.

"Hi." I muttered as he placed the tray next to me and plopped himself onto the edge of the bed.

"Good morning." He smiled, teeth gleaming in the shattered sunlight that always littered this room. I looked away, not wanting to see that horribly perfect face. "Would you like to have breakfast in the kitchen?" He tried, hopeful.

"Sure." It might be a welcome change to this already routine schedule I was on. I stood, nearly sending the tray to the floor. Jay caught it with such celerity that his arm became a blur to my human eyes.

When we entered the kitchen my eyes flickered automatically to the other people in the room. Rick was slumped on the table, pouting as Maria spoke to him soothingly.

## Scarlett Dreams

"What's going on?" I whispered, turning my head slightly toward Jay. He sighed.

"Rick got a little overzealous. That girl he was feeding off of didn't..." He trailed off, glancing at me with an embarrassed look. No doubt he was praying he wouldn't need to finish the sentence. He didn't. My eyes dropped to the floor. Tiffany was dead. How long before Charlotte and I were too?

"I'm going to find a new one." Rick stood up abruptly, heading for the door. Maria stepped in front of him, wagging her finger and speaking sternly. He groaned. "No, ugh, fuck Maria! No way!" She continued to scold him until he slumped at the table again. I had never seen this woman wield so much power over these men. I staggered back a step, startled by it.

"Jay!" She called, slipping back into the room and barking something at him. He protested in the same language, words flowing beautifully from his lips. He gestured to me and I shrunk back a little, shifting from foot to foot and biting my lip. If only I knew what they were saying!

"Fine." Jay sighed, cupping my face in his hands. "Go back to the room, lock the door, and put something in front of it." He then leaned very close to Rick, practically hissing. "If you lay a finger on her, I swear to whatever God there is you won't live to see tomorrow." With another fleeting glance at me, he followed Maria out the door. I turned quickly to leave, but Rick's hand caught me shoulder.

"Where do you think you're going?" A slow sinister smile spread up his face and my stomach dropped. I prayed that Jay would keep to his promise.

"Back to th-the room?" My voice stuttered involuntarily, and he chuckled.

"Sit down. Eat your breakfast."

"Oh!" I exclaimed as he shoved me into a chair and practically threw the tray of food onto the table.

He turned toward the window, muttering to himself. I was no longer even remotely hungry. My eyes darted around the room, looking for a way out. I knew I wasn't strong enough to hurt him, or fast enough to outrun him, but maybe I could try to slip out. Suddenly, my gaze landed on something that made my heart leap.

The newly sharpened kitchen knife laid just a reach away, shining against the marble countertop. I thought about the monster standing just a step away. I thought about what he was almost certainly going to do to me. I thought of the pain. I thought of the blackness that was my only escape. I thought of Tiffany.

The opportunity was there, just sitting there. And I took it.



## Chapter 8: A Spark of Freedom

Without thinking, I drove the knife into his back with unexpected strength. Adrenaline surged through my veins as I pushed it deeper and he screamed. He was wounded, yes. But I wasn't finished. Yanking the weapon out, I watched as he screamed again and fell to the floor, facing up. The knife drove cleanly into his heart, making him cry out once more. Frantically, I took the long sword from the wall, bringing it down upon his bare neck. In three horrifying blows, his head came spewing off his body.

Staring at the mangled body in front of me, my stomach twisted, but I knew there was still one thing to do. I dragged him out to the small yard, snatching a box of matches on my way. Striking one against the side of the box, I watched as the flame drifted silently through the air, slipping through my fingers and catching on the dead body of the man I probably loathed the most in this world. And I watched him burn.

I knew there wasn't much time. Dashing inside, I burst through doors until I found Charlotte, unconscious but alive. I scooped her up, grabbing the knife and sprinting out the door.

I ran until I was out of breath, and then walked until my knees were weak and my legs gave out from under me. The dark blanket of night fell upon us, and still Charlotte slept. I laid her in the leaves beside me and collapsed.

The morning light filtered through the leaves softer than in the house. Charlotte stirred beside me, her big blue eyes flickering open.

