**Cannot Be Contained**

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**Cannot Be Contained**

by [oncetwicenever](http://archiveofourown.org/users/oncetwicenever)

**Summary**

Nine-year-old Harry gets sick of his treatment at the Dursleys, and runs away with a mysterious girl by the name of "Shade". On the streets, he quickly toughens up and learns that sometimes it's kill or be killed. He has found himself a new family to love - but also has more to lose than ever. He is plunged into a world of street fights, both vampire and wizarding politics, and a life as the famous Boy-Who-Lived.

**Notes**
So I've never written a Harry Potter fan fiction before, so I'm interested to see how this one pans out. Please, if you have any suggestions, don't hesitate to leave them in the comments below.
What's Your Name, Anyway?

Chapter Summary

Harry takes a leap of faith and escapes his abusive relatives with the help of another runaway.

Chapter Notes

IF YOU'RE NEW: Welcome! I really hope you enjoy this pic, please don't hesitate to leave a comment!

IF YOU'VE READ THIS BEFORE: This chapter has been rewritten! I did away with the whole 'voldemort's actually dead' thing, it just didn't work with how I want this story to go. I know it's unprofessional to change such a big thing so late, but I think it'll make the story so much better.

31st of October, 1980

“Not Harry, not Harry, please not Harry!”

“Stand aside, you silly girl. Stand aside now!”

“Not Harry, please no, take me, kill me instead --”

“This is my last warning!”

“Not Harry! Please! Have mercy… have mercy! Not Harry! Not Harry! Please -- I'll do anything --”

“Stand aside. Stand aside, girl!”

There was a flash of green light, and Lily Potter’s heart was silent. The cloaked figure stepped over the minor annoyance that had just given her life for her son, pointing his wand at the infant. The young child stared up at the Dark Lord and started to whimper, not understanding why his mother wasn’t standing back up. He began bawling, just wanting his mother to hold him, to tell him everything was going to be okay. He wanted his father to show him the pretty lights, he needed his mother to kiss his head and sing him back to sleep, he just wanted his mother -

“Avada Kedavra!” There was a second flash of green light, refracting off of the infant’s forehead and back onto the cloaked figure. The Dark Lord fell, the child’s cries growing louder and louder. He screamed and pleaded for his mother, but there was no one to hear him.

17th of May, 1985
“You stupid boy!” Roared Uncle Vernon, spittle flying from his mouth, his bloodshot eyes bulging.

“I’m sorry!” Harry cried, scrambling away from the broken vase. “I’m sorry I’m sorry I -”

“Shut it, freak!” Uncle Vernon spat. Harry ducked behind the sofa, rocking back and forth on his feet, his hands over his head. He didn’t understand why Uncle Vernon was so angry - he had tried to be careful, but he was only six, and he couldn’t really reach the vase, but when he had tried to point this out to Aunt Petunia, not understanding how he was meant to clean it, she had just threw the frying pan at his head. But he had really tried his best, he didn’t understand he was sorry he was sorry he was sorry -

A cry was ripped from his throat when he felt Uncle Vernon’s fingers grasp his wrist, throwing his tiny body to the other side of the living room. There was a dull ‘thud’, and Harry felt a screaming pain in his left side. Salty tears stained his cheeks and he sobbed quietly as his uncle left the room, grumbling under his breath.

It was two hours before he worked up the courage to crawl away into his cupboard.

3rd of September, 1987

Harry refused to let the tears fall, even as his uncle backhanded him across the face again. He knew that crying would just incite further violence in the man, so he just stood there, his body tense, as his uncle spat in his face.

“I told you,” the older man practically screamed, “we would have no more of your freakishness! Get in your cupboard, and you’ll be lucky if Petunia remembers to bring you food tomorrow!”

Harry ducked his head and followed his uncle’s orders, eager to be out of his uncle’s immediate area. He didn’t bother explaining that it was an accident, he didn’t know how his uncle’s belt buckle had melted off of the belt, he just knew that he didn’t want it to hit him again. He knew his uncle would only be further enraged. He’d given up apologizing as well; it never did any good.

23rd of June, 1989

Harry narrowed his eyes at Uncle Vernon from across the kitchen, his fists clenched tightly beneath the table. He was watching the Dursleys with intense loathing as they fawned over Dudley’s newest birthday present - a new computer. What had Harry gotten for his birthday? A broken wrist and bruised ribs. And Dudley? A new computer. Dudley was eleven! What eleven-year-old needed his own computer?

The Dursleys were too focused on Dudley and his extravagant gifts to notice their nephew leaving the room and ducking into his cupboard. He closed the door sharply behind him and sat down heavily on his bed, biting the inside of his cheek. He refused to let the tears fall; his uncle had shown him from a very young age that crying was weak - and weakness got punished. Harry drew in a deep, shuddering breath, before swallowing.
'I could do it,' He thought silently. 'I could run away. What could be worse than staying here? I’d rather be murdered in the street than continue to stay here, having to come up with new excuses at school every week for my new injuries. Nobody would notice; Nobody cares enough to notice, and the Dursley’s certainly aren’t going to miss me.’ The more he thought about the idea, the more enticing it sounded. What was stopping him? He was right - nobody would even notice he was gone before he got halfway across the county.

A tremble ran through his bones as he realised he was actually considering the ludicrous idea. He sat on his cot for over an hour, weighing the pros and cons of the decision. Finally, he decided than the idea was completely far-fetched; he’d likely die less than a week out on his own, whether it be from starvation or hypothermia. Harry lay down on his cot, pulling the thin cotton blanket over him, and closed his eyes, trying to fall into the sweet embrace of sleep.

However, a single thought kept tugging at the back of his mind. The thought that perhaps… perhaps he was tougher than he thought. He’d almost died plenty of times before - when Uncle Vernon had broken a couple of his ribs, when Dudley had chased him into an alleyway where there was a drug deal going down, when he’d fallen into the sea after Dudley had pushed him off of the docks - but out of some sheer luck, he’d survived. Maybe he could count on his luck to keep him alive, at least until he learned how to live without it.

Harry decided to sleep on it; he wasn’t one for rash decisions. (This was an utter lie; he was definitely one for rash decisions, but he was exhausted.)

The next morning, he woke up to the pleasant tone of Aunt Petunia’s high-pitched screeching. He blinked his eyes open blearily, before he felt a thick hand grasp his collar and haul him from his cupboard.

"Stop being so lazy, boy,” Uncle Vernon spat at him, his beady eyes narrowed in impossible and undeserved anger. “We have guests coming tonic t - start polishing the silver!” He finished, shoving Harry roughly toward living room.

Harry stumbled forward, catching his balance by grasping onto the wall. He swallowed thickly and rubbed his sore shoulder, before doing as he was told. His mind roiled with all the things he wished he could do to the Dursleys. He didn’t think of himself as an evil person, but the things he thought when looking at his family would be at home in a criminal psychiatric hospital.

As he trudged back into the hallway, finally finished with the silver, the doorbell rang out shrilly. Uncle Vernon lumbered toward the door, glaring at Harry with a warning to stay out of the way.

Uncle Vernon opened the door, and Harry craned his neck to see over his uncle’s shoulder. He managed to spy a very pretty teenage girl of perhaps fifteen.

She smiled up at Uncle Vernon and said sweetly, ‘Hello sir. I represent the Little Whinging Assisted Living Community, and I was wondering if you’d like to do your part as a vital member of our community to help out with our elders. I would…” Harry stopped listening, and became more focused on the look of hunger on his uncle’s face.

Disgust roiled inside of Harry’s stomach, and he heard his uncle say, “Why don’t you come in? I’ll get you a snack, and you can explain exactly what I can do for you.”

Harry saw the girl’s smile falter slightly, but she took a step toward Uncle Vernon nonetheless. Harry swallowed, repulsed at the look in his uncle’s eyes. Before the girl could come any farther, he sprinted around his uncle and grabbed the girl by the hand. He tugged her away from Number Four, Privet Drive and down the road.
“What the Hell?! Hey, kid! What are you -” She demanded, looking slightly angry but mostly just bewildered. Harry finally stopped when they were at the end of the lane.

“Don’t go back there,” he said firmly, glancing around nervously. “He would have… well, just… you’re better off not knowing,” he admitted, revulsion still thick in his throat.

Understanding - and then fear - flickered in the girl’s eyes, and she nodded. “Thank you,” she said cautiously. “Hey, kid - how old are you anyway? Seven? Eight?”

“Nine!” Harry said indignantly. He wasn’t that small! The girl’s eyes widened.

“Nine? But you’re…” she trailed off, and her face hardened. “That bastard,” she muttered quietly. Her expression quickly changed to one of concern. “If you go back, after you helped me, what will happen to you?” She asked quietly.

Harry flinched slightly at the prospect of going back, but tried to answer nonchalantly. “Oh, nothing too bad,” he lied.

The girl snorted. “Yeah, okay kid. What’s this?” She asked, pointing toward the purple bruises flowering on his arms and shoulder. He swallowed.

“Um, just - you know - I fell, and -”

“Bullshit,” she interrupted flatly. “What’s your name, anyway?”

He blinked. “Um - Harry.”

The girl cocked her head. “Harry… not too bad. Eh, it’ll do for the time being,” she said. Harry blinked in confusion. The time being?

“My name was Charlie, but you’re going to call me Shade,” she said confidently. Harry’s forehead creased, still lost. The name “Shade” sounded a bit pretentious, but he was too polite to say so.

“I’m - why not just your name?” He asked slowly, wanting an explanation.

She crossed her arms, but didn’t look defensive, merely patient. “Because Charlie wasn’t strong enough. So I got rid of her, and became Shade.” Shade stooped down a little and had her face level with Harry’s. She bit her lip in concentration as she stared at his face. His cheeks heated at the scrutinization.

“Look at me,” she murmured quietly. “Do you think Harry is strong enough to survive?”

Harry looked at her blankly.

“If not, you don’t have to be him anymore. You’re going to become someone new, someone strong. You’re going to be great someday, and unleash your wrath onto those who have wronged you - and may God have mercy on their souls.”

“How do you know?” He asked softly. “That I’ll be great.”

A smirk spread across her face, quiet mirth dancing in her eyes. “It’s my superpower. But truly, kid… you’re going to be a supernova. An assassin to everyone who has dared defy you.” A shadow fell over her face, and a grim smile tugged at her lips. “There we go. Assassin - Sin, for short.” She winked at him. “I think Sin will fit you nicely.”
It Certainly Isn't Easy, But... It's Freedom

Chapter Summary

Shade brings Harry to where she and some other runaways reside.

Chapter Notes

LAST TIME: Harry ran away from the Dursleys with a teen girl named Shade, and was given the name Assassin.
Don’t hesitate to subscribe and/or leave a comment! Thank you to everyone who already has, it means a lot!

Harry hurried behind Shade, following her closely. He took in a shuddering breath as they turned a sharp corner. Shade broke into a run, and he had to nearly sprint to keep up with her long graceful strides. They continued like that for nearly an hour, before Shade finally slowed to a quick walk.

“You don’t really volunteer at the Little Whinging Assisted Living Community, do you?” He asked, an eyebrow furrowed. She let out a snort of derisive laughter.

“There is no Little Whinging Assisted Living Community. It’s just a way to get to know who lives in which houses, and sometimes I’ll get invited inside. If I know what the layout of a house is, it’s much easier to crack,” she told him, hurrying across a quiet street.

Harry’s eyes widened. “You rob people!?” He asked incredulously. “But - but that’s wrong!”

Shade stopped, and swung around to meet his gaze. She didn’t look angry, but her expression was cold. He swallowed as she began to speak. “Is it? Is it wrong that we take what we need to live? Or is it wrong that we’re on the streets trying to survive, while pigs like that man you live with get to wallow in their luxury? In the money that they made by screwing over others? I don’t think so,” she said quietly but fiercely. Harry opened his mouth to retort, before actually thinking about what Shade had just said.

“I - I guess that makes sense,” he said, his voice small. His forehead creased as he thought about it, and Shade continued walking. “But - how would that work? People would know that there isn’t a Little Whinging Assisted Living Community, so they wouldn’t believe you,” Harry told her.

She snorted again. “Typically, Harry, that would be correct - but everyone in this neighborhood is too wrapped up in their own self-centered lives to notice. Besides, even if they didn’t think there was one, they’re so afraid of looking bad that they would pretend they knew there was one.” Harry shrugged; it made sense, and Aunt Petunia would certainly never admit to not knowing something about the neighborhood.

The calm, orangey light began to fade as the sun disappeared completely beneath the horizon. Harry, bursting with curiosity, could no longer hold in his questions.
“So - so who are you, anyway? Why are you helping me? Where are we going? Are you, like, the head of a street gang? Do you expect me to help you rob people? Because I don’t know if I’d be much help - I mean sure, I want to screw over the Dursleys, but I’ve never robbed anyone before. Are we going to be walking for much longer?” He asked Shade, not being able to staunch the seemingly never-ending flow of inquiries. Shade let out a bark of laughter.

“So, you ever hear the phrase ‘curiosity killed the cat’?” She asked him with a wry grin. He blushed and bowed his head, keeping his gaze on the ground. He still wasn’t used to being called Sin. She nudged him playfully. “Kidding, Sin. And you were close, when you guessed street gang - but it’s not really a gang. We’re a family. A real one, not those bastards that had custody of you.” Harry had told her of his familial situation on their journey. “We look out for each other. The life - it’s not comfortable, it certainly isn’t easy, but… it’s freedom.” Harry’s mind whirled at the sudden influx of new information. Shade grabbed him by the collar as she stopped suddenly, and he almost walked past her. She released her and gestured toward the large abandoned-looking warehouse.

“This is us,” she said quietly. “I’ll explain everything when we get inside.” She pressed lightly on the rusting door, and it swung open with no resistance. Harry couldn’t see what was through the door - it was pitch-black. Shade jerked her head and gestured for him to enter the warehouse. He swallowed with trepidation but did as he was told. She followed him in and closed the door behind them, before calling out, “Sparky!” Harry’s features scrunched up, perplexed.

There was a loud grinding sound, and a light flickered on. Harry’s mouth dropped open in wonder. They were standing inside an enormous one-room warehouse, nearly an acre big. On the other end of the room were ten or eleven sleeping mats, and one wall had a long rack of different tools. The most alarming thing about the revelation, however, were the nine children standing in front of Harry. They ranged from what looked like a six-year-old to about Shade’s age.

One of the girls, who looked like she had just become a teenager, was holding a small metal box covered in buttons with a dirty hand. Her blond hair was tied up messily atop her head, and her eyes contracted as she scrutinized Harry.

Harry flushed at the attention, before the girl who’d spoken earlier took a step closer. “I’m Sparky,” she told him with a welcoming grin. “C’mon, I’ll getcha somefin’ to sleep on.” Harry smiled gratefully at the thirteen-year-old, who led him over to a storage closet. Sparky tossed Harry a couple of blankets and tugged a small mat out of the closet. She shut the door and dragged the mat over to the other sleeping area, and dropped it onto the floor. Harry piled the blankets onto the mat.

“So, wha’s your name, kid?” She asked him. Harry’s nose wrinkled; he didn’t think it fair that people kept calling him ‘kid’ - they were all kids, for crying out loud! However, he didn’t tell her that.

“Harry,” he said. She raised an eyebrow.
“Yeah, I don’t think so. You might have been Harry before, but you’re not anymore. You’re free now - so again. What’s your name?”

Harry swallowed, but replied with, “Sin. Well, Assassin, but - Sin. For short.” He waited for her to laugh, to roll her eyes at the dramatic name - but she didn’t. She merely looked him up and down and nodded slowly.

“Alright, Sin. Well, this’ll be where ya sleep, and like I said, you’re a scrawny piece ‘o work, so let’s get some food in ya.” She turned around and shouted at one of the smaller children, “Oi! Roach! Bring us somefin’ to eat, will ya?”

The little boy nodded and raced over to them, a loaf of bread in hand. “Sparky, guess what? I grabbed this all by myself! I didn’t need any help!” He told her proudly, handing the bread to Sin. Sin felt like he hadn’t eaten in days - actually, now that he thought about it, he hadn’t eaten since lunch yesterday. He devoured the bread, nearly moaning in delight at actually getting some food.

He flushed, expecting Roach and Sparky to be staring at him like he was mad, but they seemed to think his actions completely normal. Roach was still describing his feat to Sparky, who looked amused.

“And then I just ran! I just sprinted down the alley, and the guy couldn’t follow me ‘cause - get this - he tripped over trying to open his car door!” Sparky smiled wryly and clapped the young boy on the shoulder.

“That’s amazing, Roach! Hey, will you do me a favor and go help Toxic? She just came back from a raid, and you know you’re the only one who she’ll let help her.” Roach nodded, flashed a smile at Sin, and raced off.

“Thank you,” Sin said awkwardly, swallowing the last of the bread.

Sparky smiled. “No trouble. Get some sleep, Sin, and we’ll start teachin’ ya a thing or two tomorrow.” She replied, gesturing to the sleeping mat. Sin smiled gratefully, and burrowed into the blankets of his new bed. He fell asleep almost immediately.
What About Spider?

Chapter Summary

Sin embraces his new name and learns a little about his new family, and someone is caught.

Chapter Notes

So this chapter is really just getting to know the gang, it's not my best work. However, you do need to read it to understand the story. Please enjoy!

Sin woke to a quiet giggle. He blinked his eyes open, and his vision was assaulted by two large brown orbs. He let out a sharp yell and scooted back several feet. He cast his hand around for his glasses. Once they were on his nose, he realized what the orbs were. Beside his sleeping mat sat a young boy, perhaps five or six, with shining chocolate eyes.

The boy cocked his head. “Hey, Sin! I’m Light!” The boy thrust his hand forward, and his eyes held such warmth that Sin couldn’t help but shake it, albeit with an internal chuckle. Sin cast his gaze to his left, where Shade sat observing them, her grin amused. She watched Light fondly, and Sin could understand what she’d meant when she’d called this little gang ‘family’.

Shade noticed Sin’s stare and stood up, approaching them. She smiled at Light, who had begun to gnaw on an apple that Sin hadn’t noticed before.

“Hey, Light - you’d better go wake Stickler. Remember what happened last time we let him sleep through breakfast?” She asked the little boy. His eyes grew wide, and scrambled to his feet before racing away across the warehouse. Shade’s gaze turned to Sin, the fondness in her eyes gone, but she still had a soft look.

“I’m going to show you who everyone is, and then Toxic and I will take you to a back alley someplace and teach you a few things.” Sin nodded, silently wondering what “a few things” would entail.

Shade sat down next to Sin and leant her back against the wall. She gestured to the other side of the warehouse, where Sparky was fiddling with her black box. “You’ve met Sparky. She’s a genius. She set up the whole electrical system in here - the lights, the ‘borrowed’ fridge? Both thanks to Sparky.” Sin’s eyes widened.

“How’d she end up here?” Sin asked curiously. Shade’s face hardened.

“As you know, about four years ago, her parents dropped her off at a robotics camp and never went back for her. She wandered around for a couple days and nearly starved to death before Spider found her and brought her here.” Sin felt anger coil in the pit of his stomach, anger at the people who had abandoned Sparky. He didn’t say anything.
Shade must have seen the look on his face, because she gripped his shoulder loosely.

“Everyone in this family is here because of some messed up adults. It doesn’t help anyone to dwell on what already happened - instead, we can help by staying alive and screwing with those who have done us wrong, okay?” She told him firmly. Sin nodded, recognizing the wisdom in Shade’s words. Her expression softened, and her gaze turned back to the vast space in the warehouse.

“Roach and Toxic are from the same orphanage. They ran away ‘cause the orphanage was being shut down, and they were going to be sent to separate foster homes. Toxic kept them alive on the streets together for s. She’s got a good survival instinct, that one. She managed to keep them fed by pillaging food from the rubbish bins of the rich, and they slept in their garden sheds. Sparky and I were going through the wealthy’s rubbish bins for spare electrical parts when we happened upon those two trouble-makers. When the houses get better security, or we just can’t take what we need, it’s Toxic who always manages to find a way to keep us fed,” Shade finished, a fond light in her eyes. She tucked a lock of brown hair behind her ear and let out a short sigh.

“I found Light when I was out scouting for new houses to crack. Someone had left him swaddled up in a blanket on the doorstep of a man who regularly got drunk - I couldn’t leave him there,” she said, her voice steady. “He’s been with us for four years.”

Something about what she’d said tugged at the back of Sin’s memory, like deja vu, but he couldn’t place what it was. He shook off the feeling and waited for Shade to continue. She opened her mouth when a dark-skinned boy who looked only a couple years older than Sin jogged over and interrupted.

“Oi, Shade! I can sell the -” he stopped short when he noticed Sin’s curious look. The boy fidgeted quietly, his eyes shooting a silent question to Shade. She nodded, the movement so small Sin almost thought he imagined it. The boy continued. “I can sell the stuff you got last night. The cash alone you got us will buy a couple meals, but with those silver candlesticks - Shade, the money from them'll feed us for at least a month!” He said, puffing his chest up. Shade raised an eyebrow.

“Good. That means Spider and I can take a back seat on the raids for a while, get Sin trained up.” The boy nodded as Shade added, “Tell Toxic and Hero to come here, will you?” The boy nodded and spun around, walking quickly in the other direction.

“That was Stickler. He’s got connections that he won’t even tell me about - afraid of them fleeing and all. He can sell anything, Sin. He knows a fence who could sell a stolen diamond to the prime minister.” She laughed quietly. “But he’s a bit of a stickler for rules and formality - hence the name.” Sin nodded in understanding as two young girls raced over. One of them looked just under Shade’s age, and she was wearing a deep green hijab. It complemented her eyes perfectly. Her skin was a beautiful coffee color.

The other one looked a couple years younger. Her shoulder-length ginger locks were choppy, as if they’d been cut by a child. Her chocolate brown eyes were narrowed, and there were clear bags under them. Her fingers were stained black, and she had a long burn down her left forearm.

“Yeah boss?” The older one asked, her accent foreign. She held out her hand, and Shade grasped it tightly, pulling herself to her feet.

“Hero, you and Toxic are going to cover raid duty for a while. Maybe take Roach with you on an easier one, give him some real-life experience on a raid, yeah?” She said, talking to the older one. Hero nodded, and she and Toxic left, talking quietly.

“Hero is like our... diplomat.” Shade smirked slightly at the word. “If someone gets in trouble with
the coppers, or another set of street rats, she’ll talk their way out. She’s got a real silver tongue.”

Shade pulled Sin to his feet. “Come on, I’ll take you to Wheels. He and Sparky are working on something - God knows what. Wheels sometimes helps Sparky with her projects, and, well… it doesn’t always go well to say the least.”

All of a sudden, Sin was being pulled to the other side of the warehouse, nearer the front door where he first entered. In the middle of the floor, amidst a pile of various miscellaneous metal parts and wires, sat Sparky and a boy about her age. His stringy blonde hair was held back by a dirty red bandana, and he had spectacles that were slowly slipping off of his nose. However, Sin’s eyes were drawn to his left arm, which ended rather abruptly at the elbow.

“What happened?” Sin asked impulsively, before immediately regretting his decision. “I - I’m sorry, I didn’t -”

The boy looked up and laughed. “It’s fine, I get it. I don’t know what happened - I was born without the end of my arm. Perhaps my twin fought back when I absorbed it in the womb.”

Sin blinked quickly, not quite sure how respond to such a statement, so he merely said, “Uh - okay.” The other boy snorted.

“Hey, Shade? I get that you’re showing the new kid the ropes and all, but we need to concentrate,” Sparky said. Shade nodded, and dragged Sin toward the door.

He racked his brain, trying to remember if that was everyone.

“Hey, Shade?”

“Mm?”

“What about Spider? What’s he do? How’d you meet him?” Sin asked. From what he’d heard, Spider seemed to be kind of like a second-in-command. Shade’s face grew cold.

“Spider was… an interesting case. I think it’s best if you hear it from -” before she could finish, the door slammed open, and Hero sprinted inside, closely followed by Toxic and. Panic was written all over their faces.

“What happened?” Shade asked sharply.

“Spider - he was arrested,” Hero said quietly. Shade swore violently, and punched the wall in anger.
Chapter Summary

Sin joins Shade and Hero to try and rescue Spider, and it's revealed that Shade knows more about Sin than he knows about himself.

“You couldn’t talk him free?” Shade asked Hero quietly, nursing her bruised hand. Hero crossed her arms, a flare of hatred in her eyes - but somehow, Sin didn’t think it was directed at Shade.

“Nobody could have. The copper that arrested him… it was his dad’s friend. Smitherson.”

A shadow fell across Shade’s face, and she cursed under her breath. “Damn it. Where? What were you lot doing?”

Toxic took a breath before answering. “We were out scouting for an easy mark - you know, one that we could bring Roach to? Spider was helping us, and - and then Smitherson caught sight of him. It was down by St. George Boulevard, so they probably took him to the police holding station a couple blocks away.”

Shade stretched her arm behind her back and yelled for Sparky, who came jogging over. Shade explained the situation quickly. “You’re in charge until we get back. Nobody else leaves this warehouse until I’m back or there’s an emergency, got it?”

Sparky nodded, a grim expression settling over her face. She headed further into the warehouse, Toxic following her. Hero and Sin tried to follow her, but Shade stopped them.

“Ah, no. You two are with me.” Sin’s eyes widened considerably. Hero he could understand - she might be able to talk their way through - but him? What did he have to offer?

“Why?” He asked, confused. Shade’s lips pressed together tightly, and Sin could almost see the wheels turning inside of her head, as if she was evaluating what she wanted to tell him.

“You… you might be able to help in a way none of the rest of us can. It’s - you’ll understand at some point. It’s difficult to explain, and you won’t believe me until you experience it.”

That just made made Sin even more confused. Now instead of one question, he had hundreds.

“I don’t -”

“Look, are we going or what?” Hero cut in, an eyebrow raised. Shade straightened up and nodded, clearing her throat. She threw one last look at Sin, an indecipherable look in her eyes, before striding toward the door.

Sin put his hands on his head in confusion. What could she have possibly meant by that? He wouldn’t believe her? At this point, Sin would have believed anything Shade told him (barring, of course, alien bullshit and the like).

“Are you coming?” Hero asked, and he could feel the judgement in her stare. He opened his mouth to reply before simply shrugging and following Shade out the door. He heard quiet footsteps behind
him that meant Hero was on her way. He hurried to catch up with Shade, not wanting to be left behind.

They headed deeper into the city, walking slow enough to avoid suspicion but still keeping a faster pace than Sin was used to. After nearly forty minutes, Shade held her hand out to stop him before grabbing his arm lightly and ducking into an alleyway, pulling him with her. Hero joined them moments later.

“The building up ahead of us is the police station. They’ll be holding him there for a couple more hours, ‘cause while Smitherson is crooked, he’s also a cop, and will have to fill out the tons of paperwork, so we have a little time. Hero, what can you tell me?”

Hero cleared her throat. “It’s a Sunday, so there’s only three cops on duty. Smitherson, another dirty cop who works for him, and this new guy that nobody’s heard of. He’s the fresh-faced, naive type; easy to manipulate.”

Shade nodded. “Good - so if we create a distraction, New Guy will drag one of the other two to go check it out. That means we only have to deal with one copper.”

Hero nodded. “If one of us distracts him, then the other can knock him out no problem.”

Sin let out a nervous, skeptical laugh. “Right. ‘Cause either of you could knock a man twice your weight unconscious.”

Hero and Shade both turned to look at him, eyebrows raised. “Yes,” said Hero, crossing her arms. “Because we learned how once we realized that adults can’t be trusted.”

Sin shook his head. “No, they’re - they’re not all bad!” They can’t be, he thought. My parents had to have been good people.

Hero scoffed. “When has a grown-up ever done something good? Ever helped you out? Shade told me what your uncle did - did your aunt ever try to stop him? What about your teachers? They must have noticed what was going on at home, must have seen the bruises… did any of them ever call the police? No. Even if they had, what would the police have done? Absolutely nothing, if your uncle paid them enough. They -”

“Enough,” Shade cut in sharply, glaring at Hero. Meanwhile, Sin took a step back, his mind whirling. Hero had a point… when had an adult really helped him? The only time he could remember a grown-up mentioning his bruises was when his maths teacher last year had told him to ‘be more careful when running about’. But… he’d spent so long dreaming about his mother and father that he knew, he just knew, that they were good people - they would have helped him. Wouldn’t they?

“Oi! Sin. Sin. Assassin!” Shade said, waving her hands in front of his face. He shook himself, and looked back up at her. “We done with our little reminiscent moment? Good. ‘Cause we’re gonna need a distraction.”

He nodded. “What can I do?”

“The naive guard - he’s on desk duty in the front?” Shade asked Hero, who nodded in conformation, playing with the bottom of her hijab. “Then you’ll just run up to him and say that your dad’s being robbed. He’ll run after you to help, ‘cause often in this area, rich people will pay the cops that help them out. Forms a bond for when they need favors, y’know.”
Sin swallowed nervously but nodded, ready to help. Shade and the others had taken him in, helped him escape the Dursleys (he pushed back the thought that no adult had ever offered to help him do that, and he’d had to rely on other children); the least he could do was provide a distraction so they could rescue Spider.

Sin ran inside, a bell ringing as he pushed the door open. A young man, perhaps in his mid-twenties, looked up.

“Hey, kid! Where are your parents?”

Sin forced a tear out of his eyes. “My - my papa - he - we were just - you gotta help him, sir! You gotta help him!”

The man rushed out of his chair and hurried to kneel down before him. “Sh, slow down, kid. What happened?”

“My - Papa and I, we were walking down the short cut, and some guy - he runs at us, and points his gun at Papa, and tells him to give him money. My papa -” Sin sniffled - “he told me to run, to get help, but - please, you gotta help him!”

The man nodded, and ran into a back room. Sin heard a groan and a quiet argument, before the man came racing back out, followed by a second (far more heavy-set) man, with a hideous handlebar moustache. Sin was slightly bewildered, as he’d thought that people only had those in America.

However, he kept up his act. “Please, sirs - you gotta help my papa! He’s - he’s three streets down!”

The younger man nodded.

“We will kid, don’t you worry. You stay here, and don’t leave this building, got it?”

Sin nodded, wiping a fake tear from his cheek. The two men headed out of the doors. As soon as they were gone, Sin headed toward the light switches. He turned off all of the lights, then turned them back on. He repeated this again, and moments later Shade and Hero headed in the door.

“Where’s the third guy?” Sin asked them, whispering. Shade snorted.

“If I know Smitherson, he probably stayed behind to taunt Spider. He’ll be in the back, with the holding cells."

Sin nodded, and they headed through the back hallway. They made it to a row of six cells, two of them occupied; however, there was no sign of any policemen.

“Spider!” Hero exclaimed, racing toward the cell at the end of the corridor. A young boy, perhaps fifteen, glanced up from where he sat on the floor of his cell. He had messy brown hair, and his olive skin complemented his grey eyes. However, none of these features could distract from the enormous purple blotch on his jaw, or the fact that his left eye was swollen shut.

“What took you guys so long?” Spider asked humorously, his voice smooth, contrary to his appearance.

“When I find Smitherson,” Shade said angrily through gritted teeth, her eyes scanning Spider (presumably for further injury), “I’m going to fucking kill him.” She nodded at Hero, rage still
rampant in her eyes. Hero took something from her pocket and began to work on the cell door’s lock.

Spider raised an eyebrow when he caught sight of Sin. “And who’s this scrawny little guy?”

“That’s Assassin,” Hero said offhandedly, just as the lock clicked and the door swung open. Shade pushed Hero aside and bent down, helping Spider to his feet.

“Oh - Sin,” Offered Sin, liking the shorter version a little better. ‘Assassin’ sounded a little dramatic.

Spider snorted, limping his way out of the cell with Shade’s help. “I’ll bet Shade named you. She always did have a flair for dramatics.”

Shade rolled her eyes. “Let’s hurry - we still don’t know where Smitherson -”

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t the whole gang of street rats. I knew you’d come after him,” came a deep, gravelly voice. Shade’s eyes flew over Sin’s shoulder and she cursed violently. A shadow flickered in Spider’s eyes. Sin and Hero whirled around, to be met by the hulking form of a man in police uniform.

“Your daddy misses you, Christopher,” he crooned, looking at Spider. Spider’s jaw locked in fury.


“Who’s this, then? I’m sure Christopher’s father will… enjoy you, as well,” he said with a sickening grin. He shot forward with surprising speed and grabbed Sin by the throat.

Images flashed before Sin’s eyes; Uncle Vernon doing the exact same thing, Aunt Petunia doing nothing to stop him, the look in his uncle’s eyes when he’d seen Shade, and the way Spider reacted to Smitherson. Some tension in Sin’s eyes, that had been building ever since Smitherson had spoken, snapped. It was like a dam was released, and a wave of fury came crashing through Assassin’s body. There was a flash of white light, and Smitherson was thrown across the room. His body smacked into the wall, and he collapsed to the ground, out cold.

“I knew it,” breathed Shade.
You're a Wizard, Assassin

Chapter Summary

Shade tells Sin about his abilities but doesn't reveal everything she knows.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sin stared at the unconscious body of Smitherson. He opened his mouth, but no sound came out. What the Hell had just happened? He hadn’t touched him - he hadn’t even spoken a word! How had he done that? There were no rational answers.

He barely registered the voices speaking behind him; everything else had been pushed to the back of his mind. He’d always known he had an… aura of luck, so to speak, but what had just happened went way beyond luck; it was beyond anything.

The back of his mind eventually registered what Shade had said, and he spun around to see Spider and Shade having a heated conversation in low whispers.

“What did you mean?” Sin asked quietly. There was no reply, so he tried again. “What did you mean, ‘I knew it’?” He repeated loudly.

Shade’s gaze flinched from Spider’s to Assassin’s, and she bit her lip thoughtfully. “Spider,” she said in an undertone, “Get Hero home.” The older boy nodded and stood, taking Hero’s hand. Hero was staring at Sin open-mouthed, her hijab slightly askew. Spider led her out of the room and Sin was left alone with Shade.

Shade gave Smitherson’s body a look of utter disgust before saying quietly, “We should get out of here. I, for one, don’t want to be here when he wakes up.” She didn’t wait for a reply, merely stepping over the man’s unconscious form and heading out the door. Sin scowled, but followed her nonetheless.

It wasn’t until they were four blocks away from the police station that Shade finally broke the silence. “Have you ever… done anything that you couldn’t explain? Anything that nobody else seemed able to do?”

Sin stared at her. “How…” he trailed off, thinking. She wasn’t wrong. It wasn’t just the obvious things, like when he’d turned his teacher’s wig blue, or accidentally ended up on the roof of the school kitchens… it was the smaller stuff that made him nod slowly. He had been the only person in his year four class to not get lice, every hit Dudley or Uncle Vernon had managed to land on him that (by all logic) should have permanently injured him had never left him incapable for more than a few hours… his whole existence was riding on luck.

“What does that mean?” He asked softly. Shade smiled.

“It means you have magic.”

He stared at her. “I have what?” He asked, incredulous.
“You’re a wizard, Assassin.” She told him. He didn’t reply. It would explain… well, everything, but he couldn’t just throw away nine years of thinking magic a fairytale. “There’s a whole community of wizards and witches, just like you.”

As they walked back to the warehouse, Shade explained that there was an entire world hidden from the view of ‘muggles’. That these people had actual wands, and could cast spells, and brewed potions, and that dragons and vampires were also real… she told him tales of a magical government and of a school for people like him. His mind was spinning.

“So… you’re a witch?” Sin guessed. Shade snorted bitterly, and shook her head. “Then - how do you know so much about magic?” Sin asked, furrowing an eyebrow in confusion.

“I’m a squib,” she explained unhelpfully. Seeing Sin’s confused expression, she elaborated. “I had magical parents, but I was born without magic.”

Sin nodded in understanding, before clarifying, “Then how did you know I was a wizard?”

Shade chuckled. “I’m magic-sensitive. I can sense someone’s aura; not just whether or not they have magic, but also the potency of the magic, and how powerful someone is. Not necessarily magic-wise, either. Spider and Toxic are both muggles, but Spider’s aura is far harsher.”

Sin didn’t really comprehend what she was saying, but nodded anyway - he got the gist of it. He ran a hand through his messy black hair. A sharp, disbelieving laugh escaped his lips.

“This is insane,” he professed, rubbing his eyes. “This is completely mad.”

“Perhaps,” Shade conceded with a nod, “But that doesn’t make it any less true.”

There was a pause in the conversation as they hurried past a beady-eyed man in a boring suit who was leaning against his car, shouting into his mobile phone angrily. Spittle flew from his face and a few droplets got on to Sin’s shoulder, who grimaced.

“Do they know? The rest of them?” Sin asked once they were a street away.

“Spider does. Hero knows about the magical world, and about me, but not what I suspected about you. I don’t think she truly believed me until today. The rest of them… I’ve told them that magic is real in a broad sense, but nothing about the wizarding world.” She rolled her shoulders and sighed quietly.

They walked in silence the rest of the way back to the warehouse. Sin had a million questions, but he couldn’t decide which one to ask first. If magic was real, why had nobody used it to stop global warming? Why didn’t muggles know about magic? How had a muggle never seen a real dragon or giant, if they were really out there, and told the media? Was there only one magical school in the world? Who came first, the muggle or the wizard? Did a squib come before a muggle-born?

However, he didn’t get the chance to ask any of them, because he hadn’t sorted out his words before they arrived at the warehouse. Shade pushed the door open and Sin followed her in; once again, it was pitch-black.

“Sparky!” Shade called firmly, and the lights switched on, accompanied once more by the loud grinding. Shade snorted when she caught sight of Spider; Light was on his shoulders, and Roach was on his back, his tiny arms wrapping around Spider’s middle.

“I see you’ve made your homecoming,” she said with a grin. Spider rolled his eyes “You took your time,” he returned coolly, “Did you come the long way ‘round?”
Shade shrugged. “I had hoped it would give you time to… explain what happened,” she admitted with a guilty grin. Spider sighed.

“Lucky for you, you were right,” he said grudgingly. Before Shade could reply, Roach dropped off of Spider’s back and smacked full-force into Sin, knocking him flat on his ass.

“Are you really a wizard?” Roach asked in wonder, sitting on Sin’s chest. “I mean, you can really do magic and all that?”

“Um - I think so?” Sin wheezed out, before shoving Roach off. The seven-year-old boy giggled as he tumbled to the floor before bringing himself to a stand.

“Can you do a spell?” Roach asked eagerly.

“Roach,” Shade reprimanded sharply, “Let Assassin breathe. Besides, magic doesn’t work like that. He can’t just turn it on and off without a wand.” The younger boy huffed and stuck his tongue out at Shade, before heading a cross the warehouse to where Wheels sat with Sparky.

“So everyone knows?” Sin asked quietly, breaking the following silence. Spider nodded.

“I don’t think Sparky quite believes it - or maybe she just doesn’t want to believe it - but the rest of them do. Hero saw it first hand, after all, and after Sparky, she’s the most cynical of us all.”

Shade blew out of her nose heavily as she looked at the sleeping form of Assassin. “What are we going to do, Spider?” She asked softly. “Light and Roach are already so attached, and he could help us so much… what are we going to do when he gets his letter?”

Spider sat behind her, braiding her hair to the side. “We’ll just have to let him go,” he replied. “Otherwise they’ll come looking for him, and if they find us - which they will, because they have magic - they’ll just stick him back with his uncle.”

Shade grimaced; she knew he was right. Spider finished her braid and she thanked him silently with a smile, before rolling over to her sleeping mat, the once right beside Spider’s. She snuggled up under the blanket and was about to close her eyes when Spider spoke again.

“Are you going to tell him? About Voldemort? About being famous?”

There was a long pause before Shade replied. “I will. But the poor boy just learnt he was a wizard, for hell’s sake. Let that sink in, and then I’ll tell him.”

Chapter End Notes

So I know it's been ages and this is a little shorter than I'd like, but school just started again and all honors classes are awful. Please please please leave a comment and tell me what you thought!
He'd Be Untouchable in the Fights. Unstoppable.

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of the revelation still has Assassin's mind reeling, and he learns about the more violent way the gang earns money. Spider looks to exploit Sin's powers, and Sin himself dreams about becoming the attacker instead of the attacked.

Chapter Notes

So I know it's been a while; forgive me. I'll try to make the update gap smaller, I promise! Please please please leave a comment - it's not just helpful to my writing, it helps make the story better, and it gives me that little warm tingle inside. Enjoy!

Assassin woke with a yawn. He felt slightly empty, like there was something important he was meant to be doing but could not quite remember what it was. He pushed himself to a sitting position and blinked several times, clearing the sleep dust from his eyes. His eyes adjusted slowly to the dim light of the warehouse, and he swept the building with his gaze. He narrowed his eyes as he caught sight of Shade, Spider, and Hero talking in the corner in hushed voices. His eyes widened again as he looked at Spider and remembered everything that had happened yesterday.

Suddenly, the emptiness was replaced by a crippling panic. He was a wizard, he could do magic! Why was that terrifying him?

Before he could psychoanalyze himself, he decided to see what Shade and the other two were talking about. He stood up, his blanket falling off of his form. He walked quietly over to the trio before tapping Shade on the shoulder and giving her an innocent smile.

“So whatcha talkin about?” He asked, raising his eyebrows in query. Hero jumped and her face took on a vaguely guarded look. Spider raised an unimpressed eyebrow and Shade snorted.

“So,” Sin blushed faintly but Shade waved a hand. “We’re talking about how much Shade’s going to bet on me tonight.”

Spider rolled his eyes and crossed his arms, leaning against the wall. “We’re talking about how much Shade’s going to bet on me tonight.”

Spider ran a hand through his messy hair. “We don’t earn all of our money from nicking stuff, kid. Nah, quite a bit of it comes from the Fights.” Seeing Sin’s still confused expression, Spider shifted and began to elaborate. “Every week, one of the local dealers holds a Fight a couple streets over. You pay to watch, or you can volunteer to enter. One on one, whoever can put the person on the ground for longer than ten seconds wins half the money from the entrance fees. That’s not always enough, though, so sometimes Shade will come down with me and bet on me to win. And I don’t lose.”
Assassin’s eyes expanded in a strange mixture of wonder and nervousness. “Isn’t that - I mean isn’t that illegal?”

Spider stared at him in disbelief. “We steal things for a living,” he said slowly, “You just broke me out of prison - knocking out a police officer in the process - and that’s what you’re concerned about?”

Sin blushed a deeper shade of pink, but he wasn’t done. “How do you win? I mean, it sounds like it’s not really a kid’s thing.”

Spider looked both offended and irritated. He opened his mouth to speak when Shade cut him off.

“Let’s not have another Roach, yeah mate?” She told her second-in-command quietly. Spider’s eyes met hers before he nodded and swallowed whatever he was going to say. When it became clear that he wasn’t going to say anything, Shade stepped in.

“Spider had… self defence lessons -” her eyes darted to Spider’s for a moment and he nodded almost imperceptibly - “when he was younger, and everything else was self-taught in the moment. Plus one of Stickler’s contacts was a street-fighter once too, and in exchange for an antique carriage clock and a copper’s stolen badge, he gave Spider, Hero and I a few lessons. Hero and Spider are much better at it than I am, though.”

“Then why doesn’t Hero fight too? Surely more of you means more money?”

Shade and Hero exchanged a glance before Hero spoke up. “I don’t fight for money. I learned in case I was attacked, sure, but to purposely participate in violence… that’s just not for me.”

Sin didn’t really understand, but he wasn’t going to push her. “Can I come? To your next fight?” He asked eagerly. Spider bit his lip and shrugged, looking like he was about to say yes, when Shade cut him off again.

“... I don’t think that’s a great idea. You’re a little young -”

“I was only two years older when I first fought,” Spider muttered under his breath; Shade glared at him.

“... and you don’t have any training. If someone were to see you there and decide to nominate you... well, Spider said before there were volunteers, but that’s a loose term. If nobody challenges, they shove someone in the pit, and I don’t want to risk you being in there. These fights are dangerous, and sometimes people go too far.”

The three older children’s expression were grim, as if they were reminiscing on a bad memory. Sin swallowed; he didn’t think he really wanted to go anymore. He just nodded and Hero glanced at her watch; it was dirty, cheap plastic with a slightly cracked face, but it was functional. “Y’know, you can go back to sleep,” she said gently. “Get rest after yesterday.”

Sin didn’t really feel tired, but looking at their faces he knew that he was dismissed, so he just nodded and headed back to his sleeping mat. He crawled underneath his blanket and closed his eyes, Spider’s words dancing around in his mind.

“I don’t lose.”
Spider watched the boy head back across the warehouse, biting his lip in thought. An idea started to form in his mind, and idea that he was proud of and extremely guilty about in equal measure.

“What is it?” Shade said sharply, and he turned around to face her. “What are you thinking? The last time I saw that look, we had to jump into the river to escape the coppers.”