"Where are we?" Her meek little voice choked out.

"Away from the bad people." A rustling in the leaves made me scoop her up instinctively.

"Where are we going?"

"Well, where do you live?"

"Liverpool."

"Okay, well, we're going to get you home."

There was a brief pause. Charlotte looked down at the ground, and then back up at me. "I want my mommy and daddy." Her eyes brimmed with tears and she fell into my arms.

"Don't worry, I'll get you there. I promise." It was a pretty serious promise to make, and I wasn't sure if I could uphold it.

We walked through the woods, just out of view of the road. I wasn't taking any chances. The sun climbed higher in the sky, and I had to carry Charlotte once in a while, but the trip was bearable.

I almost cried when we came upon civilization. The first thing I saw was a light blue house with a black car in the driveway. A stone walkway twisted up to the front door, and I rushed up to it with Charlotte in tow.

"Hello?" My fists pounded desperately on the glass door.

## Scarlett Dreams

"I'm coming, I'm coming." The light, female voice was muffled, by the door, which flew open a second later. The woman was wearing jeans and a black sweater. Her deep brown hair fell just below her shoulders and she smiled. "How can I help you?"

"Um, can we please use your phone?" My voice was still shaky, and the woman looked concerned.

"Of course dears, come right in." I hesitated at the doorframe, and she glanced back at me. "Don't worry, honey, the phone's right here. I'll even keep the door open, okay?"

"Okay, thank you." I paused. "What town is this?"

"Liverpool." My heart skipped a beat. My legs felt weak. Things seemed to be going right for once, and it actually worried me for a second. The police number was up on the wall next to the phone, and I punched it in.

"Liverpool Police Department."

"Hello, my name is Scarlett, I was abducted from London and I ended up here. I just escaped with a little girl named Charlotte. We're atâ " I cupped my hand over the phone, calling out to the woman. "What's this address?" There was no reply, but she had gone into the kitchen and probably just couldn't hear me. I talked back into the phone. "I'm not sure of our address, but it's about three miles from where we were being held. Please help me."

"We will be right over. Please stay calm and do not leave your current location."

"Thank you." I placed the phone back, kneeling down before Charlotte. "Stay here, I'm going to get the nice lady. I'll be right back okay?"

She nodded, sitting down in the corner as I made my way to the kitchen.

"Um, if you don't mind, we're going to stay here for a few more -" My voice cut off with a gasp, and I pressed my palms to the wall for support.

No.

## Chapter 9: Downward Spiral

"Scarlett?" Shit. Shit shit shit shit shitâ Jay emerged from the room. I knew I couldn't outrun him. Instead, I pulled out the knife.

"Go away." My voice was shaky.

"I don't want to kill you."

"Then leave."

"I don't want to." He stepped forward, making me step back. My back was flat against the wall. "You are very impressive." He congratulated me. "It takes a lot to do what you did."

"I'll kill you too, I swear I'll do it." Could I, though? Not just physically, I mean yes, I had lost the element of surprise and all, but could I really kill this man? The man I thought I loved? The love wasn't healthy, I knew, but it didn't care. I raged through me like the venom from his fangs, and I was completely powerless to them both.

"Scarlett, neither of us has to die. You're not thinking straight." He was right, on some level. I wasn't thinking straight. But not in the way he assumed.

"I have a proposition for you." A plan had sprung in my head, perhaps just crazy enough to work.

"Oh?" He raised an eyebrow, looking almost entertained.

"Let the little girl go, that's all. If you do that, I'm completely yours."

He sighed. "I'm not making deals with you."

"Then you won't be doing anything else with me, now will you." I snapped.

"I have the power to take you by force."

"I have a knife."

"That doesn't matter to me. I'll get a few scratches, at most." He was right, and he knew it. But I wasn't giving up.

"Just let her go, you can have me."

"Why do you care so much?" He was still skeptical, I could tell.

"Because she's an innocent little girl, and I don't want her to get hurt any more than she already has." I was close to tears, but I knew it was the only good thing I could do. I couldn't save myself, not at this point. But Charlotte had a chance.