“And the time prior to that,” Hero cut in, “We had to scatter and rendezvous on the other side of the city four hours later.”

“And not long before that, you almost got Toxic stuck back in the orphanage!”

“And before that…”

“I get it, I get it!” Spider interrupted, a little bit put out. Seeing their expectant faces, he sighed. “Okay, so maybe I do have an idea - and perhaps my previous ideas have turned out a little negatively -” Hero snorted derisively; Spider ignored her, “- but this one’s different! I swear!”

They both looked at him doubtfully, and he huffed. “For fuck’s sake, give me a chance will you?” Shade rolled her eyes but gestured for him to continue. “So Assassin was right. We would make more money with two of us fighting. Plus, I might not be around forever - no, don’t look like that, you know it’s true. Our lives are dangerous, and with Smitherson out on the streets, mine is especially. But what if we trained someone else to do it? More money, and in case I get bagged?”

Shade didn’t look pleased. “I don’t like where this conversation is going,” she said flatly.

“Hear me out, alright?”

Shade sighed, but looked at Spider as if waiting for more.

“We could train Sin. In a year or two, he could join -”

“Absolutely not,” Shade snapped. “Not happening. He is nine years old, Spider! Nine!”

Spider ground his teeth in frustration. “I started fighting at eleven! Besides, he has a huge advantage over everyone! He might not even have to touch them!”

“That’s not how magic works, Spider,” Shade said wearily. “He won’t be able to just blast people to the ground on a whim.”

“Yes, but didn’t you tell us that you heard of a boy who could? A boy who could get rabbits to turn against their owners? Who could mess with people’s minds? Who could talk to snakes?”

Shade’s breath caught; she had forgotten about him. “Tom Riddle,” she said quietly. “There was a boy fifty or sixty years ago, Tom Riddle, who they said could do that. He could do wandless magic at ten years old without even uttering an incantation.”

“And didn’t you say that Sin had the most powerful magic aura you’d ever experienced?” Spider pressed. Shade let out a low breath and she nodded, her eyes glazed over in thought. “So if we could get Sin to have that same control, with the power he showed at the police station… he’d be untouchable in the fights. Unstoppable.”

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Sin didn’t remember falling asleep, only the dreams that he had, with Spider’s voice playing over and
over again in his subconscious. He dreamed of being able to fight like Spider obviously could, to never be in danger of losing. He would never again have to fear people like Uncle Vernon, or Dudley, or the countless other bullies from school. Nobody would ever be able to touch him again.

*I don’t lose.*

He dreamed of Uncle Vernon, but for the first time in his life, it wasn’t a nightmare. He wasn’t curled up in a ball on the floor while Uncle Vernon rained down countless kicks and punches on his ribs, but instead standing over him cowering. *He* was the one with the power now. It should have scared him, made him worried that he was turning out to be just like his uncle; but it didn’t.

It excited him.
Three weeks later

Assassin glanced around the warehouse, his gaze sweeping the sleeping mats that lay around him in particular. Only Shade’s and Spider’s were empty; Shade was out casing a new group of apartments a few streets down. A small smile of anticipation pulled at his lips as he pulled a note out of his pocket and left it on his blanket; he didn’t want anyone freaking out if they woke up and he was gone.

Checking one more time to make sure everyone was asleep, he crept across the warehouse and slid out of a back door, closing it quietly and cringing inwardly at the quiet squeak the hinges made as he closed it. Sin looked up and down the alleyway he had ended up in before striding down. He made a right and emerged into a small, dirty courtyard full of scattered rubbish and a couple rats.

At the other end of the courtyard, some five meters away from Sin, stood Spider, leaning against the spray-painted brick wall. There was barely an inch of wall that hadn’t been vandalised in some way. It was mostly profanity, but here and there were pictures and pieces of art that Sin found he quite liked.

“Everyone else is still asleep?” Spider asked, not one to bother with greetings or small talk. Assassin nodded.

“Well, Shade’s gone, but she said last night that she was going to wake up early and go get a look at the renters in that new apartment building.”

Spider nodded. “Good - then she shouldn’t be home for another couple hours at least. Now show me what we did last night.” He heaved a slightly dilapidated but still functional punching mat up from the ground and bent his knees slightly, gesturing for Sin to hit the mat.

Sin nodded as he recalled their last session, and got into the proper formation. Without warning he launched a quick attack on the target, punching not just hard but all over the target, careful not to spend to long in one area.
“Your shoulders are good - remember to twist your hips a little more,” Spider said as he watched Assassin’s form, holding the target. Sin spat aside and nodded, continuing, making sure he twisted his hips. “There’s power in your legs,” Spider corrected, “Use it.”

After ten minutes of reviewing his punches, Spider signaled for him to cease. Sin nodded and drew back, breathing heavily. He leant against the wall as Spider set the target down.

“You’re doing well,” Spider admitted with a wry smile. “Better than I expected, at any rate.” Sin wasn’t sure whether he should be flattered or offended. He’d learned over the past few weeks that when it came to Spider, the two tended to come hand-in-hand.

“We’ve done punches and dodges and basic self-defense… today I’m going to teach you a very handy trick, especially if your opponent is a little bigger or more skilled than you are. Do you remember the open-hand punch to the nose? Smashing it with your palm?”

Sin nodded; that sort of thing was a little difficult to forget. Spider tilted his head slightly. “Good. Now this is almost the same concept - open palm to the forehead, knocking their head back. Now this move alone is a little useless, so you have to make sure you’ll have time to follow through - otherwise you’ve just lost time and left yourself open.” Sin nodded, letting Spider know he was listening.

“Well this move pushes their head back, leaving their throat exposed for a heavy punch. Punching someone’s throat will leave them just as incapacitated as if you knocked the wind out of them, so it gives you time to launch your next set of moves without worry of retaliation or proper dodging.”

Sin furrowed his eyebrows slightly before grunting in understanding; it made sense. It sounded incredibly useful; while Sin’s punches had a long way to go before reaching Spider’s power, he was just as fast. When he remembered to put his entire body into the hits he usually did quite well.

“The adam’s apple is particularly painful, but if you hit a little higher it can cause the gag reflex to spasm and they’ll feel sick. If you punch the Adam’s apple they’ll be completely incapacitated, but only for a short while - if you hit the gag reflex they’ll still be able to fight, albeit at much lower standard, but it lasts a little longer.”

Sin nodded. He was learning a lot more about street fighting than he ever thought he would; although he was reluctant to admit it now, before Spider had started training him he’d thought there wouldn’t be much aside from learning how to punch hard and the occasional kick.

“Now let’s see if you can put everything you’ve learnt so far together,” Spider said, and the only warning Sin had was the slight tensing of Spider’s form before he launched a fist at Sin’s head. Sin barely had time to dodge out of the way before another punch came at his stomach. Sin wheeled back after the hit connected, wheezing.

“Your opponent isn’t going to wait for a whistle before they start attacking you,” Spider said sharply. “Always be ready.” Sin didn’t have time to reply before Spider was at him again. Sin was ready this time, though, and he managed to sidestep Spider’s first two punches. He spun on his heel and socked Spider in the ribs. The older boy coughed and turned around ducking beneath another of Sin’s attacks and bringing his fist into Sin’s face. Sin leant back and the blow glanced off his cheek, barely grazing him. Sin was just starting to think he might not be doing so badly when he felt a searing pain in his groin; Spider had kicked him between the legs.

“This is a street fight, kid,” the older boy said firmly. “Don’t expect anyone to stick to whatever moral code you have.” As he spoke, Sin barely registered his hips moving before Spider struck him in the chest. Sin drew in a labored breath before managing to dodge another blow, Spider’s arm
sailing over his head. Sin grabbed his arm and twisted it around; Spider let out a strangled yell before bringing his knee sharply into Sin’s ribs.


Sin growled under his breath before swinging his foot up into Spider’s side. He smiled with triumph as the older boy stumbled back, but his triumph was short-lived, for Spider grabbed his foot and twisted it sharply, before shoving him forward. Sin fell to the ground, but scrambled quickly to his feet; the ground was a very dangerous place to be, especially in a fight with no morals. He kicked up a small pile of rubbish into Spider’s face before punching him in the arm and driving his small, bony elbow into his ribs. Spider grunted in pain and clipped the edge of Sin’s jaw. Sin was about to retaliate when he heard someone clearing their throat behind him. He spun around, swallowing in trepidation.

“And what, exactly, is this?” Shade asked icily, raising a thin eyebrow. She took a step into the courtyard, her lips pressed tightly. At a glance she didn’t look too angry, but when Sin got a glimpse of her eyes… it was then that he could almost feel the fury emanating from her. He’d never seen Shade so enraged.

In fact, had he seen her like this a few weeks ago, he would have flinched - he might have even cowered behind Spider. But he had learnt over the past month that Shade would never cause him harm - and even if she did, now he could do something about it.

“Heeeeyyyy, Shade,” Spider said guiltily, stepping in front of Sin, who realised that he was standing in front of his face, which held the most visible injuries. “I thought you were scoping out those new apartments?”

“I was,” Shade replied coolly. “I came back to see if Sin wanted to come see how it was done.” She cocked her head, her eyes narrowing. “It seems I wasn’t the only one who wanted to teach him something.”

Spider swallowed. “We weren’t - you see, I wasn’t -”

Shade cut him off. “What the hell were you thinking, Spider? He’s nine! Nine, for God’s sake!”

“I’ll be ten soon,” Sin muttered under his breath, a little miffed despite the situation. Shade shot him a glare, and Sin didn’t argue.

“Look, Shade,” Spider tried, obviously having given up on pretending they he wasn’t training Sin, “We need someone else who can do what I do! In case Smitherson gets me again, and you don’t get to me in time. You know that we can’t all survive on just what we manage to snatch from people’s houses. Even if we managed to get enough food for all of us, what about supplies? What about clothes for the winter? What about the gadgets or whatever that Sparky needs that we can’t find in the junkyard? What then?”

Shade’s gaze wasn’t any less fiery. “We would figure it out,” she spat. “Or Hero would step up, if need be. Toxic would help to keep us alive. You’re going to get Assassin seriously hurt, or worse, killed! You know what happens in that pit to those who are unprepared. How could you even -”

This time it was Spider who stopped her mid-sentence. “Except he’s not unprepared! At first I wanted to train him just because of his magical edge, but he hasn’t shown a drop of magic while I’ve been training him, and he’s still good at it! He’s an incredibly fast learner - he’s mastered in three
weeks what I learnt in two months! I reckon that he could already take at least half of the challengers in the Fights!"

Sin raised both eyebrows in shock. Spider thought he was that good? He couldn’t help but feel a little smug.

Shade crossed her arms and didn’t say anything. She just glared at them both before sighing and running a hand through her brown hair. She shut her eyes tightly.

“Fine,” she said finally, and Sin grinned. Even Spider cracked a smile. “But,” she added quickly, “He doesn’t participate in the Fights until he’s at least eleven. And he won’t even go until he’s ten.”

Sin started to protest, but Spider nodded. “Okay.” Shade gave Sin one last, almost pitying look, before rubbing her eyes and turning around. Spider turned back to face Sin.

“Where were we?”
Let the Fight Begin!

Chapter Summary

Sin bonds with his new family on his birthday. Shade and Spider have a special surprise for him.

Chapter Notes

I hope you guys enjoy! Please please please don't forget to comment, it really helps me out and gives me incentive to update faster!

One Week Later

A labored breath left Assassin’s lips as he swung a heavy sack off of his shoulder and onto the ground with a loud ‘thump’. He wiped a sheen of sweat from his forehead, leaving a small streak of grease on his face.

“There you go, Sparky,” he said once he had regained his breath. “All the junk you could ask for. It’d better be worth it, because I had to outrun three coppers with this on my shoulders.” He let go of the opening of the sack and it fell open, revealing a jumbled-up assortment of wires, circuitry, and tools.

Sparky grinned, her dirty blond locks falling out of the knot she’d tied them in. “Cheers, mate,” she said, her eyes analyzing the contents of the sack. “Oh, and Spider wants to see ya in the alleyway,” she added as she lifted a strange wrench and looked at it appraisingly.

Sin grinned and nodded. He’d come to enjoy his training sessions with Spider; not only were they a great way to blow off steam and keep fit, but there was something… exhilarating about using your body as a weapon. He nodded to Sparky and Wheels, who sat next to her, before turning on his heel and heading outside.

Spider and Shade were leaning against the vandalised bricks waiting for him. Spider had his usual hard, uncaring expression. His arms were crossed stiffly. Shade, however, was pressing her lips together in a way that made it look like she could barely contain a smile.

“Um… are we going to spar or something?” Sin asked Shade, furrowing an eyebrow in confusion. He couldn’t imagine any other reason they’d need Shade; she was much closer to Sin’s level than Spider. However, Shade shook her head, her eyes twinkling slightly.

“Follow us,” she said mischievously, pushing herself off of the wall. Spider followed her example and they led Sin through the maze of alleyways before turning a corner. Sin gaped at what he saw. He was speechless.
“Happy birthday Assassin!” Came a chorus of voices. Sin blinked, still shocked at the sight before him.

Before him, in a stretch of alleyway, was a fenced-in area covered in colorful streamers. There was a rusty table with two jugs, one of orange juice and one of water. Next to the drinks sat a monstrous cake; an enormous chocolate confection with the words ‘Happy Birthday!’ written in shaky white icing.

Several red balloons were tied to the fence on the other side of the decorated area, and a long banner with Sin’s name on it hung across the dilapidated building on the left of the alley. Standing around the table stood every single one of Sin’s new family. Light sat on Toxic’s shoulders, beaming; Toxic was smiling pleasantly. Next to Toxic, Sparky had her arm draped around Wheels’ shoulders, a goofy grin on her face. The grease splotch on her forehead had gotten a little bigger, and Sin could see Wheels glancing at it and trying not to laugh.

Roach smiled widely at Sin, and there was a little bit of chocolate icing smeared around his mouth. Sin glanced at the cake and stifled a laugh as he saw one corner had disappeared.

Hero leant against the wall of the alleyway, a wry smile written across her features. She nodded to Sin as he met her eyes and he grinned back. She chuckled silently before the silence broke as Stickler - who was tapping his feet incessantly as he stood next to the table - said loudly, “Don’t just stand there, you great oaf! Are you going to join us or not?”

Sin snorted with laughter, and with that the awkward tension following his birthday proclamation broke. The others began to laugh with him, and Sin felt the strange, warm feeling in his chest that had began to glow ever since he’d found this strange, dysfunctional family grow and grow until he felt he was about to burst with happiness. He felt tears pricking at the backs of his eyes and he blinked several times in quick succession. He was not going to cry, especially not on his birthday, especially not when his family had clearly tried so hard to make today special for him.

So instead he said, “God I’m starving. Let’s break into that cake, yeah?” There were cheers of agreement all around and Shade drew a knife from within her sleeve. She cut into the cake with a grin, and Stickler tapped Sin on the shoulder.

“That cake cost a hell of a lot of money. It’d better be worth it,” he grumbled to the younger boy. Sin nodded but he could see a smile hidden behind Stickler’s grim façade. However, the words prickled at his stomach with guilt, and the giddy smile slid off his face. He approached Shade with a frown.

“All of this - the cost, I mean - I appreciate all of this so much, I really do, but -”

Shade cut him off. “But you’re worried about us not having enough money to really afford it.” Sin nodded, staring at the ground, his cheeks heated. Shade handed the knife to Hero and pulled Sin in for a hug.

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Sin blinked, caught off guard. “We have a birthday fund stored away. We save up for everyone’s birthday and don’t touch it for anything else unless we’re starving. Just because we live on the streets, Sin, doesn’t mean we can’t have a little fun sometimes.” Sin nodded, blinking away the guilt that was still forming in his chest as he squeezed Shade tighter.

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“But anyway, that jewelry box you and Hero stole last week? The one from that frankly embarrassingly under-guarded house on Bethany Street?” Sin nodded. “Well Stickler got in touch with a fencer about it yesterday and it turns out it was worth a lot more than we originally thought.” She grinned wickedly. “You stole a box worth nearly eight hundred pounds.” Sin’s mouth gaped.

“So, I think it’s safe to say you deserve this.”
Sin was about to reply when he felt a faint tug at his shirt from behind. He raised an eyebrow as he turned around to see Light with chocolate smeared all over his face and down his front. In his hands he held two slices of cake, and he shoved one into Sin’s face.

“Is goo’ ca’e,” the little five-year-old said savagely, his mouth full. “Wa’ some?”

Sin snorted quietly and took the second piece of cake. “Thanks, Light.” He took a bite and raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“Wow,” he said, “It really is quite good.”

“Cheers, Sin,” Sparky said as she shouldered past Wheels and Toxic to get to him. She’d somehow managed to add to the mess on her forehead with a splotch of icing. “I picked it out. Mr Menacing over there,” she nodded in Spider’s general direction as Sin chuckled, “Kept arguin’ wif Stickler over what they were gonna get cha, but I told ‘em, ‘look, lads, everyone likes a bi’ o’ chocolate, don’ they?”

Sin grinned. “Well, it was a good choice. It tastes amazing.” Sparky patted his cheek, beaming, before sauntering off to where Wheels stood in the corner chatting with Roach.

They were there in that alleyway for hours, eating, drinking, talking and laughing to their hearts’ content. Finally, when the cake was all gone, the jugs empty, and the sun beginning to dip beneath the buildings, they started to head inside.

As Sin helped Hero and Spider put away the decorations, he couldn’t help but feel that nothing in the world could possibly burst the enormous ball of happiness burning within him. He’d had a real, proper birthday for the first time in his life - and it was more than he’d ever imagined. He’d spent years watching Dudley’s birthdays enviously, but now he felt like he’d had a better birthday than Dudley ever had. He hadn’t gotten thirty-seven presents, or a trip to a theme park, but… he’d gotten a sense of family. He’d gotten hours of pure, uninterrupted bliss with the people he loved and trusted most in the world.

So he felt that the years watching from afar as Dudley tore open the wrapping to his presents had all been worth it, for this.

Sin stepped back into the warehouse and smiled affectionately at his new family, all of them climbing into their beds, and was content.

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Assassin grumbled quietly into his pillow as he felt someone shaking him. “Sleep,” he murmured. “Jus’... jus’ lemme sleep.”

“Get up, you lazy idiot,” a fond voice said lowly. Sin huffed and rolled over to see Shade above him. “You’re ten now. Do you remember what that means?” Sin racked his brain before shooting upright. “You’re kidding,” he said with excitement. “I’m allowed to go?”

Shade nodded with a quiet laugh. “Yes. I’m not particularly happy about it,” her smile twitched into a momentary frown, “But I did promise, and Spider will never get off my ass about it. Besides, it’s probably good for you to go and get an idea of what it’s like in the Fights before you actually participate.”
Sin scrambled out of bed and hurried past Shade to get changed. Ten minutes later he was scarfing up a hamburger bun with margarine spread over it. Strangely, while the food was never exactly that fancy, he seemed to be better fed - or at least fed more often - now that he lived on the streets than when he had lived with the Dursleys.

Spider eyed him with a thoughtful look. “You sure about this?” He asked. “We’ve ‘fought’, but you’ve never seen a real Fight before. I don’t want you upchucking on me.”

Sin wrinkled his nose in disgust. “I’m sure,” he said firmly, pleased that his voice didn’t waver despite his anxiousness.

“Alright then. We’d better hurry - the Fights started two hours ago, and they end at sunrise, so we’ve only got another hour or so before they end and we have to wait another week. Follow me.”

Spider led the way out of the building and down the alleyway behind. They crossed a few streets, the area suspiciously quiet despite being in the middle of the city. It was almost eerie, the way that their footsteps, quiet as they were, were still the loudest things Sin could hear.

They ducked behind a rundown Chinese restaurant and down an alleyway, through a network of tiny, narrow streets before they came out into a cemented courtyard, like a giant version of the one Sin and Spider trained in, except in the center of the courtyard was a huge pit in the ground. It was seven or eight feet deep, and about ten feet wide. Around the edge of the pit was no barrier, just a crowd of people.

As they stepped into the courtyard (Sin was almost thankful for the violent cheering, for it meant the strange silence was gone), a gangly young man (perhaps in his early twenties) with a lewd tattoo of a woman on his right forearm stepped in front of them.

“Welcome back, Spideyboy,” he said with whiny sort of voice. “Who’s your new friend?”

“Now that’s none of your goddamn business, is it Jerome?”

Jerome shrugged and his beady eyes drifted to Sin, who resisted the urge to hide behind Spider. “No need to be so rude,” he said oily, before sighing. “Alright then - you know the drill. Fighters it’s five, spectators it’s twelve.”

Spider drew several crumpled notes from his back pocket and handed them to Jerome, the distaste obvious in his eyes. As Jerome counted the bills his eyebrows raised slightly.

“What, you’re not fighting today? Now that is a surprise.” Spider ignored him and took Sin’s hand, dragging him past Jerome and into the crowd. Sin swallowed thickly and kept his gaze straight, refusing to look at any of the other spectators. They elbowed their way through so that they weren’t quite at the edge of the pit, but nobody stood directly in front of them.

“For the next match, it’s recurring champion Skullfinger, who’s won twelve out of thirteen matches, versus the new guy from last week, Whirlwind!” Cried a young woman, perhaps a year or two older than Shade, from atop the wall of the courtyard. In the pit stood a young man, probably just out of high school, and someone Hero’s age. Nobody in the courtyard seemed to be older than twenty-five.

“Let the Fight begin!”
My Name is Assassin

Chapter Summary

Sin is forced to bite off more than everyone thinks he can chew, but he's not quite in over his head.

And with those words, the black man launched himself at the younger girl, knocking her to the ground. Sin sucked in a sharp breath; the beginning of the fight and she was already on the ground, that was a bad sign. “Get up get up get up,” he whispered under his breath, and Spider tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

“Just watch,” he said quietly, and Sin nodded. They turned their gaze back to the pit as the man pounded his fist into the girl’s face - or would have, had she not rolled out from underneath him with a knee to his ribs and an elbow to his throat. She hopped to her feet and slammed her foot into the back of his head before he could recover, smashing his face into the wall of the pit. She stepped back warily, her knees bent and her arms up, watching his still form as the crowd began to chant, counting down from ten. When they got to six he twitched, before rolling onto his back. He didn’t stand up and Sin hoped dearly that he wasn’t imagining the faint rising and falling of his chest.

The crowd screamed “One, WINNER!” and the girl grinned, raising her fist.

“And it’s another win for Skullfinger! Perhaps one of our most skilled Fighters, I don’t think any of us really doubted this outcome - not after last week’s incredible performance - but I think I speak for all of us when I say this one was over much quicker than expected!” The woman from atop the wall cried out over the crowd. Sin had to commend her spectacular projecting; she wasn’t speaking into a microphone of any sort.

As the woman spoke, two boys dropped into the pit and grabbed Whirlwind’s unconscious body, his face covered in blood, and hauled him over the edge. Sin hoped they were taking him to some sort of medical facility, or were at least going to patch him up themselves.

Skullfinger, however, remained in the pit. This didn’t seem to escape the notice of the commentator who said loudly, “Now the question remains, folks; who will challenge Skullfinger? It looks like she’s ready for another round. Are there any here tonight brave enough to take her on? Or foolish enough?”

Sin found that he rather disliked the look on the commentator’s face as she searched the crowd. It was too hungry, too… manipulative. Rather like she was watching pawns on a chessboard, wondering which one she should move. The more Sin stared at her, the more uncomfortable he felt. Her long black hair looked too shiny, her lips too red, her skin too pale. As her eyes searched the crowd they met Sin’s, and he swallowed thickly. They stared at each other, their gaze not shifting, and Sin wanted to run, to hide behind Spider, to leave the Fights and never come back - but he couldn’t move. He was a deer in headlights, too frightened to leave… frozen and forced to stare into those hungry eyes.

Finally Sin felt someone walk past him, shoving his shoulder slightly, enough that he was pushed forward and broke the woman’s gaze. “You alright?” Spider asked quietly, a concerned frown on his face. “You look a little pale. Was the Fight too much? Do you need to go -”
Sin shook his head. “No, no, I’m fine. Just… it was kind of sudden, that’s all.” Spider nodded slowly, his eyes narrowed as if he didn’t quite believe Sin, but he didn’t push the issue.

The commentator spoke again and as she did, Sin made sure not to look at her. He stared straight down into the pit. “Well, it looks like we don’t have any volunteering challengers. I guess we’ll have to do this the old-fashioned way.” The crowd began hollering, mostly in boisterous cheer, a few in protest. Skullfinger grinned maliciously and surveyed the audience.

“We have to leave,” Spider said suddenly, and he yanked Sin back from the edge of the pit. “We have to go, now.”

“What? Why? What does old-fashioned way mean? Wha -” he could finish his sentence as when Spider dragged him backwards he lost his footing, falling to the dirt ground. Sin scrambled to his feet but the gap between him and Spider closed, people stepping between them.

“Oh crap oh crap oh crap,” Sin muttered wildly, trying to shove his way through. He had barely moved by the time he felt a tap on his shoulder. He spun around to meet the icy blue eyes of Skullfinger.

“Leaving so soon?” She asked sweetly. “You’re a little young to be here, aren’t you? I mean, I saw you with Spider, but that retarded fuckstick doesn’t know what he’s doing. So I think you need a little dose of reality, and why you shouldn’t try to play with the big kids before you’re ready, hm?”

It was almost surreal. A fifteen-year-old was giving him a lecture on being too young to street fight. If Sin had been anything but terrified he would have laughed at the absurdity of the situation. As it was, he just gulped and looked down.

“Are you deaf, kid?” She asked, no longer feigning sweetness. When he didn’t answer she just chuckled and turned to the commentator. “Well, Elena, it looks like I’ve chosen my opponent! I’m about to teach this squirt why coming here isn’t a carnival show.”

The commentator - Elena - smirked, before yelling out, “And we have our next match! It’s recurring champion Skullfinger, who’s won thirteen out of fourteen matches, against a new young man who seems to have found his way out of the nursery.” Despite his situation, Sin bristled slightly. He wasn’t that young! He was ten for God’s sake! Elena turned his gaze back to Sin, but her eyes didn’t meet his in the same freakish way. In fact, this time she seemed like a perfectly normal older teenager. “Do you have a name, kid?” She asked, and the crowd fell relatively quiet.

“You’re going in that pit whether you speak or not, kid,” a young man to Sin’s left whispered greasily. “Try to have a little dignity.”

Assassin forced himself not to shake from fear and drew himself up to his full height. “Assassin,” he said as loudly and as firmly as he could. “My name is Assassin.”

There was a beat of silence before the entire courtyard erupted into laughter and jeering. Sin took the time the commotion gave him to look around frantically for Spider, but the older boy was nowhere to be seen. Sin couldn’t help but feel a pit in his stomach at being abandoned so quickly, but he quickly shook off the feeling; Spider was probably just stuck somewhere in the crowd.

“Alright then,” Elena called out, clearly amused. “Recurring champion Skullfinger, who’s won thirteen out of fourteen matches, against new boy ‘Assassin’!” With those words the opening around the pit started to close as people moved forward, shoving Sin closer and closer to the opening of the pit. Skullfinger leapt elegantly into the pit and turned around to face Sin, her arms crossed and a cruel smirk pulling at her lips.
Not wanting to be shoved unceremoniously onto his face, Sin jumped down after her - not quite as elegantly, but not exactly clumsily either. He breathed in slowly through his nose and tried to remember everything Spider had taught him about going up against more skilled opponents.

“Let the Fight begin!” Elena yelled. Cheers began to erupt as Sin met Skullfinger’s eyes, Spider’s words from their first ever training session buzzing in his mind.

‘Always watch your opponent’s eyes. The eyes are what will give their next move away - if you watch their body you won’t know what they’re doing until it’s almost too late. Watch their eyes.”

Sin breathed in deeply and waited. From the way she had baited and moved in the previous match, Skullfinger’s technique tended to be ‘wait to be attacked and then turn their strength against them’. So he wouldn’t attack first. He would force her too.

Sin didn’t move his gaze from Skullfinger’s eyes, taking his last chance to breathe slowly and deeply. He tried to soothe the thundering beat of his heart.

There was a bit of an awkward pause, as Skullfinger had clearly expected him to make the first move. He waited and saw her eyes twitch almost imperceptibly to the left and he stepped quickly to the right, just in time to dodge out of the way of a low kick that would have sent him sprawling. He took advantage of her being slightly off-balance to twist his hips and punch her ribs as hard as he could. He bent and then straightened his legs as he did so, adding enough power to send her staggering to the other side of the pit.

She clutched her side and turned back to face him, a cruel grin on her lips. “You’ve got guts, kid, and you pack a mean punch, I’ll give you that… but that -”

Before she could finish her sentence, she brought her foot up into the side of his knee, collapsing his legs and sending him into a pile on the floor. His heart pounded inside his chest and he rolled to the side as her foot came down a hairsbreadth from his head. He tried to scramble to his feet but was too slow and Skullfinger’s foot came down hard on his chest, knocking the air from his lungs and holding him down on the ground.

He drew in a laboring breath as she smirked at him. “Didn’t Mommy ever tell you not to -”

This time it was Sin who moved while she spoke, wrapping his arms around her legs and striking his fists into the backs of her knees. She let out a strangled yell and her legs folded, collapsing onto her knees on either side of Sin’s body.

Before she could recuperate from her shock, Sin slammed his open palm into her forehead, knocking it back, and punched the top of her throat as hard as his barely-ten-year-old fists would allow. A choked sound escaped Skullfinger’s body as her hands grasped at her throat. Sin took the opportunity to shove her off and scramble to his feet.

His breath was ragged as he stared down at the girl and realised the crowd had begun counting. They reached six when Skullfinger pulled herself to her feet. “You’ll pay for that,” she spat venomously. Her eyes were dark and as Sin watched, they glanced left. He jumped to his right - straight into her right cross. She had faked the eye twitch and sent Sin sprawling backward, holding his right cheek. Before he could recover, she brought her foot up to pummel his stomach. He grasped for her foot but she just shoved him against the wall of the pit, grabbing his wrists with one hand and forcing them up above his head.

“Sorry kid,” she sneered, “Looks like your light is about to go out.” He tried to kick up but her body was keeping his legs still, and she was much stronger than him, he couldn’t move his arms. He could
only watch in terror as she drew back her arm, knowing that the next punch she would land would crash into his temple with enough force to knock him unconscious. He refused to shut his eyes, not wanting to give her the satisfaction - so he watched, almost as if life was in slow motion, as her fist came closer and closer and closer, eventually hitting him and - he blinked in utter confusion.

“What the hell?” Skullfinger said, staring at her fist in puzzlement. Her fist had come into contact with Sin’s temple, yes, but it hadn’t knocked him unconscious - it hadn’t even hurt. It had bounced off of his skull.

Skullfinger had evidently shook it off as a hallucination, because her eyes held the same haughty confidence as she drew her fist back once more. However, during the confusion she had let go of Sin’s wrists.

Before her fist could reach his head again, he shoved her shoulders, putting all of his panic from the past few minutes into the push. He had expected her to stumble back a step or two and then catch herself… but she didn’t. She didn’t stumble at all - she flew backwards into the other side of the pit, her head slamming against the wall. She fell to the ground and didn’t move.

The crowd started chanting, but Sin couldn’t hear them. There was a loud buzzing in his ears and his hands were shaking. “Please, please, please,” he begged silently, not quite knowing who he was begging. He knelt down beside Skullfinger and breathed a sigh of relief when he noticed the girl’s chest rising and falling.

The crowd’s volume almost doubled and he finally registered what they were saying.

“ONE!” They screamed at an unprecedented volume, and Sin felt a hand on his shoulder. His head whipped up and he saw Spider standing over his kneeling form. Spider’s left eye was blackened and a purplish bruise ran down the side of his jaw.

“Come on, Sin,” he murmured, hauling Sin to his feet. “Let’s go home.”

“And the first defeat of champion Skullfinger in weeks!” Elena’s voice bellowed over the crowd. “Defeated by the youngest Fighter in our history, Assassin wins! I don’t think anybody saw this coming, folks, what a surprising turn!”

A woman who looked a little like Shade, but with brilliant blue hair and much sharper features, hauled him out of the pit, with Spider pushing him. She clapped him on the shoulder and said lowly, in a faint American accent, “You did good, kid. If you ever want to talk to somebody who knows why what happened happened, contact me.” She slipped him a small card and the crowd parted to let him through.

He just walked numbly out of the courtyard, Spider’s hand on his back guiding him. As they left the threshold the hairs on the back of his neck prickled, and he turned his head to see Elena watching him. Her smile looked even hungrier than before, and again he felt his body freeze up.

“Move, Sin,” Spider whispered, but he couldn’t. He was frozen, staring into those terrible eyes - and then she looked away and Sin breathed a sigh of heavy relief. He stumbled forward away from the Fights, his feet moving without him really registering them.
Sin stumbled out of the courtyard and almost collapsed, but Spider caught his arm and hauled him back up straight. “Shit, man,” the older boy said with a slow shake of his head, “What the hell are we going to tell Shade?” As he spoke, Spider grabbed Sin and pulled his arm around his shoulders, nearly carrying him.

They were just out of the walls when an oily voice rang out behind them. “Aren’t you going to collect your winnings, boys?” Jerome asked. Spider let out a string of low curses that Sin was sure Hero and Stickler would have lectured him about had they been there. He then turned around and held out his free hand.

Jerome shot him a nasty grin. “Looks like your friend there is a little more than he seems. You’ve taught him well; next time, though, I doubt he’ll be so lucky.” He placed a wad of bills in Spider’s hand, who looked like he was seconds from punching the guy, when Sin spoke up.

“Home,” he croaked, “Please. Just - let’s - home.” Spider’s eyes narrowed as he glared at Jerome before finally tearing his gaze away from the leering man and nodding shortly.

“Let’s get you back, Sin,” Spider murmured quietly. He let out a quiet laugh of disbelief as they emerged from behind the Chinese restaurant, Sin’s eyelids flickering. “Shade is going to murder me,” he told Sin as they walked. “I’m as good as dead.”

A quarter of an hour later, Spider was sliding open the hidden door to the side entrance of the warehouse. The light was on inside and Spider helped Sin limp into the warehouse. His legs weren’t in much pain at all, but his stomach was still queasy, and he was utterly exhausted.

“You’re back early,” came a voice from their left. “Did Sin not - oh my god! What the hell happened?!” Shade rushed into view, concern written all over her beautiful features. She knelt in front of Assassin, giving him a quick once-over to gauge the level of his injuries. Once she’d realized that Sin wasn’t in any immediate danger, the concern on her face started to morphed into a cold rage. “Get Hero,” she said coldly, her voice thick with fury. Spider nodded once and left the two of them.

“Oh, Sin…” Shade said sadly, before scooping Sin up into her arms. She walked gently over to his
bed, and lent him down on his mattress. “I knew it was a bad idea.” Sin barely registered the flurry of motion going on around him as he slipped from consciousness, his fingers curling around the card he’d received from the blue-haired lady.

Shade leant against the wall of the warehouse, her eyes trained on the sleeping form of Assassin. She could taste lead in her mouth, the fury at his injuries tangible. “What happened?” She asked through gritted teeth.

Spider sat on the floor next to her, his face in his hands. “Nobody would challenge Skullfinger. When they called for the old-fashioned way, I tried to get him out, but we got separated in the crowd, and I couldn’t get to him, and by then he was already in the pit - I was going to rush in and volunteer, but three of Elena’s cronies grabbed me and -” his voice cracked, and he gestured to his black eye and bruised jaw “ - well, they held me away until the fight was over.”

Shade knelt in front of him, and cupped his face gently in her hands. “Look at me,” she said as his gaze dropped to the floor. “Look at me,” she repeated firmly. He dragged his gaze back up to meet her brown eyes. “There was nothing you could have done. You know that they prey on weakness, and you know that once they’ve chosen someone they don’t change their minds. You know how Elena is. She likes the dramatics.” Shade’s mouth tasted foul as she spoke Elena’s name, as if just uttering those syllables brought a bitter taste.

“You were right,” Spider replied hollowly, his grey eyes full of remorse. “We should have waited.”

Shade nodded. “I was. But don’t beat yourself up about this.” She cast a glance at the sleeping form of Sin, his tiny body still so fragile in her eyes. “I’m more worried about the blow to his ego than anything else. Nobody likes losing their first Fight, even if it’s expected, and Sin is very proud. I’m wondering if his confidence will -”

“- and I think - what?” Shade stopped in her tracks, her eyebrows furrowing. “He didn’t lose?” She asked incredulously. “But - he’s ten. And you said Skullfinger was basically undefeated.”

Spider nodded. “He used magic.”

Shade sucked in a breath and moved to sit next to him. “What happened?”

“They were fighting. He actually managed to hold her off for quite a while; he did really well, but her experience was too much for him. And then she was going to finish him off, but her fist bounced off of his skull. It bounced.”

A strangled noise escaped Shade’s throat. “There’s a new one.”

Spider hummed in agreement. “And then when he shoved her, she flew into the wall. It was - it was like Smitherson all over again, except this time he touched her.”

Shade nodded slowly. “If Elena saw -”

Spider shook his head. “I don’t think so. I doubt she would have let us leave so easily if she had seen what he can do.”
Shade closed her eyes and leant her head on Spider’s shoulder. “What are we going to do, Spider?” She asked quietly.

Spider ran a hand through his hair, his eyes still trained on the sleeping form of Assassin. “Whatever we have to do to keep us all alive and together.” Even if it means other people getting hurt, he added silently. Spider would do anything to protect his family.

Sin blinked slowly, turning around in his bed to bury himself deeper under the covers. His muscles ached, and his stomach was incredibly sore. Even his face felt a little raw. As he shifted, something poked him in the arm. He sat up gently, his eyebrow furrowing in confusion. There was a small card in his bed - what was that about?

Suddenly, everything from the previous night came rushing back. The utter terror, the momentary triumph, and then pure exhaustion. He vaguely remembered a woman in blue handing him a small card, but he hadn’t actually looked at it yet.

He sat back and picked up the card, squinting at it. His hand floundered around before finding his glasses, and he shoved them unceremoniously on his nose.

Elena Genovesa

66 Knockturn Alley

Erunt Ultra Genua Flectentibus

Sin’s forehead creased further in confusion. It was clearly Latin, but he didn’t speak Latin; besides, who used Latin on what was clearly a business card of some sort? He turned it over, and on the back there was just a picture of a red rose, with what seemed to be blood dripping from the petals. Sin snorted quietly.

“That’s a little dramatic,” he remarked to himself, before yawning and forcing himself to his feet. He swayed slightly before he heard a shout behind him.

“Sin! What the hell are you doing on your feet? You should be resting!” Sin turned to see Shade and Toxic rushing toward him. Shade caught his arm as she continued. “How are you even standing? You’ve only had eight hours of rest since you were in the fighting pits for the first time - and the magic you used! I - what’s that?” Her tone turned from scolding to sharp, and she gestured to the card in his hand. Sin shrugged, still holding on to her for support, and handed her the card.

“I - some girl gave it to me last night.”

Shade’s eyes narrowed nearly imperceptibly and then she let out a quiet snarl. “That power-hungry bitch,” she spat, “couldn’t leave well enough alone.” The creases in Sin’s forehead deepened in confusion.

“Shade? What -”

Shade turned, bending at the knees slightly until she was eye-level with him. He didn’t know whether to be insulted or not at the clear - yet most likely accidental - slight to his height. “Assassin, I
need you to listen to me, because this is important,” Shade said grimly. There was something different about Shade’s eyes - they held their usual confidence, but it looked shakier than usual. More unstable. As if Shade was being confident because she had to be, because she had to hold it together and be strong, not because she truly was. “This girl - who gave you the card - what did she look like?”

“Um…” Sin furrowed his eyebrows, trying to remember. His mind had been sort of hazy at the time, having just used a lot of magic and won his first street fight. “She had… blue hair, and she was about your age. Her face looked like it had been chipped from stone - all edges and hard lines.”

Shade nodded slowly, the intensity in her gaze not lessening. It was starting to unnerve Assassin a little bit, and he took a small step back. “Why? What does the Latin say? Why are you so - what does it mean? The whole card, what’s it for?”

Shade bit her lip and turned to Toxic, who had been standing there looking awkward since she’d walked over. “Run and get Spider, make sure everyone’s inside for the next couple hours. I don’t want anyone leaving the warehouse without permission for at least a day.”

Toxic raised her eyebrows but nodded, scratching at the burn on her forearm. She didn’t question Shade - nobody but Spider and occasionally Hero really did - and headed off to find the others.

Shade turned her attention back to Sin, whose mouth was hanging open. Never in all of his time with his new family had Shade ever put anyone on house arrest, and here she was, ordering the whole family to stay inside.

“What? What’s the big deal, anyway? It’s just a card -”

“It’s not just a card, Sin,” Shade said patiently. “It’s…” She bit her lip, and took Sin’s hand in her own. She lead them back to the beds and sat down on her own, patting the space next to her. Assassin sat down, waiting for Shade to explain.

“So yesterday, in the pits, do you know why you won?” She asked. Sin nodded, and his triumphant feeling drained slightly as he had to admit it.

“I used magic,” he said dully. It wasn’t that he was annoyed to have the magic - he was grateful he had been able to stop Skullfinger from squashing him into the dirt - but it felt like cheating. The glory of winning wasn’t quite so untouched anymore.

Shade didn’t seem to notice his disappointment. “Yes. You’re a wizard and you’re magic reacts when you’re angry or scared, because you haven’t had any training. But the thing is, Sin, I also told you that you weren’t the only one. That there are other wizards, and witches, and there are also werewolves and goblins and vampires and pixies.” Sin nodded; he didn’t see what any of this had to do with the business card.

“Well the address, Knockturn Alley… that’s a street muggles can’t go to. It’s a purely magical place.”

Sin blinked. “Do you think - so - so that means that the girl there - she was a witch? I thought there weren’t that many? How could a witch have possibly…” He didn’t know how he felt. He was terrified, of course, that they would take him away to some sort of wizard colony - Shade hadn’t said anything about that, but there was little chance they would just let him be - but he was also almost… flattered. Someone had actually taken an interest in his abilities. His. He was special.

Shade wrapped an arm around his shoulders, and he rested his head gently on her shoulder. “I don’t
know about the girl that gave it to you,” she admitted, “‘But Erunt Ultra Genua Flectentibus’ is the motto of a very powerful, very ancient family. The Van Raus.”

“What does it mean?” Sin asked.

“It’s Latin for ‘will never kneel’. The Van Raus have always been very proud, and they always think they should be in power. But the last of them died out decades ago in a vampire attack.”

Sin shoved a finger under his glasses and rubbed his eyes. This was all giving him a headache. “So then why would someone give me a business card with a dead family motto on it?”

Shade didn’t answer immediately, and when she did, her voice was quieter. “When - back before my family realised I was a squib, when I still lived with them, there were… rumors. About one of the Van Rau girls, who hadn’t been killed by the vampires, but turned. And that she’d started a kind of underground resistance, trying to form their own government, and ignoring the laws of the ministry. None of us really paid much attention to it, we all thought it was just gossip. But - now that I think about it…” Shade’s tone turned cold. “The girl, the last Van Rau? Her name was Elena.”

Chapter End Notes

Please leave a comment to help me out!
Will She Be Okay?

Chapter Summary

Months later, Sin feels guilty about a new alliance, but he doesn't break it off in fear of hurting his family.

Chapter Notes

This is a very long chapter, so I apologize if you don't like that. Please leave a comment telling me what you think - what you loved, what you hated, what was okay, whether you prefer longer chapters, your predictions, what you're excited to see happen to Sin/see Sin do...

Six Months Later

Sin spun around, his smile enormous at the gleeful giggles in his ear.

“Faster, faster, faster!” Cried Light, his tiny six-year-old arms clinging to Sin’s shoulders, his legs wrapped around the older boy’s waist. Sin’s smile grew and he spun faster, before stopping and dropping Light down gently. The younger boy beamed as he stumbled slightly, clearly dizzy. Sin saw the world spinning in circles himself.

“Not so fast, guys,” Hero called firmly from where she stood overseeing Sparky’s latest project. Sin looked up, his arms crossed, to retort, when he noticed an exasperated grin on Hero’s face. “You don’t want to knock into something, and then have both Shade and Stickler on your asses.”

“Oi!” Sparky cut in indignantly, looking up from her pile of scrap metal. “Las’ time I swore in fron’ o’ Light, you ‘n Shade got righ’ pissy abou’ it! Bloody hypocrites, the lo’ o’ ya!”

Hero rolled her eyes as Sparky continued to mutter under her breath. Sin snorted quietly as Light yawned. “When’s Shade getting home?” He asked, rubbing his eyes. Sin reached down to pick Light up, swinging him up to sit on his hip.

“I dunno kid,” Sin admitted, “She’s helping Spider go through all the bins from here to Gladstone Court, so I doubt she’ll be home soon.” He pressed his lips together to keep from chuckling when Light pouted adorably.

“Who’s gonna sing me to sleep?” He asked. Sin glanced at Sparky, who was watching the interaction. The shook her head hurriedly, turning her attention back to whatever her new project was, and Sin sighed. He raised his eyebrows at Hero, who rolled her eyebrows and approached the two boys.

“You owe me one,” she murmured into Sin’s ear as she took Light, walking him over to the bed
Once he was sure that he no longer held anyone’s attention, Sin slowly slipped out of the back door and into the alleyway. The sun began to dip beneath the horizon as Sin started down the street.

“Oi! Sin! Where you off too, mate?” Sin shut his eyes tightly and cursed under his breath before turning around, a pleasant expression on his face. Wheels was jogging up to him, a small plastic bag slung over his shoulder. “If you’re going to go train with Spider, he told me to tell you he won’t be back for another couple of hours.”

Sin hesitated before replying, “Oh, thanks - I think I’ll just go practice by myself. See if I can finally tug some magic out of me.”

Wheels snorted. “Well I hope you do; then you can show all of us, and Sparky can stop thinking we’re all having her on.” Sin chuckled and nodded before turning around heading back through the network of alleys. However, where he would usually turn right to get to the practice courtyard, he turned left and broke into a run.

Several minutes later he climbed over a tall chain fence, the barbed wire long since rusted and fallen to the ground. He dropped to his feet on the other side and turned a corner into an abandoned parking lot. Leaning against the fence on the other side stood Elena, looking bored.

“You’re late,” she drawled slowly, straightening up and approaching Assassin. The way she walked still put Sin slightly on edge; her strides were too graceful. She walked more like a panther than a person.

“By a few minutes!” He said indignantly.

Elena wasn’t amused. “That’s still a few minutes late.”

“I got held up,” he replied shortly. Elena raised an eyebrow.

“If you’re not committed to this, then there’s no reason for me to be wasting my time with -”

“It won’t happen again,” he cut in firmly. She gazed at him, and in sharp contrast to how he had reacted the first time he had met her stare, he raised his chin and glared back. A few moments later Elena’s lips curled and she let out a quiet chuckle.

“Alright then. Remember what I taught you last time?” She asked, and Sin nodded. Elena grabbed a small stone from the sack by the fence and chucked it at Sin, who ducked out of instinct. Elena sighed.

“Assassin,” the vampiress said smoothly, “This isn’t going to work if you keep finding ways to not use your magic. If you keep choosing the muggle path for everything, you’re only going to be able to use muggle skills.”

Sin didn’t reply; they’d gone over this before. He didn’t bother retorting.

“You can’t let what happened with Toxic get to you,” Elena added, picking out a broken shard of brick from within her sack. “You have to get over yourself.”

_Six Weeks Ago_

Toxic grinned as the three teenagers heard a soft ‘click’ emit from the lock on the door. Hero straightened up, hiding the lock-pick in the folds of her hijab and placing her gloved hand on the
brass handle. She pressed a finger to her lips three times, and Sin and Toxic nodded at her. They had roughly three minutes before the building security guards noticed the camera for this apartment was out and came up to check it out.

Hero pushed the door open and Toxic and Sin hurried inside the lavish apartment. Toxic headed straight to the kitchen while Sin found his way into the master bedroom. He opened an ornate jewelry box on the bedside table and grinned. A sparkling diamond necklace hung from a hook, with two earrings beneath it. He snatched the necklace up, not bothering with the earrings.

He left the bedroom just in time to catch Toxic stuffing a large cabbage into an almost overflowing canvas bag. He nodded at her and the ginger nodded back and they made their way out and into the hallway. Hero let out a quiet breath and shut the door.

“Hurry,” Hero said as she started down the hall, “I don’t think -”

“Shit,” Toxic breathed as the elevator at the end of the hallway dinged quietly, and opened to reveal two uniformed security guards.

“Hey, kids, you alright? We got a security -” The taller guard’s eyes dropped to the necklace in Sin’s hand and he drew his gun, pointing it at Sin. “Drop the necklace,” he said firmly. The second guard’s eyes widened, and he put a cautionary hand on his partner’s arm.

“Steve, they’re just kids,” he murmured gently. Steve shook his head.

“They’re thieves, Jerry. Now drop the necklace, and I’ll just call your parents and you probably won’t go to Juvie. If you cooperate.”

Sin’s fist tightened around the necklace, and Hero stepped forward slowly, her hands up. “Look, gentlemen, there’s no need to -”

“Don’t come any closer!” Steve almost shouted, turning his gun to point at Hero.

“Officer,” Hero said calmly, no longer approaching the two men, “Just let me explain.” She paused, and when Jerry lowered Steve’s arm she continued. “I think there’s been some kind of misunderstanding. We’re putting on a school play, and Mrs. Sanchez, who lives up on this floor, offered to help out. The necklace is plastic, you see, and we just needed one for a prop - the whole play is sort of centered around a magical necklace, and -”

Steve snorted. “If you think I’m going to believe you brats for one second -”

“Steve!” Jerry reprimanded, and he turned to face the thieves. “Look, kids, I’m not saying that I don’t believe you, but it is a little suspicious, don’t you think?”

“You honestly can’t be believing this tosh,” Steve set, turning to his partner with an incredulous look on his face. “Besides, she’s a dead give away.” He gestured to Hero. “If her kind aren’t trying to kill you then they’re robbing with you. It’s just the way it is.”

The temperature seemed to drop several degrees, and Sin took a step around Toxic. “I’m sorry?” He asked, his tone worryingly dangerous for a ten-year-old. “What was that?”

“Sin, don’t it’s not worth it,” hissed Hero, but Sin ignored her. “She’s a better person than you’ll ever be,” he spat at the two guards. Steve flushed and he raised his gun again, pushing Jerry to the side slightly.

“Drop the necklace, and maybe I won’t shoot you.”
At the back of his mind Sin was wondering how Steve even had a gun; Jerry clearly didn’t, and he was pretty sure that civilians couldn’t just buy guns whenever they wanted.

“Sin,” Toxic breathed from the corner of her mouth, “Just drop the necklace and let’s get out of here.”

“Sir, really, it’s just a prop -” Hero started, and there was a loud ‘bang’. Sin felt the same white-hot anger and terror he had back with Smitherson, and in the fighting pits. He felt his stomach implode on itself, and he thought he was going to be sick. He whipped his head around to look at Hero, tears forming in the corners of his eyes - but the expression on her face was neither glassy-eyed nor pain-filled. She just looked surprised.

“What the hell?” It was Steve who broke the silence, his previously angry expression now drawn and anxious. There was no sign of the bullet, but there were shards of it littering the floor.

“Steve, you could get arrested,” Jerry said anxiously, all the color drained from his face. “You fired on an unarmed child!” Steve took a staggering step back, before turning tail and sprinting down the hall. Jerry gave one last apologetic glance to Hero before chasing after his partner.

“Unbelievable,” Hero said incredulously, “They’re just going to leave us here?” She shook her head in disbelief.

“Um - guys,” groaned Toxic, and Sin and Hero turned to face the ginger. Sin’s jaw gaped in horror at the red blooming from Toxic’s left leg. “I… I guess one of the shards hit me, or something, but it - it really hurts, guys,” she managed, sliding to the floor.

Hero swore loudly, and she had the dirtiest mouth Sin had ever heard. “We need to wrap the wound - it looks like it didn’t hit an artery, there isn’t enough blood, so you won’t need a tourniquet…” She glanced around, tugging at the end of her hijab.

Sin began to tear the edge of his shirt and Hero nodded in thanks, kneeling down next to Toxic. “You have your pocket knife on you?” She asked Toxic, who nodded, gritting her teeth. Toxic pulled a small gadget from within her right pocket and Hero snatched it up, raising the leg slightly and beginning to cut away the part of Toxic’s jeans that was stained red. Toxic hissed in pain and Sin handed the strip of his t-shirt to Hero, biting his lip anxiously.

“Will she - will she be okay?” He asked. Hero nodded and Sin’s fear began to drain away, replaced with guilt. It was clearly his magic that had shattered the bullet, and if he had just shoved Hero to the side instead, the shard wouldn’t have hit Toxic.

Hero wrapped the strip of cloth around Toxic’s leg and tied it tightly. The ginger swore colorfully. “Fucking hell,” she stuttered, “That’s fucking awful.” Hero just shushed her, still holding her leg raised slightly in the air. “God that hurts like a bitch.”

Hero turned to Sin. “Get a phone. I don’t care how, but get a phone, and call an ambulance.” Sin nodded, his stomach roiling with too much guilt to reply. Hero slipped her lock picks from her hijab and handed them to Sin before turning back to Toxic. Sin stood, taking the tools as Hero began to murmur to the slightly younger girl.

_Three hours later_
Sin tapped his foot incessantly, his gaze fixed on the door that Toxic had been wheeled through. Every so often, his eyes would flick up to the clock beside it, and then turn back to the door.

Shade put a comforting arm around his shoulders. “She’ll be fine. I spoke to the doctor, and she said that the shard didn’t sever any major arteries, and it didn’t even graze the bone. They dug it out and they’re just stitching her up. She’ll be good as new in no time.”

Sin was silent. It was his fault. He should have just dropped the necklace. He should have just shoved Hero out of the way. Now, because of him, Toxic was in surgery.

“How come they haven’t called the police yet? Why haven’t we all been arrested?” Sin asked instead, not wanting to talk about why he was in such a foul mood.

“Stickler bribed one of his contacts into coming in and pretending to be our foster dad. ‘Said he had to get back to work, but was just checking to see if his daughter was okay. He told them he’d be back tonight, so that they wouldn’t badger him - or us - but we’ve got to get Toxic and get out of here before then. We can’t risk the police getting involved in this.’”

When he didn’t reply, she turned to look at him. “Sin.” She pushed his chin gently in her direction. “You know it’s not your fault, right? That you can’t be expected to control it?”

He nodded numbly as the door opened and Toxic was rolled out in a wheelchair by a young man in blue scrubs. Her skin was still ashen, but her lips broke out into a grin when she caught sight of Shade, Sin, Stickler and Hero waiting.

The three walked over to meet her. Shade and Hero immediately leant down and embraced Toxic while Sin hung back hesitantly. “Spider would be here,” Shade said, her arms around Toxic’s shoulders, “But he stayed back with Sparky to watch the little ones.” Toxic chuckled and turned her gaze to Sin, holding her arms out.

“Come here, you,” she said, her grin goofy. A little of Sin’s guilt drained away as he hugged the ginger, smiling faintly.

“I’m glad you’re better.” He hesitated, before adding, “And - I’m - I’m really sorry for, you know, the bullet shard -”

“Nonsense,” Toxic cut him off. “If it wasn’t for you, Hero might be dead. Really, we should all be thanking you.”

Sin ran his hand through his spiky hair, not convinced. Hero clapped a hand on his shoulder. “Really, Sin,” she said quietly. “Thank you.”

One Day Later

He had to do something. Everytime Sin heard a loud noise, or someone surprised him, he jumped, and imagined sending another bullet shard flying into another one of his family. Maybe the next time they wouldn’t be so lucky; maybe next time, shattering a bullet meant for Spider’s brain could embed itself in Roach’s heart. He wouldn’t be able to live with himself.

He stood up from his mat, everyone but Stickler still sleeping. Stickler was off somewhere trying to fence the necklace Sin had stolen. Careful not to wake the others, he began pacing around the
He ran through possible solutions in his mind, each more unpleasant than the next. The only way he could think of to keep his family absolutely safe would be to run away, and there was no way he could bring himself to leave them.

A tiny, unwelcome thought began to worm its way to the forefront of Sin’s mind. There was no way he could ask Shade for help controlling his power; she’d all but admitted that he would just have to deal with it, so she clearly wouldn’t know how. The only other person who could possibly help him was not someone Sin ever thought he would willingly seek out… but he was desperate.

He slipped on a thin jacket and a pair of beaten-up trainers, before heading over to the small safe that Shade told everyone to stay out of. Sparky had hooked it up with a passcode instead of a key, which was good news for Sin, because he had watched Shade put it in several times and knew the combination. He unlocked the safe, wincing at the beeps that accompanied each pressed button. The door swung open, and two letters, a stack of photographs, a worn book, and what Sin was looking for. The small business card that the blue-haired woman had given him.

He slid it into the pocket of his jacket, gave the rest of the safe’s contents one last, curious look, and shut the door as softly as he could. He had no idea where Knockturn Alley was, but there was one other place he might be able to find Elena, or at the very least the blue-haired lady. With the card in his pocket, he slipped out of a side door and retraced his and Spider’s steps back to the Fights.

He still had an hour or two of night left, and to his luck, it seemed there was a Fight tonight. He approached the entrance, and Jerome raised his eyebrows at him.

“Well, well, well… if it isn’t our little One-Hit Wonder, come back to play. It’s been a while, sonny boy,” he crowed. “You know the drill - five pounds.” He held his hand out expectantly, and Sin hesitated. “No, cash, no entry, kid,” Jerome said, crossing his arms.

Sin took the card from his pocket and handed it to Jerome. “Just - just give that to Elena. Or - if there’s a girl with blue hair. Just tell them Assassin wants to see them.”

Jerome looked doubtful, but he took a step into the courtyard and handed the card to someone else, whispering in their ear, before returning to his post. Sin briefly wondered, as he stood there staring, how much Jerome was paid. And whether Elena ran the whole thing, or was just the commentator. The mouthpiece of some shady underground mob boss who didn’t want to show his identity.

It was a very uncomfortable five minutes, with Jerome leering at Sin the entire time. The young wizard pulled at the threads of his raggedy jacket, and when someone finally emerged from the courtyard he breathed a sigh of relief. Then his relief fell away as he met the sharp, deadly gaze of Elena.

“Hello again, Assassin,” she said smoothly, her voice like melting velvet. She spoke as if there should be a condescending twinkle in her eye, but her terrible gaze looked as gentle as he had ever seen her, which wasn’t exactly saying much, but still. It stopped him from throwing his plan out the window and bolting. “To what do I owe this pleasure?” She handed the small card back to him.

Sin flashed a nervous glance at Jerome, and Elena nodded in understanding. “Jerome, you’re dismissed,” she told him, her voice full of the confidence of someone who was used to being obeyed. Jerome gave a tense nod and took a skittish step around Elena, heading into the throng.

Sin turned the card over in his fingers. “Are you - are you Elena Van Rau? A - a vampire?” He asked shakily, not daring to tear his gaze away from Elena’s.
Surprise flickered in Elena’s eyes, but it was gone so quickly Sin almost thought he’d imagined it. It was replaced with a look of calm amusement. “Indeed,” she replied silkily, curling her lip up. Sin gasped as he saw long, razor-sharp fangs protruding from Elena’s gums. The vampiress chuckled. “So, you know about vampires. I assume you know that you’re a wizard, then.”

Sin nodded briefly.

“Then what is it you want from me? You seem to know enough about who you are already. That’s what the card was for. How is that, I wonder? What manner of magical people have you found solace with, hm?”

Sin ignored the question. “I - I need to know if you can help me control it. My magic. So that it doesn’t - so that it doesn’t hurt anyone.”

Elena raised a delicate eyebrow. “I take it something happened? You wouldn’t come to me unless you were desperate.” “I am,” Sin replied shortly.

Elena tilted her head, and her lips pulled up into a thin, wicked smile. “That can be arranged. Meet me here again tonight, ten o’clock.” And with that, Elena turned around and loped back into the courtyard full of spectators and fighters.

Sin blinked. He hadn’t expected it to be that simple -- he’d been certain she would require something in return. In fact, it made him uneasy, how agreeable she was being. Hoping against all hope that this deal wouldn’t come back to bite him in the ass, he turned around to head back to the warehouse.

He was not looking forward to have to keep the truth from his family. He had never kept such a secret from them before - even when Spider trained him in secret, Spider knew, and it hadn’t been so awful when Shade had found out. He couldn’t even begin to think of how Shade would react to him willingly seeking out Elena for training, so he swore to himself that he would never tell her; he would get Elena to teach him how to control his powers, and then he would leave.

Now

“Again,” Sin said through gritted teeth, and Elena nodded. She rolled the small corner of brick around in her hand before tossing it towards Sin’s chest. There was a tiny, wriggling feeling at the back of his mind that he silenced as he forced himself to stay still, and the piece of brick hit his torso. “Fuck,” he swore, holding his hand to the aching area.

“Don’t swear, Assassin,” Elena ordered. “It’s unbecoming. Now, this time, don’t force yourself not to react; just control the reaction.”

“But you aren’t telling me how,” Sin growled at her. She ignored him, taking a modest chunk of cement between her long, pale fingers.

“Again.”

Sin glared at her, but when she threw the cement, this time he didn’t bother to silence the tiny wriggling feeling. He waited for impact - but the cement piece didn’t hit him. He gaped as the small rock floated several inches from his chest. “How -” he started, and the piece of cement dropped to the ground. He looked back up Elena, and the woman’s expression was much like it had been the
first day he’d ever seen her. A hunger in her eyes that made him want to turn and flee.

“Again.”
That's Why You Agreed to Help Me

Chapter Summary

Sin bonds with his family and finally manages to even the footing between him and Spider. Elena pushes Sin too far.

Chapter Notes

Please leave a comment! Feedback really helps me out and motivates me to write faster!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Three Months Later

“...and then he trips over his shoe laces!” Wheels exclaimed. There was a chorus of laughter from around the fire. “I was almost toast, seconds away from being arrested, and the twat trips over his bloody shoelaces!”

“Language,” Shade scolded, nodding toward Light, but there was no fire to her words; she looked like she was holding a giggle in herself.

“Hypocrite,” Wheels replied with a smirk, before pointing at Toxic accusedly with his good arm. “You were there! Why aren’t you backing me up?”

Toxic snorted, before rolling her eyes. “Yeah, it’s true. It was pretty hilarious, to be honest. I walk out from behind the house, bag of silver spoons in tow, and there’s a copper face-down in the street and Wheels making a beeline for the other side of the street.” She shook her head.

Spider shook his head, exasperation clear in his tone as he cut in, “Wheels, mate, you’re a rubbish example for Roach and Light. I don’t know why we rely on you to get anything done; the only reason you haven’t been arrested is Hero and your unreasonable amount of good luck.

Wheels shrugged, scratching under his chin with the arm that ended at his elbow. “Or maybe I was just banking on that idiot policeman being particularly clumsy.” Spider snorted and opened his mouth to argue when Shade cut him off.

“Before we let the boys argue themselves into dust,” she said dryly, “Sparky, did you make any progress?”

Sparky grinned widely. “I did, Shade. Take a loo’ at these beau’ies,” she said proudly, laying five rudimentary-looking walkie-talkies on the floor in the middle of the circle. “I’m makin’ more, o’ course,” she added defensively, when no one said anything. “Soon we migh’ ‘ave enough for all o’ us.”

Stickler’s eyebrows flew into his hair. “These could be invaluable,” he observed, his eyes taking stock of the walkies in front of him. He picked one up gently, his lips pursed in the way that they
often were when he was evaluating how much he could sell something for. “Communication like that… we wouldn’t need to run people back and forth anymore. We could halve our delivery time. If something went wrong on a job we could set up new rendezvous’ immediately. Sparky, this is genius!” He proclaimed, patting the blonde on the back. She beamed at him.

Shade looked like she, too, was suppressing a grin. She smiled approvingly at Sparky. “For now, we’ll use four, so that Sparky still has one too work from. Hero and I will have them at all times; one will stay here at all times, with whoever’s in charge, and the last one will go with whoever is going somewhere that needs it.”

Sin was momentarily surprised that Shade wasn’t giving Spider his own walkie-talkie - after all, he was her second-in-command - but after he mulled it over, he realised that it made perfect sense for Hero to have her own. She was the one with the biggest chance of getting someone out of a predicament without resorting to violence.

“I want one!” Roach whined. Light nodded in vigorous agreement, his mouth too full of mushy peas to speak. Toxic, Hero, Spider and Sin snorted with laughter, and Sparky ruffled Roach’s hair.

“You are somethin’, aren’ cha, Roach?” She asked with a giggle. She grabbed the bowl of soup that sat beside Toxic, swallowing a few mouthfuls before setting it back down.

“Maybe later, when Sparky has enough up an running.” Shade told the young boy, amused. Light appeared to have struggled through his mouthful of peas because he crawled out of Spider’s lap and into a standing position, his legs wobbling slightly.

“Me too!” He insisted. “I -” he yawned - “I want one too!”

The group erupted into giggles at the five-year-old’s pouting face when Shade shook her head. “You’ll all be death of me,” she remarked mildly. She glanced at the cracked clock face of her watch. “You had enough to eat, Light?”

The youngest child nodded, leaning against Spider. He rubbed his eyes sleepily and Shade smiled kindly.

“Let’s get you to bed, then,” she said softly, picking him up and swinging him into her arms. Light shook his head but without any real feeling.

“Not tired,” he argued, his eyelids drooping. Sin watched Shade carry Light to the beds, a fond smile on his face. He turned back around as he felt someone tap his shoulder lightly.

“’You up for a practice round tonight?” Spider asked, a daring smirk on his lips. Sin nodded eagerly; they had to be careful now, because although Shade had told them they could continue training, she still got irritated when either of them came back with bruises.

Spider stood and had a few murmured words with Hero, which resulted in her rolling her eyes but gesturing for him to leave. Spider grabbed a small portable lantern and headed to the door. Sin handed his glasses to Wheels who took them without speaking - he was too focused on the walkie-talkies - and Sin followed Spider out of the warehouse and down the now-familiar maze of back-alleys and courtyards.

Spider set the lantern on the ground. As Sin began to stretch - reaching an arm as far as he could behind his back - Spider lashed out a fist at him. A few weeks ago, this would have sent Sin sprawling into the dirt, but Sin was used to Spider’s antics now. He had learned to always be on his guard the second they left the warehouse together. So the blow never landed; Sin merely dropped to
the ground and used the opportunity to swing his leg behind Spider’s feet, attempting to knock the older boy’s legs out from under him. However, Spider was wise to that trick and jumped backwards.

Sin pulled himself to a stand and ducked under a swing of Spider’s. He began a series of lightning-fast jabs at Spider’s ribs - none of them actually landed, as the older boy deflected each one - but they were enough of a distraction for him to plant his right foot behind Spider’s left and bring it back towards him sharply. Spider grabbed Sin as he was left off-balance and Sin’s fist shot out to smash into Spider’s chin. Spider wheeled back and spat out a mouthful of blood, the red staining his teeth.

Sin advanced on him, but before he could make a move Spider threw a right hook. Sin bent back slightly so that the punch merely glanced off of his right cheek, but was ill prepared for the kick that landed solidly below his ribs. Sin heaved as the air was knocked from him, not quick enough to dodge as Spider grabbed his arms and spun him around into a headlock.

“Yield,” Sin gasped once he had regained enough breath to speak. Spider released him, taking a few steps back.

“You’re good,” Spider admitted, “I’m not even going easy on you anymore. You’re awareness is much better, but it still needs to be improved.” Sin bristled slightly; Spider had been going easy on him? He’d thought he’d been doing so well!

However, he swallowed his annoyance and nodded. He supposed it was praise, however backhanded it felt. “Again,” he said, running strategies through his mind. Spider was stronger than him, and more experienced, so he wasn’t going to win this through straight improvisation of moves. He needed a plan.

Spider nodded slowly, giving him a few moments to breathe, before swinging his leg up into Sin’s side. Sin spun out of the way and brought his elbow into Spider’s ribs before backing up quickly. Spider groaned, gripping his side. He swung over to meet Sin’s eyes, and as they ticked slightly to the right, Sin leant to the left, bringing his fist up toward Spider’s ribs, but meeting the older boy’s waiting hand.

Sin took a step away from Spider, his back to the wall. Technically it was a tactically terrible place to be - he had nowhere to run - but it would serve his purposes. He looked to the right and flinched, just as Spider’s fist came flying at his face. Sin dropped to his knees and brought his out clasped fists up between Spider’s legs just as the brown-haired boy’s fist slammed into the brick wall. As Sin rolled away Spider swore loudly, and both the pain in his hand and his groin, and staggered back, clutching his bleeding hand.

Sin took advantage of the other boy’s momentary incapacitation to kick him in the backs of the knees, pushing Spider to the ground, and grabbing his head. Sin was in the perfect position to smash Spider’s head into the brick.

“Yield,” Spider groaned, nursing his hand. Sin released the older boy’s head and stepped back, a his expression smug. Spider turned around, leaning against the wall and raising his eyebrows at Sin.

“Clever,” he remarked, impressed. “Using your surroundings is always helpful. You’ve definitely improved, Sin. And you’re not even eleven! Just imagine what kind of havoc you’ll be able to wreak in Elena’s pits in a few months,” Spider added, his own lips tugging up with a grin.

Sin tensed slightly at the mention of the vampiress but otherwise didn’t react; he couldn’t let Spider know about what he was doing. Sin shook it off and gestured to Spider’s hand, feeling slightly guilty now that the euphoria of finally being victorious had started to wear off.
“You should go back, get that looked at,” he told the other boy. “I’ll stay here, practice some of the punches and things on my own.”

Spider looked at Sin appraisingly before nodding slowly. “Alright, but try to be home before midnight. Shade is still a little paranoid after the Roach debacle last week.” Sin snorted as he remembered the incident but nodded.

He watched Spider leave the courtyard and once he could no longer hear his footsteps, he switched off the lantern and he too left the small courtyard. He glanced around him before making his way to the abandoned parking lot.

Twenty minutes later, when he arrived, he was surprised to see Elena already waiting for him. She was standing in the middle of the parking lot, perfectly still except for her eyes, which were focused on Sin. He swallowed uncomfortably.

“How?” He asked, furrowing his eyebrows. “I told you I was coming, but I said it might be another couple hours.”

Elena didn’t move as she replied, her voice still eerily smooth, “Assassin, just because you are so terribly predictable and unobservant doesn’t mean everyone else is.” Sin sighed. He was used to Elena being frustratingly cryptic, so he didn’t push her. “Regardless,” she continued, ignoring his rolling eyes. “Let’s see what you’ve learnt.”

She tossed a stone at him without warning, but his senses were still on edge from the fight, and it didn’t take much effort to tug at the tiny squirming feeling just beyond the reach of his thoughts. The stone froze several feet from his chest before dropping to the floor.

Elena lifted her eyebrow. “Sometimes offense…”

“Is the best defence,” Sin grumbled. Elena threw another stone, and again it froze it the air, before shooting back at Elena. Elena dodged to the side with almost inhuman reflexes -- actually, now that Sin thought about it, they weren’t human at all.

The vampiress nodded approvingly, her eyes still cold. “Good.” She gestured to a small circle on the ground, surrounded by a thick ring of dark ground, as if it were wet. Sin, knowing by now not to question Elena’s tactics, stepped into the circle.

Elena drew a small box of matches out of her pocket. Sin’s forehead creased in confusion - weren’t vampires supposed to be particularly flammable? - and it wasn’t until she struck a match and dropped it onto the ring that Sin released what she was doing. He cried out and took a step forward to get out of the circle, but it was too late; he was surrounded by a ring of fire, the flames too high for him to step over. They licked up to his shoulder height, and he saw Elena’s face over the flames.

“What the hell?!” He shouted at her, pushing down the terror that began to creep up his skin. “Get me out of here!”

Elena stared at Sin impassively. “You have all the tools you need to get out of there on your own,” she told him, her tone bored. “So do it. I’m tired of waiting around, of repeating the same drill for weeks before you learn to use your magic. So now you’re going to learn quickly.”

Sin glared at her, the terror slowly turning into panic as the vampiress didn’t reply, and his breath began to quicken. He clenched his palms tightly, closing his eyes, and tried to slow his breathing.

In, out. In, out. In, out.
Once he was sure he wasn’t going to have a panic attack, he opened his eyes again. He tried to ignore the fact that the flames seemed to be edging closer and closer to him.

The heat began to prickle at his skin, and he could feel the sweat beading at his temple. He took another breath. He needed to put the flames out - water. He needed water.

Shutting his eyes, he tugged once more at the feeling worming around at the back of his consciousness, and imagined water pouring over the fire. When nothing changed, he swallowed, the terror sneaking back, but he ignored it. Maybe it was his magic abilities that were failing, maybe it was just harder to create something than change it.

With that in mind, Sin tried something different. Instead of imagining the water, he just imagined the cold. He thought back to freezing nights spent in his cupboard with the thin blanket; remembered the bone-chilling cold of icy rain soaking through him when he’d tended the Dursleys’ garden the February before last. As he did so, he reached back into his mind and pulled. The wriggling feeling snatched, as if it were a rubber band. He began to shiver, his teeth chattering loudly. He didn’t dare break his concentration to see if it was working, but he could no longer feel the heat of the flames.

Sin’s eyes shut tight, he let the frosty feeling surround him. His thoughts simulated the freezing cold incredibly well, and he no longer felt any heat at all. It was as if all the warmth had been sucked from his bones, leaving only empty, piercing cold behind.

There was a loud roar in his ears and he didn’t realize he had collapsed until he felt Elena shaking him, her tone urgent as she called his name. “Assassin. Assassin! Wake up! You need to stop! You have to let go!”

He opened his eyes slowly, Elena’s dead eyes and perfect face swimming lazily into view. “You’re holding onto your magic,” she said firmly, maintaining eye contact - although it was not nearly as unsettling as usual. Her stare no longer transfixed him. “You need to stop pulling on it. You’re going to pass out again from exhaustion, or freeze to death. Stop.”

It was with enormous effort that Sin nodded slowly, realizing she was right; he was still pulling on the enormous wave of magic that had been released. He swallowed and did his best to shove back. It was like forcing two incorrect puzzle pieces together, but it seemed to do the trick, as he already felt the cold begin to leave his body.

Elena didn’t say anything further, and when he had recovered enough to sit up, Sin turned to see what had formerly been a circle of fire was now a shallow, jagged block of ice.

“I -- I did that?” He asked incredulously. Elena nodded silently, tilting her head. Her eyes narrowed, regaining their usual haunting look.

“Well,” she remarked dryly, “Wasn’t that interesting.”

Sin turned to Elena angrily, pushing her away. She flinched back from where he had pushed her, before her eyebrows declined slightly as she look at her arm. “Curious,” she murmured.

“What the hell was that?” He asked heatedly. “I could have died! What if I hadn’t managed that before the flames closed in all the way?”

Elena rolled her eyes, an act of surprisingly low decorum for her. “I knew your magic was incredibly powerful. You’d have gotten out of it somehow, whether in controlled magic or accidental.”

Sin’s furious expression lost some of its heat as he asked, “How did you know? That it’s powerful?”

Elena pursed her lips, looking remarkably like Shade in that moment. “What have Shade and Spider
told you?” She asked, and Sin took a moment to process the unexpected question.

“Told me? About what?”

“About your magic.”

“Um… I’m a wizard. There are other wizards and witches and also werewolves and… vampires, and uh, goblins and stuff, and that the wizards and witches have their own world, almost… they’ve got their own money and government and stuff, and there’s even a school - Hogwash or something like that - for wizards to go too. That’s… that’s pretty much it. Oh, and they use wands. For spells and things. They don’t usually - usually it’s just kids that do what I do. ‘Accidental magic’ or whatever.”

Elena nodded and sat down across from Sin, crossing her legs. “Nothing else? Nothing about… you?”

Sin shook his head, his eyebrows furrowed deeply. “Uh - no? Should they have?”

Elena let out a long, shallow sigh. “Okay. What I’m about to tell you isn’t exactly a secret, but I wouldn’t tell Shade that you know. Then she’ll want to know how you found out, and unless you think she’ll be perfectly on board with our little arrangement, I don’t think that will be a good thing for you.” She tilted her head as Sin’s head swam with questions. Elena paused, as if waiting for him to speak up, but he wanted her to finish before he began bombarding her with questions, all traces of his previous fury gone in place of curiosity.

“I’m going to be blunt, because this isn’t the sort of thing subtlety is useful for. Just as there are evil tyrants and terrorists in the muggle world, they also exist in the wizarding one. One of those terrorists was a Dark Lord who most living wizards and witches are afraid to name. This is not completely unwarranted, but for our purposes we will refer to him not as “You-Know-Who” as most of the wizarding community does but as either the Dark Lord or his name, Voldemort.”

Sin nodded, still wondering what this all had to do with him.

“Well for eleven years not too long ago the wizarding world was in an all out war against him and his followers. He slaughtered muggles for sport, and killed anyone of magical power who might be a threat - or if he was just in the mood.”

There was an edge to Elena’s voice that made Sin wonder whether she’d been personally affected by the war, or by the Dark Lord himself.

“When you were just over one year old, the Dark Lord targeted your family.” Sin inhaled sharply; that was not what he had been expecting to hear. “He came into your home and murdered your mother and father.”

Sin blinked several times. The Dursleys had always told him that his parents had died in a car accident because his dad was drunk. This was… better, he supposed, better that they had died an honorable death. And yet he couldn’t bring himself to quite feel the relief he thought he should.

“Then, when he tried to kill you - a mere infant - he couldn’t.”

Sin’s eyebrows flew up. “He couldn’t?” He asked in disbelief. “He was the terror of the wizarding world for eleven years - against wizards who could use magic - and he couldn’t kill a baby? Me? He tried to kill me?”

Elena nodded, looking a little vexed at his interrupting, but continued without rebuking him. “Not
only could he not kill you - he vanished. Died, is seems. All because he tried to kill you.” She tilted her head, and the hunger he had first seen in her at the Fights was in her eyes again, scarier than he’d ever seen. He scooted away subconsciously.

“That’s -- that’s why you agreed to help me,” he said, his voice tinged with a sensible amount of fear, considering his situation. “Because I -- I killed this Dark Lord, and you think that makes me powerful, and you want to use me.”

Elena let out a small, amused chuckle. “Spot on, Harry Potter.”

Assassin flinched at the mention of his old name. Of the name that had been too weak to carry him.

“That is not my name,” he spat at the vampiress. She didn’t react, but didn’t push the issue either.

“Now, as for what I want in return… it’s nothing awful, I assure you. In fact, you would probably do it anyway at some point.”

Sin glared at her.

“I want you to come back to the Fights. You’re going to be my champion,” she said, a grin showing off her long, sharp canines. “In the Fights you’ve been too. And in my other, more… exclusive Fights. Have you heard of Knockturn Alley, Assassin?” She asked.

He nodded minutely, remembering the address on the card the blue-haired woman had given him.

“Well, you’ll be fighting there for me. With others of your age, and with your more… special abilities.” She grinned wickedly at him. “Unless, of course, you want poor little Light to have a tragic accident.”

In that moment, Assassin knew what it truly was to hate. But he did not dissent. “I’ll do it.”

Chapter End Notes

So I spaced everything out this chapter - do you guys like this better? Please please don't forget to leave a comment!
My Side of Our World

Chapter Summary

The family runs into slight financial trouble and Toxic hates the system. Sin tries experimenting with his abilities by himself and Elena cashes in her side of the deal.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sin stared at the rafters, his blanket pulled up to his chin. His fists were clenched tightly underneath his blanket, his nails almost breaking the skin of his palms, and his mind was whirling with so many emotions he couldn’t process.

He had never trusted Elena, he was too smart for that, but in the weeks he had been training with her, he had started to respect the vampiress. He had even grown to almost like the intimidating woman.

Now all he felt for her was an intense, roiling loathing. How could he have been so blind? Of course she would want something in return! Nothing in this world was ever given for free, especially not from someone like Elena. Sin berated himself for being so naive.

Of course, there was nothing he could do. He’d have to fight for Elena; he had no way out. He didn’t think Elena was the type of person to make empty threats. Elena shouldn’t have even known about Light; the small boy had never been anywhere near the Fights, and Sin had definitely never mentioned him to Elena.

He hated feeling this helpless. It felt too close to the way the Dursleys had had complete power over him. Sin vowed that once he had complete control over his magic - once he didn’t need Elena anymore - he was going to make the manipulative vampiress wish she had never uttered Light’s name.

When he woke up, Sin shoved down his anger and his guilt and the amalgamation of other emotions and ignored them. He couldn’t tell his family about this. Logically, they would understand and wouldn’t hate him, but he still had the scars from the Dursleys marring his soul, and he couldn’t help but fear they would send him away if they knew he had endangered Light.

So as much as he wanted to, he didn’t run to Shade. He pushed aside the urge to get on his knees, spill everything, and beg the forgiveness of his family. He placed his emotions behind a careful mask he usually reserved for dealing with Elena and stood, making his way over to where Toxic and Spider sat talking quietly.

Toxic handed Sin a piece of toast slathered in honey, and he nodded his thanks. Spider grinned affectionately at him before continuing the train of conversation.

“So Stickler’s main fence was arrested. It’s going to take a while for him to find someone new to sell the earrings, which he thinks might be fake anyway, so we can’t rely on those.”

Toxic narrowed her eyes, and Sin could almost see the wheels spinning in her head. “We’ll be fine for food, at least for a while,” she said, “But Hero’s blanket needs replacing, and Shade wants to buy
locks for the doors - preferably ones with codes instead of keys, so that will be expensive - and we need to have spending cash on the side for your entries to the Fights, and I want to buy some antibiotics and general painkillers - Roach is still having bad luck with his hand - and I want to start keeping a small portion for bribes. I don’t like leaving every encounter with the coppers to the chance that Hero will be there, and even she can’t talk her way out of everything. Oh, and we probably won’t be able to find everything Sparky needs for the walkies in the trash, so money for electrical parts wouldn’t be amiss either.”

Spider was already shaking his head as Sin sank his teeth into the toast, relishing the sweet taste of the honey.

“It’s just not realistic. I like that idea, but the money just isn’t there. The blanket’s no problem - I can snag one next time I go out, or have Shade or someone do it - and the cash for the Fights is no problem, because I always walk out with more than I spend as an entry fee,” Spider explained, and Sin knew the older boy wasn’t being falsely arrogant; he always did. Spider never entered a Fight he didn’t know for certain that he could win, and he had gone undefeated for nearly a year. It made Sin glad that the Fights seemed to be exclusively for those under eighteen; those over could watch (although he hadn’t seen anyone over twenty-five at the Fights) but Sin knew that only those who were seventeen and under could participate. He supposed it made sense; no unfair advantages and all that. Also, it guaranteed a cop couldn’t fight undercover and blow the whole thing.

Sin wasn’t a huge fan of the Fights, given his personal history and the fact that he currently despised Elena with every fibre of his being, but he knew they were one of his families major source of income. The only one, besides theft. They needed the Fights.

“And while the locks are a possibility, if we have good luck with the homes we crack, and the painkillers are possible - we could easily snag them from whatever house we need to - the antibiotics will be a little harder. Shade won’t like the idea of using someone else’s prescription meds; they might have nasty side effects we won’t know about, but also whoever we take them from might really need them. We don’t want to put anyone in danger, Toxic. We’ll try to save some money for the walkies, I guess… those are pretty important…but with all of that, there’s just no way we’ll be able to have enough money for proper bribes. Cops won’t be swayed by ten or twenty quid, and realistically, that’s the most we’ll ever have in that department.”

Toxic sighed but nodded. “I guess we make the blanket and the walkies the priority, and then hope that Stickler can find a new fence soon.”

Spider nodded and Sin crammed the rest of his toast into his mouth as the older boy clapped Toxic on the back before heading away. Toxic sighed and slung an arm around Sin’s shoulders. He swallowed his food and leant into her.

“Don’t you just love capitalism, Sin?” Toxic grumbled, closing her eyes and leaning back. The dim overhead light made Toxic’s forearm burn look worse than usual. “Rewarding the rich with more money and success and punishing the poor with more poverty and misfortune. What an incredible system we’ve got going.”

Sin nodded absentmindedly, not really listening; he was a little on edge. He had his first Fight since Skullfinger in less than twenty-four hours. It was a regular fight, Elena was granting him that small mercy. He wouldn’t start her ‘special’ Fights until he won at least one normal Fight without using magic. That, at least, he agreed with. If he couldn’t win a normal Fight, what use would he be in a magical one?

So as Toxic continued her rant on capitalism, which eventually led to a tirade on the government in general. This reminded Sin a little of Uncle Vernon, and he tensed slightly; he knew for certain that
Toxic would never hurt him, but it was still an instinct to be ready to run whenever he even thought about Uncle Vernon. It had been nearly a year since he had left the Dursleys, and he was still haunted by them. His lip curled in distaste for his blood relatives.

“...and I almost think total anarchy would be a better alternative to what we’ve got going on now,” Toxic finished, pulling away and running a hand through her ginger hair. Sin raised his eyebrows at her.

“Hey,” she said defensively, “We’re basically living in anarchy - except worse, because we have to worry about the coppers - and we’re doing just fine!”

Sin only raised his eyebrows higher. “Oo-kay then,” he said slowly, “Good for you. I’m going to go for a run, maybe pick through some trash or something, see if there’s any junk Sparky might be able to use.”

Toxic nodded and rubbed her eyes. “Want me to come with you?” She offered, yawning.

Sin shook his head with a wry grin. “No thanks. You look like you could use some sleep,” he observed with a forced chuckle. Toxic rolled her eyes but didn’t dispute his point. Sin gave the ginger one last squeeze before heading out.

Assassin began to run along the warehouses, relishing the exercise. He’d grown much healthier during his time on the streets, as ironically, he was much better fed now, and he didn’t have to deal with the daily beatings that Hero said had probably stunted his growth.

He ran until he couldn’t run anymore, which wasn’t as long as he had hoped. He ran out of the warehouse district and into the wealthier areas. There was a new family moving in at the end of Churchill Lane, and as Sin passed it, he silently noted down the moving company and the address. There wouldn’t be any security systems up yet, and it wasn’t often that there was such a lavish house without any alarms or security.

When he circled back around to a street a couple blocks from the warehouse, he stopped. He leant against a spiky black gate and regained his breath before continuing his journey - walking this time.

Sin picked his way through the back-alleys and side streets before arriving at what had recently become one of his least favorite places in the world, after the Dursleys’ house, Mrs. Figg’s, and the Fights. The abandoned parking lot where he and Elena met.

There was no sign of the vampiress. He supposed, being the morning, she might not be out because it was daylight - he didn’t know whether the whole ‘sunlight is poisonous to vampires’ theory was real or not - or simply because she hadn’t known he was coming. She had some strange way of knowing exactly when he was going to come, which she refused to tell him, so they didn’t need to plan ahead or have a schedule - which was good, because irregular meetings were harder to pinpoint - but maybe because they’d never met up when it wasn’t nighttime she didn’t know he would be here.

Regardless, he couldn’t say he was sorry about her absence. He hadn’t really come here for her instruction, although it wouldn’t be amiss. He came here for practice, to see what he could do without her help.

There were several small pieces of brick and asphalt scattered the lot. He focused his attention on one of them, yanking on the feeling at the back of his mind. He could feel the rush of power slam through his body and the brick shattered into dust.
Sin sucked in a breath and stumbled backwards. His head throbbed, as if he had banged it on something. Well, he mused thoughtfully, that had a lot more power behind in that usual. I didn’t do anything different. I wonder what... ah.

The dam he had released in his head last night. He had pulled so tightly on the barrier in the back of his mind that it had snapped. God, was it really only last night that he’d frozen the flames around him?

He guessed that was the cause of the new-found power behind his magic. Biting his lip nervously, he tugged as lightly as he could on the writhing feeling behind his consciousness. The brick shot up into the sky, as if he had fired a gun upwards. He raised his eyebrows and took several steps back; he didn’t want the stone to come back down and land on his head.

This turned out to be a smart decision as the piece of brick landed where he had just been standing with a loud crack. The asphalt around the brick had fractured. Sin stared, his eyes wide. How the hell was he supposed to control his magic now?

With a deep breath he tried again. He focused on the brick, and instead of pulling at the magic, he simply let is pour out from the back of his mind. He let the feeling envelop him. The feeling was... euphoric. It was what he guessed powerful drugs would feel like. It was as if he were floating, and the power... he felt like he could do anything.

So he concentrated on the brick again and just willed it to rise. It wasn’t toiling; he just willed it to happen. And it did. The broken shard of brick rose into the air effortlessly. Assassin grinned.

The feeling of his magic was intoxicating. He commanded the brick to spin around him, and it followed his silent orders. He dropped it, and the magic began to sink slowly back into his subconscious. Hurriedly, not wanting to lose the fantastic feeling, he willed the ground in front of him to freeze. The exhilarating feeling returned, and the asphalt before him began to sparkle with frost. It started to spread, thin tendrils of ice creeping out from where he stood. He started to shiver, and remembered vividly how he had collapsed after using his magic last night. Reluctantly he stopped, the magic draining into the back recesses of his mind.

The feeling of euphoria was gone, and in its place a pounding headache. Sin blinked several times and realized that there were spots in his vision. He crouched down in the center of the web of ice, his face in his hands.