"Fine." He put his hands up. "She can go. I have no use for her, and we'll be gone before she can tell them where we live." He smiled, grabbing my arm and pulling me out the back door.

## Scarlett Dreams

"Why do you want me so much?" The tears were flowing now, as we stumbled through the brush and into the depths of the woods.

He didn't answer at first. We stopped abruptly, and he turned to face me.

"Because you're beautiful. Because no one else would be the same. Because I miss you when you're gone." Tears flowed down my cheeks faster and faster as his words did. They cut what was left of my heart, piercing it through with what could only be lies. I wanted desperately for them to be true, and yet there was no way they were.

"Stop." I sobbed. "Just stop." Stumbling forward, I tried to avoid his gaze. Those ice blue eyes would kill me before his fangs did.

"Scarlett." He yanked me back. "I know you have no reason to believe me. Hell, even I don't believe me. But I'm not letting you go, and that's a fact." His hand never released me as we ventured deeper and deeper into the sylvan scene. There was no sound, and the silence was oppressive. I had to say something.

"Where are we going?"

He shrugged. "A clearing somewhere, I guess."

"You don't know?" I asked dubiously. He didn't reply. He didn't need to. We walked right into a small clearing. Jay looked smug.

"Pretty good, huh?" I refused to honor that with a response, and instead watched as he removed a huge bag from his shoulder. And when I say huge, I really do mean half my height and twice my thickness.

"Is there food in there?" I inquired, my stomach growling as if to prove the point of my hunger. He ripped it open and I peered inside. It was actually mostly filled with food; blankets, a flashlight and a few other supplies were shoved in between.

"Take your pick." he gestured to the food and I pulled out a bag, delving right in.

"When do you need to eat?" I asked hesitantly, grimacing at the thought.

"Not for a while. I had a big meal before I left. And then there was that lady. So I think I'm set for a day." Well that was the best news I would probably hear for the rest of my sure to be short life.

"Good." I finished the food, leaning back on my arms and looking up through the trees. The light was fading, and the sky was transforming with streaks of vibrant color. If I concentrated, I could almost pretend I was on that camping trip with mum, dad, and Jenna last summer.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yeah." I muttered, trying desperately to slip back into my memories. I began to cough, quietly at first but they turned violent in a moment. Through the fit, I could see Jay's concerned expression as he pulled out the blankets.

"Are you okay?"

"No." I managed to choke, dropping to my hands and knees.

## Scarlett Dreams

"Maybe you should lie down." I glared at him. It was clear he had no experience with his, though, so he backed off. My coughing subsided somewhat, and was taken over by a massive headache and burning fever. Now I was lying on a makeshift bed of leaves and blankets.

"I grabbed some stuff from that lady's house. You know, besides food." Digging around, Jay pulled out a bottle of Advil and plopped two into my hand. I swallowed them quickly.

"Ugh, what the hell was in that food?"

"UmâScarlett, it wasn't the food." I looked at him, confused. "It's theâthe venom. Maria warned that it might have some side effects."

"Are you shitting me?" My use of profanity had greatly increased since this experience. "What kind of side effects?"

"Coughing, headaches, fever, dehydration, weakness, stiffness, soreness, vomiting, internal bleeding, bruising, and possibly but very rarelyâdeath."

"You bastard!" My head swam as I screeched at him, creating a pause in my rant. "I hope you realize that I would much rather be dead than here with you! Which, considering the situation, is probably happening very soon, either due to you draining the life out of me or the poison rushing through my bloodstream."

"You'd probably rather me drain you. I imagine the alternative would be very painful."

"You are so not helpful!"

"I'm sorry."

"No you're not."

"Yes, Scarlett, I am." He sighed. "Do you think I enjoy watching as you lay there in pain?"

"Kinda."

"Well, I don't."

"Then don't! Then bring me to a fucking hospital!"

"I already told you, I can't." His voice wavered slightly with sadness. It didn't reach me this time, though. Something about the situation had turned me to stone, blackened my heart. I couldn't find compassion.

Thanks to the Advil, my pain was dulled just enough for me to slip into a much needed unconsciousness.

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