Several minutes later, when he felt he had sufficiently recovered, he stood once again. His eyebrows furrowed slightly; the sun was shining hot, and the ice hadn’t begun to melt. The ice from last night had melt almost completely before he’d even left the courtyard, but today it was all completely frozen.

He was tempted to see what else he could do - if he could freeze things, could he warm them up? Set them on fire? Could he draw moisture from the air and turn it into water? - but he resolved not to do anymore magic for a while unless Elena was watching him. He didn’t want to pass out again from over-exertion. He almost found himself looking forward to his session with Elena that night; he couldn’t wait to feel his magic fill him up again.

So instead of attempting to melt the ice himself, he returned to the warehouse. He almost ran right into Stickler, whose dark forehead was creased.

“Oh - sorry, mate,” Sin said with an apologetic smile. Stickler nodded distractedly, a walkie in his hand.

The older boy crossed him before turning back and replying, “Oh, um - Spider said to tell you that
there’s no training tonight or tomorrow, he and Wheels are taking Roach down to Gladstone Court tonight, and then tomorrow I’m meeting with a new fence and will need back-up."

Sin nodded his thanks, privately glad; he didn’t want to have to think of an excuse as to why he’d have to ditch.

Early the next morning, when he was sure nobody else was awake, he rose from his bed. Swapping out his baggy, patched-up pajamas for a pair of loose sweatpants and a thin shirt, he crept out of the building. As the moon glinted off of his glasses he made his way back to the Fights. When he approached Jerome, he realised he didn’t have any money.

“Oh - um - I don’t have -”

Jerome just sneered greasily at him before saying, his voice oily, “No charge for you. I don’t know what kind of deal you and Elena have going on, but getting into bed with her is a mistake. It’s too bad you’re in too deep now.”

Sin refused to falter under the young man’s leer, and so he simply hid his discomfort behind a mask of confidence and stared back unyielding. Jerome flinched back slightly, not used to such emotionless eyes from anyone but Elena, and especially not from a boy who wasn’t even eleven. After a few moments of eye contact, Sin passed him and entered the Fights.

The large courtyard wasn’t quite as packed as it had been last time he’d been here, but it was still pretty full. The crowd was currently ‘oohing’ and ‘ahhing’, so Sin assumed there was currently a Fight going on. He shoved his way through the throng, approaching where Elena sat on the wall. Her gaze seem fixed on the pit that he couldn’t quite see through the crowd of people, but as soon as Sin got between the horde of people and Elena, her eyes snapped down to meet his. It was now a reflex to have his calm mask up when dealing with Elena, as she always made him feel uneasy, and he hated it when people could tell he was ill-at-ease. It made him feel helpless.

“Good,” she said, just loud enough for him to hear over the roar of the crowd. “You’re here.” She patted the wall next to her, and he refrained from recoiling in disgust.

“Won’t people be suspicious, if they see me sitting next to you?” He asked her, delaying his response.

Elena chuckled lowly. “So? Let them. We have nothing to lose from the others knowing we have an arrangement, Assassin.” Her eyes glinted with a soft challenge.

Sin swallowed. “You don’t,” he replied shortly. Sin was surprised to see a gleam of disappointment in Elena’s gaze, but it was gone as quickly as it came.

“Alright,” she sighed, “I see. But you’re up next. It’s your first time working for me, so I’ll go easy on you and not put you up against someone who’s undefeated.” She grinned wickedly, and Sin managed to stop his fists from clenching. He didn’t bother to reply other than a simple nod. He and Elena turned their attention to the Fight as the crowd began to count.

A boy who looked a little younger than Toxic was on top of a girl about Sin’s age. Her face was pressed into the dirt and he held her arms back in a very uncomfortable position. The boy’s cheekbone was bruised purple and he was putting most of his weight on one knee, but otherwise the girl looked far more worse for wear. Her stringy blonde hair was matted with blood and three of her fingers bent the wrong way. Her nose was gushing blood. Sin scanned the pit and noticed that a small rope ladder had been added to one side of the pit, presumably to aid in getting Fighters in and out.
“- THREE, TWO, ONE!” The crowd shouted, and the boy staggered to a stand, raising his arms to the sky in triumph. After a few moments the girl rolled onto her back, cradling her hand. One of Elena’s various goons dropped into the pit to help the girl out.

“And the first win of the night goes to return fighter Steelfist!” Elena called out over the fray, somehow managing to remain elegant while bellowing out over the roar of the audience. “And now we have the return of the presumed one-hit-wonder, you may recognize him… Assassin!”

Sin managed to keep the mix of disgust and fear off of his face as he forced his way through the crowd and dropped smartly into the fighting pit. There was a low hush as the crowd quietened to whispers.

“Steelfist, with two consecutive wins to his name, versus Assassin, who toppled the long reign of Skullfinger!” Elena added, giving the other boy, Steelfist, time to take a few gulps of water from a bottle handed to him by the same lackey that had helped the girl out of the pit. The same lackey, who looked just over Shade’s age, tied something tightly around Steelfist’s knee that seemed to help the boy get over his slight limp. “Let the Fight begin!”

Sin almost felt bad for the other boy; he doubted he hadn’t gotten the same amount of training that he had. Not many people had access to mentors like Spider, and even then, Sin had the added advantage of magic.

The other boy didn’t wait for Sin to make the first move; he launched his foot into the young wizard’s ribs. Sin grabbed the foot and yanked it sharply, sending Steelfist onto his ass. Without waiting for retaliation Sin buried his toe between the other boy’s ribs, careful not to shatter his ribs. A strangled cry escaped Steelfist’s mouth and he kicked up into Sin’s legs, who easily dodged. Steelfist rolled to the side and began to scramble to his feet just as Sin planted his foot into the small of the other boy’s back, sending him crashing into the dirt. The crowd began to chant down and as Steelfist struggled Sin felt another worm of pity before squashing it and dropping to the ground, digging his elbows in between the other boy’s ribs.

“And it’s a win for Assassin!” Elena yelled as the counting stopped. “In no time at all, he put Steelfist to shame! Will anyone dare to put Assassin to the real test?”

There was a pause as Steelfist managed to crawl out of the pit, before a girl a few years older than Sin leapt into the pit. She smiled at him crookedly, venom in her eyes.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a surprise!” Elena commented, a dangerous grin on her face. “It seems Skullfinger has come back to reclaim her throne!” Sin’s mask almost faltered as he realised why she had seemed so familiar, and why he hadn’t recognized her immediately. She had grown out her hair and dyed it an outrageous pink. Skullfinger opened her mouth and wasn’t quite drowned out by the roar of the excited crowd as she spoke.

“I don’t know what sly trick you pulled last time, kid,” she murmured, her eyes fixed on Sin’s, “But I assure you, it won’t work again.” Sin didn’t bother replying, but he swore to himself he would defeat her again, and this time, he wouldn’t even need his magic.

“Let the Fight begin!” Elena cried.

Skullfinger immediately brought her right arm around in a haymaker, and as Sin ducked to avoid it she kicked out and caught him in the chest, sending him sprawling. He didn’t wait until she approached again before rolling to his knees however, and he lashed out at her legs with his own. She managed to jump over them but landed right into an uppercut into her stomach as he stood. She reeled back slightly and coughed, and Sin didn’t wait for her to regain her upright posture before launching a series of blows to her ribs. Hunched over as she was she was unable to block and slammed into the wall behind her.
Sin gulped in a breath, not expecting to be fighting more than once tonight. He certainly hadn’t expected to be pitted against someone with so personal a vendetta as Skullfinger.

He aimed a left hook to her throat but she deflected it awkwardly, having regained her strength, and brought a knee up between his legs. Sin had been expecting it, however, and leant to one side, so that her knee had only bruised the inside of his right thigh. Taking advantage of him being slightly off-balanced, she brought the knee that was under his leg father up so that he was forced to jump away to recover.

Skullfinger ducked under a punch of his and thrust a fist of her own into Sin’s stomach. He stumbled backwards, and his back hit something lumpy on the wall behind him.

The rope ladder.

An idea formed in Sin’s mind as he thought back to how he had won that sparring match against Spider. He had used his surroundings.

He dodged a hit to the face and shoved Skullfinger’s shoulder roughly. She pivoted slightly so that she was almost perpendicular to Sin. He gripped her shoulders, twisting her so that her back was to him. Shocked at the elementary move she made no defense while Sin grabbed rope ladder from behind him. She began to turn just as he fit the end of the rope around her neck and jumped up so that he was hanging from it as it wrapped around the front of her throat.

Skullfinger grasped at it before collapsing to her knees, and Sin heard the audience begin to count down. He could see her neck begin to turn purple and released the rope. She dropped to the ground, breathing erratically, as the crowd finished their count.

“A third win for Assassin! The young man seems to be building quite the reputation!” Elena called out, and as Sin met her gaze, he didn’t even shrink from the hungry look in her eyes. He stared back, throwing as much hate into his gaze as he could. The vampiress blinked, and had it been anyone else, Sin would have thought nothing of it, but coming from Elena it was almost an exclamation of surprise. That gave him pause; why would she be surprised he hated her? She had outright threatened to murder one of his own, with not a hint of subtlety veiling her threat. She should be lucky his magic hadn’t exploded and shattered her to bits. In fact, Sin mused, if he hadn’t gotten lessons on controlling his magic from her, that probably would have been exactly what would have happened.

Skullfinger was still gasping air but managed to stagger upright, shooting Sin one last look of pure vitriol before pulling herself out of the pit with the help of someone presumably working for Elena. She didn’t touch the rope ladder.

“Can he lose at all? Will he stay to fight another match, so that we may find out?” When no one moved to jump in the pit and challenge him, Elena prompted, “This next match will be the last of the night, so anyone hoping to fight tonight should see if they can defeat Assassin, the ten-year-old who won the last three matches.” There was a ripple of shock throughout the crowded courtyard as the realised the age of the boy who had just come away from a fight with Skullfinger virtually unscathed. Sin realised as she spoke how clever she had been to add that in. Not only was she pushing at the egos of possible fighters, basically calling them cowards for not wanting to challenge a ten-year-old, while simultaneously getting the more stupid of the bunch to continue underestimating him. It was a well-thought-out maneuver, but Sin only glared at her. If someone challenged him now he wasn’t sure he would be able to come out on top; he was exhausted.
When nobody jumped into the pit, Sin was momentarily relieved, before remembering how he had come to joining a Fight the first time. His stomach dropped as Elena opened her mouth.

“It seems no one is willing to test our new reigning champion. Curious.” She let her gaze wash over the crowd and it hushed, seemingly hanging on her every word. “However. The sun is almost up; we won’t be picking a new contestant the old-fashioned way tonight.” There was a wave of quiet disappointment, but nobody disputed Elena’s decision. Sin highly doubted any of them had guessed she wasn’t human, but even to muggles she radiated an aura of danger. Even subconsciously people had guessed she was not one to mess with. “It’s been a pleasure, ladies and gentlemen. I hope to see you again tomorrow night.”

And with that, Elena hopped off of her perch on the wall. The crowd began to mill out of the courtyard, and Sin grabbed the rope ladder and climbed from the pit. As he pulled himself to his feet, Elena stepped in front of him, her expression one of quiet amusement.

“My my my, Assassin. If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you’d lost your recent spurt of affection for me.”

Sin stared at her with disgust. “Would you,” he replied flatly.

Elena raised a delicate eyebrow, her amused expression otherwise not moving. “Mhm. Care to inform me as to why? Surely you did not expect our little sessions to come for free?”

Sin’s forehead creased. “You’re not serious?” He scoffed. “You threatened one of my own. And I do not take kindly to threats of any kind, especially not those against my family.”

Elena blinked again, before regarding Sin with an odd mix of disdain and pity. “Dear Mordred, you have a lot to learn. Especially if you end up in Sly- well. We’ll see.”

She turned and approached the entrance of the courtyard with her panther’s gait before turning to look at him.

“Tomorrow night, meet at the same place we do for your little lessons. Try to be a little earlier than you were today. I’m going introduce you to our world. More specifically… my side of our world.” She grinned at him, and he was reminded vividly of a wolf.

Chapter End Notes

Disclaimer: Toxic’s views on capitalism and anarchy are in no way my own. They reflect her character's thoughts based on her past experiences, not my own.

A/N

That was a little longer than usual, but believe or not I had to cut it down a lot from the original; you almost got the next chapter and this one all mushed together. Please leave a comment! Tell me what you loved, what you hated, whether you like the longer chapters or not, who your favorite character is, your predictions, your hopes for Sin’s future... I love hearing from you guys!
Weakness Can Get You Killed

Chapter Summary

Elena introduces Sin to the magical world. He learns why she cares so much about having him on a string.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Oh my goodness! I’m so sorry,” Sin apologized quickly to the man he had bumped into. The man just gave him a quizzical look but waved him off and hustled down the street, adjusting his tie. Sin stepped aside and let him go, shooting a triumphant smile to Stickler, who sat on a bench at the bus stop.

Sin walked past Stickler who made a show of checking the bus times, shaking his head, and standing up. Once they were a street away they ducked into a small alleyway, scaring away a few pigeons.

“What’d you grab?” Stickler asked, anticipation on his face. Sin grinned at him and pulled out a wallet, a fancy Rolex watch, and a phone from his pocket. Stickler’s eyes lit and he snatched the watch from Sin’s hand, pursing his lips.

“Fake,” he said after a few moments.

Sin sighed, disappointed. “I bet you could sell it for almost the full price though,” he suggested hopefully, “If people don’t know it’s fake.”

Stickler shook his head. “It’s not a good enough fake. Anyone buying a Rolex would know to check first, and if I can tell it isn’t real, so will they.” He put it in his satchel and took the phone from Sin’s hand. It looked a little like a walkie talkie but with a slightly bigger screen and a smaller antenna, and a flap flipped over to cover the numbers.

“This’ll do… we won’t be able to sell it, but I imagine it will really help out Sparky with the walkies. Hell, if we get another couple, we might not even need the walkies.”

“Don’t tell Sparky that,” Sin replied with a wry smile. “She’ll be devastated.”

Stickler chuckled and conceded with a nod, before stowing the mobile away in his pocket and gesturing for the wallet. Sin handed it to him, and Stickler flipped through it.

“Fantastic!” he exclaimed appreciatively as he pulled two hundred pounds in cash. “The mug you snatched this from must be either foolish or loaded, to carry around so much at once.”

Sin smirked. “Always go for the men in expensive suits. They’re either very rich or like to look rich - either way they’ll carry around lots of cash.”

Stickler nodded approvingly, searching through the rest of the wallet. There was a driver’s license, a black-and-white photo of a beautiful woman, a receipt for a pair of cufflinks, and two plastic credit cards.
“Alright, I’m going to head back now that we have a few wallets and try to make contact with the backdoor pawn shop dealer. He might know a fence I can use. Let Shade know I’ll be crashing at the pawn shop, it gets the dealer in a soft mood if act like I’ve nowhere else to stay. See you in the morning?” Stickler asked, orange light making his dark skin shine. Sin nodded as Stickler passed him back half of the cash, glad he didn’t have to think of an excuse to slip away soon.

When he arrived back at the warehouse he passed Stickler’s message on before dropping the cash into a small cardboard box beside Shade’s mattress and heading to bed himself. He had started going to sleep earlier, because waking up at ungodly hours in the morning to sneak out and meet Elena had begun to wear down on him.

On his first real day out pickpocketing, Roach had snatched several watches, and had given one to Sin. It had an alarm that he could set low, so that only he could hear it, and it was what told him when he needed to go see Elena.

At just past midnight, he entered the parking lot, very glad he had thought to bring his jacket. It was a particularly chilly night. Elena wasn’t there yet, so he leant against the fence to wait. Ten minutes later, he was just beginning to wonder if he should come back later when he blinked and all of a sudden Elena was in front of him. He stumbled back in shock as she chuckled lowly.

“We’re going to have to work on that. Where we’re going, showing surprise is weakness, and weakness can get you killed.”

Sin attempted to school his features back into the careful mask he usually wore around Elena. She gave him an appraising look with her dead eyes before nodding.

“It’ll do, for now. But you’re going to have to make sure there are no cracks. We’ll work on that later. For now, we have somewhere to be.” She turned around and as she did, Sin noticed she was wearing a long black cloak, and instead of her usual cheap clothes she had donned an expensive ruby blouse, and sharp black trousers.

Sin hurried to follow Elena as she left the parking lot. They walked in silence for a few minutes before Elena spoke.

“You’re going to have to take on a false identity when you fight in Knockturn Alley. The world you’ll be thrown into once you go to Hogwarts is ruled by carefully spoken words and manipulation, not fists and feet, so it wouldn’t be helpful for your reputation if it got out that you were a brawler, even against other magical beings. However, since you already go by a different name, that part won’t be a problem; we’ll just need you to look a little different.”

Sin blinked and nodded, not knowing how to reply. He was feeling a little queasy; fighting with his fists he could do, he excelled at it. Fighting with words? He knew he spoke quite eloquently for his age, especially for children who lived on the streets, but he didn’t think that was exactly what Elena was talking about. He had no sense of tact, and he expected to put his foot in his mouth at the first opportunity.

“We’ll just have you put in contacts and cover your scar with makeup, and maybe gel that hair of yours… well, no, we’ll want to do that for your real identity once you go to Hogwarts for the appearance factor… we could always use Polyjuice Potion, but then you would have to fight in someone else’s body, and you’d lose home field advantage…”

Elena seemed to be speaking more to herself now. Sin had no idea what Polyjuice Potion was, and he was about to ask when the vampiress shook her head and continued.

“Anyway, today I’m going to be preparing you for when you go to Hogwarts, not just for when you begin to fight for me. That’s less important, and temporary. Hogwarts is the beginning of political
warfare, especially if you end up in Slytherin. You -"

This time Sin managed to cut her off. “What’s Slytherin?” He asked, a little irked at how little he understood this world he was meant to be a part off.

They made their way out of the network of back alleys and into a long, deserted street before Elena explained, “At Hogwarts, the students are divided into four houses. There’s Gryffindor, the house of the brave and ‘chivalrous’; essentially a bunch of reckless daredevils. Occasionally a few of them are truly courageous, however. The Longbottoms were definitely what the house should have been. And your mother. She was truly brave.”

Sin sucked in a breath. “You - you knew my mother?” He asked quietly.

Elena smiled sadly at him, the first true emotion he’d ever seen her show other than mild amusement. “I did. We weren’t friends, but she saved my life once.”

Sin swallowed and opened his mouth to ask another question, but Elena kept speaking.

“Anyway, that’s Gryffindor. Ravenclaw is the house of the intelligent and curious, and they usually come at the bottom of the house cup - it’s a contest between all of the school houses, to see who can earn the most points - because they never turn in their work, and spend time they should be doing their homework doing some ridiculous project for their own curiosity. Not a bad place to be. Hufflepuff is the house of loyalty and hard workers. They win quite often. The last house is Slytherin, the house of ambition and cunning. The rest of the school - including a lot of the teachers, and the Headmaster -” Elena’s words turned bitter as she mentioned the Headmaster, as if he had personally offended her, “are generally biased against Slytherin, because the Dark Lord was in Slytherin, and because Slytherin’s have a survival instinct. They’re not as easy to manipulate, and they become the manipulators. Professors don’t like that. They don’t like knowing that the students have their own hierarchy, because they aren’t at the top of it. Most politicians were Slytherins; being in Slytherin is like being a politician already. You have to wade through age-old politics to even survive in the den of the snakes.”

Elena seemed to know a lot more about Slytherin than the other houses, Sin mused silently. “Did you go to Hogwarts, Elena?” He asked her, guarded. “Were you in Slytherin?”

Elena chuckled as they turned into another, slightly more populated road. “I was. About forty years ago, I was in Slytherin. My political skills weren’t quite up to scratch back then, and for the first few years especially, I was near the bottom of the Slytherin hierarchy. By my sixth year, I’d managed to climb up so that I was second-in-command of the Slytherin queen at the time, Natalia Greengrass.”

Sin forced himself not to show his surprise at Elena’s concession. He had been sure that Elena would have been at the top of whatever hierarchy there was. He processed what she’d said before blurting out, “You’re fifty years old?”

Elena fixed her gaze on him before he blushed and then slipped his mask back on. Then she chuckled and nodded slowly. “Fifty-three. I know, I look excellent for my age.”

Sin blinked. She looked only a year or two older than Shade, and she was fifty-three. It was somehow more mind-boggling than if she’d been hundreds of years old, because it was more realistic.

They turned the corner onto a bustling Charing Cross Road, and as Sin’s eyes swept the line of shops, he noticed a small, rough-looking building that nobody was stopping at. In fact, he noticed, the muggles’ eyes seemed to slide right past it, as if they couldn’t see it.

Elena seemed to notice Sin’s curiosity. “That’s The Leaky Cauldron,” she explained lowly, but they
walked right past it. “It’s the regular entrance to Diagon Alley, which is a huge shopping center for wizards and witches. It’s where you’ll go to buy your school things, and it’s where most wizards go to buy regular supplies. The Leaky Cauldron offers a place to stay and a good meal. We, however, are not going to Diagon Alley. We're going to Knockturn Alley.”

They walked along Charing Cross Road until the street corner, where they turned and approached a small building, similar to The Leaky Cauldron, except it had a curled up black cat on it’s hanging sign. As he watched, Sin could have sworn the cat’s body was rising and falling as if it were breathing.

“The Night Prowler,” Elena said smoothly, opening the door and holding it open for Sin. He stepped inside and scanned the room. There was a counter at one end of the room and a few elegant, green velvet sofas filling the rest of the room. Behind the counter stood a middle-aged man with cropped grey hair and milky eyes. He was dressed in sharp black robes, with silver stitching.

The man, catching sight of Sin and Elena, bowed deeply at Elena. “Well met, Lady Van Rau. A pleasure to see you, as always..”

Elena nodded at him and the man straightened. “Well met, Mr Avery. Likewise. I’m afraid we’re just passing through today. Any word from the Shafts?”

Avery shook his head. “I’m afraid not, but they’re in Egypt at the moment, so I expect it’s just taking a while for the letter to arrive.”

Elena nodded, and Avery looked pointedly at Sin and then back to Elena. The vampiress merely raised an eyebrow at him and he looked down, redness creeping up his neck.

“Have a wonderful night, Lady Van Rau.” Elena nodded and led Sin through the back of the room.

“Doesn’t everyone think the Van Raus are all dead?” Sin asked in a whisper once they were out of earshot of Avery, “How come he knows your real name?”

Elena chuckled as she opened the back door and ushered Sin through. “Avery is… well, he won’t tell anyone. And it’s not everyone that thinks I’m dead. Only the general wizarding public. You’ll find that most people in Knockturn, as well as the goblins, are quite aware that I’m alive.”

Sin wasn’t really listening as Elena explained, because his jaw dropped as he looked at Knockturn Alley. It was one in the morning, and yet the alley was full of people in dark and usually expensive cloaks hustling up and down. However, he remembered Elena’s warning and snapped his mouth closed, placing his mask carefully over his features.

“First stop; Gringotts bank. It’s run by goblins, so don’t look surprised when you see them,” Elena said lowly as she began to stride quickly down the alley. Sin sped up to keep up with her, his legs quite a bit shorter than hers. He managed to stifle a question about the goblins; he got the impression that Elena would explain everything on her own time.

“We’ll be going through the Knockturn entrance because it isn’t quite so obvious. We don’t need anyone seeing you. Oh, also - put this over your scar,” she said, handing him a small tub of cream. He rolled his eyes but applied it softly over his scar, and it stung slightly before disappearing.

“Good. That shouldn’t wear off for another four hours or so, but keep the rest of it just in case.” He stowed it into his pocket as they approached a small building made of black marble, the archway sculpted into obsidian dragons and gargoyles. Elena knocked twice, and the heavy wooden door swung inwards. The room inside was lit with a torch on either side of the empty doorway opposite them, and Sin followed Elena into the ominous looking room.
A very short man walked out of the darkened doorway and when Sin looked closer, he noticed that it wasn’t a man at all. His features were too pointed, his expression cruel and clever. He had very long, almost clawed fingers and a short beard. A goblin, then. Sin was grateful for Elena’s warning, because without it he was sure he would have gaped. As it was, he managed to keep his mask of cool indifference intact.

Elena bowed to the goblin. “May your gold be plenty and your vaults full, Dagnok,” she intoned smoothly, before straightening up. The goblin - Dagnok - blinked before mirroring Elena’s bow, although he went even deeper.

“May your plans come to fruition and your enemies cower beneath your feet.” He straightened. “Lady Van Rau, always a pleasure.” The goblin grinned nastily, and Sin noticed his teeth were pointed, and looked very sharp. “I presume your visit has something to do with your new companion?”

Elena nodded, a faint smile on her lips. Sin knew that smile had nothing to do with happiness, and was merely a careful screen of politeness to veil her inner malice. “Indeed. I trust I don’t have to mention the importance of this meeting being kept secret?”

Dagnok’s eyes glittered with something close to malevolence at the presumed slight, but he merely nodded. “What services require of Gringotts Bank today, Lady Van Rau?”

“I would like Mr. Potter here,” the goblin inhaled quietly at the name, and Sin flinched at hearing his old, weak name, despite his mask, “to visit his vault.”

“And does Mr. Potter have his key?” Dagnok asked, leering at Sin. The young boy snapped his mask back into place as best he could.

“I apologize for our unpreparedness, but it would seem not,” Elena responded boredly, not sounding sorry at all. “I’m afraid a blood test will have to be performed.”

Dagnok nodded and drew a quill and a thick roll of parchment from within the pocket of his purple waistcoat. “I see,” was all he replied, before handing the parchment and quill to Elena. “If you would be so kind.”

She nodded and unrolled the parchment, scanning the words before signing the bottom and handing it back to the goblin. He examined the parchment once more before saying, “It all seems to be in order. Follow me.” He headed back through the dark archway, Elena and Sin close behind.

They walked through a maze of winding black marble corridors before they entered a small stone room with a flat cot and a locked cabinet. As Dagnok left them in the room Elena gestured for Sin to sit on the cot, and he did, raising a questioning brow at the vampiress.

Later, her eyes seemed to say. I’ll explain later. Just pay attention.

Sin nodded slowly as Dagnok returned, another goblin in tow. This one wore not a waistcoat but a set of plain purple robes.

“I am Healer Kenrok. May your gold be plenty and your vaults full,” the newcomer said, bowing to Elena and then Sin.

Elena bowed back. “Lady Elena of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau. May your plans come to fruition,” she replied, and they both looked expectantly at Sin. He blinked in panic before remembering Elena’s first conversation with Dagnok.
“I’m - Assassin. And - may your enemies cower beneath your feet,” he guessed, putting up a show of confidence. A pleased gleam flickered in Elena’s eye and the new goblin bared his teeth at Sin in what the young wizard guessed was meant to be a smile. Sin narrowed her eyes at Elena; ‘noble and most ancient house’ seemed to be quite a big deal. He wondered if the wizarding world kept the sense of nobility from Tudor times.

Healer Kenrok cleared his throat gruffly before speaking. “I am going to perform a series of tests, which will be slightly painful, so that we can verify your identity.”

Sin blinked, appreciating the honesty but being anxious all the same. He kept his mask of indifference up as best he could.

Elena turned back to Dagnok. “I have another, private matter I’d like to speak with my account manager about. If you wouldn’t mind fetching Bogrod, then we can leave Healer Kenrok and Mr Potter here alone.”

Dagnok nodded, and while Sin managed not to twitch at the sound of his old name, he almost gaped at Elena. Was she really going to leave him here alone?
It seemed she was, as she followed Dagnok out of the room and he was left to stand there as Healer Kenrok sized him up. The healer drew a silver quill from within his bag. The nib of the quill was very thin and looked razor sharp.

“Hold out your arm,” Healer Kenrok ordered, and Sin did so, not wanting to piss off a goblin. The goblin gripped his wrist tightly and brought the nib of the quill down onto his forearm, breaking the skin and feeling a little like a bee sting. After a few seconds he withdrew the quill and pulled a gilded roll of parchment from his bag and let the tiny drops of blood drip from the nib onto the parchment.

The blood was absorbed into the parchment and Healer Kenrok let go of Sin’s arm. The young boy rubbed it softly, the pain not really bothering him. As he watched, he did his best not to let his jaw drop as words began to spider across the page from where his blood had touched it. The goblin’s face remained impassive as he turned to Sin.

“Would you like to read the results before your Lady Van Rau returns, or would you like her to be here?” Healer Kenrok asked.

Sin bit his lip. He wasn’t sure he would understand any of the results himself, but Elena had enough control over his introduction to the wizarding world as it was. “I’d - I’d like to read them myself.” The goblin nodded, handing him the parchment.

Elena followed Dagnok down the stone hallway, used to her footsteps making no noise. A small part of her was worried about leaving Assassin behind; worried that he would make some awful social gaffe and offend Healer Kenrok. However, the majority of her had faith in the boy. He was smart, and learned quickly. He never needed to be taught the same lesson twice.

She had grown something close to fond of the boy; she spent a lot of time with him, and while most of it was spent intimidating him or providing him pointers on his magic, he was still an interesting dilemma. Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived, the Savior of the Light, the Vanquisher of Voldemort, on the muggle streets under a new name, under the wing of the lady of a notoriously dark and powerful house - not to mention a vampire.
Whatever game that old, wizened fool was playing, she thought, he was going to be vastly disappointed when his favorite chess piece turned up to Hogwarts not as soft clay ready to be molded, but as a powerful sculptor ready to mold others. She almost wished she could go with the boy to Hogwarts just to see the old coot’s face.

Dagnok lead her into a small office, the walls black marble. There was a desk on one side, three velvet seats on an adjacent wall, and a fireplace with a gilded mantlepiece across from the desk. Bogrod sat at a desk opposite the fire, a handsome green quill in his hand. He looked up from his work when Elena and Dagnok walked in, and he stood quickly, bowing deeply.

“Lady Van Rau, may your gold be plenty and your vaults full,” He said. She nodded at him and he straightened.

She bowed back, more shallow, and replied, “and may your plans come to fruition and your enemies cower beneath your feet.” She turned to raise an eyebrow at Dagnok, who got the message and scurried from the room. The door shut and locked behind him with a soft ‘click’.

“What can I do for you tonight, Lady Van Rau?” Bogrod asked. Elena smiled at him, her teeth glinting in the soft candlelight.

“For several years now, you’ve been trying to persuade me to name an heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau. Well, today is your lucky day. I know just the young wizard for the title.”

________________________________________

Sin’s eyes bugged out of his head as he finished the parchment.

Hadrian James Potter

Mother: Lily June Potter née Evans
Father: James Fleamont Potter

Inherited Lineage:
Heir of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell
Heir to the House of Potter

Named Lineage:
Heir of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black

Lineage by Conquest:
N/A

Personal Blood Debts Owed:
N/A

Familial Blood Debts Owed:
Debt of Servitude owed by the Noble and Ancient House of Nott

Vaults With Current Access:
Potter Trust Vault
Black Trust Vault
Peverell Trust Vault
Peverell House Vault

Vaults Accessible Once Fifteen:
   Peverell Artifact Vault
   Potter House Vault

Vaults Accessible Once of Age:
   Black House Vault
   Black Artifact Vault

Vault Restrictions:
Muggle Conversion Restricted - Magical Guardian Pro Tem

Sin reread it again, compartmentalizing it so he could make some sort of sense from it. His parents…
knowing their middle names made it more real, somehow. It humanized them. He felt a slight pang of
sadness, but it was quickly smothered. He had a new family now. He moved on down the list.

Lineage… if the wizarding world did indeed run on a Tudorish sense of nobility, it sounded like he
himself was quite important. He would have to ask Elena about that. Being the heir of two ‘noble
and most ancient’ houses - whatever that meant - had to mean something important. And if he hadn’t
been descended from the line of Black, who had named him their heir? Did he have family he didn’t
know about? Perhaps friends of his dead parents? Or maybe, he mused, someone just wanted the
Boy-Who-Lived to be an heir to their house. Vaguely he wondered what ‘lineage by conquest’
meant, but ignored it and moved on.

Blood debts. That could be very useful. Seeing as he was about to be thrown into a world he only
knew about from Elena and Shade, he would need someone who would answer his questions.
Elena’s information wasn’t trustworthy and Shade didn’t know much of worth, especially about the
political side things. And even aside from information, he would need someone watching his back.
From what he knew of it, the magical world was a very dangerous place to be with no allies.

And the vaults… there were several, and his heart began to beat faster. If he really had access to that
many vaults - and the houses he belonged to were as important as he hoped - then that would mean
he was rich. He and his family would never have to worry about money ever again. Hero could get
her blanket, they would never go hungry, they could get a real house, Sparky could get her
walkietalkies, they could pay for bribes out of - Sin blinked as he realised the full implications of this.
None of them would ever be in any danger of being arrested again… because they would never have
to break the law again. They would never have to steal. For the first time since getting into bed with
Elena, Sin felt truly hopeful.

And then, as he looked down at the last line on the parchment, he felt that hope sink. If that meant
what he thought it meant, then his hopes for his family were shattered. No muggle conversion… that
meant that wizards had a different currency than muggles. And if he couldn't convert it, it would be
useless. He wouldn't be able to use it to help his family. Whoever his magical guardian pro tem
was… Sin was going to find them, and force them to change it.

As he spiraled into despair and frustration, he noticed the ink on the parchment glimmered, and it
changed. Several more words were added, and he reread the parchment again.

Hadrian James Potter

Mother: Lily June Potter née Evans
Father: James Fleamont Potter

Inherited Lineage:
Heir of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell
Heir of House Potter

Named Lineage:
Heir of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black
Heir of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau

Lineage by Conquest:
N/A

Personal Blood Debts Owed:
N/A

Familial Blood Debts Owed:
Debt of Servitude owed by the Noble and Ancient House of Nott to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black
Life Debt owed by the Noble and Ancient House of Greengrass to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau

Vaults With Current Access:
Black Trust Vault
Peverell Trust Vault
Peverell House Vault
Potter Trust Vault
Van Rau Trust Vault

Vaults Accessible Once Fifteen:
Peverell Artifact Vault
Potter House Vault

Vaults Accessible Once of Age:
Black House Vault
Black Artifact Vault
Van Rau House Vault
Van Rau Artifact Vault

Vault Restrictions:
Muggle Conversion Restricted - Magical Guardian Pro Tem

Sin blinked as his blood turned to ice. Elena had named him her heir? Was that what she had just left him alone to do? He stood there staring at the parchment in shock. He couldn’t fathom what on earth would motivate Elena to do such a thing. One moment she was threatening to kill his family, and the next she was naming him her family and basically handing him political power? It didn’t add up.

Sin leant against the wall, the gears in his mind whirling, before his eyes narrowed in realization; realization of why Elena was teaching him all of this, why she named him her heir, why she was blackmailing him and getting him to fight for her. She wanted her own puppet. She couldn’t use her full political might, because the government and the majority of the world believed she was dead. However, he would have just as much - if not more - political weight than her soon, and everyone already knew who he was. He was entering the playing field soon, and with the power Elena had over him, he was basically her little chess piece. And he had been handed a second safeguard, so that
she could protect her investment; the life debt from the House of Greengrass.

Part of him felt sick at the manipulation, but he couldn’t help but be impressed. She had pulled every string incredibly well, weaving them all into her massive plan. It was virtually foolproof; she knew his weakness. He wouldn’t cross her for fear of her hurting Light, or the rest of his family, and with her teachings and his inherited power - and now her named power - he would have the political clout for her to maneuver. It was spectacularly well done.

So Sin made a decision. There was no way he was going to get out of this - so he would embrace it. He would do everything Elena asked; he would study up on wizarding politics, he would be sorted into Slytherin, he would learn about this world he was being thrust into so unceremoniously. He would claw his way up the Slytherin hierarchy, and then when he left school he would do the same with the political world outside Hogwarts. He would set himself up on top of everyone, he would bide his time, he would play Elena’s puppet. Then, once he was the one pulling the strings, he would come for Elena. And she would pay for manipulating him. She would pay for daring to threaten those that were his.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Do you guys like the chapter summaries, or should I get rid of them? Do they give away too much?

Shoutout to tat2rmh for helping me out with ideas.

I'm starting to regret naming so many of my characters with an 's'. Sin, Sparky, Shade, Stickler, Spider...

Please leave a comment! Tell me what you liked, what you didn't, what you want to see more of, what you hope will happen, what you wonder about the future...
You're Not Helpless Anymore, Sin

Chapter Summary

Sin learns of his financial and political power. Elena takes him to fulfill his side of their deal, and Sin reveals an ability he didn't know he had.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sin turned to Healer Kenrok and did his best impression of Elena - an arrogant grin and lazy posture that radiated both authority and capability. “If you wouldn’t mind showing me to my vaults,” he drawled out, attempting to make his tone something between confident and respectful.

If the goblin noticed the change in him, or the time in which he took to stare at the results of his blood test, he didn’t comment on it. He simply dipped his head and replied, “I’ll have a key holder show you immediately, Heir…?”

Sin stared at him until he realised Healer Kenrok was waiting for him to give him a title to use. Which should he go by? Potter, because it was the house of his parents? Peverell, because it was a Noble and Most Ancient House that he was descended from? Black? Van Rau, because it would afford him respect similar to Elena’s? He threw away that suggestion pretty quickly; he didn’t want to be associated will Elena’s name. At least not yet. He would forge his own way in the world for now.

“Peverell,” he replied. “Heir Peverell.” The goblin’s eye brow rose for a fraction of a second before they returned to normal, and Sin guessed that was the closest a goblin ever got to showing surprise. Or perhaps any emotion at all. Sin found himself envious of such a skill. It was difficult for him to maintain a halfway decent mask, and this goblin showed no emotion at anything! For all he knew, the eyebrow raise could have been something planned to ease Sin into thinking he was surprised.

Healer Kenrok led him out of the room and into the hall, where they met Elena and Dagnok. She raised an eyebrow at Sin.

“So? How did it go?” She asked smoothly, clearly waiting for a reaction. Sin didn’t give her the satisfaction, and just tore his gaze from her eyes and toward Healer Kenrok.

“Healer Kenrok was about to have someone show me to my vaults.” Elena showed no sign of being disappointed, and merely nodded.

“Heir Peverell?” Elena repeated, her voice holding the slightest tone of disbelief. “Heir Peverell?

Sin smiled coldly at her. “What were you expecting? Heir Van Rau, perhaps?”

Elena seemed to ignore him as she turned to Dagnok. “How? We would have known if James Potter was a Peverell.”

Dagnok glanced at Sin, who was blinking in surprise. It looked like Peverell was a pretty big deal. It
through Sin off a little when Elena mentioned his father’s name, but he shook it off. When Dagnok saw that Sin was also looking at him expectantly, he replied.

“It’s possible that after such an ancient line, the Potters stopped getting blood tested, assuming that they kept good enough records… alternatively, it could be from the maternal line.”

Elena narrowed her eyes. “Lily Evans was a muggleborn,” she replied sharply.

Dagnok didn’t look phased. “So we know. But there are some who theorize that muggleborns are just the long-forgotten descendents of wizards, or squibs.” When no one spoke again, Dagnok continued. “Shall we go to your vaults?”

Sin nodded.

“Which would you like to see first?” The goblin asked. Keenly aware of Elena’s cutting eyes on his form, Sin asked carefully.

“Is it possible to get bank statements without visiting the vaults in question?”

Dagnok nodded slowly, his beady eyes blinking slowly. “It is… however, in the case of the artifacts vault, it will only give you a list of the ten most recently added items, because in some cases, a list of an artifact vault’s entire stock could fill out several long books. And your bank statement will hold the valuables of every vault you or your house have access to, but you can only visit the vaults under ‘current access’.”

Sin nodded, before adopting Elena’s easy, deadly mannerisms again. “If you would show me to the Potter trust vault, and get me bank statements for the rest of my vaults,” he prompted, a lazy drawl creeping into his voice. He wanted to see wizarding money for real, but he also didn’t want Elena to know about his other houses. Whatever upper edge he could gain over her, he would. And as he knew from nearly a year of living on the streets, casing houses; knowledge was power. And he intended to keep as much of it out of Elena’s elegant hands as he could.

Dagnok dipped his head and began leading them down the stone corridors. The goblin led them through a set of double wooden doors and Sin’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. They were in an enormous underground ravine of rock, with what looked like rollercoaster tracks winding through. As he watched, a minecart zoomed past the small rocky outcropping they stood upon. Another minecart flew into view, stopping right in front of the three of them.

Elena and Dagnok stepped into the minecart, and after shutting his eyes tightly and drawing in a breath, Sin got in and sat behind the vampiress. Seconds after he sat down the minecart was whizzing forward, and Sin’s stomach jumped up into his mouth.

A few minutes later the cart skidded to a halt in front of a line of enormous stone and metal doors. Elena and Dagnok stepped out without too much trouble, and Sin took a moment to compose himself before masking his exhilaration and stepping out of the minecart.

Dagnok pulled a small gold key from within his pocket, inserted it into a lock Sin could have sworn hadn’t been there before, twisted it, and handed it to the wizard. “Keep that.” Sin nodded as the goblin pushed the door open.

Sin gaped at what was inside. Mountains of enormous gold coins, piles of silver, little stacks of bronze. He lost his composure completely, the mask slipping away as he hurried into the vault and dropped to his knees amid all of the money.

“Fucking hell,” he breathed.
“Language,” came Elena’s remark, but she sounded too amused to be properly scolding.

“How - how much is in here?” Sin asked, barely managing to keep his voice from cracking.

“Two thousand galleons, seven hundred sickles, and five hundred knuts.” Sin turned around to raise an eyebrow at Dagnok who sighed before elaborating. “There are 17 sickles - the silver coins - to a galleon - the gold ones - and 29 knuts - the bronze one - to a sickle. One galleon is worth just under five British pounds.”

Sin thought he was going to be sick with excitement. “That’s… that’s…”

“Ten thousand and seventy-one pounds and fifty-three pence.”

Sin stumbled to the wall and leaned against it, feeling a little dizzy. “Ten thousand pounds. Ten… ten thousand. And this - this is just the trust fund?”

Dagnok nodded, and drew a gold piece of parchment from within his pocket. “If you would hold your palm against this, you’ll have your official bank statements.” Sin swallowed and held his hand against the parchment. It glimmered slightly before black ink words began to spider across it. The goblin handed it to him, and Sin was very aware of Elena standing at the entrance to the vault.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bank Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hadrian James Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heir to the House of Potter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potter Trust Vault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 galleons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 sickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 knuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potter Family Vault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92,912 galleons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,336 sickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9,880 knuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peverell Trust Vault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3000 galleons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 sickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 knuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peverell Family Vault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>315,032,008 galleons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33,456 sickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 knuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peverell Artifact Vault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Tales of Beedle the Bard, first edition, signed copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amulet of Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalice of Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sin barely made it out of the vault before he was on his knees, vomiting all over the floor. He retched
out his supper and stumbled back, light-headed. He was rich. He was really, really rich. In fact, he was - by muggle standards - a billionaire. His head swam and he sat hunched over his own vomit before he felt a firm hand on his shoulder, hauling him upright.

“Pull yourself together,” Elena murmured quietly, looking him in the eyes. He spat on the floor to clear his mouth and took a deep, heaving breath. When he was sure he wasn’t going to be sick again he pushed Elena away gently and stood on his own. With this money, his family would never have to go hungry again. They would never have to shiver as they slept because they didn’t have enough money for a new blanket. They would never have to risk being arrested. And all because of his magical guardian pro-temp, he wasn’t able to convert it into muggle money.

Sin’s light-headedness vanished, replaced by an overwhelming rage. Who did this mysterious guardian think he was? What right did he have to stop Sin from hauling his family off the streets? Whoever this was, he’d better hope he never met Sin.

Trying to keep from exploding, he picked something from the list at random and asked, “So what’s an unplottable ring?”

“Wearing it means you can’t be traced by any magical means. Even owls can’t reach you unless they’ve been given your exact address, and to find that you would have to tell whoever is writing to you.”

Sin’s forehead creased in confusion. “Owls?”

“They carry the mail,” Dagnok said, his nose turned up slightly. Sin’s eyebrows shot up. That was interesting. It sounded a little like carrier pigeons. He wondered briefly if they made the poor things carry international mail.

“I’m assuming you wear an unplottable ring?” Sin asked. Elena’s perfect face remained passive as she raised her right hand, which was bare. She waved her fingers a little and a small silver ring was sitting on her fourth finger.

“We ought to get you one of your own,” Elena mused. “I’m assuming you don’t want to whisked away from your little band of street rats?” She asked dryly, a knowing smirk tugging at her lips.

Sin glared at her, but didn’t dispute her point. She was right. It would be incredibly useful. Elena’s eyes narrowed as she looked at the wall past Sin intensely. Sin took a small step back, his expression guarded. She was planning something, and Elena’s plans usually ended very well for her and not so well for anyone else.

“Of course,” the vampiress mused aloud, “We wouldn’t want them to think you’ve left wherever you were before you ran away. A week or so before your eleventh birthday, you’re going to have to return to wherever you ran away, just until you get your letter. Then you can run back to the drafty little warehouse you call a home.”

Sin’s mask slipped. “How the hell do you know -” he stopped himself, fully comprehending what she had said. “No,” he said flatly. “Not a damn chance.”

Elena turned her icy stare on him. “No?” She asked, raising a delicate eyebrow.

“There’s no way in hell I’m going back there.”

Elena tilted her head, her dark eyes catching his and freezing him in place. “How much is your family worth to you, Assassin, hm? If you don’t go back, just for the one week, then the Hogwarts staff will know where you are. And if it’s not where they think you should be, they will come
looking for you. They will whisk you away from your family, maybe think they’re doing the right think and report your family to the muggle police. They’ll be separated, shunted into different children’s homes. Caretakers aren’t known for their kindness, Assassin. Will it be worth it? Taking a hit to your pride?” She asked coolly.

Sin’s fingers curled into fists. “It’s not about my pride,” he spat.

Elena bit her lip to keep from groaning in annoyance. It was one week! Why was Sin being so difficult about this? He could return for a week, tell whoever he’d run from that he’d finally come to his senses, and then take off again at the end of the week. What was so hard?

She tilted her head to look back at Assassin, opening her mouth to snap at him, when she saw the emotion curling within his emerald eyes. It was burning, icy rage, but beneath that… roiling pain and fear. The thought of returning genuinely terrified the boy.

Elena had to make a conscious effort to keep her mask in place. “Assassin - Sin. Who were you staying with before you ran away?”

Sin broke their eye contact and shifted his gaze onto the ground. “My - my aunt and uncle. And cousin. The Dursleys.”

Elena crouched down to Assassin’s height, resting her hands gently on his shoulders. “Sin,” she asked cautiously, “What did the Dursleys do to you?”

His gaze snapped back up to meet hers, but he didn’t reply. Elena nodded; his silence was confirmation.

Elena stood up sharply and turned away, trying not to let the boy see the pure fury on her face. Her mask, which almost never failed her, was shattered. They hurt Assassin. That boy was hers, and they had hurt him. She was going to pull their intestines out and use them to strangle all three of them. She was going to rip out their spines and feed every vertebrae down their throats.

“Elena?” Came a whisper from behind her. She took a slow breath, slipped her mask back into place, and turned around. Sin was looking up at her, his jaw set in a determined grimace.

“I’ll do it. To - to keep my family together - I’ll go back.”

Elena was hit with a sudden shock of how simply good this boy was. He would risk anything for the people he loved. He was just so good. Elena felt a pang of guilt for the things she was making him do, for the way she was manipulating him. He didn’t deserve it.

But she hadn’t gotten where she was by listening to her conscience. So she pushed aside her guilt and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“I’ll go with you, when you go back. I’ll make sure they don’t ever lay a hand on you again. And if they try… you’re not helpless anymore, Sin. You are a wizard. They’re just muggles. This time, you can change the game. You can make them afraid of you.”
Sin blinked. Elena was right; he didn’t have to be afraid anymore. If Vernon raised a hand, he could send the man flying. If Dudley so much as came close to him, he could send a picture frame zooming right into the fat pig’s face. If Petunia threatened to keep food from him, he could cover the counter in ice and threaten to burn her alive, never mind that he’d never summoned fire before, and that he wouldn’t actually kill her. He didn’t have to be afraid anymore. The Dursleys… the Dursleys would be the ones to cower in fear. He was done cowering.

He turned to speak to Elena, to thank her, or make a snide remark, but the woman had already turned to Dagnok. “To the Van Rau artifact vault, if you please.” Dagnok bowed and returned to the cart, where he sat and waited.

Sin turned back to the open vault full of gold and began to stuff his pockets. He knew he couldn’t convert it to muggle money, but maybe he could pawn it off if it was real gold, and still make some money.

He turned back, pockets bulging, and faced Elena’s raised eyebrows. He glared, daring her to call him out, but she just gestured for him to get into the cart. He did so, and Dagnok passed him a small leather bag.

“You can buy one with an undetectable extension charm at Wiseacres’ Wizarding Equipment,” he said, before pulling a lever and the cart zoomed away. They seemed to be going for a very long time, deeper and deeper underground; as Sin looked, they seemed to be approaching a waterfall.

“Um… Elena?” He asked, his tone reserved, “Are… are we going to go through that?”

Elena nodded. “The Thief’s Downfall. Washes away all concealing enchantments. We’re not pretending to be anyone but who we are, so it shouldn’t even get you wet. Just ignore it.”

Sin swallowed but didn’t reply. As they neared, he instinctively covered his head - but they passed through it without incident. He didn’t even feel the water as it came crashing down upon them. Soon they’d passed through, and the cart stopped. Dagnok and Elena stepped out, and Sin quickly hurried after them.

He paused. “Was - was that a roar? Are you keeping an animal down here?”

Nobody replied as they walked down a hallway into a large room, with an enormous winged reptile asleep in the middle of it.


Elena turned to him, amusement tugging at her red lips. “Indeed.”

The whole way passing it, Sin couldn’t tear his eyes from the beautiful creature.

When they finally reached the vault, Elena laid her hand on the door and it melted away, revealing an enormous room full of gorgeous furniture, weapons, jewels, and piles of other bits of treasure. The walls were lined with bookcases packed on every shelf. Sin’s jaw dropped.

“Come,” Elena said, stepping into the stone cavern. She approached a jewelry stand that stood atop a handsome mahogany dresser and opened it, pulling out a small silver ring identical to her own. She passed it to Sin, who slipped it onto his finger. It shrunk to fit perfectly.

“Now don’t ever take that off until you go back to the Dursleys for a week. You have to take it off then or else you won’t get your letter.” Sin nodded, and as he did the ring faded from view.
“What - “

“When you want to be able to see it, just wiggle your fingers and think of it on your finger. It can only be removed by the person wearing it or the owner, so that’s just you and me. It would be best if you didn’t show anyone else the ring.”

Sin nodded, not really listening. He was too busy drifting toward one of the bookcases. Many of the books were old and dusty, with leather covers. He skimmed along the titles, his eyebrows raising with each one. On one shelf he saw books labeled Warding and the Loops of the Law, An Uncensored History of the British Ministry of Magic, An Insider’s Look at the Department of Mysteries, Dark vs Malevolent; A Guide to Ministry Spell Regulation, The Complete Works of Herpo the Foul, and Secrets of the Darkest Art. He reached out a hand to pull one off the shelf when Elena cleared her throat. He turned around sheepishly, his cheeks heating.

“Now those titles aren’t particularly… legal, Assassin. I trust you’ll be keeping the contents of our vaults a secret?” She asked. Sin caught the heavy implication behind the word ‘our’. If she went down for illegal possession, so would he. He nodded, used to Elena’s scare tactics.

She handed him a short, fat volume that looked new, at least relative to the other books in the vault. He turned it over and read the title aloud.

“The Current Political State of Affairs and How to Navigate It,” he said, a doubtful eyebrow raised. “I’m surprised I didn’t fall asleep just reading that title.”

“Hilarious. You should read it,” Elena told him, and he opened his mouth to object but the vampiress cut him off. “If you’re going to be in Slytherin, you’ll drown without knowing how to wade through the age-old politics, and even if you aren’t in Slytherin, it’ll give you an edge over your peers.”

Sin rolled his eyes but tucked the book into the money bag anyway, the bag now bulging at the seams. As they left the vault, and the stone wall shot up behind them, Elena said, “Our lessons will expand. You know pretty much all you need to for your magic… anything else you’ll need you’ll learn at Hogwarts, and we can resume practical magical tutoring when you come back next summer. Instead, we’ll focus on navigating the wizarding world. I’ll teach you who to make alliances with, who to steer clear of, and who you may risk alienating by doing what.”

The word ‘alliances’ rang in his ears, and Sin tilted his head, his expression thoughtful as the stepped back into the minecart. “Allies. Not friends.”

Elena turned her head to look at him, her eyes sharp. “Alliances have consequences for being broken, and can save your life, whether in reality or in a political situation. Friendships can be broken on a whim.” Her expression softened. “But… you are just a child. I’m not going to tell an eleven-year-old he’s not allowed to make friends. Just… try to make sure to choose your friends wisely.”

Sin nodded. He wasn’t planning on getting close to anyone lightly; he didn’t really need to, he had his family now, but he was sure that the school year would go by much more quickly if he had a friend to share it with.

To make sure he wasn’t going to get a lecture on trusting too easily or some such, he opened the book to the first page and began to read.

*** The state of current politics in the magical world has, in many ways, remained stagnant since the birth of the Wizengamot. The system remains the same, and as such, the power balance tends to as
It would not be amiss to say that the Wizengamot (and corresponding political realm) is not far off from an amalgamation of the old muggle British and French Parliaments. There are two main sectors in the Wizengamot: the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The House of Lords is split into the First Estate and the Second Estate. The First Estate is made up of Ancient and Most Noble Houses, and either the Lord or Lady of each house (depending on whom inherited the title/was named heir, and who simply married into the family) has three seats on the Wizengamot with which to cast a single vote each.

An heir is awarded their Lordship/Ladyship when the current Lord or Lady dies, and if the current Lord or Lady dies before the heir is of age, the heir is awarded their full title at the age of fifteen unless the previous owner of the title specified otherwise in their bill. An heir can always sit in on Wizengamot meetings, and if permitted by their lord or lady (or magical guardian), they may voice opinions once fifteen, but they may not vote until either they inherit the full title of lady or lord. A comprehensive list of all current Noble and Most Ancient Houses is as follows.

First Estate
Noble and Most Ancient House of Black
Heir: Oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell
Heir: Oldest child, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Slytherin
Heir: By conquest, oldest child, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Hufflepuff
Heir: Oldest child, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau
Heir: Oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Gryffindor
Heir: By conquest, oldest daughter, oldest son, named
Noble and Most Ancient House of Ravenclaw
Heir: Oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Ancient House of Longbottom
Heir: Oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Ancient House of Malfoy
Heir: Oldest child, named

The Second Estate is made up of Ancient and Noble Houses. They are very similar to the First Estate except that they own two seats on the Wizengamot sign with which to cast a vote each. A comprehensive list of all current Noble and Ancient Houses is as follows.

Second Estate
Noble and Ancient House of Bones
Heir: Oldest daughter, oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Greengrass
Heir: Oldest daughter, oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Gaunt
Heir: Oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Lestrange
Heir: Oldest child, by conquest, named
Noble and Ancient House of Nott
Heir: Oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Ancient House of Burke
Heir: By conquest, oldest son, oldest daughter, named
Noble and Ancient House of Parkinson
Heir: Oldest child, named
Noble and Ancient House of Bulstrode
Heir: Oldest daughter, oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Selwyn
Heir: Oldest child, by conquest, named
Noble and Ancient House of Diggory
Heir: Oldest child, named
Noble and Ancient House of Ollivander
Heir: Oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Prewett
Heir: Oldest son, named
Noble and Ancient House of Slughorn
Heir: Oldest child, named

The House of Commons is made up of the top ministry personnel. The Minister for Magic, the Heads of all Departments, and the Minister’s immediate support staff are all included. Each member of the House of Commons has one seat on the Wizengamot with which to cast their vote. A comprehensive list of the House of Commons is as follows.

Minister for Magic
Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement
Head of the Department of Mysteries
Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation
Head of the Department of Magical Education
Head of the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes
Head of the Department of Magical Transportation
Head of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures
Head of the Department of Magical Games and Sports
Senior Undersecretary to the Minister for Magic
Senior Advisor to the Minister for Magic
Deputy Senior Advisor to the Minister for Magic

Presiding over the Wizengamot is the Chief Warlock, who leads court proceedings and, in cases which demand a full Wizengamot judicial session, acts as judge. However, in most cases, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement or the Minister act as judge.

The duty of the Wizengamot is to perform legislative and judiciary duties. For a law to be passed through the ministry route, a ministry worker must write a proposition bill and pass it up to their superior, who will (if they agree to the bill) pass it up to the Head of their Department. The Head will then propose it at the next House of Commons legislative session, which is monthly. If there is at least a sixty percent majority, then the bill will be passed to the House of Lords, who will be called into session that same month. If the House of Lords votes to pass the bill with any majority, then the law will be brought into effect.

For a law to be passed through the House of Lords route, the Lord or Lady of a Noble and Most Ancient House or Noble and Ancient House will write up a proposition bill and get it signed by at least two houses. They will then propose the bill at the next full Wizengamot legislative session (Tri-annually) and if there is at least a sixty percent majority in favor, then the law will be passed. Unless called into session because a bill passed through the House of Commons, the House of Lords does not meet in session without the House of Commons.

The Wizengamot also acts as a judicial court. Any criminals on trial for a crime that could potentially earn them more than ten years of jail time is tried in front of the entire Wizengamot, who act as jury (apart from the Chief Warlock, who acts as judge). If the crime an individual is being tried for cannot
earn them more than ten years of jail time, but any other consequences (even if quite severe, such as having one’s wand snapped, or seven years of jail time,) are tried in front of the House of Commons, who acts as jury (apart from the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, who acts as judge). However, anyone tried in front of the House of Commons can appeal to be tried in front of the entire Wizengamot. Before a trial, if one is to be tried in front of the House of Commons, they can appeal to be tried instead in front of the whole Wizengamot. However, if they appeal their trial to be instead in front of the whole Wizengamot without first being tried in front of the House of Commons, the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement would still act as judge. ***

The minecart squeaked to a stop and Sin blinked. The information was dry, but knowing that it truly applied to him made it much more interesting than history class. If everything was true, then one day he would have nine seats on the Wizengamot. Nine votes. Although he doubted he would outlive Elena, so probably six. But still… he would have an incredible amount of power. No wonder Elena coveted him, and she didn’t even know he was also the Black Heir. He closed the book, but his mind never really left the pages as they exited the bank.

It did seem like a very frustrating system. People who weren’t born into power would have an incredibly hard time getting it. He certainly wouldn’t want people he didn’t vote into office controlling the legislation and judiciary that affected him, but at least he would have some control over that.

“For a book you thought was dry, you seemed to spend a lot of time reading it. Or am I that unbearable to talk to?” Elena interrupted his train of thought.

Sin bit his lip as she led him through Knockturn. “What’s an heir by conquest?” He asked quietly, the sketchy atmosphere subconsciously lowering his voice.

They made a sharp turn, and suddenly they were heading down a narrow back-alley that they certainly hadn’t come through. “If you defeat someone, you get their titles if their titles are won by conquest. For example, the Noble and Ancient House of Burke’s heir goes first by conquest, then to the oldest son, then to the oldest daughter, and the to whoever Lord Burke names his heir. If you were to defeat Lord Burke in a duel, then you would become Heir Burke until you were fifteen, when you would become Lord Burke. If nobody defeats Lord Burke, his lordship will go to his daughter Catarina, because he doesn’t have a son.”

As she finished, and they approached a rusty metal door in the side of a long wooden building, she pressed a finger to her lips and pulled out a small wooden box. She handed it to Sin. He opened it, and found two contact lenses. He glanced at her uncertainly before putting them in, wincing. He pulled off his glasses as he did so and was amazed to find that after a few blinks, he could see perfectly.

“Good,” Elena breathed, satisfied. “That should hide your eye color - that emerald green is too noticeable, a dark brown will be fine - and you won’t need those glasses in a fight anymore. You won’t be half-blind.”

Sin smiled his thanks, his eyes watering slightly, and Elena nodded before turning to the door. She put her hand up against it and murmured, “Erunt Ultra Genua Flectentibus.” The door swung open without a sound, revealing a dark, not very welcoming interior.

Elena pushed Sin inside gently before following him, the door slamming shut silently behind them. Once it did, lights flared on, and Sin saw a crowd gathered in the middle of what looked like an enormous, abandoned warehouse, similar to the one he lived in.

As he heard the chants of the crowd he felt his stomach sink, realizing what this was. He turned to
Elena. “I can’t do this now,” he said flatly. “I’ll be home late, and Hero and Shade will wonder where I’ve been. They’ll panic.”

Elena’s mouth lifted into a cruel smile. “I guess you’ll have to win quickly then,” she purred, her lips thin. Sin swallowed, before placing a mask of indifference over his features.

Elena led him through the crowd just as they erupted into cheers. They weren’t the loud and boisterous cheers that he was used to, but more refined and polite - and yet somehow, slightly more menacing.

The floor slanted down towards the center of the room. Down in the center of the crowd was a pit twice as big as the one at the Fights. Within the pit, a man stood perfectly still, a thin line of blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. At his feet was the collapsed form of a young woman.

“Is she -” Sin started, worried, but Elena shook her head.

“It’s happened before, but no. She’ll live.” As she spoke, the woman’s body began to float up, and levitated out of the pit onto a stretcher. A tall, slender man dressed all in black, with a veil covering his face, nodded to the man in the pit.

“Victory to Sanguini,” he drawled, the silkiness of his voice sending shivers down Sin’s back. Perhaps it was because he had gotten used to Elena’s voice, but it set him even more on edge than Elena’s did.

“I thought you said the fighters would be others my age,” Sin breathed quietly enough that only Elena could hear him.

“I lied. I didn’t want to frighten you. Some of them are. Some of them aren’t even people. We’ve had two werewolves go at each other’s throats once. The man who just won? He was a vampire. Mr Noir’s little puppet.” She nodded to the veiled man, whom Sin guessed was Mr Noir.

“I might have to go up against a werewolf?” Sin asked, starting to panic. Elena pushed Sin a little further forward, so that they were almost peering over the edge of the pit, and shook her head ever so slightly.

“For your first time they’ll probably give you an easy go. And even if you did, you wouldn’t die; they usually give the werewolves Wolfsbane beforehand, so that they’re in control of their actions.”

The word ‘usually’ did nothing to placate Sin, but he held onto the knowledge that he was too valuable to Elena for her to let him die. He hoped.

“Elena,” came that horrible, silky voice from across the pit. “How lovely of you to join us.” Mr Noir’s tone dripped with condescension, and Elena’s gaze snapped up to meet his. Her smile was utterly lethal. Sin didn’t know how Mr Noir stood his ground; if Elena had looked at him like that, he would be running very fast in the other direction.

“Well, I wouldn’t want to deprive you of my presence for too long,” the vampiress replied, every syllable thick with a cold sarcasm. “And lucky for you, I’ve brought a new contestant.”

Contestant? Sin thought, insulted. What is this, a beauty pageant?

Mr Noir’s red eyes, the only part of his face visible behind his veil, turned to Sin and glowed with greed Sin knew only too well. It was the kind of hunger Elena often wore when she looked at him -- but somehow, coming from Mr Noir, it made Sin feel even more vulnerable.

“Is that so,” Mr Noir drawled slowly. His eyes dragged up Sin’s form, evaluating him as if he were a
piece of meat at the market. Sin forced himself to stay still, even though every cell in his body was screaming at him to hide behind Elena. “Well,” Mr Noir returned his gaze to Elena’s, “We might as well watch him perform.”

Elena gestured for Sin to get into the pit, and with one last swallow of trepidation, he leapt into the hole, thankfully with much more grace than his first few Fights.

“My fellow ladies, gentry, and those in-between,” Mr Noir intoned dramatically, yet still somehow inspiring such fright, “It looks like we have a new contestant. Who would like to see a show?”

The crowd began to chant something unintelligible, and a small grate Sin hadn’t noticed before in the side of the pit raised, revealing a gaping black hole. There was a quiet hissing sound, and an enormous, three-headed snake slithered out into the pit. Sin sucked in a breath and took a step back.

Apparently showing submission was the wrong move, because the snake reared up, all three heads raising up.

‘Ssstupid child. A coward doesss not make much of a meal.’

Sin blinked at the snake. He had heard those words just as the right head had hissed at him. The left head cocked slightly.

‘We are fassster than he is. We will wait until he makesss his move, and then we will ssstrike,’ The left head said.

‘How - how are you talking?’ Sin demanded, the hair on the back of his neck prickling. He was utterly dumbfounded. Levitating rocks was one thing, but this? This was madness. He was speaking to a snake.

The snake reared back in shock. ‘He is a ssspeaker!”

Sin took a step forward, narrowing his eyes. ‘What are you?’

The snake reared as tall as it could before the middle head spoke. ‘We are a Runessspoor, the noblest of all sserpentssss.”

“Sssave the Basssilisskk,” chimed in the right head.

‘Quiet!’ Snapped the middle head.

Sin bit his lip. Talking to this creature made him far less inclined to want to kill it. Before, his plan had been to send it flying into the wall, try to knock it unconscious - but it was just a snake. It wouldn’t get anything out of winning. Perhaps he could talk it into throwing the match? It pulled at Sin’s honour to do such a thing, but he didn’t want to hurt it.

‘Why are you here?’ Sin asked.

‘We were taken by the Dead One. He keepsss usss here, to fight hisss petty battlessss. When we win, we are given better food. Sssometimesss the Dead One letssss usss eat our prey. The onesss we defeat.’

Sin swallowed. If he lost, Mr Noir - whom he guessed was the ‘Dead One’, being a vampire and all - might feed him to the Runespoor.

‘Do not worry, little one,’ the middle head spoke, it’s tone almost amused. ‘We would not eat a
Speaker.”

Sin bit his lip. ‘So would you mind just… you know… lying down and losing? Because if I lose -’

The right head’s tongue flitted out of its mouth. ‘We would never act with sssuch a lack of honour! You speak of heresssy!’

That seemed to clinch it for the other two heads, who looked at each other and immediately said, ‘Of courssse, Ssspeaker,’ and the Runespoor dropped to the ground. The right head put up a little resistance, but after a jab from the center head, it too flopped to the floor and lay still.

Sin looked up, the fear and shock slowly draining from his bones, only to meet a completely quiet crowd. The silence was deafening, and he looked for Elena. In her eyes, he caught something he never thought he’d see. Pure terror.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you liked this chapter, I spent quite a while on it! I'll admit some of it's a bit dry, so if you skipped over the description of the Wizengamot I won't hold it against you.

Disclaimer: I'm fully aware that's not how the Wizengamot works in canon. This is an AU, and I've taken a few creative liberties. Humor me.

Also, I've been thinking of adding a "Last time:" summary of the previous chapter in the notes before each new chapter, in case you forgot what happened. They wouldn't be like the pre-chapter summaries, which barely give anything away. They would actually tell you what happened so if you forgot you wouldn't have to go back and reread the whole chapter. Do you guys like that idea or would that be a waste of my time?

Please enjoy, and please please please leave a comment! It really helps me out, and it's why I publish my works! I love constructive criticism, and just hearing what you guys think in general.
You're a Survivor

Chapter Summary

Sin's talents are coveted, and he sees an unfamiliar side of Elena. Elena reminisces about the past, and why Sin's revelation terrified her.

Chapter Notes

LAST TIME: Sin had a minor breakdown after realizing he was incredibly rich, but thanks to his mysterious magical guardian, he's unable to exchange galleons for muggle money. He learnt a little about politics and Elena took him to his first magical fight, where his opponent was a Runespoor. He managed to convince the Runespoor to throw the fight by using parseltongue, and for some reason this skill terrified Elena.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sin looked uncertainly at Elena’s fearful face. The absence of any sound pounded through his head, and the silence seemed to drag on before Mr Noir spoke. “It seems we have a winner,” he drawled, his sickeningly smooth voice making Sin want to gag.

That seemed to snap Elena out of her reverie, because the terror was gone from her expression. She bent over and hauled Sin out of the pit by his collar. Before the poor boy could even register her inhumane strength she was pulling him out of the crowd.

The audience seemed to unconsciously part for the two of them, and Sin could only laugh internally without humour at the similar situation to the end of his first Fight.

Elena kicked open the door, not letting go of Sin’s collar but allowing him to walk. She slammed the door closed behind them, the expression on her face keeping Sin from asking any of the multitudes of questions brimming inside of him.

They were halfway down the alley when four tall, deathly pale men seemed to drop from the sky, landing elegantly in front of them. They were clearly vampires, although Sin couldn’t remember if he saw them watching the fight or not. “Well, well, well. That was quite the spectacle, Elena dear,” the shortest one said, an oily smirk on his white face. If Sin wasn’t so completely terrified and off-kilter, he might have laughed at the absurd dramatic air of the vampire who had spoken.

Elena took a small step forward, and Sin creased an eyebrow as she clearly put him behind her. “Indeed, Bedici. You know I always impress.”

Bedici let out a bark of laughter, in stark contrast to the elegant chuckle Sin had come to expect from vampires. “You’re little pet has intrigued a good many people, Elena. The chance to own a parselmouth… well, that’s not something the House of Bedici wants to pass up.”

“I’m not a pet,” Sin spat, his indignation surpassing his fear for the moment. “And nobody is going to own me.”
Bedici’s gaze turned to Sin, raising a delicate eyebrow. “He speaks!”

“You won’t touch him,” Elena said with smooth finality. She made to pass the four vampires, but they closed ranks into a barrier. Elena took a step back.

“Oh?” Asked Bedici. “And why is that?”

“You value your lives too much,” Elena said with a sickening pleasantness.

“You think you alone could keep him from us, if we decided to take what we want instead of asking nicely? Arrogance doesn’t suit you, Elena.”

The fear began to creep up Sin’s spine again. If the four vampires did decide to attack, he could maybe take one of them, but he’d never seen Elena fight. Even if she was spectacular, there was no way she could take three at once, especially if those three were also vampires.

Elena smiled, and Sin found himself very glad he was not on the receiving end of that smile. “It’s not arrogance. But even if it were, would you risk starting a blood feud with the Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau, and my coven? If you touch him, that’s what will happen. He is part of my coven.”

Bedici’s simpering grin fell. “Surely you would not react quite so -”

“An attack on my coven is an attack on me.”

Bedici took a faltering step back. “Noir will back me,” he said, but he seemed unsure.

Elena raised an eyebrow. “Are you willing to risk everything on that?” She asked.

Bedici scowled, but he turned away. The vampire to his right, however, took a step forward. “I think you want to hand him over, Van Rau.”

Elena took another step in front of Sin. “And why is that?”

The vampire grinned crookedly. “It would be shame if something happened to that mudblood wench you’re so fond of. Where does she work again? Slug and Jiggers Apothecary, right?”

Sin could sense the immediate shift in the mood of the conversation. The air seemed to crackle with tension, and Sin took an unconscious step back.

“You really shouldn’t have said that,” Elena said, and suddenly her fangs were out and she was at the throat of the one who had threatened her. The five vampires became blur of motion, and Sin could do nothing but watch. If he had been able to see any of the attackers he might have tried to help, but as it was, he would just as soon hit Elena with a blast of magic as any of the others. So he stayed out of it.

He needn’t have bothered. The fight was over as quickly as it started. Sin stared, wide-eyed, at Elena. She stood in a circle of bodies, a black liquid too dark to be regular blood dripping from her exposed fangs and a disembodied head in her right hand.

Sin swallowed, staring at the corpses. He’d never seen a dead body before, let alone seen someone being killed. That he remembered, at least.

There were too many thoughts swirling around in his brain, so he spat out the first one that came to mind. “Don’t you have to - I don’t know - drive a wooden stake through their hearts?”
Elena let out a cold laugh. “I don’t know where that idea spread through muggle pop culture, but no. You can kill a vampire just like you can kill a human - although it’s significantly harder because they’re much stronger and faster.” She wiped away the black liquid from her mouth, her fangs retracting back into her mouth. She dropped the head and began to walk away as if nothing had happened.

Sin hurried to catch up to her. He was a little disturbed that he wasn’t as disturbed as he should be. Given, he had never known those vampires, and they had tried to kidnap him - at best - but he had just seen Elena slaughter four vampires in less than a minute, and he was barely shaken.

Sin followed Elena closely as she lead them out of the narrow back-alley and into Knockturn Alley’s main street. They headed the opposite direction of where they had come, doing a series of twists until they came out onto a street that was far more colorful and nearly deserted.

“Welcome to Diagon Alley,” Elena said, casting her gaze about carefully. “It’s usually packed, but nobody comes here at night. The shops are all closed.”

Her hand shot out to grab Sin’s wrist but she seemed to change her mind and just gestured for him to follow her as they approached a small, colorful storefront with a purple door. An equally colorful sign hung over the door, reading “Slug and Jiggers Apothecary”. Elena rapped her knuckles against the door sharply four times. After a short pause she knocked again, and the door swung open. A woman with bouncy blonde hair stood in the doorway, yawning in her blue nightgown. She rubbed her eyes before glancing at the two of them and she let out a quiet squeal.

“Elena!” She cried, leaping onto the vampiress and pressing her lips to Elena’s, her hands buried in Elena’s hair. Sin turned away, his cheeks heated.

Elena leant into the kiss with a quiet chuckle before drawing back. Her hand glided gently down the blond woman’s cheek. “You’re safe,” she said with a relieved sigh.

The woman let out a giggle. “Of course I am. You worry too much. You gave me this amulet, remember?” She held up a small carved pendant that hung around her neck. “I’ve never taken it off. Besides, I can defend myself.”

“I know,” Elena replied, placing a careful kiss on the woman’s cheek, “but that doesn’t mean I can’t make sure.” Sin couldn’t quite believe what was happening. He didn’t think there were two more opposite people in the universe, and he’d certainly never heard Elena sound so… soft.

The woman caught sight of Sin and jumped, before clearing her throat. “Oh! Hello there. I’m Cecile,” she said, her cheeks pink.

“Assassin,” he replied, equally as embarrassed. Witnessing such a tender moment between anyone would have been weird, but watching Elena regard someone with such sweetness and adoration… it was one of the strangest things he’d ever seen.

“This is my heir,” Elena said, waving a hand toward Sin. Cecile’s eyebrows shot up, and she shoved Elena playfully.

“You never mentioned you had a son!” She said accusingly, but there was no real indignation or anger in her eyes.

Sin started. “Oh, I’m not -”

Elena shrugged. “Well now you know.” There was a genuine smile on the vampiress’s lips as she gazed at Cecile, and it was so off-putting Sin didn’t register that Elena had called him her son.
“Would you like to come in? The boss is asleep, but I’m sure he wouldn’t mind - is that blood?”

Cecile drew in a breath, stepping closer to Elena and inspecting her sleeve. She grasped Elena’s arm tightly.

“For Merlin’s Sake, El! Why do you keep getting into fights?”

“They threatened you,” Elena replied flatly, and Cecile scoffed.

“So what? They were most likely bluffing - it would take a fool of massive proportions to do something that would get on your bad side - and besides, I can take care of myself!” There was a pause, before Cecile inhaled sharply. “They’re - you - you didn’t kill anyone, right?”

Elena didn’t say anything, but clearly the look in her eyes was answer enough, because Cecile sighed and let go of Elena’s arm. “I thought we talked about this, El.”

“I didn’t feed off of them!” Elena replied indignantly. “Besides, they were vampires. And they wanted to kidnap Assassin.”

Cecile’s gaze darted to Sin for a moment and her stern expression softened. “Fine, but I still don’t like it. Besides, what’s he doing out so late? He’s what, nine? Elena, it’s three in the morning! Get him to bed!”

Elena nodded and drew Cecile in for a long kiss. Sin turned around again, and waited a few moments before turning back. Elena made to leave but Cecile grasped her arm. She pulled the vampiress close and whispered in her ear. A wolfish grin on Elena’s face grew bigger with every word.

“Well, I’ll be sure to return once I’ve taken Assassin home,” Elena said, winking at Cecile, before the blonde blushed heavily and reentered the apothecary.

Elena watched the woman go before turning away and heading down the alley. The warmth slowly leached from her eyes the further away from Cecile they got, and as they entered Knockturn she was back to her regular, cold self.

As Sin thought about Elena, an idea formed in the back of his mind. A despicable, disgusting idea, one that he would never previously have considered, but if it helped him keep Light safe…

“You must really love her,” he said cautiously, glancing up at Elena. The vampiress didn’t bother acknowledging him, but Sin pushed forward. “We all have people we care about. I care about Light, you care about Cecile… we would all do anything to protect those who we love.”

“What’s your point?” Elena asked, sounding unconcerned, but Sin knew she was paying very close attention.

“You leave Light alone, and I don’t mention Cecile to any of your possible enemies. Or pay her a visit myself.”

Elena’s eyebrows furrowed as she looked to Sin, and she looked genuinely puzzled. “Why would I go after Light?”

Sin stopped walking. “You - you threatened him. When you first revealed why were helping me.”

Elena pressed her lips together before turning to Sin. “I was bluffing. I would never have actually touched any of your family, especially not Light. You think I would have risked alienating you? Besides, I don’t touch kids.”
Sin blinked. “I don’t - I don’t understand.”

Elena sighed, resting a gentle hand on Sin’s shoulder. “Contrary to what you might believe, Sin, I’m not that despicable.”

“You just slaughtered four people.”

“Self-defense!” Elena said defensively. At Sin’s raised eyebrow, she allowed, “Okay, so maybe they weren’t actually going to attack us, but they threatened my lover. Besides, there’s a difference between being unnecessarily cruel and being practical. If it was kill or be killed, which would you choose?”

Sin knew his decision immediately, but he took a moment to say it. It worried him that his answer was so immediate.

“Kill,” he answered finally. Elena nodded, and it made Sin feel worse knowing that was the answer Elena had expected.

“Right. Because you’re a survivor. Anyone who’s been through hell has a powerful survival instinct, you and I more than most. That said, you can be a survivor and still have a moral code. It’s just more… flexible than others’ might be.”

Sin glanced up at the vampiress as they continued walking. “So… you wouldn’t ever hurt him. Or - or the rest of my family.”

“Well, definitely not Light. Shade’s almost an adult, though,” Elena mused. “If there was something I really needed you to do, and you were being particularly uncooperative…” she let the sentence trail off. Sin’s fists clenched and she let out a deep chuckle. “No, Sin. I wouldn’t hurt them. I just needed to throw all your chips down with me before I could scare you off.”

Sin furrowed his eyebrows. “So… what’s your leverage over me? What’s to stop me from showing up to our ‘meetings’? Or revealing all of your secrets? Or not ending our arrangement as soon as I get enough power?”

Elena smiled thinly as they stepped into the Night Prowler. Elena exchanged another formal greeting with Mr Avery but didn’t stop for a chat, and as they re-entered the muggle world she said quietly, “The Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau has considerable clout in the wizarding world, and considerable power on the Wizengamot… even if you are Heir Peverell, as Lady Van Rau, I have the power to make life very… difficult for you. And I won’t touch your family, that’s true… but I can cut you and Spider off from the Fights. And I’m sure social services would be very pleased to hear about the location of a nest of runaways.”

Sin glared at her, but the burning loathing he had held for her in his heart ever since she’d threatened Light had lessened substantially. Not only was the direct threat over Light’s health gone, but he found it impossible to despise someone to such a degree after watching them be so gentle with someone like Cecile. He still wasn’t exactly fond of her - he knew her threats weren’t empty - but he didn’t hate her with quite such a passion.

As they walked, one of Sin’s earlier thoughts bounced its way toward the front of his mind. “Elena?”

“Mmh?”

“Why did you look so scared? When I talked to that Runespoor? And why did Bedici make such a big deal out of it? Can’t… I mean, can’t a lot of magicals do it?”
Elena’s mask cracked for a fraction of a second, revealing a gaunt expression of fear, before regaining her composure. “No, Sin,” she managed to say. “It’s not very common at all. In fact, the last known parselmouth was the Dark Lord Voldemort.”

Sin’s eyes widened as he tried to comprehend the full ramifications of what Elena had just said. “Is - is that why everyone was so weird about it? Why you were so scared? I reminded you of him?”

“That would be why everyone coveted you, yes. But that’s not - I -” Sin had never seen Elena speechless, so he was amazed to find her stuttering over her words. She bit her lip. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“What do you mean, you don’t want to talk about it? It looked sounds pretty damn important to me!”

“Sin?” Elena snapped, her tone dangerous. “Drop it.”

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December 21st, 1954

Elena wiped the blood from her mouth, shoving the drained corpse away from her. Her fangs were cutting into her mouth, and she took deep breaths of air she didn’t need to try and calm the thirst that sang through her. After a few moments, once the man’s blood had started to run through her veins, the frenzy subsided and the fangs retracted.

She could feel the strength returning to her limbs already, and she managed to elegantly stride out of the alley she had stumbled into. She could see the moon nearing the horizon, and she knew that she would have to seek shelter soon. She was too young to be able to survive in the sunlight.

She turned the corner, the fresh blood rejuvenating her, when a hand shot out and grabbed her wrist. She whirled around, slamming a cloaked figure against the crumbling brick wall. Her fingers trapped the stranger’s throat with a ridiculous ease. As Elena felt the blood pumping through the figure’s neck, it took a very conscious effort not to drain them of blood.

“Who the hell are you?” The vampiress snarled, her fangs inches from the stranger’s cloaked face.

The cowl of the the cloak fell away, revealing the heavily scarred face of an old woman. Under her right cheek, a bloody rune gleamed in the moonlight. “I have a warning for you,” the woman whispered, her voice hoarse.

Elena bared her teeth. “Spit it out,” she hissed. “Who’s warning? And tread carefully; I don’t think you’d like me when I’m angry.”

The woman didn’t seem fazed by the fact that a lethal, out-of-control vampire was inches from her neck. She opened her mouth to speak, and the rune on her face glowed a heavy purple. “Your role is not the leader but the teacher. You must protect the heir from the silver-haired preacher. The fires of war you will inevitably tend, and the speaker of snakes will bring about your end.”

Elena shoved closed her fingers around the old woman’s neck. “What does that mean?” She demanded, trying very hard not to acknowledge the broiling mix of anger and fear inside of her. “Bring about my end? You mean my death? Who the hell are you?!”

The woman didn’t flinch. “Your role is not the leader but the teacher. You must protect the heir from the silver-haired preacher. The fires of war you will inevitably tend, and the speaker of snakes will bring about your end,” she repeated, the rune glowing even brighter.
“I heard you the first time,” Elena snarled, digging her fingers into the old woman's throat. A thin trickle of blood ran down her wrinkled skin, and Elena's throat burned with thirst, despite having just fed. “But what do you mean? The speaker of snakes - a parselmouth?” She asked, forgetting her thirst in a flash of terror. “And a war - what do you mean, war? Will Grindelwald rise again? Or -” her breath caught, despite not needing to breathe. “Is there going to be another Dark Lord?” She asked, making a conscious effort to stay in control.

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June 13th, 1969

“There’s a war brewing, Elena,” said the man, his face cowled, “And it’s time for you to choose a side. There is no room for a neutral party. The Dark Lord -”

“- will have to make do without me,” Elena replied, her velvety voice uncaring in the face of the threatening words. “Lord Black -”

“Orion,” the man interrupted, removing the cowl of his cloak. His handsome, chiseled face broke into a friendly smile. “Are we not friends, Elena?”

Elena did not smile. “I appreciate the Dark Lord’s interest - really, it’s quite flattering - but I’m afraid I must regretfully decline.”

Orion’s friendly expression melted into a dangerous glare. “You would risk angering him? Did you hear what happened to -”

“I’m afraid you’re about four years too late. The moment you started sicking that creature Greyback on children is the moment you lost my support.”

Orion took a step forward, his gaze burning with a warning. “You would risk it? You would risk actively defying the Dark Lord, when we’re on the brink of war you know he will not lose? The Lord of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Slytherin, the first known parselmouth in generations -”

“What?” Elena cut him off, her tone lethal. “The Dark Lord is a parselmouth?” Fear sang through her bones, and she took a shaky step back.

‘So this is it,’ she thought privately, forgetting Orion for the moment. ‘This is how I meet my end. Hunted down by the Dark Lord himself.’

“Rethinking your decision?” Orion asked with amusement, clearly enjoying the sight of the usually so poised Elena being so shaken.

‘Well,’ she thought, pushing the terror down, ‘If he’s going to kill me anyway, there’s no reason to cave to his tactics.’ She took a moment to collect herself and then turned back to Orion.

“Give the Dark Lord a message,” she said with a smirk oozing false confidence. “Tell him,” she said, extending her fangs, “to bite me.”

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November 1st, 1980
Elena pressed the edge of the silver blade against the man’s neck. “I’ll ask this one more time,” she said pleasantly. “What’s the Dark Lord’s next move?”

“Nothing,” the man whimpered, his voice hoarse from screaming. He clutched the bloody stump of his thumb and tried to keep from sobbing as he continued, “He’s gone.”

“What do you mean, gone?” Elena asked, not daring to acknowledge the hope soaring inside of her.

“Last night, he - he attempted to the slaughter the Potters. But… but… he couldn’t.”

“He couldn’t?” Elena asked, her previously faux-pleasant voice now full of ice. “Is Lily Potter alive?” She asked, trying not to care about the answer. When the man shook his head, Elena’s grip tightened subconsciously. “So who couldn’t he kill?”

“The little boy - Harry. The little boy is still alive, and the Dark Lord is gone.” Elena blinked, before sheathing the knife and piercing the man’s neck with her fangs. She fed on him until he was all dried up, and then she pushed his corpse away.

‘So,’ she thought. ‘The Dark Lord’s reign of terror ends with a child.’

That night, the vampiress visited several other sources, and they all confirmed the same thing. The Dark Lord was gone, and it was all because he failed at killing the Potter boy.

But as Elena finished interrogating her sources, a dull pit formed in her stomach. He couldn’t really be gone, because there hadn’t been another known parselmouth in such a long time. That was either a very comforting thought - because she might live for hundreds of years, until the next one came about - or a very scary thought indeed; because the wizarding world was off-guard now, and if he came back, they would fall into the same pattern as before. The cycle would never end.

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July 9th, 1989

“I expect to see you at the Fights tonight,” Elena said as they came upon the alley where they would part ways. Sin looked at her incredulously.

“You want me to go back there? The place we were just run out of?” He asked in disbelief.

Elena let out a smooth chuckle. “Oh, Merlin no. The muggle ones.” Sin let out a quiet sigh of relief, but he still wasn’t really in the mood.

“You want me to fight on three or four hours of sleep?” He asked. At Elena’s answering eyebrow, he sighed.

“See you there.” He didn’t bother with a goodbye before heading back to the warehouse. Taking care that he didn’t wake anyone, he crept back into his makeshift bed and almost immediately fell asleep.

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Shade slung a patched sweater over her head, wiping the sleep from her eyes. She stifled a yawn before staggering over to where Spider sat at the rusted table, shoveling oatmeal into his mouth.
She made sure to keep her voice down, not wanting to wake any of her kids (for that’s how she thought of them, her children) as she said softly, “So I’ve been thinking. There’s less than a month until Sin turns eleven, and maybe he’d like to go see another Fight? Obviously if he doesn’t want to after last time he doesn’t have to, and I don’t think he should actually participate until he’s twelve, but it’s better for him to go watch than to fight again on his first day back, right?”

Spider swallowed and offered the pot of oatmeal to Shade as he nodded. “I think that’s a great idea. I was actually thinking of going tonight, and offering Elena some sort of deal… like I could give her half of my cut if she promises to leave him alone until he’s ready to fight, or something like that -”

Shade shook her head. “No, that will just draw attention to him and make her interested in him. We don’t want her to know he’s special. Hopefully she won’t even remember his face, or his name. But you should still go tonight, if you can stomach it; we’re running a little low on funds, and Sin’s birthday is soon… I don’t want to have to tap into that fund, it’s a little depleted after Roach’s extravaganza last month.” She smiled fondly at the memory.


Sin pulled the hood of his ratty jacket over his head pulled a fiver from his pocket. He hated lying to his family like this, but he knew that they would forbid him from going, and from seeing Elena. He was less worried about their safety now, but if he wanted to do anything in the wizarding world, be anything more than the street rat, he needed the vampiress’s guidance. And his family needed the money.

He reached the end of the alleyway and handed the five-pound-note to Jerome, who waved him in without a glance. It seemed like a Fight had just ended, as a boy Toxic’s age was climbing out of the pit looking dazed, blood on his face and his nose slightly crooked.

“The second win of the night for Ironheart!” Elena called over the crowd, somehow managing to project her voice loudly but still maintaining her elegance. “Do we have any challengers?”

Sin shoved forward through the crowd and jumped down into the pit, pushing his hood back.

“And it’s Assassin, who is so far undefeated!” A cheer went through the crowd, who had come to root for this underdog.

Ironfist brushed a strand of blond hair from her face. She definitely had the size advantage, she was probably Hero’s age and twice as broad as Sin.

As he listened to Elena hype up the crowd, his gaze swept up out of the pit, only to meet the furious gaze of Spider.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you liked this chapter! I'm sorry it took so long, but I've been cramming for finals. In two weeks they're all over though, so updates should start to come a lot quicker then.
In the middle of August I'm moving half-way across the world, so my timezones will be all jacked up, so the updating times will be strange. However, you'll probably get a lot of updates because I'll be lonely :/

Please please please leave a comment, and tell me what you thought, what you think will/want to happen next! Have you reevaluated your opinion of Elena now?
Chapter Summary

Spider and Sin have a fight, and Elena does what she always does and makes bad into worse.

Chapter Notes

LAST TIME: Elena showed a lethal side of herself after slaughtering several vampires and declaring Sin a part of her coven, and a softer side when her lover, Cecile, is revealed. From Elena's point of view we found out that Elena is terrified of Parselmouths because of a prophecy that one is to be the cause of her death. Sin goes to the muggle Fights, where Spider sees him.

Sin blinked twice, Spider’s fiery eyes trained on him. The older boy crossed his arms, a furious - but far from hateful - expression muddled slightly with fear and disappointment. Sin swallowed. His body instinctively flinched from the amount of rage he saw, but consciously he was aware Spider would never hurt him. It was the disappointment that stung the most.

He had no time to process it, or plan what he was going to say to Spider, because Elena was already speaking.

“This should be an interesting one, folks… let the Fight begin!” Sin barely had time to tear his eyes away from Spider before Ironfist was upon him. She was tactless, trying to crush him with her bodyweight. He was distracted, however, and barely had enough time to dodge out of the way.

She snatched the back of his shirt and wheeled him around, forcing him up against the wall. She twisted his arm behind his back, and he could feel her breath on his neck. She smelled like cigarette smoke.

He stomped down on the inside of her foot and threw back his head, hitting her in the neck. Ironfist made a choking sound and stumbled back. Sin wasted no time in whirling around, punching her twice in the stomach and elobowing her between her ribs with all of his might. She doubled over, and he kicked the backs of her knees, forcing her onto all fours. Quickly, before she had time to recover, he wrapped his arms around her neck in a chokehold.

“Give up,” he said, straining slightly. She had no skill, but she was strong, and she began to pull at his arms. Grunting, and not wanting to wait until she could dislodge him, he placed the flat of his hand against her back and pulled very gently at the back of his mind. Ironfist let out a faint ‘oomph’ as Sin’s magic pushed her to the ground. The crowd began to count down, when they finished, Sin released the girl, scrambling off of her.

“And it’s another win for Assassin, who remains undefeated! Will anyone try to challenge the young champion?” Elena called, slipping from her elegant confidence to her crowd-hyping voice.
Ironfist climbed hurriedly out of the pit, and Sin made to follow her when he heard the thump of a new opponent landing near him. He let out a sigh; he hadn’t wanted to take this long. Elena hadn’t specified he’d have to fight more than once, but he knew that now that he’d been challenged there’d be no backing out.

He turned around to face his opponent and almost stumbled back in shock. Spider stood in front of him, eyes alight.

“Spider… I can explain,” Sin murmured hurriedly, putting his hands up. “It’s not -”

“You know,” Spider cut him off, his voice full of stark anger, “I had wondered how you were getting all of that extra money. You’ve barely been with us a year, and yet you’re pulling in more than Toxic from people’s pockets? I thought it was a bit suspicious, but I didn’t ask you about it. I figured, if it was important, you would tell me. Family don’t keep secrets.” He uncrossed his arms, bringing his arms up into a fighting position as Elena spoke to the crowd. “I guess I was wrong.”

“Spider… look,” Sin said weakly, “I wasn’t trying to - I never meant to hurt you, I just - I wanted to help! I’m good at this!”

“You could have told me,” Spider said through gritted teeth. “And don’t expect me to go easy on you. You clearly think you have enough skill to beat me as it is.”

“That’s -”

“Let the Fight begin!”

And suddenly there was no time to talk. Sin had known Spider was good, and the older boy had said he’d stopped going easy on him - but that had to be a lie, because Spider was fast. By the time Sin had registered the Fight had started, he was Spider had already spun him around and forced him up against the wall of the pit.

Sin stomped back with his foot but Spider easily stepped out of the way, twisting the younger boy around and judo-flipping him onto the ground. Sin grunted in pain as the wind was knocked from his body but before Spider could get a proper grip on him he spun out of the way, jumping to his feet.

“You were perfectly happy to lie to Shade about my training,” Sin defended, evading a series of jabs to his ribs and managing to land a kick to Spider’s shin. The older boy backed up.

“That’s not the same and you know it,” Spider growled. “Do you honestly not realize how much danger you’re in when you’re here? You’re ten years old, Sin!”

As he finished his sentence, Spider ducked under a clumsy haymaker from Sin and thrust his palm into the younger boy’s belly, forcing him to double over, and bringing his fists down on his back. Sin stumbled and fell to the ground, gasping for breath like a fish out of water.

“TEN!” Roared the crowd.

As he fought for breath, he considered just giving up.

“NINE!”

Maybe if he just let Spider win, then the older boy wouldn’t be so angry.

“EIGHT!”
It niggled at his honor, but he considered it for a moment.

“SEVEN!”

And then a familiar, steely voice whispered in his mind, ‘Get up.’

“SIX!”

‘Get up, Assassin. Show him how good you are. Show him why you deserve to be here.’

“FIVE!”

‘Get up.’

“FOUR!”

‘Get. Up.’

“THREE!”

Assassin drew in a shuddering breath and crawled to his feet. The crowd erupted into cheers, and pulled himself into a fighting position.

“It doesn’t matter how good you are,” Spider said, his eyes dark. “Don’t you understand who’s watching you? Not only could you have been seriously hurt, but you’re just tempting Elena and her group. Are you trying to draw her attention?”

Sin didn’t bother answering; he was done with the lying, and he didn’t want another thing to have to defend himself against during the Fight. He sprinted toward the ladder, sliding underneath a kick from Spider, and grabbed onto it. He climbed halfway before turning and launching himself at Spider. The older boy, clearly not expecting Sin to come at him from above, responded instinctively and put his hands up to shield his face. Sin barrelled into Spider’s abdomen, knocking the older boy over. He sat on Spider’s chest, a foot keeping each wrist down.

“Goodness, folks this is an interesting one! It seems young Assassin has turned the tables on Arachnus, the undisputed grand champion of the Fights! I don’t think anyone saw this coming!” Elena commented, and Spider grinded his teeth.

“TEN!”

“Just because you can beat the average starving street kid,” he said, “doesn’t mean you’re anywhere near equipped to deal with anything Elena throws at you. Trust me, Sin, any interest she shows in you is bad news. She’s a snake.”

“EIGHT!”

“I can take care of myself,” Sin assured him. “I’ve survived this long, haven’t I?”

“SEVEN!”

“I just didn’t want to worry you! Besides, you were going to bring me in anyway. And this is a good thing! I’ve been bringing in money, why does it matter how I got it?”

“FIVE!”

“Because,” Spider replied heatedly, “You didn’t tell us. Do you honestly not trust us?” He asked.
“FOUR!”

Sin stared down at him with hurt eyes, and Spider swung a leg up to slam into his side. Sin lost his grip on Spider and the older boy threw him off. Sin rolled away to a stand but Spider was already upon him, digging an elbow into his neck while sweeping a leg under his feet.

The young wizard fell to the ground, Spider’s full weight pressing him down. Only half the crowd counted down this time, as if sure that Sin would be able to turn things around once more.

“I’m sorry,” Sin breathed heavily. “I am. I would have told you - I would have asked first, but -”

“But nothing.” Spider snapped. “You can explain yourself to Shade. I’m sure she’ll be extremely pleased to know that you’ve been coming here, alone, behind her back.”

“THREE!”

Sin grunted, and again, the oddly familiar voice spoke with quiet confidence in his mind. ‘You can win. You are not like him - you can get out of this. Think, Sin. Show him you can do this. Beat him, and he’ll have no excuse to keep you from coming.’ As the voice spoke, Sin realised it was Elena’s voice. It was a little disturbing that his subconscious was taking the voice of Elena, but he ignored it.

Sin gritted his teeth and threw an elbow back, pulling very gently at the well of power within him. Spider stumbled back as if a baseball bat had whacked him in the stomach, and Sin used the opportunity to use all of his weight and hit Spider in the backs of the knees, forcing him onto his hands and knees. He leapt onto Spider’s back and put him in a weak headlock, his free hand forcing Spider to the ground with his magic. The crowd roared again and began to count down.

“FIVE, FOUR, THREE, TWO, ONE!” The crowd went absolutely insane, and Sin could see flashes of paper as money changed hands. Sin retreated from Spider, releasing the hold his magic had on the older boy.

“And the win goes to Assassin, finally toppling the year-long reign of previous champion Arachnus! I don’t think anyone saw this coming! Tonight was an easy way to lose a lot of money, or make a lot more! Anyone who doubted the young Assassin before… well, the young man sure showed them!”

Assassin wanted to be sick. Spider shot him another glare before crawling out of the pit on the ladder, before offering a hand to Sin. Sin smiled in thanks, relieved; he couldn’t be that angry. Not for the first time, Assassin wallowed in gratitude at the fact that he had a family that cared about him so much. The only reason Spider was angry with him was because he cared about him.

That said, the walk home was an awkward one. The silence was suffocating, and Sin let out a breath of relief when Spider spoke.

“So you’ve got a handle on your magic, I see. I suppose you thought you didn’t need to mention that, either.”

Sin swallowed. “It’s not… it’s not what it looks like. I didn’t…”


They fell back into uncomfortable silence. As they neared the warehouse, it became nearly unbearable.

“So… Arachnid?” Sin asked cautiously, glancing sideways at his older brother.
Spider shrugged. “Yeah. A play on my name, but I didn’t want to give them my real name.”

“Smart,” admitted Sin. “I didn’t think of that.”

“Obviously not,” Spider sniffed. “I’m a genius, and you aspire to my level of god-like intellect.” There was a beat before the boys both snorted, and Sin felt a weight lift off of his shoulders. He wasn’t quite so dead. At least, not until they reached Shade.

They were about to turn the corner out of the maze of back-alleys when the hair on the back of Sin’s neck pricked. He grabbed Spider’s arm and stopped in his tracks.

“What?” Spider asked, narrowing his eyes and looking around. Unconsciously, Sin’s legs formed a fighting stance.

“I’m not sure,” he murmured in reply, “I -”

“Well, boys, that sure was interesting,” came a smooth, all-together too familiar voice. Sin swore, and relaxed his stance, but didn’t let down his guard. He didn’t think Elena would attack him, but he didn’t trust her as far as he could throw her.

“Elena,” he ground out as the vampiress appeared out of the shadows before the two orphans. “The hell are you doing?”

She smiled wickedly. “Why, Assassin, I thought you were coming clean,” she said with a sweetness Sin might have believed if he didn’t know her, and if it weren’t for the aura hanging around her that always seemed to set him on edge. “With everything. I guess you kept some things to yourself.”

“Sin,” Spider asked, his voice strained, “What is she talking about?” The older boy’s face was pale, and while Sin had relaxed, Spider looked ready to brawl.

Elena turned to Spider, her pleasant smile flashing. “I think it’s time we all had a chat.” She turned to continue the way Spider and Sin had been walking, but the two boys didn’t move.

“Sin,” Spider repeated, his voice quivering slightly, “What the hell?”

Sin’s gut wrenched as he ignored his older brother, stepping toward Elena. “I’m not stupid. There’s no way you’re coming with us.” Elena raised an eyebrow, and Sin swallowed, turning to Spider.

“Get Shade. Bring her to the Japanese courtyard.” Spider opened his mouth, but Sin cut him off, grabbing his forearm. “Spider, do you trust me?” He asked.

“Of course,” Spider replied gruffly. “But -”

“Then bring Shade to the courtyard. Make sure Hero stays with the rest - don’t leave them unprotected.” Spider stared at him before nodding slowly, glancing between him and Elena, and heading off toward the courtyard.

The young wizard turned on Elena. “What the hell?!” He exclaimed, shoving her. She didn’t so much as sway.

Elena’s feigned friendliness vanished, her expression now grim. “They had to find out eventually. I was only helping the process along. Also, Hogwarts letters are supposed to start coming next week.” Her expression softened. “I know what the Dursleys did to you, Sin, and if it were up to me, the only reason you would ever have to go back there would be to rip their throats out. However, unless you want to be found here, you need to go. Do you really want to disappear for a week without telling
your family? Do you know how worried they’d be?"

Sin opened his mouth to argue, but found nothing to refute her words. As much as he hated to admit it, Elena was right. “You still should have let me tell them,” he grumbled.

“Apologies,” Elena said, her tone indicating she wasn’t at all sorry. Sin ignored her and took a left in the maze of back-alleys, leading the vampiress into a triangular brick courtyard with Japanese characters spray-painted on all three walls. It wasn’t long before Spider showed up, Shade in tow.

If Sin had thought Spider had been angry, it was nothing to the terrifying wrath Shade’s furious expression promised. “Sin,” she said, her voice flat and emotionless, “what the fuck?”

When Sin didn’t immediately reply, the girl’s gaze snapped to Elena. She stepped between Sin and the vampiress, staring down the lethal killing machine without a flicker of fear.

“If you laid a single finger on him,” she snarled, “I will destroy you. I will go to the Daily Prophet, to the Quibbler if I have to, and make sure everyone knows who you are. Rita Skeeter owes my family a debt. I think the ministry would love to know that the last Van Rau is a living vampire.”

Sin had never respected Shade more. Too look Elena in the eye and threaten her, without flinching… she had to be the bravest person in the world, or completely insane.

Elena raised an eyebrow. “Well, I certainly admire your courage, but you don’t have to worry. I haven’t hurt him.” She tilted her head. “I assume you’re Assassin’s connection to the magical world. Now who might you be?”

She began to slowly walk in a circle around Shade, as if aprising her market value. Eventually, as Sin began to speak, she let out a clear laugh, one that skated along Sin’s spine. “I’m not the only cast-out descendent of an important family. It was always a mystery what the Lestranges did with their squib daughter.” She laughed again, and Shade paled slightly, but held her ground. “Charlana Lestrange, finally resurfacing. That is interesting.”

Sin couldn’t quite remember where he had heard the name Lestrange before, but he didn’t quite care. “Enough,” he snapped at Elena. “Her name isn’t Charlana Lestrange. It’s Shade.”

Three pairs of eyes turned on Sin, and he swallowed. “Care to explain?” Shade asked, crossing her arms. It was amazing a seventeen-year-old could convey such scary displeasure.

“You might… might want to sit. And get comfortable. This could take a while.” Under Shade’s withering stare, Sin sat himself. When everyone followed suit, he said, “I’ll tell you everything, I only ask you don’t interrupt.” He got shaky nods from both Spider and Shade, and then started to explain.

“It started with Toxic, and the bullet…”

The sun had just begun to peak over the horizon once Sin finished. There was a long, sickening silence.

“How could you go to her?” Shade finally said. “You needed help. How could you go to her and not me? We’re your family, Sin. Aren’t we?”

Assassin’s eyes stung. “How could you ask that?” He said, his voice hoarse. “How…”
Shade’s angry expression slowly melted away into hurt. “Family comes to each other when they need help.”

Sin shut his eyes tightly and took a steadying breath before replying. “I didn’t want to hurt anyone else. You didn’t offer to help me control it, so I didn’t - I didn’t think you knew how.”

“You’re not supposed to be able to control it, Sin!” Shade exclaimed. “That’s why it’s called accidental magic!”

There was another pause, before she said, “Show me. I want to see what you can do.” She shot Sin a watery grin, and he knew that while he wasn’t forgiven, she wasn’t quite so furious.

He turned to Elena who nodded. Unbeknownst to Sin, Shade stiffened at the gesture. The vampiress snatched a piece of broken asphalt from the ground and tossed it at Sin, who barely needed to tug at the back of his mind before the rock stopped in the air, flying back at Elena. The vampiress caught it, a slim smirk on her red lips.

There was an intake of breath from Sin’s left, and Spider spoke up. “Wow. Can you - can you do anything else? Ow!” He turned to Shade, who had stomped on his foot. She didn’t speak, however.

Sin’s gaze, again, went to Elena whose eyes seemed to say, ‘whatever you’re comfortable with’. So he opened the door to the power in his mind, and let it flood him. The intoxicating feeling of power made him sigh with euphoria, and he willed the ground before him to freeze, creating a tiny sheen of ice. He willed it to build, and build, and build, until there was a block of ice as tall as he was standing in front of him. He ignored Elena’s sharp gaze and the gasps of Shade and Spider, before shoving a hand forward. The block of ice flew into the wall and smashed into hundreds of tiny pieces.

“I had no chance of winning that fight, did I?” Spider demanded. Elena snorted.

“Assassin defeated a Runespoor. No, you didn’t.”

Spider huffed and crossed his arms.

“I didn’t really defeat it,” Sin argued. “It was more like I… reasoned with it.”

Spider let out a humorless laugh. “I still can’t get over the fact that you can speak to snakes. That’s freaky.”

“Parselmouths are incredibly rare,” Shade agreed.

Sin glanced at Elena, and her lips were pressed together tightly. He didn’t often see Elena rattled, but whenever the fact that he was a parselmouth was brought up, she lost her elegant cool.

There was another pause. “So where do we go from here?” Sin asked.

“There’s no way you’re going back to the Dursleys. Or to another magical fight,” Shade said immediately.

“Shade,” Sin pleaded, “I have to. If they find out that I’m here, they could come and take me away, and put me back with the Dursleys permanently. I’d rather go for a week than for the next six summers.

“I don’t see why you can’t just go the day the letters come,” she argued stubbornly.

Elena stepped in, and Sin nodded at her gratefully. “The letters don’t all come on the same day, and just in case we get the day wrong, or the Dursleys find the letter before Sin and throw it away and
the next one comes the next day… it’s better not to risk it.”

Shade shot her an angry look and Elena stepped forward, her expression comforting. She rested a hand on Shade’s shoulder. “Sin will -”

The moment Elena touched her, Shade drew a small knife from her belt and pressed the blade to the vampiress’s neck. “Don’t you fucking touch me,” she spat. “And don’t you ever, ever lay a hand on Assassin.”

Sin stepped forward, alarmed, and frankly worried for Shade’s safety, despite Elena being the one with a blade pressed to her throat. However, Elena merely put her hands up placatingly and stepped back. Sin relaxed.

“As I was saying,” Elena continued smoothly, and Shade lowered her knife slowly, “Assassin will be perfectly fine. He can defend himself now. He has the power. They won’t be able to lay a finger on him without him blowing them into the next room. And I’m going to … have a word with them when he arrives.”

This was news to Sin, and he turned to Elena, the question in his eyes. “I don’t want him going back any more than you do, but it’s a necessary evil,” she finished. Shade snorted in disbelief and Spider raised an eyebrow, skeptical, but neither of them argued.

“When are the letters coming?” Spider asked.

“Next week.”

Shade swore under her breath. “Fine. But only if you are sure you feel comfortable,” she said, taking Sin’s hand. “And I want you to check in twice a day. We can get you one of Sparky’s radios, and if we don’t hear from you for over eight hours, we’re breaking in and I’m going to exponentially increase the murder rate in Privet Drive.”

Sin nodded. It was reasonable, and he was glad to have a life-line; if, God forbid, his uncle beat him senseless, then his family would save him. He had nothing to fear. Besides, if Elena was going to speak to them, they’d probably be too terrified to try anything.

“One more thing,” Shade said, turning to Elena. “You stop meddling with Sin’s life. I want you gone. You don’t ever talk to him again.”

The corner of Elena’s mouth twitched into a horrible, knowing smirk. “I promise I’ll leave you all alone, and never even say hello to him ever again… if he asks me too.”

Sin blanched in surprise. She would really do that? After all the trouble she went through of blackmailing him?

Shade turned to him expectantly, but he didn’t speak immediately. “Well?” She prompted, obviously thinking she knew what he was going to say. Elena’s smirk proved she expected a different answer.

Sin opened his mouth to say of course he wanted her out of his life, of course he never wanted her to speak to him again, of course -

And then he really thought about it. If he never saw Elena again. He didn’t need her to help him with his magic anymore - he had it under control - but he couldn’t deny that being someone with power in the wizarding world was extremely appealing. Being at the top of the food chain instead of the very bottom… he couldn’t help but want it. Plus, when he had that power, he could keep his family safe. And while Elena terrified him more than anyone he’d ever met… she was also the only one he
trusted to protect him and his family from Mr Noir, and others like him. She wasn’t his only connection to the magical world, but Shade hadn’t been there in ages, and he didn’t want to put her in harm’s way. However, he could care less about using Elena to climb to the top and then pushing her aside when she was no longer needed.

He thought she was telling the truth - she would leave him alone if he asked. But as much as he hated to admit it, he needed her.

He refused to acknowledge the small part of him that admitted he had another, more emotional and very impractical reason for not wanting to sever ties with Elena.

“I can’t do that,” Sin said softly, his chest tightening at the awful mixture of betrayal, hurt, anger and confusion in Shade’s eyes. His eyes flickered to Elena’s face, and he immediately regretted it. The vampiress’s smug expression conveyed that she had known exactly what Sin would say, and it made him feel sick.

“Fine. Then I want to be there every time you two are together. I don’t ever want you alone,” Shade snapped.

Sin nodded; he supposed it was reasonable, but he hated to put Shade in Elena’s path, and the chance that someone would recognize her…

That’s when it hit him. “Oh! Lestrange!” He exclaimed, turning to Shade, who flinched backwards. “You’re a Noble and Ancient House!”

“Excuse me?” Spider asked, and Shade nodded stiffly. Sin immediately felt bad for bringing up Shade’s obviously painful past, but he couldn’t help but be curious.

“Wouldn’t that bring shame upon their name? To give up a child?”

“My parents were… despicable people,” Shade spoke quietly. “And in Azkaban - the wizarding prison - for most of my life. I stayed with my mother’s sister, who married into the Malfoys. As an influential member of the ministry, and as a Noble and Most Ancient House, Lucius Malfoy was able to visit my mother in Azkaban once he’d realized I was a squib. He got her to sign the papers, and I was no longer a Lestrange nor a Malfoy. I ran.”

“I’m sorry.” There was nothing else he could say, but he noticed that somewhere during Shade’s monologue, Elena had vanished.

“Let’s just go home.”

__________

Sin practically inhaled his bowl of tomato soup, graciously accepting the hunk of bread Hero offered him. He gnawed on the edge as Hero glared at him.

“Spider told me everything,” was all she said, before turning on her heel and stalking away. Sin put down the bread, not quite so hungry anymore.

“Do you think she’ll forgive me?” He asked Sparky as the young teenager sat down next to him.

“Hero? Or Shade?”
“Both. Either. Anyone.”

Sparky took a long slurp of her soup before replying. “They will. It’ll take time - your fault, mate, for bein’ such a fuckin’ dumbass - but they’ll come ’round.”

Sin conceded her point, grateful that there was at least one person who wasn’t freezing him out.

“It’s no’ tha’ they’re angry, so much,” the fourteen-year-old continued, brushing a strand of wispy blond hair from her face, “they’re hurt. They don’ fink ya trust ‘em, Sin. And tha’ hurts.”

Sin ducked his head in shame. He hated being the cause of his family’s pain. He took a small bite of his bread as Sparky finished her soup. Sin stood and found himself face-to-face with Shade.

“The letters start coming tomorrow,” she said, her face emotionless. “We’re going to the Dursley’s tonight.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m really sorry for not updating sooner, my eyes are super fucked up, my migraines have gotten worse and I have an issue with looking at computer screens for too long. My updates may start to always take this long, which I sincerely apologize for, but I promise you I AM updating and continuing the story. Please please please leave a comment! I love knowing what you guys think!

IMPORTANT: I rewrote chapter one, please go back and read it - I got rid of some major aspects of the story, which I know is super unprofessional, but I think it changes the fic for the better.
You Won't Feel a Thing

Chapter Summary

Sin returns to the Dursleys. Elena, Shade, and Sin all have their own ways of making sure he is safe, and Elena teaches Sin a little more about the dangers of the magical world - and how to protect himself.

Chapter Notes

LAST TIME:
Sin becomes the first person to defeat Spider in a Fight, and then he tells him and Shade everything he's kept from them. They head to the Dursleys' with Elena.

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Surprise! Not dead!
I apologize it took so long. I just no longer remember what motivation feels like. Good news though - my migraine thing seems to be gone, at least for the moment.

TRIGGER WARNING FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC/PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The houses were too perfect. It set Assassin’s teeth on edge. They were too uniform. Each one an exact copy of the next, the only variations being in the colors of the hydrangeas in the front gardens. As the three walked slowly down the lane, and came to a stop in front of one of the identical houses, Assassin bit his lip. “I think I’m going to be sick,” he confessed.

Shade gripped his shoulders gently, squeezing softly. “We’ll make sure they know not to touch you,” she said with a sad smile. Sin’s stomach roiled.

Elena glanced at him. “You are stronger than they are. If they twitch in your direction, you could send them flying through the wall.” Assassin nodded. He would never tell Shade, but Elena’s reminder was much more comforting. The knowledge that he could hurt them, if he wanted to - that he could defend himself - that was powerful. It made him feel strong enough to grit his teeth and walk up to the front door.

Shade rang the doorbell for him, and there was a muffled yell and a crash echoing through the walls. Moments later, the door swung open gently, revealing Aunt Petunia’s skeletal form.

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“We’re not interested in buying .” she froze mid-sentence, her eyes nearly popping out of her horse-like face. She blinked several times, before rage began to bloom across her features.

“You freak! You run away, and then have the nerve to come crawling back -” and suddenly she was raising her hand and it was coming towards his face, and he couldn’t move. He should be able to send her flying, but he couldn’t even run, he was frozen, he could only close his eyes -

The slap never came. He peeked, squinting ever so slightly, before taking a deep breath and allowing his eyes to open fully. Elena was gripping Aunt Petunia’s hand, her nails digging into Aunt Petunia’s skin.

“What the hell -” started Aunt Petunia, her face growing paler, but Elena placed her finger against
Aunt Petunia’s lips.
“I’m speaking now, alright sweetheart? So here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to let us in, and show us into your living room, where we are going to sit down and wait for you to bring your husband down. Then we’re going to have a nice long discussion, and if you cooperate, you’ll get through today without losing any limbs. Sound good?” The vampiress asked, extending her fangs on the last word, the expression on her face not at all something Sin would want aimed at him. Aunt Petunia whimpered but nodded, and Elena let go of her hand.

The muggle led the three of them into the living room, and Sin gazed around the familiar house in a daze. He never thought he’d be back here.

The three of them settled into a horrid salmon pink sofa, and Shade put her arm around Sin. He flinched slightly at the contact, and she swore under her breath before retracting her arm.

“I’m sorry,” she said quietly, “That was insensitive. This must be horrible for you.” Sin let out a shaky laugh, but he didn’t bother replying. He just nodded.

“Breathe, Assassin,” Elena murmured, sitting perfectly still and straight. The picture of elegance.

“Remember to breathe.” He nodded, taking a deep breath through his nose and letting it drain out slowly.

“What the ruddy hell are you doing?!” Shouted a familiar voice, and without warning Sin couldn’t move, or breathe.

Harry heaved in a breath, crawling to his cupboard because the pain in his legs was too great to stand -

‘Tears leaked from Harry’s eyes. “I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to”

“FREAK! USELESS!”

“I’m sorry!”

“Please!” Harry pleaded, backing away from his heavily intoxicated uncle. “It’s not my fault!”

Uncle Vernon snorted, backhanding his nephew across the face. “Tell that to Dudders!” He slurred, hitting Harry in the stomach.

He was frozen, he couldn’t move - and suddenly Shade was kneeling in front of him, holding out her hands. “Breathe,” she said quietly. “You are not Harry Potter anymore. You are not weak. You Assassin, and you are so strong. You survived the streets, you are reigning champion of the Fights, you’ve survived eating Sparky’s cooking. You can survive this.”

A shaky, forced laugh burst from Sin’s lips, and his hand darted out to grab Shade’s. He inhaled deeply. He was not Harry. Harry was someone who curled on the floor and let his uncle beat him to a pulp. Assassin was someone who could beat other people to a pulp. Someone who had survived a Runespoor, and dealing with Elena. He could do this. He was Assassin.

He nodded at Shade, squeezing her palm. She squeezed back as she stood, and the two of them turned to where Elena had a hand around Uncle Vernon’s thick neck, lifting him several inches above the floor.

She set him down when his face turned a very unappealing shade of puce. She turned to Aunt Petunia. “Well? Aren’t you going to offer us some tea?”

Aunt Petunia squeaked and hurried off into the kitchen. Uncle Vernon seemed to have recovered from the shock of being held in the air by a very slim seemingly seventeen-year-old, because the puce faded into crimson.

“WHO THE BLOODY HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE -”

Elena sighed, before grabbing his head, tilting it back, and emptying a small vial into his mouth. He made a gurgling noise but she shut his mouth and held his nose until he swallowed it.

Her smile was terrifying. “What you just drank is of my invention. It’s a mixture of Aconite extract,
diluted Water Hemlock, salamander blood, and my own special venom,” she purred, flashing her fangs once more. “Because it is homemade, I own the only known antidote. Unless you have a phoenix hiding in your china plate cupboard?” She asked, pausing. Uncle Vernon only stared at her in terror. She grinned, and Sin questioned how he ever thought she was remotely human. “Didn’t think so,” she added sweetly. “Fortunately for you, the poison takes exactly seven days to kick in. Before then, you won’t feel a thing; however, should you not receive the antidote before 168 hours from now… well, you can kiss your heart functions goodbye.”
“Who - who are you?” He rasped, pulling at tufts of his moustache. Elena patted him on the shoulder.
“You don’t need to worry about that.”
“What do you want from me?”
“Now that, Mr Dursley, I can answer. Assassin here,” she gestured to Sin, who refused to look his abuser in the eye, “is going to be staying here for a few days. You are not going to hurt him, nor touch him in any way. You will not prevent him from eating, or roaming about the house. You will give him whatever room he asks for, and you will respect his privacy. You will keep your infernal son away from him. You will not speak to him unless he initiates the conversation. In fact,” she glanced at Sin quickly, being turning back to Uncle Vernon, “Unless he initiates contact, you will not so much as look at your nephew. Am I clear?”
With each sentence, Uncle Vernon grew slightly more purple. However, he was clearly stricken with fear, as he nodded hurriedly. Elena’s smile grew.
“Good. I’ll be back in a week, perhaps less, and if you have followed each of these instructions, then you will receive your antidote.”
Aunt Petunia reentered, carrying a tray with five cups of tea. She set it down on the coffee table, shaking. She had clearly heard everything.
As Assassin watched, he couldn’t help but feel a thick glee rise up within him. To see his tormentors so scared… it was like a drug. Suddenly, he was filled with a burning desire to be the reason they were so scared.
So he took a deep breath and stepped toward Uncle Vernon, and did not flinch. “Uncle Vernon,” he said, spitting out the two words like they were expletives. “You made my life a living hell for eight years.” He raised a hand, and Uncle Vernon’s eyes bugged as he was once again lifted, this time suspended in the air. Sin took a step forward, his previous panic draining, replaced by an icy rage. Images of being curled up on the floor, Uncle Vernon above him, flashed through his mind. “I am going to enjoy returning the favor.” Sin relinquished his hold over the disgusting man and letting him collapse to the floor in a heap.
Aunt Petunia squealed and ran to her pig of a husband, kneeling down and trying to help him up. He swore and stumbled to his feet, turning to Sin. Sin’s feet urged to step away, to flinch, but there was too much cold anger in him to find enough fear to move.
“How -”
“Ah ah ah,” Elena said, her red lips stretching over her too-white fangs, “think before you speak, Mr Dursley. Is it something that would be an obstacle between you and the antidote?”
Uncle Vernon shut his mouth, and instead only glared at Elena and Sin. Sin wondered if he would have an aneurysm. Sin wouldn’t be too put out if it happened.
“Now,” Elena said pleasantly, “Why don’t you show me where Sin will be sleeping?” She asked Uncle Vernon. Sin didn’t think it was possible for his face to go a deeper shade of purple, and yet at the request, Uncle Vernon’s head resembled a very ripe plum. However, when Elena took a step closer to him, his survival instincts kicked in, and with an expression of both fear and disgust, he tramped up the stairs.
Aunt Petunia took one look at the emotion in Sin’s eyes and scurried out of the living room. “Don’t even think about calling the police,” Shade called after her. “They certainly won’t have the antidote, and I’m already on the run for murder. I have no qualms about adding to my rap sheet.” There was a squeak, and a slammed door.
“You’ve killed someone?” Sin asked in shock. Shade shook her head, the corner of her mouth
ticking up. “No… but she doesn’t know that,” she admitted with a grin. Sin let out a quiet laugh, before sitting down on the salmon sofa. Shade sat next to him, but refrained from reaching out to touch him. Sin was grateful.

“So I wanted to have someone year to keep you company round-the-clock,” she said quietly, “Because I can’t stand the thought of you being here alone. But realistically, money’s tight right now, Stickler is days away, Sparky is working hard on her new project, and I don’t trust Spider not to murder your uncle. However, I can get either Wheels, Hero, or myself to stay with you at night. I know that everything gets a little worse in the dark.”


Shade laughed and rolled her eyes. “Hell if I know. He’s tracking down one of his old fences, Scooter. Apparently Stickler thinks he’s starting selling cocaine, and he wants him to go back to selling stolen ID’s and passports.

Sin raised his eyebrows. “Huh.”

“Yup. And he’s meeting up with someone who collects foreign jewelry. Stickler thinks he can sell this woman some cut glass and convince her it’s ‘exotic foreign diamond’ or something like that. He thinks he’ll return with enough cash to buy nearly everything on my list for the next month or so.”

“What’s high up on the list?”

“Firstly, some basic math books. Those are hard to come by. Hero’s been teaching Roach and Light how to read from books she’s dug out of dumpsters, and Sparky is teaching them basic science, but I want them to have a good grasp on math too. Otherwise they’ll get swindled one day. Also both you and Wheels have birthdays coming up, and the fund is a little low after we went all out for Hero’s fifteenth two months ago. And I think everyone is getting a little sick of second-hand cabbage.” She scrunched up her nose in thought. “What else… oh, right. Spider wants to start keeping a stock of basic medicine; we’ve always kept bandages, but he wants pain killers and stuff to sterilize wounds. And Hero, Sparky, Toxic and I could always do with real tampons instead of makeshift ones. Oh, and it’d be nice to have one or two bicycles, just to get around more quickly.”

Sin’s eyebrows were lost in his hair. “Stickler thinks he get get you money for all of that?”

Shade shrugged. “If we’re lucky. He said the lady is both very wealthy and really stupid. Besides, he doesn’t need to get us two new bikes. He can just by old ones, or parts, and then Sparky can fix them up.” Sin nodded.

There was a buzzing sound, like radio static, and Spider’s voice clicked from the walkie-talkie on Shade’s belt.

“Shade? We need you. Hero was attacked.”

Shade stood suddenly, unhooking the device. “Attacked? What do you mean, attacked?” She asked, speaking into the walkie.

“She was picking pockets at the tube station when three guys came after her, yelling at her. One of them tore off her hijab, and when she kicked his ass, the other two smacked her around. Her wounds aren’t that serious - Toxic’s tending to her now, she doesn’t need the hospital - but she’s pretty shaken up. They left her on the platform and she had to crawl to a payphone and call us.”

Sin swore, and Shade’s fists clenched tight. “I’m coming back.” Spider clicked in confirmation and Shade dug through her bag, before handing Sin a second walkie.

“I’d come, but if the letter comes while I’m not here -” Sin started, feeling slightly sick - “I know,” Shade replied with a tight smile. “I feel awful for leaving you here alone, but - I have to go - I’ll send Wheels up tonight, but I really do need to go,” she said apologetically. She opened her arms, clearly letting Sin make a decision, and he was grateful. Tentatively, he gave her a short hug, feeling slightly uncomfortable.

As she left, Elena and Uncle Vernon came down the stairs. One look at Sin and Uncle Vernon joined Aunt Petunia in the kitchen.

“Where is Miss Lestrange going?” Elena asked as she sat on the sofa, somehow managing to look elegant against the hideous salmon.
“Her name is Shade,” Sin said shortly, “And it’s none of your business.”
Elena raised a delicate eyebrow but didn’t inquire further. She tilted her head. “Well, since it looks
like you’re going to have lots of free time while you’re here, I thought I’d leave this with you,” she
said, slipping a familiar book from within a bag that looked far too small for its contents. The Current
Political State of Affairs and How to Navigate It.
“Oh joy,” he said flatly. “Such fun.”
Elena rolled her eyes. “Well, if you don’t want to do that, we can always get a head start on your
occlumency.”
“Occlumency?”
Elena nodded, crossing her legs. “It’s a difficult but extremely useful branch of magic that protects
one’s mind from being accessed by a Legilimens.”
Sin inhaled sharply. “I’m - I’m sorry? You mean there are people out there who can read minds?”
Elena’s thin lips lifted into a cold smile. “I wouldn’t quite put it like that - thoughts and memories
aren’t generally in words - but yes, that would be an apt description. While Legilimency is even more
difficult to master than Occlumency, it’s common enough to be a danger. For example, you only
know two people from the magical world and one of them is a Legilimens.” She pulled her lips over
her teeth in a smug grin, and Sin, who had thought he was immune to Elena’s queer lure by now, felt
a shiver run down his spine.
“Have - have you ever read my mind?” He asked, suddenly disgusted. If she had - if she had violated
his most basic privacy like that -
Elena shook her head. “It’s incredibly illegal,” she said, her eyes glinting. “Although since it’s nearly
impossible to detect, it’s rare for anyone to be charged for it.”
That didn’t reassure Sin.
“Besides,” she added, “it would make life incredibly boring, if I knew what everyone was thinking.”
“And Occlawhatsit will stop them from being able to get in?” He asked. Suddenly, learning
Occlumency felt like the most important thing Elena would ever be able to teach him.
Elena tilted her head. “It will certainly make it much more difficult. The more practice and willpower
you put into it, the harder it will be for anyone to get into your thoughts and memories. Because you
aren’t a natural born Occlumens, then you’d never be able to keep out a natural born Legilimens.
Lucky for us, there hasn’t been a recorded natural Legilimens since the 1930s, in New York.”
“But if I - if I practice enough, I can keep out every living Legilimens?” Sin asked urgently.
Elena tilted her head. “It’s possible,” she acknowledged. “But Occlumency is one of the most
difficult branches of magic. It’s not something you can simply read about. You need to have
incredible will power and mental control.”
Sin swallowed. “Teach me.”
Elena nodded. “First, you’ll need a place to store your memories.”
“I’m sorry?”
“In your mind, you need to have a place where your memories are stored. A place that others will
have to break through fortifications to get to. For example, my mother stored her memories in a
replica of our manner. Many people choose their childhood homes. It doesn’t have to be a real place,
but because you need to be very familiar about it and its dimensions, most people do use a real
place.”
Sin tilted his head, thinking. To give himself time, and because he was curious, he asked, “Where do
you store yours?”
Elena’s lips thinned. “Wouldn’t you like to know.”
Sin rolled his eyes. “If you’re going to be teaching me, then obviously you’re going to know mine.
Turnabout is only fair.”
Elena looked at him and he shrugged. “It was worth a try.”
Sin sat back in the sofa, barely needing to think. The only place he held any sort of emotional
attachment for was the warehouse he lived, so there was no other choice.
“Once you’ve chosen your place, close your eyes and try to imagine packing all of your memories in
their. This is an abstract concept, and takes a lot of concentration, but it can be done in small pieces. I
suggest meditating for an hour or so before bed and trying to fit your memories into your chosen space.”

Elena stood, gesturing to the book. “And try and read some more of that, as well. It’d be good for you to have read the whole volume by the time you board the Hogwarts Express.”

Sin stared at her. “You’re giving me homework?” He asked, his tone incredulous.

Elena simply raised a thin, delicate eyebrow in response. Sin sighed.

“Whatver.” He would never admit it to Elena, but he begrudgingly admitted to himself that it would be helpful to know how the politics in the wizarding world were structured before he attempted to gain any sort of standing.

Elena stood, brushing off the front of her dress. “Well, I’m off. The spare bedroom upstairs is yours. If you have any trouble from any of them, you know what to do.” Sin nodded, swallowing. A small part of him almost wanted Uncle Vernon to try something, just so he’d have an excuse to retaliate - but the rest of him was still scared. Fear tasted bad on Sin’s tongue, and he felt ashamed.

Realistically, he knew he had nothing to be afraid of - he was far from defenseless - but it was difficult to fight off the trauma of years of abuse.

“Oh,” she added, taking a piece of paper from her sleeve and handing it to him. “Carve that into your bed, or your door, before you go to sleep.” Sin took it from her, furrowing an eyebrow at the strange shape inked onto the paper. There was a cross with pitchfork shapes on the ends, and two slashes on each line.

“What’s this?”

“A protection rune. Very basic, you don’t even need to use magic to invoke it. Only to draw it on. But like I said, it’s basic, so it will just automatically draw the magic from you.”

Sin nodded his thanks, mentally noting that he needed to do that. It would, at the very least, give him a small sense of security.

Elena looked back at him as she reached the door. There was an unfamiliar expression in her eyes.

“Assassin…”

“Mnhm?”

She hesitated. That caught Sin off guard even more than the words she spoke. “Stay safe.”

Then she was gone.

______________

Sin opened his eyes and punched the mattress below him. He gritted his teeth in frustration. He was trying to follow Elena’s instructions, but she didn’t really give him much to go on.

“‘Oh Sin, just imagine putting your memories somewhere, that’ll work,’” he mocked. “The hell am I supposed to do with that?” He sighed, falling back and letting his head meet the pillow with a small ‘oomph’. He rolled over, pulling the duvet over himself, and resolved to keep practicing in the morning.

His gaze fell onto the book on his bedside table, and he scowled. However, he sat up and flicked on his lamp, pulling the book onto his lap. Since he had failed at Elena’s first instruction, he ought to at least read some of the book.

Resigned, he opened it to the page he finished on last time.

“Dark, Light, and the Grey Area in Between

Most members of the Wizengamot are affiliated with the “Dark” or the “Light”. A few prefer to stay “Grey”, or the middle area between the two. Dark and Light are similar to the Muggle political parties of Labor and Conservative, or Republican and Democrat. Entire families are typically on the same place on the spectrum. “Light” families tend to find certain spells easier for them, and vice versa. However, not all Dark families are talented at Dark Magic, or lousy at Light Magic. Light families and members of the Wizengamot tend to lobby for more restrictions on magic, while Dark
families and members of the Wizengamot tend to lobby for less restrictions. Grey families tend to want a middle ground. Light members of the Wizengamot usually form alliances and vote together, as do Dark members, so many times things are decided in the Wizengamot by the Grey minority. As follows is a list of the members of the Wizengamot and their house affiliations.

Chief Warlock (Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore)

Light
House of Lords
First Estate
Noble and Most Ancient House of Black
Dark
Noble and Most Ancient House of Peverell
Grey
Noble and Most Ancient House of Slytherin
Dark
Noble and Most Ancient House of Hufflepuff
Grey
Noble and Most Ancient House of Van Rau
Dark
Noble and Most Ancient House of Gryffindor
Light
Noble and Most Ancient House of Ravenclaw
Grey
Noble and Most Ancient House of Longbottom
Light
Noble and Most Ancient House of Malfoy
Dark

Second Estate
Noble and Ancient House of Bones
Grey
Noble and Ancient House of Greengrass
Grey
Noble and Ancient House of Gaunt
Dark
Noble and Ancient House of Lestrange
Dark
Noble and Ancient House of Nott
Dark
Noble and Ancient House of Burke
Dark
Noble and Ancient House of Bulstrode
Light
Noble and Ancient House of Selwyn
Dark
Noble and Ancient House of Diggory
Light
Noble and Ancient House of Ollivander
Grey
Noble and Ancient House of Prewett
An example of a typical Wizengamot legislative session is the most recent session, September 5th 1989. A law was proposed by Lord Percival Selwyn, one stating that unless the ministry had a warrant signed by the Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, they would have to give at least twenty-four hours notice before searching a place of business. Before, the ministry could avoid notifying the owner and/or management of the business by having the warrant signed by the head of any office.

A complaint was filed by Margause Merrythought, owner of Merrythought Second-Hand Wands in Knockturn Alley, after his shop was raided by a group of Aurors without any notice. They had a warrant, but it had been signed by the Head of the Department of Intoxicating Substances, who at the time had a grudge against Margause Merrythought for sleeping with his wife. The aurors raided the shop without any notice, and went into the backroom - where Margause lived - only to catch the Head of the Department of Intoxicating Substances’ wife in nothing but a towel.

This complaint gave Lord Selwyn the grounds to propose such a law. He convinced Lord Slughorn and Lady Burke to sign the law. At the September 5th meeting, the law passed with a significant majority, only the Head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation (Bartemius Crouch), the Senior Undersecretary to the Minister (Lyria Abbott), the Senior Advisor to the Minister (Tiberius White), the Minister for Magic (Cornelius Fudge), and the Lord Amos Diggory voted against passing the law.

After passing the law, there were eight more laws proposed, none of them passing. A few on them include a law that would give shop owners free reign on cauldron bottom thickness, a law that would allow wizards to set up shops in the muggle world without a glamour, and a law that would criminalize drinking pumpkin juice before six in the morning.
With nothing more to discuss, the meeting was adjourned, although several members of the Wizengamot stayed on the floor afterwards to discuss amongst themselves. This is a perfect time for forming political alliances.

For an hour after each session, the press is allowed inside the room to interview any member of the Wizengamot.”

By the end of the chapter, Sin’s eyes were drooping. Shade had told him that if he really needed someone to stay with him that night, she would send Wheels over, but Sin didn’t want to have to stay up any longer, and he didn’t trust himself not to panic if he saw someone come into the room in the middle of the night and woke him up. So, safe with the knowledge that Elena was sufficiently terrifying, there was a protection rune carved into his door, and he could knock Uncle Vernon on his ass if he needed to, he set the book on the table. Pulling the covers to his chin and pushing the remaining fear far down, he drifted off into fitful sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you liked that chapter! I know nothing important really happened in this one, but if I manage to stick to my plan for once, something HUGE is going to happen in the next one. Please comment and tell me what you think! I know having long excerpts from the book is just lazy exposition, but the only other way I could write that in is long conversations between Elena and Sin. Let me know if you’d rather I do that.

IMPORTANT: BEING A VICTIM OF ABUSE DOES NOT MAKE YOU WEAK. BEING AFRAID OF YOUR ABUSER DOES NOT MAKE YOU WEAK. NOT FIGHTING BACK AGAINST YOUR ABUSER DOES NOT MAKE YOU WEAK. This is just the fucked up psychological effects of Sin's abuse speaking out into his conscious.
What Was That About Me Being a Coward?

Chapter Summary

Sin's family makes sure he doesn't have to weather his abusers alone. Sin overcomes his fears, and enjoys it a little too much.

Chapter Notes

LAST TIME:
Elena, Shade, and Sin all threaten the Dursleys and Sin stays there to wait for his letter. Elena tells Sin about Occlumency, and he reads a little more about the Wizengamot.

TRIGGER WARNING FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC/PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE

‘Thud’.

Sin groaned as he picked himself up off the floor. He was used to sleeping on a flat, floor-height mattress, not a raised bed, and he had forgotten that rolling to one side meant a three-foot drop. He yawned blearily, before snapping his eyes open as he remembered where he was. Suddenly his throat clogged, and he couldn’t breathe or move. At any moment, Uncle Vernon could walk through the door and beat him within an inch of his life, break his ribs again, slam his skull against the wall hard enough to kill him -

His eyes caught on a small card on the desk with his name written in Sparky’s rough scrawl, and he forced himself to exhale and calm down. He took in a shuddering a breath and stood, snapping up the card. A sad smile tugged at his lips as he opened it.

‘Sin,

Its only been one night and we allready miss you. Toxic hasnt left the warehouse, shes been pacing all day. I wish youd hurry and get home, shes pissin me off. I cant consentrait on the walkies. Every ones on edge, and even Stickler is a little off. He couldnt make a sell to a normal fence last night. He says its cause the guy had a better offer, but we all know he was too distracted missin you too sweet talk the guy. I wish i coulda gone with Wheels to see you, but Shade wants more walkies, and she wants to see if i can replicat the mobile. Hero wants me to tell you shes fine, but i think shes more shaken up than shes lettin on. It really scared her. Light didn’t go to sleep for a long time last night, i think he can tell your somewere dangerous. But your strong. I know you can do this.
Sin closed his eyes and gripped the letter tightly, breathing in the scent of the cheap paper. There was a walkie laying on the desk as well, and as Sin’s stomach rumbled, he resolved to talk to his family as soon as he’d had breakfast. Slipping on a pair of jeans and an AC/DC shirt he’d nicked from Spider, who had found it in one piece by a dumpster a few weeks ago, he slid the letter into his pocket and breathed in deeply before leaving the room, subconsciously making as little noise as possible.

He crept down the hallway, a quiet sigh of relief escaping him as he heard the loud snores that indicated his uncle and cousin were still asleep. As he descended the stairs, making sure to avoid the step that creaked, he wondered slightly what Dudley thought about all this; what his parents had told him.

He made his way into the kitchen and blinked in surprise; Wheels was sitting at the kitchen table, two plates of scrambled eggs in front of him. He was drinking a glass of milk, before catching sight of Sin and putting it down, waving him over.

“I got here a couple of hours ago, but I thought it would be a bad idea to creep into your room while you were sleeping. Especially, you know, considering where we are.”

Sin smiled gratefully, taking the seat across from Wheels. The older boy slid the second plate of eggs toward Sin, who took no time in wolfing them down.

“I hope you don’t mind, I’m going to pilfer some of your Aunt and Uncle’s stuff. Food, mainly. They’ve got all this expensive, highly calorific shit, and it doesn’t look like your cousin needs it,” he said with a slight smirk, gesturing to the photograph of Dudley on the kitchen counter. Sin chuckled.

“Help yourself. I’d tell you to relieve them of the television and computer as well, but that might be a little noticeable to people who come to visit.” He wiped a little dribble of egg from the corner of his mouth and began pouring himself and Wheels glasses of milk.

“Good to know. I’ll stick to the silverware,” Wheels replied with a grin, stacking Sin’s empty plate upon his. Sin handed him a glass, and he gulped it down before asking in a more serious tone, “So… why didn’t you tell us? About the Fights? And Elena?”

Sin’s insides roiled and he let out a frustrated laugh. “Do you really think Shade or Hero would have let me continue if they knew?”

“Fair point.” Wheels yawned and handed Sin the stack of plates with his good hand, and the young wizard left them in the sink.

“So has anything happened at home since Sparky wrote her letter?”

Wheels pursed his lips. “Not really. Wait, actually - you’ll never believe this,” he said, his grin widening, “Toxic has a girlfriend.”

Sin nearly spat out his water. “What?” He asked, incredulously.

Wheels nodded, clearly enjoying the thought - Sin imagined he was very pleased with all the new material to tease her with. “Hero caught her snogging this fancy chick behind the bus station when
she went to join her on a pick-pocketing raid. Toxic was mortified, but the girl introduced herself and everything! Apparently they met last week when Toxic tried to snatch her purse and the girl caught her. Said she wouldn’t tell if Toxic went out with her.”

Sin snorted with laughter. “Of course Toxic snogs the girl who caught her out. Just running away would be too easy.”

Wheels smirked. “Yeah. Toxic is super embarrassed - she refuses to let anyone but Hero meet her. I overheard they’re meeting up tonight, though - I’m gonna make Toxic introduce us, or I’ll tell Shade that she’s sneaking out.” Sin grinned.

“You have to tell me everything you find. I can wait to tease her - and she was the one who made fun of Spider for flirting with that girl outside Sainsbury’s! Hypocrite!”

Laughing, Wheels nodded. “Yeah, Spider’s already given her quite a lot of grief.” His grin grew. “Apparently she’s teaching Toxic Korean.”

“That’s adorable,” Sin replied, refilling his glass. There was a creak of floorboards the bubbly feeling of laughter fell away, replaced by a sharp, nervous intake of breath.

Sin turned around slowly, eyes landing on the enormous forms of his cousin and uncle.

“You’re really back then, freak?” Dudley said rudely, and Uncle Vernon’s face paled.

“Don’t speak to him, Dudders,” he said hoarsely, before taking a step in front of his son.

Sin’s limbs were stuck. He couldn’t move. His mind was screaming at him to run, to run from the monster that had terrorized him for years - and then Dudley waddled around Uncle Vernon and headed towards Sin. The movement jerked him out of his terror, but it activated some instinct in his subconscious and he panicked. His hands flew out in front of him and an elastic band snapped somewhere inside of his head.

“Dad? Dad what - what did he do to me?!” Dudley cried, and an angry roar ripped from Uncle Vernon’s throat. The hulking man ran at Sin, who twisted his hand and braced for impact -

But the impact never came. He opened an eyelid, and let out a shaky breath. Both Dursleys’ feet were encased in ice, frozen to the floor. They couldn’t move or break the ice, and their mouths were opening and closing, but no sound was coming out.

Sin backed up, his whole body shaking with fear. A low whistle came from behind Sin, and he turned to see Wheels looking in awe.

“That was… that was incredible!” He said, amazed. Underneath all the slowly fading terror, Sin was sort of flattered.

“What do I do now?” He asked quietly. “If I let them out they might try to run at me again. Uncle Vernon isn’t really smart enough to stop, especially now that I’ve pissed him off.”

“You could just leave them there for the rest of the week,” Wheels suggested. “Or, you know, forever.”

The two frozen muggles’ eyes bulged in terror. Sin couldn’t deny the sight made him smile, but he shook his head. “Too many questions… I don’t want Mrs. Figg to come over to water the plants and find them. Or for Aunt Petunia to do anything stupid.”
He tilted his head, before swallowing. His resolve hardened and he approached the two.

“If you try anything like that again,” he whispered, his confidence growing with every word, “I will do far worse than just freeze you in place.” With a little tap on the well in his mind, a large, pointed icicle materialized in his hand. “Do you understand?”

They nodded hurriedly, and Sin smiled. “Good. You stay away from me, and we shouldn’t have a problem.” He pulled at the magic again, and the ice began to melt slowly. Sin didn’t back away; he knew that if he didn’t face his fear of his uncle now, when he held all the power, he would never get over it.

So he stood there and watched, a gleam in his eye, as the ice melted and Uncle Vernon wiggled out. He pulled his son free, took one look at Sin, and high-tailed it out of the kitchen.


“Thanks, man.”

“For a ten-year-old.”

“And to think I was so flattered…”

Assassin sat at the kitchen table, tapping a pencil on the wood. Wheels had left an hour ago, because Sparky had said something about being able to fit him with a homemade prosthetic arm, and ever since then he had been incredibly bored. Bored, worried about Hero, and lonely. He realised for the first time that he hadn’t been alone for so long in over a year. Even when he snuck away from his family, he was always with Elena. He’d never been alone for more than a few hours, and now he would be going days without his family. He’d seen Wheels an hour ago and he was already dreading the days ahead of him.

He glanced over to the small pool of water on the floor that had previously held his uncle and cousin in place. His stomach twinged slightly as he remembered the feeling of utter power and control the action had made him feel. Shoving the feeling away, and looking for a distraction, he held his hand out and carefully turned the faucet on his magic, letting it slowly drip through him.

The water rose into the air in tiny, shimmering droplets, reflecting the sunlight that filtered through the cracks in the curtains. Sin clenched his fist and the water spiraled into one big sphere, and it froze solid. He summoned over to his hand, before setting the ball of ice on the table. Biting his lip, he stood. He was bored, and starting to get really antsy. If he could just see Hero in person, to talk to her, he was sure he’d feel better. He just wanted to make sure she was feeling okay.

‘Technically,’ he thought, wringing his hands, ‘As long as I’m still ‘living’ here all week, it won’t matter if I leave the house, just for a few hours.’

He nodded to himself; it made sense. As long as he still considered his week-long stay here to be ‘living’ here, then it shouldn’t matter that he went out for a while. Grinning, he hurried up the stairs to grab the radio.

‘kkkkkkkk’
“Come in Sparky? Or Shade?”

“Sin, it’s Shade. It’s good to hear your voice!”

Sin chuckled. “Yours too. Sparky’ll have your head if she knows you’re not saying ‘over’ at the end of your transmissions, over.”

“True, but she’s out scrounging for God-knows-what for Wheels’ prosthetic.”

“Lucky. Hey, so I’ve been thinking…”

“That’s a first.”

“Shut up. So I’ve been thinking, as long as I’m living here, I can still leave the house for a little while. Right? I mean, even if I lived here for real, I’d still leave the house sometimes.”

There was a long pause, before Shade said, “True. But… I don’t like it. The chances… although I suppose you’d go crazy, stuck in that house all week. Okay, fine, but don’t leave Little Whinging. I don’t want to hear that you’ve walked all the way into the city, alright?”

Sin lifted his button off of the walkie-talkie and swore before pressing back down and replying, “Fine. But I’m bored.”

“I know, bud. Hey - why don’t I send someone up? I reckon Stickler and Toxic could take Roach, he’s been dying to see you. Maybe you four can go to the park near you so you can get out of the house for a little while.”

Sin grinned. “That’d be great, Shade. Thanks.”

“Listen, Sin - I’ve gotta run, Light’s in a mood - but I’ll let Stickler and Toxic know. I love you, kid.”

“Love you too,” Sin replied, before setting down the walkie on his bedside table and collapsing onto his bed.

Bored, he pulled the book off of the floor. He would never admit it to Elena, but he was actually beginning to grow more and more interested in it. He settled down to read a chapter on the personal histories of each member of the Wizengamot.

Nearly an hour later, he heard the doorbell ring. He left the book open on his bed and hurried downstairs, not wanting to find out what would happen if if one of the Dursleys got to the door first. He flung it open and the air was immediately knocked from his lungs as his chest was squeezed tightly.

“Hhh - Roach - mate - I can’t breathe,” he gasped, and the eight-year-old untangled his arms from around the young wizard.

“I missed you, Sin! I don’t like that you have to stay here. They hurt you,” Roach said with a frown. Sin kissed the top of his head and smiled sadly.

“I know. But it’s necessary. I’ve got to keep you safe, haven’t I?”

Roach pouted, crossing his arms. “I can protect myself just fine.”

“Of course you can,” Sin laughed, “but we have eachother’s backs. Why?”
The corner of Roach’s mouth twitched, and he mumbled, “Because we’re family.” Roach stepped to the side, and Toxic smiled at Sin.

“He’s been a nightmare with you gone,” she said, her arm around draping an arm around Stickler’s neck. Stickler shook it off irritably and nodded.

“It’s horrid! I couldn’t get a lick of sleep last night, he was so restless, so if I sleep through my meeting tonight with the silver fence then that’s on him.” Sin chuckled, before turning to Toxic, grinning.

“So what’s this I hear about a girlfriend?” He asked, Roach pulling at the button on his sleeve.

Toxic went nearly as red as her hair. “How about we get to that park, yeah?” She stuttered, before turning on her heel and dragging a complaining Stickler after her. Sin snorted, before trailing after them, Roach jumping up and down.

They walked to the park, Sin pestering Toxic all the while, a large grin plastered across his face. As they reached the park, her blush deepening with every passing word, she whirled around to face him.

“If I answer your questions will you shut up about it?” She hissed, and Sin’s grin widened as he nodded.

“Fine,” she allowed, kneeling down to tie Roach’s shoelace that had come undone. Stickler rolled his eyes but Sin could tell he was trying not to smile.

“Min-Ji. I call her Minnie.”

Sin laughed. “You have a cute nickname for her!” Toxic ducked her head, as if Roach’s shoelaces were suddenly a clever puzzle she couldn’t quite unravel. “Where’s she from?”

“She moved here from Korea two years ago.”

“Why?”

Toxic shrugged. “Her mum’s job, I think? Her mum’s some fancy corporate head.”

“Is she rich?”

Toxic’s head snapped up to glare at him. “Don’t you dare,” she growled.

Sin raised his hands in surrender. “Hey,” he defended, “I didn’t say anything.”

Toxic narrowed her eyes and stood, Roach’s shoelace tied. “We’re not ransacking my girlfriend’s house.”

Sin rolled his eyes. “Duh. But if you were to just ask her to help out sometimes, when it gets rough -”

“No,” she snapped.

Sin stared at her. “Why not? You’d take your pride over -”

“Sin, leave it,” Stickler murmured, but Sin ignored him, irritated with Toxic’s selfishness.

“No! Having a rich friend help out, especially during winter, could be the difference between malnourishment or hypothermia and being healthy and warm!”
“She doesn’t know,” Toxic replied sharply, her eyes cast downward. “My… our… situation. She thinks I nicked her stuff for the adrenaline. To be rebellious.”

Sin scoffed. “Is she thick? Look at the state of your clothes!”

Toxic’s eyes burn. “She’s not stupid! Just… sheltered. The concept of poor people isn’t her reality.”

Sin crossed his arms, unimpressed. “Then tell her. If she likes you as much as you seem to like her, then she’ll probably volunteer the money. Maybe give you a couple of expensive jewelry pieces.”

“I can’t.”

“Why the hell not? Do you really value your pride over our family’s survival? If you really like this girl, and she feels the same way about you -”

“Her older brother works for social services, and her best friend’s dad is a copper. If she told either of them, even if she meant well, or if they found out…”

Sin stopped ranting, Stickler looking at him, annoyed. Roach didn’t seem to notice the commotion, too busy tying Stickler’s own shoelaces together. Stickler let him.

Sin sighed. “Sorry. You were just protection us.”

Toxic shot him a sad smile. “Despite what you may believe, Sin, us gingers do have souls.”

“Your jury’s still out on that one,” Stickler called, untying his shoes now that the conflict had been resolved. Roach looked grumpy.

“You were supposed to trip,” he glowered.

Sin chuckled. “You know, Stickler’s got a - pardon my intended pun - stick too far up his arse to chase after you for that. But me…” he smirked and Roach’s eyes grew wide before he scrambled to his feet and decked it across the park. Sin sprinted after him, whooping loudly. He could hear Toxic’s chuckles and Stickler’s offended squawking behind him.

Sin chased him all around the park and through a brambly bush when he heard a soft, “Harry?”

From behind him. He ignored it; Harry was a common name, and it wasn’t his anymore. He stopped beneath a tall tree that Roach had begun to climb.

“You’ll have to come down eventually!” Sin called, grinning. “You can’t stay up there forever.”

“Harry? Harry Potter?”

Sin froze. The frail voice was familiar, and he turned to meet the watery gaze of Mrs. Figg.

“Hey, Mrs. Figg,” he said quietly. There was a long pause, and Sin asked, “How are you?”

“It’s been over a year since I saw you last,” the old woman said, her eyes wide. “The Dursley’s told the school that you’d been transferred, but I didn’t see you around the neighborhood… I half-thought they’d cast you out onto the streets!”

The blood rushed to Sin’s ears and he said carefully, “They transferred me to a boarding school. In… Wales.” He wondered silently how she knew what the Dursleys had told the school, but brushed it off on her being as nosey as the rest of the street.
“But - I didn’t see you all summer! Or last summer!”

Sin shrugged, trying not to panic. They hadn’t planned for this. Sin had been relying on his neighbors’ previous complete indifference to his existence for this to work. “Boot camp,” he said with a nervous laugh. He hoped it would be believable enough; it would certainly explain the slight muscle that had begun to replace his stick-thinness from the Fights.

Mrs. Figg nodded several times. “Of course, of course. They had talked about shipping you off before.” This was news to Sin; they’d talked about sending him away, but it had always been to an orphanage or on the street.

“Si - Harry?” Called Toxic as she approached slowly, clearly reading the situation. That had always been one of Toxic’s talents. Adapting.

Sin almost gagged at the sound of the feeble coward’s name on Toxic’s tongue. It was not a name his family was ever meant to utter.

“Who are your new friends, dear?” Mrs. Figg asked with a kind smile. Sin smiled back, his much more forced.

“This is… Jennie. And Jennie’s little brother, uh - Stephen,” he added, gesturing up the tree to where Roach sat, his head tilted in confusion.

“Harry and I met at boot camp.” Toxic said smoothly, stepping toward him. Sin hated the way she spoke his old name. With such familiarity. Sin knew it was feigned - knew that she was just an incredible liar - but the idea that she knew his weak self disgusted him. “My family came down to Surrey for the holidays - we have a cousin who lives near here - and I asked my mum if I could come visit Harry.”

Mrs. Figg smiled. “Well, I’m glad he’s got such nice friends. I’ll see you around, dear?” She asked Sin. He nodded, and she hobbled out of the park. Sin let out a long breath.

“That was horrible,” he murmured, folding into Toxic’s hug. Stickler hobbled up behind them, as he hadn’t wanted to approach and give Toxic another person to explain away.

“She seemed nice, if a little… nosy,” Stickler said, watching the woman leave. Once she was out of sight, Sin chuckled.

“Yeah, Mrs. Figg was always a bit odd. But whenever I went over she always gave me as much food as I wanted, albeit most of it stale cake.”

Toxic smiled. “Sounds like a good deal.” Sin nodded, and Roach shuffled down the tree. Sin clapped the younger boy on the back, their previous joking squabble forgotten.

“Maybe we ought to get out the public eye? Avoid that happening again?” Spider suggested, and Sin nodded with a sigh. He hated being stuck inside the house, but if too many people started asking questions it could cause them problems.

“I guess.”

“But we just got here,” Roach pouted. Toxic ruffled his hair affectionately, a small smile on her lips.

“I know, bud. But it isn’t safe for Sin here.”

Roach let out a huffy sigh, and rolled his eyes, but nodded. A smile tugged at the corner of Sin’s lip.
“Potter?” Came a thin, reedy voice from behind the four of them. Sin shut his eyes.

“You have got to be joking,” he swore. He was not in the mood to deal with anything else today, and he had a feeling he knew exactly who was behind him. He turned around and his suspicions were confirmed. Piers Polkiss, surrounded by the rest of Dudley’s gang. Dudley himself stood at the back, silent with fear.

“Well, well, well,” Piers said dramatically. “This will be fun. I’ve been itching for a good spot of Harry Hunting - I haven’t seen you in over a year. Dudley, you want the first - Dudley? What’s wrong with you, then? Just grossed out by the sight of your pathetic little cousin?”

While Harry Potter had been frightened by Dudley and his gang, the sight of them didn’t quite freeze Sin with terror like Uncle Vernon did. Sin didn’t even think he was scared of them at all; he reckoned he could take all of them on without magic. And bootcamp would be a good excuse for his newfound ‘self-defense’ skills. He was more resigned than fearful.

“Let’s just go,” Dudley managed to say, his voice squeaking slightly. “He’s not - he’s not worth our time.”

“Come on, Dudley, you haven’t hit anyone in three days! Aren’t you itching for a fight?”

Dudley swallowed and shook his head, and Sin couldn’t help but feel a wiggle of satisfaction in his belly at the obvious fear in Dudley’s eyes. It warmed him, to know that the boy he spent his life running and hiding from was afraid of him.

Malcom, Gordon, and Denace cracked their knuckles in an attempt to be menacing. “Walk away,” Sin advised them, hoping very much that they wouldn’t listen to him.

“Guys, we’re nearly late for supper,” Dudley tried.

“Have you gone soft, mate?” Piers asked in disbelief. “Fine, you can run home to mummy, but the boys and I are going to have a little fun first.” Dudley took one look at Sin and bolted across the park.

“You guys go,” Sin murmured. “I can handle them.”

“I don’t doubt that, but I’m not leaving you alone with them,” replied Toxic. Sin gritted his teeth.

“Fine. Stickler, you take Roach back to the Dursleys’. Toxic and I will meet you there when I’m done here.”

Stickler grunted in agreement and led Roach away, who was grumbling under his breath.

“What, you think you can take us all on, Potty boy?” Piers sneered. Sin shrugged.

“Bootcamp taught me a thing or two,” he answered, unbothered. He was itching for a fight, he had been ever since he’d gone back to the Dursleys.

Piers nodded at the three heavy-set thugs around him, and Gordon lunged clumsily for Sin. The young wizard ducked under the heavy swing before standing straight and letting a cocky smirk play along his lips.

Dennis threw a punch of his own, and Sin sidestepped it. A heat prickled up the back of his spine as he held himself back.
“Coward,” taunted Piers. “What would mummy say if she saw her son being such a pathetic coward, not fighting back? Oh, wait!” He laughed. Sin raised an eyebrow at the jab, but didn’t react. Piers went pink at the silence.

“Well?” He said angrily to Malcom, Dennis, and Gordon. “Stop playing around! Hit him!”

Sin blocked a slow punch from Malcom with a sigh, before ducking underneath a clumsy attack from Gordon. He grinned.

“This is boring,” he said lightly, before launching a lightning-fast attack on Dennis’s ribcage, ducking underneath one awkward swipe and jumping out of the way of another. A high-pitched squeak escaped Dennis and he fell to his knees, hunched over. Sin didn’t pause in his attack before grabbing Malcom’s outthrown fist and twisting it back over his own forearm. There was a resounding crack that ran through the park. Malcom shrieked with pain, and Sin grinned at Gordon and Piers.

“What was that about being a coward?”

“You’re mad,” Piers breathed, backing up. Gordon lumbered at Sin, who rolled his eyes as he spun around the slow muggle, jabbing him in the back of the neck and landing a powerful kick to his backside. Gordon fell to the ground, sprawled in the dirt.

“I’m what?” Sin asked coolly, stepping over a weeping Malcom. Dennis rolled over and started to crawl away, but Sin smashed his foot down on his back, hitting his ribs that were presumably bruised.

“Sin,” cautioned Toxic, “Let’s go.”

Sin ignored her, the rush of finally being able to pay back years of pain too intoxicating. Piers backed up and made to turn and run, but Sin’s hand lashed out and grabbed the muggle boy’s arm. Snapping it straight, he whirled the boy around and pushed his face into the trunk of a nearby tree.

“Do you remember when you told Ms Brons I’d stolen the twenty quid from her desk that you’d nicked? Remember that?” He hissed into the other boy’s ear. “She sent a very angry letter home. Uncle Vernon wasn’t pleased.” Sin remembered that particular beating well.

“Please - it was just a prank -” begged Piers, and Sin shoved him harder into the tree.

“Sin,” Toxic repeated, her tone hard. “We need to go.”

Sin punched Piers in the gut, a glint in his green eyes. “Or when I was walking home from school, and you called Dudley and these goons over when I could have gone in peace? Or when you copied from my desk every day for three years, getting me into trouble for copying off you? Or every time you held my hands behind my back as you let Dudley lay into me?” He dug his elbow into the rat-faced boy’s ribs.

“Assassin!”

“Eight years, I spent in fear of you. Eight years,” Sin spat, before letting go of the grip he had on the muggle boy. Piers wasted no time in booking it for the other side of the park.

Sin could hear Toxic saying something to him, but he wasn’t paying attention. All he could think about was the surging feeling of euphoria inside him as he watched the remaining members of Dudley’s gang crawl away from him. It was just as exhilarating as the first time he had dipped into his magic. He couldn’t help the wide grin on his face.
“Sin,” Toxic said softly, and he turned to face her. “We should go.” He blinked a few times before nodding, trying to convince himself that the flash of fear he’d seen in her eyes was a trick of the light. They spent the walk back to Number Four in silence.

Sin raised his arm to open the door when it swung open, and Roach stood in the doorway with a shit-eating grin on his face, holding up a small envelope of yellowish parchment.

“Guess what came?” Stickler asked from behind the young boy, the dark-skinned boy also smiling.

Chapter End Notes

Shoutout to StasiaRavenclaw, McCready, Monsterrmadcat, Argentiumm, Jane0Doe, Addicted_to_fic, Callmeportgas, VongolaMyst, Pegasister60, 20Zvorak17, QuietRosy, Aslovens, LostInStereo, LilithsChild, Bruciewayneisbatman, Galaxy_Me, JacksNervesOfSteel, Storm_Buji, Winternox13, MarvelaDraven, sevil or sevilemar, NoodleFerrets, TheWeather, and everyone else who answered the survey! Thanks :)
Sin snatched the letter from Stickler’s hands, sucking in a breath. It had all seemed sort of surreal up until now - not that he was a wizard, he was quite comfortable in that department. No, the fact that there was a magical castle that wanted him… it still felt unbelievable.

He nearly tore it open on the doorstep, but then common sense seeped back into his brain. He pulled Toxic inside and shut the door. Dudley and Aunt Petunia were nowhere to be seen, and Uncle Vernon was at work. He sat on the hideous sofa, his chest tight.

This was it. This was proof - written, signed, legal proof - that he was special. That he could learn to do more with his magic than gain an advantage in street fights. If Hogwarts was a school of magic, surely it could teach him how to duplicate food to make it go farther, how to heat up the warehouse, maybe even how to create muggle money. This letter was his family’s ticket out of the uncomfortable life on the streets.

“Stickler,” Sin murmured, “go get the radio upstairs. Tell Shade to come. And -” he paused. Part of him wanted to call Elena too; to show her, to prove to her that he was as special as she said. To see the proud satisfaction in her eyes.

And then once again, common sense knocked him upside the head. “Just run and get it,” he said, and Stickler nodded before racing up the stairs. Sin didn’t take his eyes off of the yellowish parchment, the red wax seal, the green ink of the address.

There was a silence, and then Stickler trampled down the stairs. “She’s on her way,” he said, slightly out of breath - he had clearly rushed. “And she’s bringing Hero. Spider’s gotta take care of the rest of ‘em, but - they’re on their way.” Sin nodded his thanks.

Silence. Then -

“Well? Aren’tcha gonna open it?” Roach asked, bouncing up and down impatiently. His face was red with excitement.

“Should - should I wait? For Shade?” Sin asked hesitantly.

Toxic snorted. “I think if you wait any longer Roach is going to burst. Go ahead, kid.”

“Kid’. You’re only four and a half years older than me,” Sin mumbled under his breath. Toxic rolled her eyes and gestured for him to open it. Sin pushed down the trepidation and carefully slid his finger under the folded side of the envelope, pushing off the wax seal. He pulled out two pieces of parchment, and unfolded the first one. He read it aloud, knowing the others would demand to know its contents.

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HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore

(Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf, Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. Of Wizards)

Dear Mr Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.

Yours sincerely,
Sin scanned the letter again, silently. It was rather less… spectacular, frankly, than he was expecting. Although the headmaster did seem to hold a great many titles, and of those he only understood the significance of Chief Warlock. He blinked. The school headmaster was the head of the justice system? Interesting. He wondered how on earth the man was qualified if he was only an educator - but then, he supposed, any man who could obtain so many titles was surely worthy.

He shook his head and dismissed the idea as Roach butted in, “What does it mean, they ‘await your owl’?” He asked, tilting his head, his black curls falling into his face. His dark fingers brushed his hair away, but it merely fell back into place.

“Shade said the wizarding world uses owls to carry post,” Sin said absentmindedly, pulling the second piece of parchment from the envelope. This one was rather longer.

**HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY**

**Uniform**

First-year students will require:

- Three sets of plain black work robes (black)
- One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear
- One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)
- One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)

Please note that all pupils’ clothes should carry name tags

**Set Books**

All students should have a copy of each of the following:

The Standard Book of Spells (Grade 1) by Miranda Goshawk

A History of Magic by Bathilda Bagshot

Magical Theory by Adalbert Waffling

A Beginners’ Guide to Transfiguration by Emeric Switch
Other Equipment

1 wand
1 cauldron (pewter, standard size 2)
1 set glass or crystal phials
1 telescope
1 set brass scales

Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad

PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST-YEARS ARE NOT ALLOWED THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS

Stickler swore softly, and Sin raised his eyebrows; Stickler usually never used language like that. In fact, he was the most proper and eloquent - Spider would call him pretentious - of the family. “What is it?” He asked.

“Where the hell are we supposed to find the money for all of that? Even if we raided the birthday fund, we’d probably still be short.”

Sin tilted his head. “Didn’t Shade tell you?” He grinned. “Some elitist bullshit means in the wizarding world, I’m loaded.”

Stickler flicked him on the shoulder.

“Oi! What gives?”

“You never thought to mention that? To perhaps exchange it for muggle money? Bring it home?” Stickler asked, accusation written on his face.

“You got on my arse about Min-ji! Hypocrite!” Toxic added, although her tone was far more teasing than Stickler’s.

Sin raised his hands in surrender. “Hey, man, I wanted to! My magical guardian restricted muggle conversion, and I can’t exactly go out into the muggle world and try to buy things with wizard money. The attention we would draw -”
“Would be bad, yes,” Stickler interrupted impatiently, “But presumably you can buy things in that magical alley? I assume they sell food, blankets, clothes, etcetera there?”

Sin opened his mouth to argue - and blinked. “Huh,” he said, feeling a little too much like Dudley for his liking. “I, uh… huh. That would be smart.”

Stickler sighed. “Well when you go to buy your school supplies, pick up some stuff for the rest of us, yeah?” Sin nodded, feeling incredibly guilty. He had fortunes about fortunes tucked away in a vault beneath the ground, and he hadn’t spared a thought after learning it couldn’t be converted.

Roach snatched the supply list out of his hand. It took him a little while to struggle through, and several of the words he had to sound out, but when he got to the end of the uniform list he snorted. “You’re gonna look like such a wanker,” he laughed. Sin rolled his eyes and plucked the list from Roach’s hands.

There was a ring of the doorbell, and Sin went to open it, a grin on his face. He was excited to show Shade the letter - but it wasn’t Shade at the door.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were disappointed it was me,” Elena drawled, stepping over the threshold of Number Four. Sin stepped to the side, his excited expression slipping into his best attempt at an emotionless mask.

Roach narrowed his eyes at her. “Who are you?” He asked rudely, crossing his arms. Stickler took a subtle step in front of Roach, and Elena laughed, the noise serrating down Assassin’s spine.

“My name is Elena,” she replied with a thin smile. She turned to Sin, her eyes catching on the parchment in his hands.

“How did you know to come?” He asked, but she merely raised an eyebrow at him. He sighed. “Why do you think the letter came so early? I mean, I know it was this week, but -”

“They tend to do muggle borns first, to give more time for it to sink in, and because if they don’t get an answer in three days they have time to send a second letter - along with a teacher and explanation - and still be on schedule.”

Sin’s forehead creased. “I’m not a muggleborn.”

“You might as well be,” Elena said. “As far as they know, you’ve never been exposed to the magical world.”

“Then how am I supposed to explain how I know how to reply, and to go to Diagon Alley?” He asked.

“If they ask, you can say when Petunia saw the letter she told you everything, thought it would get rid of you. They probably won’t ask, though. Won’t want to admit that they placed the Boy-Who-Lived in a place where he would be cut off from his whole world and potentially abused.”

She held her hand out, and he rolled his eyes, handing her the letter and the list of supplies. She scanned it quickly before handing it back and nodding.

“We can go to Diagon Alley this afternoon, rent an owl from the post office and send your reply as we buy the supplies. I also have a few extra things I think you ought to buy, which is why I’ll come along.”

“You don’t have an owl I can use?”
Elena cocked her head slightly. “I do. However, I think it best that you don’t send any mail using my owl; it wouldn’t do for anyone to notice that you were using mine. I don’t think anyone would, but there’s no use taking unnecessary chances.” Sin nodded, and the doorbell rang for a second time. Stickler opened it, and Shade and Hero barrelled inside. Hero reached him first, scooping him up in a gentle hug.

“I missed you, kid,” she murmured, and planted a kiss on his forehead. Sin smiled at her as she drew away, but his smile slipped when he saw the fading bruises on her cheek. She noticed his stare and waved a hand. “I’m fine,” she breezed, “it doesn’t hurt anymore.”

“I - I should have -”

“There was nothing you could have done,” Hero finished for him. Sin offered her a small, apologetic smile. She returned with one of her own before rising and turning to Elena, fixing her with a searching stare. It was clear Shade had told her who she was.

“What are you doing here?” She asked acidly. Elena merely smiled.

“Assassin and I have a mutual agreement. I’m going to go with him to get his school supplies.”

“Like hell,” Shade cut in, a hand resting on Roach’s shoulder. “I’m taking him.”

Elena raised an eyebrow. “There’s no reason we can’t both go. Besides, I need to take Sin to obtain some… extra purchases.”

“Aren’t you afraid someone will recognize you? Report you to the ministry?” Shade asked, crossing her arms. Elena laughed, and again Sin had to force himself not to cringe. He could see Shade’s fingers clench into fists at the sound, and Toxic and Stickler twitched. Roach, surprisingly, seemed the calmest of the five children. Although perhaps it was because he didn’t quite understand what Elena was, or how dangerous she was.

“I wouldn’t worry about it. Nobody remembers what the Van Rau girl looked like, and nobody’s looking for me. The only people that would recognize me already know I’m alive, and certainly won’t turn me over. Besides, I’ll be using a glamour anyway.”

Shade glared at her. “I don’t want you there.”

Elena’s smile widened. “Darling,” she said with sickening sweetness, “You don’t have a choice.” The temperature of the room seemed to drop several degrees. Elena’s body was perfectly still, and Shade dropped her gaze.

“Excellent. Shall we start on our way, then?”

They entered through the Leaky Cauldron this time. At first Sin was rather taken aback by the shabbiness of the place, but then decided he thought it added to the friendly atmosphere. His eyes kept flicking up to glance at Elena, her glamourous form rather disconcerting. Her usually jet-black hair was now a light brown, and her skin and eyes had been enchanted. Instead of her usual alabaster, her skin was pink and lively, and her eyes were no longer black and dead but brown and warm. Somehow, it set him even more on edge now that she looked human.

Shade kept shifting, playing with the ends of her sleeves absentmindedly. Sin wondered if this was
the first time she had been in a magical community since she had been cast out for being a squib.

“Gringotts first,” Shade said as they stepped out into a stone courtyard. Elena stepped forward and tapped five bricks, seemingly at random. There was a pause, before the bricks started to peel away. Sin’s eyes widened in amazement as a loud, bustling alleyway was revealed. Compared to Knockturn Alley, this place was absolutely mobbed.

Elena shook her head. “I have money on me. I’ll pay.”

“No,” Shade said flatly. “We aren’t going to owe you anything.”

“Shade,” Sin murmured quietly, “It’s fine. I’m technically her heir. It’s her duty to pay for me. We won’t owe her.”

Shade swung around to glare at him, but he ignored her and asked Elena, “Will you pay for some other things I want? Because if not, we need to go to Gringotts regardless.”

The corner of Elena’s now pink lips drifted up. “Of course. You are my heir, after all.”

With less resistance from Shade than expected, they made their way to the post office. They rented a small owl for the flight, and Sin penned a short letter right there.

_Deputy Headmistress McGonagall,

I am pleased to say I will be accepting my place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I look forward to seeing you on September the 1st.

Sincerely,

It took him a moment of grinding teeth to dredge up the courage to sign his birth name on the piece of parchment.

_Sincerely, Harry Potter_

After that, they arrived at a small well-kept shop with a sign hanging in the front labeled ‘Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions’.

“I’m going to pop over to Knockturn to get a few things while I’m here,” Elena said quietly before they entered. “I’ll meet you two at Flourish and Blotts once you have all the things on your list.” She pulled a small purse from her bag and handed it to him. “Undetectable extension charm, you’ll have plenty enough for everything on the list. And a bit more besides.” Sin nodded, and she started off along the alley.

A bell tinkled as Shade opened the door and held it for Sin. Madam Malkin - a squat, jolly witch - smiled at them. “Hello, dear. Hogwarts, I assume?” She asked, and Sin nodded. She smiled and led him to the back of the shop. Shade waited in the front.
There was one other boy in the back, standing on a footstool while a second witch seemed to be fitting his robes. “Hop on up there, dear,” Madam Malkin gestured to a second stool. Sin did so and the witch pulled a black robe over his head and began to pin it to the correct length.

The boy, who had pale blond hair and a rather pointed face, greeted him. “Well met,” he said.

“Well met,” Sin replied, a little nervously. It was his first solo interaction with someone from his world that wasn’t Elena or Shade, and he couldn’t afford to screw it up.

“Hogwarts too?” The boy asked. Sin nodded in confirmation, and the boy continued, “My father’s next door buying my books and mother’s up the street looking at wands. Then I’m going to drag them off to look at racing brooms. I don’t see why first-years can’t have their own. I think I’ll bully father into getting me one and I’ll smuggle it in somehow.”

Sin blinked, and was strongly reminded of his cousin. He didn’t think he liked the boy very much.

“Have you got your own broom?” The boy went on.

“No,” said Sin. Shade had told him a little about broomsticks, and that there was a sport played on them - Quidditch or something similar - but he hoped the boy didn’t ask any difficult questions.

“Play Quidditch at all?”

Quidditch. That was it. “Not really, no.”

“I do - Father says it’s a crime if I’m not picked up to play for my house, and I must say, I agree. Know what house you’ll be in yet?”

Sin was now quite sure he didn’t like the boy. However, this was no time to make enemies, so he said, “I’m not sure. I reckon I could be in any of them.”

“Well, no one really knows until they get there, do they, but I know I’ll be in Slytherin, all our family have been - imagine being in Hufflepuff, I think I’d leave, wouldn’t you?”

“I mean, I don’t think there’s anything wrong with valuing hard work and loyalty above other attributes,” Sin said cautiously, “But I could understand why you would think Slytherin would be more… beneficial.”

“Mm, I suppose. What’s your surname, anyway?” He asked. Sin momentarily panicked - he still had talked to Elena about which House to go by - when he was saved by Madam Malkin’s interruption.

“That’s you done, dear,” she said, and Sin smiled gratefully. He hopped down from the stool and followed her to the front of the shop, where Shade was waiting with the back to pay. He smiled at her and she grinned. Madam Malkin wrapped up three sets of robes and the rest of the mandatory uniform and Shade paid her.

“Next we ought to get you a cauldron phials and scales, they’ll all be in Potage’s,” Shade said, and Sin nodded. They quickly bought all three, and found an excellent telescope in Wiseacre’s Wizarding Equipment.

Finally, they approached Ollivander’s. Sin couldn’t deny the excitement growing in his belly. The wandless magic he could do was powerful, but having a tool to hone and sharpen his skills… he couldn’t deny the appeal.

The shop was rather small and dusty. Sin didn’t know what he had been expecting - perhaps
polished pedestals with intricate wooden wands - but rows of dusty boxes behind a cluttered counter with a single spindly chair in the front was not it. Shade sat down on the chair as a soft voice said, “Good afternoon.” Sin jumped.

An old man with milky eyes and white, frizzy hair stood before them.

“Hello,” Sin said after a pause.

The old man - Mr Ollivander, Sin presumed - stared at him and said, “Harry Potter. I thought I’d be seeing you soon.” Sin bit his tongue at his old name, but he supposed he would have to get used to it. “You have your mother’s eyes. It seems only yesterday she was in here herself, buying her first wand. Ten and a quarter inches long, swishy, made of willow. Nice wand for charm work.”

Sin shivered under the old man’s scrutiny. “Your father, on the other hand, favoured a mahogany wand. Eleven inches. Pliable. A little more power and excellent for transfiguration. Well, I say your father favoured it - it’s really the wand that chooses the wizard, of course.”

Sin took a step back, the old man getting too close for comfort. He disliked anyone in his personal space, especially people he didn’t know. Especially people who were this creepy.

“And that’s where…” Ollivander reached out a finger to brush Sin’s forehead, but he ducked backwards. “I’m sorry to say I sold the wand that did it,” he said softly “Thirteen and half inches. Yew. Powerful wand, very powerful, and in the wrong hands… Well, if I’d known what that wand was going out into the world to do…” He shook his head. Sin cleared his throat.

“Right, yes. Let me see.” He pulled a long tape measure from his pocket and asked, “which is your wand arm?”

“Uh - I’m right-handed.”

“Hold out your arm,” Ollivander ordered, and the tape measure began to measure Sin by itself. Sin watched it measure his height, wrist to elbow, and ankle to waist as Ollivander said, “Every Ollivander wand has a core of a powerful magical substance, Mr Potter. We use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, dragons or phoenixes are quite the same. And of course, you will never get such good results with another wizard’s wand.”

Sin nodded as Ollivander began searching the dusty shelves full of boxes. He pulled several down, seemingly at random, before setting them down on the counter. “Right then. Try this one. Beechwood and dragon heartstring. Nine inches. Nice and flexible. Just take it and give it a wave.”

Sin took the wand and waved it around, his face heating. He could hear Shade snicker behind him, but he ignored her. Mr Ollivander snatched it from him and handed a second, shorter wand, with a more intricate design on the handle. “Maple and phoenix feather. Seven inches. Quite whippy. Try -” Ollivander didn’t even finish the sentence before snatching the wand from Sin’s hand. “No, no - here, ebony and unicorn hair, eight and a half inches, springy. Go on, go on, try it out.”

Sin tried. He really did. Once, he felt a little spark - Cedar, phoenix tail feather, ten and a half inches, supple. Nonetheless, Ollivander snatched that one from him just as he did all the others.

“Tricky customer, eh? Not to worry. Hm, why not… try this one. Holly and phoenix feather, eleven inches, nice and supple.” Sin took the wand and immediately felt the warmth in his fingers at the touch. He waved the wand, and gold sparks spouted from the end. He smiled; it was like a watered down, calmer version of the euphoria he felt when using wandless magic. Not intoxicating, but…
pleasant. Calm.

“How curious… how very curious…”

Sin raised an eyebrow. “What’s curious?”

“I remember every wand I’ve ever sold, Mr Potter. Every single wand. It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather - just one other. It is curious indeed that you should be destined for this wand when its brother - why, its brother gave you that scar. Yes, thirteen and half inches. Yew. Curious indeed how these things happen. The wand chooses the wizard, remember… I think we must expect great things from you, Mr Potter. After all, He Who Must Not Be Named did great things - terrible, yes, but great.”

Each time Ollivander said Potter, Sin flinched a little less. Despite the older man’s laborious explanation, he respected the man for recognizing his enemy’s greatness. He didn’t like the implications that he was intertwined with the man who murdered his parents, but he shrugged it off as Shade paid seven Galleons for the wand.

“How for the books,” Shade said, placing a gentle arm around Sin’s shoulder.

“Let’s hurry up,” he mumbled, “Elena isn’t pleasant when she’s kept waiting.”

Shade nodded, and entered a shop where books were piled to the ceiling. They bought all of his school books first, and when they didn’t see Elena, Shade let him buy two extras that caught his interest - one titled *An Introduction to the Wizarding World* and the other *Self Defense and Sport: A Beginner’s Basic Guide to Dueling*.

As they finished the purchase, a smooth voice called out, “Harry. Lovely.”

Sin whirled around to face Elena. “Don’t call me that,” he hissed under his breath.

“You’re going to have to get used to it. Once you go back to Hogwarts, that will be your name. You can’t flinch every time you hear it. People will talk.”

Sin, feeling childish, stuck his tongue out at her. She looked at him, and he sighed. “Fine. I guess. Whatever.” It didn’t sit well with him, that realization.

“Good. Now, follow me.” She turned and made to leave, when Shade stepped in her way. Once more, Sin was left speechless and his sister’s courage.

“Where are we going?” She asked, crossing her arms. Elena stepped around her elegantly. “To Wiseacre’s.”

With a sigh, Sin and Shade followed the vampiress to the equipment shop, where Elena bought him a trunk with an undetectable extension charm. Then she took him to a small yet less cluttered bookshop and filled his trunk with several books she barely showed him the names of before tossing them in. Finally she took them to the Apothecary.

“The school-supplied ingredients are subpar. The ingredients here are much better quality, and will hail you better results.” She ordered Sin a Basic Ingredients Kit, as well as a few others. These she also added to his trunk.

As they left, she said, “That’ll be all for now. Sin, I expect to see you at the entrance to the Fights tonight.” With that, she disappeared into the throng of bustling witches and wizards.
“That was it?” Shade asked suspiciously. Sin shrugged.

“How much money is left in that bag?” He asked, a grin beginning to spread across his features now that he could relax.

Shade smirked at him. “Twenty or so galleons.”

“Well, Elena didn’t seem particularly bothered about whether or not she gets it back.”

“No, she didn’t,” Shade agreed.

By the time they left Diagon Alley, accompanied by eleven thick fluffy blankets, eight large and two small warm woolen cloaks, a large basket crammed full of takeaway, and three young storybooks, the sun had started to set. Sin had to admit he was grateful Elena had taken him to get the expanded trunk, otherwise they’d never be able to carry everything home.

On the way back, Shade said quietly, “I don’t think you should go tonight.”

Sin made a noncommittal noise that they both knew meant he was going.

“She can’t - she can’t just summon you like a dog .” They both knew she could. “You don’t have to do what she says.” Yes he did. “I’m not - I’m not going to stop you from going,” she said desperately, “But… please, Sin. Don’t go. Stay home. Read to Light. Tease Toxic about her girlfriend. Watch Wheels get used to his new prosthetic. Just - don’t go. She might want to take you to the magical fights, and look what happened last time!”

“Elena has it under control,” Sin replied just as quietly. “It was self-defense, so Mr Noir nor anyone else has any grounds to retaliate. And even if someone attacks… you should have seen her, Shade. She was unbelievable. She killed all four of them in the time it took the first one to hit the ground. She wouldn’t let anything happen to me. I’m too valuable.” There was a bitter tang in his mouth as he spoke the words.

Shade’s’ face was pinched as they arrived back at the warehouse. “She is not someone you want to trust, Sin.”

“I don’t trust her, per say. I trust that she values her investments.”

Shade sighed, and left to hand out the blankets and cloaks. She started to give out the takeaway as well as Light barrelled into Sin’s side.

“I missed ya! I didn’t like it when you were gone. Roach was annoying, and Spider was grumpy.” Sin chuckled, and ruffled the six-year-old’s hair.

“Sin! Excellent! Watch this!” Wheels called, and he pulled himself to a stand. On his left arm, which ended in a pink stump at the elbow, had a metal piece strapped to it, with three hooked claws at the end. “When I flex my arm,” the older boy said, and did so, “this happens!” The three claws closed. Wheels loosened his muscle and the claws relaxed.

Sin raised his eyebrows, impressed. “Wow, that’s incredible,” he said truthfully.

“Why thanks, mate,” came Sparky’s rough voice from behind him. Sin grinned as Sparky clapped him on the shoulder. She had a bright blue bandana tying her stringy blonde hair back, and a lopsided grin on her face. “I worked hard on i’. Been a bi’ boring without’ you, bu’ i’ mean’ I worked on tha’ beau’y harder.”
Sin laughed, hugged her, and fell back in with his family.

Sin yawned and kissed Roach’s sleeping form on the forehead before wandering over to wear Hero, Spider, and Shade sat at the low, wonky table. “I’m going to go,” he said, “she’ll be waiting for me.”

Shade bit her lip. “I still - I still don’t think you should go.”

“I know. But I don’t really have a choice. I want her to think I’m cooperating.” He didn’t want her to think anything. He was cooperating. “I have to go.”

Shade swallowed, before narrowing her eyes and standing up. “Fine. Then Hero and I are coming with you.”

Hero raised her eyebrows but stood. Sin refrained from rolling his eyes; he knew she was just trying to protect him. However, he did feel it was unnecessary. Elena wouldn’t hurt him, and he could take care of himself.


He lead a grim Shade and a quiet Hero to the entrance of the Fights, where Elena was waiting.

“T ook you long enough. You brought company?” She asked sharply. Sin nodded and didn’t bother to elaborate.

“It will be more dangerous for them. The people that hang around the fights in Knockturn are not the sort of people to overlook muggles or squibs in their presence.”

Shade crossed her arms, and Hero remained still. “We’re still coming. We’re wearing cloaks we bought there, so they shouldn’t realise we’re muggles.” Sin noticed she counted herself as a muggle, not a squib.

Elena raised a brow. “You think they won’t smell it on you? It isn’t just your clothes.”

Shade didn’t flinch. “We’re coming,” she said flatly.

“Shade, maybe you shouldn’t come,” Sin murmured. “It’s more dangerous for you -”

Shade fixed him with a stare, and he shut his mouth.

Elena sighed. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

They entered through the Night Prowler. Mr Avery and Elena exchanged greetings, but when the man raised his eyebrows at Sin, Hero, and Shade, Elena merely stared at him, and he quickly dropped his gaze and bowed them through the door into Knockturn.

They walked in silence, and Sin couldn’t bare it. He cast his mind around for something to say - anything, really - until he came upon something he’d been meaning to ask Elena for a while. “Elena?”

“Mm?”

“Can you do magic? As a vampire that used to be a witch?”
Elena paused slightly before continuing down the alley. “Not with a wand, no. And not your type of wandless magic. But… some remnants remain. For example, mind magic. Legilimency and occlumency. And I can still brew potions, and use certain runes that require a magical energy or magical force. But I can’t perform spells, or cast curses, or anything like that.”

“Do you miss it?”

Elena stopped in her tracks, and turned to Sin. Her eyes were usually empty - and while her gaze was unreadable, he could clearly see emotions roiling behind them, and as she stared at him, he nearly flinched away. When she opened her mouth, she said with more heartbreaking feeling he had ever witnessed from her, “Yes. More than you could ever know.”

Sin couldn’t bare to keep looking into her eyes, so he turned his towards the cobbled stones. After a beat of silence, they continued to the warehouse where he had fought the Runespoor. He made no more attempts to spark conversation, and Shade and Hero remained silent.

The warehouse was boistering with loud cheers as they entered. Hero and Shade had pulled down the cowl of their cloaks to hide their faces. Elena pushed through the crowd, the three street children close behind her. When they got to the edge of the pit, they saw a two vampires locked in a blur of movement. Their battle was too fast for Sin to tell what was happening, or who was winning, but eventually they slowed, until he could see a body with dark grey skin collapse to the floor, a pale woman with brilliant red hair standing above him, one foot on his throat. There was a small smirk on her face.

“Victory to Anneith,” came the horrible, satiny voice from Assassin’s nightmares. Sin lifted his gaze from the winner - Anneith - and fixed his eyes on the veiled face of Mr Noir. The crowd roared louder, and Sin could hear the chink of coins as money changed hands. Sin and Elena didn’t seem to escape Mr Noir’s notice, and he lifted his sickly gaze to meet Elena’s. “Well, well, well. If it isn’t Lady Van Rau and her pet Parselmouth. I didn’t think I’d be seeing you two again.”

“What, you hoped Bedici finished us off?” Elena replied, raising an eyebrow. Mr Noir let out a laugh like cough syrup at her inquiry.

“Oh, Elena dear, of course not. Bedici and his friends could never match you. Besides, I enjoy having you around. You’re so fun to play with.”

Shade slipped her fingers into Sin’s and squeezed his hand in support, and Sin could see Hero subtly shift into a fighter’s stance out of the corner of his eye. Elena tilted her head. “And I do so enjoy playing these games of ours.” Mr Noir’s thin lips stretched into a wide smile that had Shade twitching, and made Sin want to run for the hills. He turned to Sin then, and Sin closed his eyes for a moment and breathed in. When he opened them again, he refused to make eye contact.

“Well, let’s see how your little pet does when he can’t use his special trick.” Anneith grabbed the prone form of the other vampire and, with inhuman strength, threw him out of the pit. One of Mr Noir’s lackeys caught the body and disappeared into the crowd with it. Sin hoped the vampire was just unconscious.

“Anneith, how would you like another opponent?” Mr Noir proposed, and Anneith grinned, revealing her pointed fangs.

“I would pity the poor boy, but passing up the chance to face a Parselmouth is too big to resist,” she replied, and her voice was surprisingly human for a vampire. One glance at her fangs, however, ruined the facade.

“You don’t have to do this,” Shade murmured as quietly as she could. “We can still go back.” When
Sin didn’t reply, she tugged on him. “Sin, we can leave. We should go. Please - leave Elena to deal with Mr Noir - we have to go. Anneith’s aura - usually vampires don’t have one. Or at least I can’t see it. I think it’s because they’re dead. But - she must be fairly new, because she has one - and it’s just rage, Sin. Hate. She’ll kill you. Please -” Shade’s tone had turned desperate. She was begging him, and Sin turned to reply, but one of Mr Noir’s lackey’s had already made his way to them, and shoved him into the pit.

He fell to his feet off-balance, and Anneith bared her fangs. He glanced up, and Elena hadn’t taken her eyes off of Mr Noir. Obviously she saw him as the true threat. Shade, however, looked moments away from jumping into the pit after him. Hero gave him a gentle nod, and he knew she was wishing him luck. She wasn’t the type to let herself believe the worst, in case it came true.

“Well whenever you’re ready,” Mr Noir called out. Sin didn’t have a moment to think before he felt a searing pain in his chest, and he was lying on his back.

“Too slow, Slithertongue,” Anneith crowed. Sin raised his hand to blow her back with a burst of magic, but before he could call upon the power in the back of his mind, she threw him against the wall of the pit. “Pathetic,” she spat, as Sin gingerly touched his bruised cheek.

He didn’t wait this time, and delved into the magic. The euphoric feeling filled him, and he spun, thinking of the cold. He saw a blur of movement as Anneith ran at him again, but she cried out and jumped back when several large shards of ice pierced her shoulders and arms. “Mordred!” She cried out. A hush fell over the crowd, and Sin realised they’d only ever seen him speak Parseltongue. They didn’t know about his wandless magic.

Anneith grit her teeth, and rushed at him. Sin threw out his hand and a pointed icicle flew at her - but she snatched it out of the air and threw it back at him. It lodged itself in his right bicep and he cried out.

He heard Shade shriek behind him, and a scuffle, but he couldn’t afford to lose focus. As Anneith ran at him again, he threw his arms out with everything he had, and Anneith’s body lifted from the ground before slamming into the wall of the pit. She collapsed, and didn’t attempt to rise.

“Victory to the Parselmouth!” Mr Noir cried, and Sin gasped as the pain in his arm suddenly sunk in. Toxic’s first-aid lectures in mind, he didn’t attempt to pull out the icicle. He turned to Elena to ask for help when his eyes narrowed and his blood went cold. The vampire that had pushed him into the pit had Shade trapped in his arms.

“There are two rules in this game,” Mr Noir said icily. “Rule one? No snitching to the ministry. Rule two? You don’t interfere. This one,” he pointed at Shade with one thin finger, “Tried to jump into the pit when the Parselmouth was in trouble.”

Elena stepped forward. “Now, Mr Noir, I’m sure that wasn’t quite her intention. We can come to an agreement that… resolves this issue, hm?” Sin’s heart was thundering in his chest, and all of a sudden he was eight years old again, frozen in place. He couldn’t even lift a hand, and inside he was screaming at himself - to move, to do something - but he just stood there.

Mr Noir smirked wickedly. “Oh, no, Elena dear. This one,” he nodded at Shade, “Broke one of the rules. And what happens to those who break the rules?” He asked loudly, and the crowd yelled out something indistinguishable. “That’s right. They’re fair game.”

The vampire holding Shade grinned, extending his fangs.

And then it ripped out her throat.
... so. I hope you liked it. And uh. Please don't hate me?

Please leave a comment and tell me what you thought!
In the aftermath of the tragedy, Assassin is trapped by his grief. He crosses a line that can't be uncrossed.

LAST TIME:

Assassin bought his school supplies and Hero and Shade tagged along to a fight in Knockturn. Shade angered the vampires, and was the first victim in a war.

If I'm being honest, I'm not happy with this chapter at all. It's far sloppier than I would have liked. However, it's been so long that I felt I needed to give you guys a chapter, and if I delayed any longer it could have been another month. I'm sorry updates are coming so slowly, but my increased workload and declining mental health aren't really great conditions for fic writing.

At first there was only the cold. The bone-chilling iciness.

Then there was pain. The frigid air nipped at him, biting and stinging his skin.

Then came the pounding headache, as if someone was hammering on his skull from the inside. The air was unscented and uncomfortable, and there was a deafening silence that gripped his head like a vice. He fought to open his eyes, crystals of snow melting onto his black lashes. He couldn’t remember his name.

As he finally managed to pry his eyelids open, he thought for a moment that he might have gone blind. Or perhaps he had always been blind, he couldn’t remember.

There was only a never-ending expanse of white towards the horizon. He turned around, and still there was nothing. Only the blankness.

Then he blinked, and he realized the white was ice and snow. Icicles clung to his hair and the corners of his mouth; he quickly wiped them away, shivering. He had never been this cold before - or maybe he had. Maybe he had grown accustomed to the glacial temperature. But it seemed impossible that anyone could ever grow used to this.

He took a step forward, the snow crunching beneath his boot, the sound throwing him off-kilter after the suffocating silence. Suddenly he felt a different type of cold wash over him. Before, the chill had seeped into his bones from the outside - but this was different. This was a cold coming from within.
A shadow flickered on the snow before him, but it was gone as quickly as it had appeared. Perhaps he had imagined it.

The cold from within strengthened, and he fell to his knees. It pulled at his chest, and he could barely breathe. His fingers pulled at his skin, and the pain slowly receded. He could breathe again. However, a sinking, black coldness remained, as if something awful had happened but he couldn’t quite remember what.

The shadow flickered again, and a gust of wind blew past his ear. His headache worsened and then dulled as the shadow once again vanished.

He pushed himself back to his feet. The tips of his fingers had started to go numb, and he rubbed his hands together. He tried to remember something - anything - but he couldn’t. He could feel his identity at the back of his mind, but the closer he got, the farther away it slipped.

He turned in a slow circle, surveying the seemingly endless landscape of snow and ice, when he caught sight of what looked like a trail of black smoke from the horizon. He blinked, and when he was sure it wasn’t like the shadow, flickering in and out of existence, he stumbled towards it, his legs week.

It could have been hours or it could have been minutes later, but as he got closer, and the smoke became clearer, his forehead began to sting. The smoke was thick and jet-black, almost too solid to be smoke. He narrowed his eyes, his forehead stinging more and more the closer he got, adding to his already only just bearable headache. He brushed his fingers against his forehead and remembered the jagged scar carved into the skin there.

For a moment, he wondered how he had gotten it - and then the shadow reappeared. This time it didn’t vanish immediately, and he looked closer - it was in the shape of a person. He tried to make out who it was, when a second gust of wind blew into him, nearly strong enough to knock him off of his feet. He could hear a murmur on the wind, as if it was speaking to him, and he strained his ears - but it faded away. He had a strange assumption he couldn’t explain that the wind had just whispered his name, but he still couldn’t remember it.

He turned back to the smoke, trying to get closer. The smoke was far too thick than it should be, he thought, and it looked like large black drapes hiding some strange evil. He was close enough to smell the foul, sickly odor emanating from the smoke when the pain in his forehead became too much, and he cried out, clutching his head. He turned away, and the pain lessened slightly.

The shadow was back, but it was no longer a shadow. It was a tall young woman, looking barely of age. Her skin was pale enough to match the color of the icy ground that stretched around her, and her inky black hair and dark red lips stood in stark contrast to her white skin and the alabaster snow.

As he stared at her, the skin on the back of his neck rose. Her features were too perfect, and a voiceless thought screamed silently at him to flee. His legs were frozen in place as he stared at her. She opened her mouth and spoke, but nothing came out. An expression of worry and fear, so out of place on her perfect face, lined her features.

And then she was gone. The stinging in his scar had vanished, but the pounding at the back of his skull was back with a vengeance. He swore loudly, ducking his head and gripping fistfuls of his hair.

The wind blew harder, knocking him to the ground and whispering into his ears.

*Wake up,* they murmured. *Wake up, Harry.*
Was that his name? Harry? He couldn’t escape a shiver of revulsion, although if someone had asked him why the word disgusted him he would not have been able to explain it. He supposed it must be his name, if it was the only one he could hear, but it just didn’t seem like it fit.

The headache didn’t relax, and he gritted his teeth as he was buffeted by another blast of wind.

_Hadrian, you need to wake up._

Perhaps his name was Hadrian, then. He found he much preferred Hadrian to Harry; it didn’t make his body convulse, but it also didn’t seem as though it fit. He shrugged; perhaps names weren’t meant to feel right. They just were.

The wind grew stronger, and he grew colder, his fingers digging into the snow. The weight in his chest became heavier, as did the headache. The eerie woman flickered back into existence.

“Hadrian, you need to wake up,” she said, her voice somehow managing to be velvety smooth while still conveying worry. “Snap out of it.”

“I - I don’t understand,” he rasped. His voice sounded like grinding rocks compared to hers.

“You’re going to kill yourself, and Hero and I, if you keep channeling your magic inwards,” she said. He flinched, and the painful hurt in his chest strengthened.

“I - please - I don’t know what to do,” he begged.

The woman held out her arm. “Wake up, Assassin,” she breathed. At the name, it felt like all the puzzle pieces inside of him were finally set into place. The cold no longer seemed to affect him; he grabbed her hand and the icy wasteland vanished.

As Shade’s body fell from the vampire’s arms, Elena felt the room drop several degrees. She caught the gaze of the vampire and he glared back. Hero let out a piercing shriek, and Elena grabbed her wrist before she could run at Shade’s attacker.

“That was an act of war,” she hissed. If her heart were able to beat it would have stopped as she thought of Hadrian, and turned to look into the pit. She had prepared to see anguish, hate, grief, insurmountable sadness - but instead there was nothing. He had fallen to his knees and his eyes were glazed over. She could see his fingers turning blue, and he was clearly shivering.

By the time she had taken all of this in, nearly everyone had vacated the premises. Only Noir and four of his thugs, the one who had killed Shade included, remained. Hero was fighting her grip, still screaming Shade’s name.

“She broke a rule, Elena,” Noir said with faux regret. “I’m terribly sorry, but -”

Before he could finish the sentence, Elena attacked. She tossed Hero into the pit out of the way and grabbed the vampire closest to her and ripped his head off, throwing it at the tallest of Noir’s goons. He ducked out of instinct and she used the time he was off-guard to knock him onto his knees and tear out his throat. She ducked underneath the swing of another vampire and kicked him hard in the groin, sending him flying backwards. Noir hit her in the chest too fast for her to react and she was flung backwards into the fighting pit with Sin and Hero. She growled and leapt out of the pit and latched onto the vampire that had killed the girl. She didn’t kill him - she wanted to give Hadrian the
opportunity - but she slammed his head against the ground twice as hard as she could, and though he was a vampire and had considerable endurance, her strength matched it, and he fell unconscious. She leapt onto the fourth vampire who had recovered from her kick and snapped his arm backwards, tearing it off. He howled in pain and she easily dodged a clumsy swing at her throat from his remaining arm. Her fingers dug into his bag and she ripped his spine from his body. His corpse collapsed at the muggle girl’s terrified feet and Noir was gone. He was smart.

Hero struggled out of the pit and barely spared Elena a glance before collapsing down beside Shade’s body. She rolled Shade onto her back, her mouth moving but no words coming out.

Elena stared at them, shoving down the twinge of guilt that squirmed within her. She had no connection with Shade, and she wouldn’t have cared, but she knew how close Hadrian was to her. It wouldn’t due to lose the little trust Hadrian had in her, but she wouldn’t lose herself in a show of compassion.

Elena leapt down into the pit, taking Hadrian’s hands in her own. She shook him gently. “Hadrian,” she hissed. He didn’t even blink. He had gone into shock. Elena knew some felt grief harder than others, but it had been decades since she had felt it herself. She didn’t know what to do.

“Hadrian,” she said again, as Hero’s screams transformed into sobs. Elena gritted her teeth. She knew he might never forgive her if she invaded his mind, but he needed to wake up. They couldn’t stay here. It was only a matter of time before Noir sent more of his thugs, and there would be more than four this time.

So she looked into his clouded green eyes and reached out gently with her mind, testing the waters.

Immediately she felt as though she had been plunged into the Arctic. She hadn’t felt the cold since she’d Turned, and it was so jarring she nearly threw up. Vampires weren’t supposed to be able to feel the cold. It was so… unnatural. She withdrew from his mind immediately, scrambling backwards.

“What the hell…” she murmured aloud, her eyes narrowing. The cold was gone, but the memory stayed. She gritted her teeth and knew she had to try again. Trying to ignore Hero’s cries from behind her, she knelt before Hadrian again, looking into his eyes, and reached out with her mind, more firmly this time.

Again she was buffeted with cold, but she refused to give way. She forced herself into his head, not delving deep into his memories but staying on the surface, his current thoughts. Once she got used to the cold, she found herself in a frozen wasteland. It unnerved her; Hadrian shouldn’t be able to formulate such a realistic place in his mind without learning occlumency.

She could see Hadrian in his own mindscape, which was another oddity that shouldn’t happen. However, in this instance, she was grateful. It would be easier to reach him.

“Hadrian!” She shouted. He was close. He didn’t appear to hear her, and he fell to his knees. “Hadrian! Wake up!” She shouted again. Nothing.

The cold grew stronger and she flinched back, withdrawing from his mind once more. Snarling, she tried again. She had to snap him out of whatever trance he was in.

She delved once more into his mind, ignoring the pathways that would take her to his memories and instead focusing on his current thoughts.

“Wake up,” she said again. “Wake up, Harry!” She knew he hated the name, but perhaps it would
trigger something. “Hadrian, you need to wake up.” Nothing. As the cold grew stronger, a light inside her mind flickered on slowly, and she withdrew.

“Hero,” she said, “We have to get out of here.”
The girl ignored her. Her sobs were growing quieter now, and she had closed Shade’s eyes. Elena nearly swore in frustration. She knew why Hadrian’s mindscape had seemed so clear for someone who had never studied occlumency. He wasn’t projecting an occlumency shield on purpose; he was channeling his magic inwards, and the mindscape was a survival instinct. A subconscious attempt of his mind so that he didn’t kill himself with the overload of magic. But when he stopped channeling it inwards, and it was released… Elena did not want to be there for the fallout.

“Hero, Hadrian’s magic is building up. If we’re here when he releases it, he could kill us. We have to get out of here,” Elena hissed again, but Hero only turned to snarl at her.

“Get away from me,” she spat, her eyes swollen but no less hateful. Elena grabbed her wrist.

“Your family has already lost one person today,” she said softly. “They don’t need to lose another,” she said softly. Hero yanked her arm back and Elena let go.

Hero glared at her, but said, “What about Sin? Won’t he hurt himself -”

Elena shook her head. “He’ll be fine. We have to go. Now.”

Hero drew in a shuddering breath and scooped up Shade’s body in her arms before staggering to the warehouse door. “I’ll be right behind you,” Elena called after her. “Get as far away as you can. And be careful; Noir’s goons could still be lingering.”

She watched Hero leave the building before kneeling down in front of Hadrian again. She had to snap him out of it. She’d told Hero that he’d be fine, but if he didn’t stop directing his magic inward, he might kill himself. He had to let it out.

She reached out with her mind again. “Hadrian, you need to wake up,” she said, managing to keep the desperation out of her voice. “Snap out of it.”

Hadrian was convulsing on the ground, his body shivering. However, he seemed to hear her, because he looked up. “I - I don’t understand,” he said, and Elena breathed a sigh of relief. He could hear her.

“You’re going to kill yourself, and Hero and I, if you keep channeling your magic inwards.” He flinched at her words.

“I - please - I don’t know what to do,” he begged.

She had to get him to snap out of it. She braced herself, and then, throwing the full weight of her legilimency into each word, she said, “Wake up, Assassin.”

She held out her hand, and he took it, pulling himself to his feet. She could feel the wasteland growing warmer, and the mindscape was melting around her. She had stayed as long as she dared. She withdrew from his mind and lifted the unconscious body of the vampire that had killed Shade over her shoulder. She spared Hadrian one last glance to confirm that the cloudy sheen over his eyes was clearing before turning on her heel and fleeing.

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Sin drew in a shuddering breath as the cold vanished from his fingertips. His skin was buzzing, as if an invisible force hummed at the surface. He opened his eyes slowly, and the sight of the empty warehouse confused him. How did he get -

And then everything came flooding back. The fight, Anneith’s cold body, the pain in his arm - the icicle was gone from the wound - Shade’s scream, her attempt to help, and then -

And then that vampire had torn out her throat.

All of the wounds Sin had ever had had done nothing to prepare him for this pain. He couldn’t breathe, he couldn’t see, all he could do was cry out as the image of Shade dying played over and over again in his mind.

A scream tore from his throat and the humming energy beneath his skin erupted.

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Hero laid Shade’s body down gently on the worn cobblestones. Elena barely paid attention to the muggle girl, her gaze fixed on the warehouse in the distance. Nothing had happened, and for a moment she thought she had overreacted; however powerful Hadrian was, he was only a child… perhaps had overestimated his magical ability. She dropped the unconscious vampire on the ground unceremoniously, and Hero’s gaze snapped to him. Her eyes darkened.

And then the whole world seemed to go silent, as if waiting for something. The air seemed to be listening, and Elena narrowed her eyes. She took a small step forward, and there was a low groan of wood, and the warehouse exploded.

The walls were blown to pieces and the roof collapsed inwards. Hero screamed, and Elena snatched her wrist again before she could go running back towards it. Her gut clenched slightly but she ignored it. Hero yanked away but Elena held fast until the dust settled, and there was nothing else to collapse. As soon as she let go Hero was sprinting down the alley towards the remains of the warehouse. Elena followed her.

A single wall remained, and pieces of the roof were littered around of the floor. The foundations had cracked, and the pit had large chunks taken from the walls. Hadrian was on his feet, swaying slightly. Elena was surprised he hadn’t passed out from the amount of magical energy he had just expended.

Hero wasted no time in jumping down into the pit and wrapping Hadrian in her arms tightly. Slowly, he hugged her back, looking dazed. “Hero,” he said hoarsely, “Shade - she - I couldn’t save her.” A single tear trailed down his face. “She came here because of me, and I couldn’t save her.”

“It’s not your fault,” Hero whispered back. “There was nothing you could have done.”

Hero fixed Elena with a glare that indicated while Hero didn’t fault Hadrian, she didn’t consider Elena quite so blameless. Elena held the girl’s gaze, expressionless.

She allowed the two a moment before interrupting, “We need to leave. The explosion isn’t going to go unnoticed. I doubt Noir will return so soon, but others - including the ministry - will be enroute already. We can’t be here when they arrive.” Privately, she thanked Merlin that there was no way for the ministry to trace wandless magic.

Hero pulled back slightly and lifted Hadrian’s arm over her shoulders, helping him to the edge of the
Elena held out a hand, but Hadrian ignored it. It didn’t escape Elena’s notice that Hadrian had refused to meet her eyes.

Hero helped Hadrian out of the pit and he limped along the alleyway to where Shade’s corpse lay next to her murderer. Hadrian’s eyes swept over them, and his blank expression slipped.

Sin felt like his insides were being boiled alive as he looked at Shade’s body laying on the dirty cobblestones, her throat torn and the blood drained from her neck. Her eyes were closed, but he assumed that was Hero’s doing. The image of terror in Shade’s eyes as she had died was fresh in his memory.

He felt sick. Leaning against the wall, he bent over as his stomach spasmed. He could hear Hero sniffling behind him.

He straightened, using the wall to keep his balance. His body was exhausted, but as his gaze shifted over to look at the vampire sprawled on the ground he forgot his fatigue. All he felt was an icy, burning rage that ran through his veins and stung at his fingertips.

“Wake him up,” he said softly. When there was no response, he turned to Elena, fury flickering in his gaze. Elena stared at him before nodding. She grabbed him by the throat and pulled him up, slamming his head against the wall. When that did nothing, she closed her eyes and paused.

She seemed to be concentrating on something, and whatever she was doing worked, because the vampire’s eyes flew open at the same time Elena’s did.

“Let go of him,” Sin said in the same quiet tone. Elena did so, taking a step back. Her gaze didn’t leave the murderer’s.

“Sin,” Hero murmured, “Be smart. Think about what you’re doing.”

Assassin ignored her. The vampire’s features, which had been so full of arrogance, were now nervous. His eyes twitched to the right, but before he could run Assassin raised his hand and the vampire was thrown back against the wall. He struggled against Sin’s magic but he couldn’t move, as if his limbs were manacle to the stone.

Assassin’s legs wobbled beneath him, but he ignored his exhaustion. “Do you know what it’s like,” he said quietly, his voice icy, “To have one of the people you care about more than anything in the world ripped away from you? To see them murdered right before your eyes?”

“Sin,” Hero cautioned, but Elena cut her off.

“Let him be,” she said, her voice as velvety as ever. As unbothered. It pissed him off.

“Do you know how it feels?” He asked, stepping closer to the imprisoned vampire. The creature struggled, breathing fast.

“I’ll show you.” He clenched his fist and the vampire let out a shriek pain a a bone in his forearm snapped. Sin gritted his teeth and narrowed his eyes as the vampire screamed louder as every bone in his hand cracked and snapped and grinded. The vampire’s screams encouraged Sin. He needed to show this creature how it felt, needed to push every sting of pain he had caused back into the perpetrator’s body.
“Sin, you can stop now,” Hero said, her voice shaky. Assassin turned to look at her, confused. He didn’t release his magic, and he could feel the energy draining from his body.

“He killed her, Hero,” he said. How could she not understand? How could she not want to avenge Shade? “He ripped her throat -” his voice broke.

“I know,” Hero said, a fresh tear sliding down her face to join the just-dried ones. “And I want him dead too. But - you do this, and there’s no coming back. Don’t let him change you, Sin. He isn’t worth it.”

“You would just have him go free?”

“No, of course not,” Hero said softly, “But - we can leave him for the ministry to find, or -”

“He killed her,” Sin cut her off, and he twisted his hand slightly. The vampire let out another screech as his ribs began to pull closer together, squeezing his insides. Black spots danced at the edge of Sin’s vision. “He deserves it.”

“I know, I know he does, and I want him to suffer too,” she said hastily, “but you can’t come back from this. You’ll never forgive yourself for it. Don’t let him change you.”

Sin turned his gaze back to the vampire, who was still crying out in pain. No tears marred his face, though. Perhaps vampires couldn’t cry. His gaze met Sin’s, and suddenly the rage was back in full force. His body wobbled as he placed his hand on the vampire’s chest and pulled at the remaining drops of magic within him.

“Please,” Hero begged desperately, “Sin. Think about - think about Shade. She wouldn’t want you to become this. You’re ten years old, Sin. Please.”

“Shade doesn’t want anything anymore. She’s dead.” He pushed out with his magic and the vampire screamed as his ribs pulled closer and closer, crushing his organs and snapping.

Sin collapsed, and before he fell unconscious he noticed the differences in expressions between Hero and Elena. One face of anguish and fear, and the other of understanding.

Then everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

I know it wasn't my best, but I hope you enjoyed it anyway. Shout out to iAmCon for the frozen wasteland idea.
Chapter Summary

Assassin breaks the news to his family and goes to Hogwarts.

Chapter Notes

Kind of a filler chapter, but I thought you guys deserved some content. It would have been up last week but I spent the whole time I was supposed to be writing rewatching A Very Potter Musical. Sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Explosion and Murder in Knockturn Alley Leave Ministry Out of Their Depth and Scrambling For Answers

By Rita Skeeter

An explosion rocked the infamously Dark neighbor to Diagon Alley late last night. The source of the explosion was an old warehouse down a side lane long thought to be abandoned. Neighboring storage facilities as well as down-and-out tavern The Spiny Serpent and intoxicating substance shop Touranious Substances were all damaged in the blast. Heavy traces of magic were detected at the blast site, but the Department of Magical Law Enforcement has neglected to state whether they know what spell was used. The ministry is at a loss as to the culprit of the explosion but while the minister was unavailable for comment, Head Auror Rufus Scrimgeour has stated, “No, we don’t know who did it, and if we did, I bloody well wouldn’t tell you.” The motive of the attack remains unknown, and no one was harmed. However, less than a hundred meters from the origin of the blast, the body of a vampire was found, his organs crushed by his broken ribcage. He showed no sign of other wounds, so it was clearly a witch or wizard - but the questions present themselves; what kind of sloppy killer leaves the corpse in such a noticeable position? How can we trust our ministry to protect us when they can’t even find such an obviously amatuer murderer? Was this mystery killer the same person who set off the explosion? If so, was it merely a diversion? For more information about the utter incompetence of our current government, and a spectacular opinion piece by yours truly on how an increase in muggleborns in the government is causing such idiocy, turn to page 14.

Sin groaned as he sat up, his chest aching. He opened his eyes slowly, realising someone was shaking him hard.

“Sin, you have to - thank God. He’s awake,” Hero said, turning over her shoulder to call. Elena turned around.
“Good. You need to leave,” she said smoothly.

Sin blinked again, realising he was on a rooftop somewhere. “What the hell -” his eyes caught on Shade’s body, laying limp at Elena’s feet, and he shot to his feet. The ache in his chest was almost unbearable as he spun around and shoved Elena’s chest as hard as he could. She didn’t flinch, but didn’t move out of the way either.

“How could you let this happen?” He hissed. “You were supposed to protect her! You were supposed to - I was supposed to - I -”

Hero laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. “It wasn’t your fault, Sin,” she murmured quietly. He shrugged her off, glaring at Elena.

“Bring her back.”

“I can’t.”


“Hadrian,” Elena said sharply, “It isn’t possible. I wish it were, but there is no spell to reawaken the dead. Even if there were, I’m not a witch anymore.”

Sin shuddered at her words, before collapsing down beside Shade’s body. “I’m sorry,” he whispered, his eyes stinging. “I’m sorry I couldn’t protect you. I - I should never have let you come.” He grabbed her hand, almost jerking back at the unexpected iciness of her skin. He intertwined their fingers gently.

“You were the first person to make me feel strong,” he whispered. “I’m sorry I wasn’t strong enough.”

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When they arrived back at the warehouse, Sin felt as though every drop of energy had been siphoned away from him. He had never felt so magically exhausted, not even after almost killing himself the day he froze the ring of fire. Every bone in his body ached, and a relentless headache pounded harder with every step he took. He tried to carry Shade’s body, but Elena must have noticed he was on the brink of collapse, because she took it just as he was about to collapse in the street.

They stopped before the warehouse doors. He no longer cared that Elena was about to enter his home, the home of his family. She was no longer the threat.

“How are we supposed to explain this to Roach and Light? How can I walk in there and tell them that I -”

Hero took his hand, the tears on her face still not dry. “We’ll do it together. Explain that Shade was brave to the end.” He squeezed her hand gently as he opened the door. Elena had the decency to stay silent as Hero took Shade’s body in her arms.

“It’s been long enough, wanker,” Wheels laughed as he caught them in the entryway. “Spider was starting to -”

His eyes landed on Shade’s body in Hero’s arms, and he stopped. His teasing, quietly relieved smile slid off his face. He blinked, but didn’t speak.
“I tried,” Sin said, his voice dull and emotionless. “To save her. I - I wasn’t fast enough.”

“I don’t understand,” Wheels said, his voice quivering.


Sin couldn’t bring himself to look Roach in the eyes. “Why is she sleeping?” He asked, but his voice shook enough that Sin knew he didn’t really think she was asleep.

Roach approached Hero and nudged Shade’s corpse gently. “Wake up,” he whispered. “Shade, please.” He nudged her again. He lifted his head, tears welling up in his brown eyes. “Wake her up,” he said desperately to Sin, who felt his heart crack even more.

“I can’t,” he replied quietly, his voice shaking slightly. “I’m sorry. She - she’s gonna sleep for a long, long time.”

“You’re a wizard,” Roach begged, “you can do it. Please, just - just wake her up.”

“I’m sorry.” Sin could feel his own tears returning, and he didn’t wipe them away. He let them trickle down his dirty cheeks. “I can’t.”

Roach’s tearful eyes turned hateful, and he shoved Sin hard. “Then what,” he spat, with more vehemence than Sin had ever heard an eight-year-old use, “is the point of you?”

Sin staggered back as if struck. “Roach, I -” he started, when Elena laid a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“Give him time,” she murmured. Sin nodded, trying without success to swallow the lump in his throat.

One Month Later

Sin tugged the unplottable ring from his finger and stowed it in his pocket with a nod at Elena. “And remember,” she repeated, “Only put it on -”

“When I come home for the holidays, or I’m going somewhere I shouldn’t, yes, we’ve been over this a thousand times,” he said, exasperated. She raised a thin eyebrow but didn’t comment.

“Right. This is as far as I go. Remember everything I taught you and you should be fine. You read all your school books, right?”

“Yes,” he said, rolling his eyes. “Twice. And all the extra ones you gave me. Look, Elena, I’ll be fine.”

She nodded. “Good luck, Hadrian,” she said with a smirk, before nodding to him one last time and turning around, disappearing into the crowd of Platform Nine and Three Quarters.

Toxic took his hand gently, squeezing it. “We’re all gonna miss you,” she said softly. “The others wanted to come wish you off -- especially Light, he was really begging -- but I thought a large group of dirty children might attract more attention than we want.”
Sin nodded, turning his gaze to Toxic’s. “Everyone wanted to come?” He asked, his voice flat. He tried to keep the tiny kernel of hope out of his words.

Toxic’s face fell slightly. “I’m sure Roach did, really,” she said quietly. “It’s only been a month, Sin. He loves you. It’s just -”

“He loved her more,” Sin finished, tearing his gaze away, not able to look her in the eyes any longer.

“That’s not true, Sin. But you haven’t died. He hasn’t had to deal with life without you yet. All he knows is that he misses her, so much. Besides, he’s eight years old, Sin. Give him time.”

Sin nodded, fighting down the guilt that threatened to choke the air from his lungs. He glanced up to the clock above them. It read twenty minutes to eleven.

“I’d better go if I want to choose my own compartment,” he said, giving her one last hug. She pulled him tight, her eyes watery.

“I’m going to miss you so much, Sin,” she murmured quietly. “We all will. You have to write to us at least once a week, and tell us everything that happens, and I don’t care what that bloodsucking bitch says, you make friends with whoever you want to -”

“Toxic,” Sin said with a small smile, pulling back, “I’ll be fine. And I’ll write as soon as I can.” She smiled back at him as he gave her one small kiss on the cheek before boarding the train.

There were several compartments full to the brim but he managed to find an empty one near the back of the train. Remember, Elena had said, don’t go out of your way to introduce yourself to anyone yet. Wait for them to come to you.

He had brought a small travel bag with him, and he pulled a think black outer robe out and put it on around his collared shirt and dress pants. First impressions are important, Elena had told him.

Sin looked out the window and saw his own scrawny face reflected back at him. This is it, he thought, his heart thrumming. There’s no going back now. I can’t be Assassin for now. I have to be Hadrian Potter, Heir to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black.

The day before, he had finally confessed to Elena that he was the Heir to the House of Black as well as the House of Peverell. He had expected her to be angry at him for withholding such important information from her, but to his surprise she had actually been pleased. She’d said it showed that he was already beginning to think like a politician. However, she was glad he had told her. They’d decided he would introduce himself as Heir Black, and that they would hold Heir Peverell as his trump card, should he ever need to play one.

He sat down next to the window and pulled out a copy of A Young Warlock’s Guide to Self-Protection disguised to look like a book of first-year charms. He opened it to the fourth chapter and resigned himself to a long journey.

It was a minute before the train was meant to leave when he heard the compartment door slide open. He turned to see a freckley, red-headed boy about his age peeking in, his gaze sheepish.

“Sorry to bother you,” he said, turning red, “But I was wondering if you’d seen Harry Potter? He’s supposed to be coming to Hogwarts this year!”

Hadrian barely twitched at the mention of his birth name. “I, uh -”

“I bet he’s loads ahead of the rest of our year! You are a first year, aren’t you?”
Hadrian nodded.

“I can’t believe we’ll actually get to meet him,” the boy continued. “My little sister’s fancied him for ages, and she’s never even seen a picture of him! My mum told me I should find him on the train, because apparently he’s been raised by muggles, and he’d probably want someone to show him the ropes in our world - sorry, did you say you’ve seen him?”

Hadrian shook his head. “Sorry,” he lied, panicking. As soon as he said so, he could here Elena swearing in the back of his head. *Stupid, stupid, stupid.* He resolved not to lie to the next person he met, and make any more social blunders. Luckily, he thought, a little shameful at such shallow thoughts, the boy’s dirty nose and clearly hand-me-down robes didn’t make him seem like he’d be very high up the proverbial ladder.

The ginger boy shrugged. “Oh well. Thanks anyway.” He left, and Hadrian once again buried his nose in his book.

He had gotten perhaps three chapters through when the compartment door slid open once again.

“Have you seen a toad? Neville’s lost one,” said a rather bossy voice. Hadrian looked up to see a girl with lots of bushy brown hair and unfortunately large front teeth, shadowed by a round-faced boy looking quite miserable.

Hadrian shook his head. “No, sorry.”

“I guess we’ll have to keep looking, Neville - I’m sure he’ll turn up somewhere. Say, I’ve read that book on charms! It’s quite good, isn’t it? I’ve managed to perform a few of the spells already, have you?” The girl asked, gesturing to Hadrian’s protection book.

“Oh, er… not really,” he said awkwardly, not having read the book it was pretending to be, and therefore not knowing any of the spells in it.

“Of course, I’ve only tried a few of the simple spells, but they’ve all worked for me. Nobody in my family’s magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it’s the very best school of witchcraft there is, I’ve heard - I’ve learnt all our set books off by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough - I’m Hermione Granger, by the way, who are you?”

She said all of this in one breath, and Hadrian just blinked as he processed everything she had said. He took her introduction to mean that she wouldn’t care about his titles, so he forwent the formal introduction and just said, “Hadrian. Nice to meet you.”

“You as well, Hadrian. Do you know what house you’ll be in? I’ve been asking around and I hope I’m in Gryffindor, it sounds by far the best, I hear Dumbledore himself was one, but I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn’t be too bad… Anyway, we’d better go and look for Neville’s toad.” She left, the toadless boy - Neville - trailing dejectedly behind her. Hadrian returned to his book and was interrupted again not an hour later.

“Have you - oh, you’re the boy from Madam Malkin’s!” Came a snide drawl. Hadrian turned to see who the exclamation belonged to and found the pale boy from the robes shop, flanked by two burly boys.

Hadrian smiled thinly. “Indeed. I don’t believe we ever properly introduced ourselves,” Hadrian said, and the other boy nodded.

“I’m Heir Draco of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Malfoy,” the boy said pompously, puffing
out his chest slightly. Hadrian inhaled quietly; this was his first real experience with someone of importance, even if he was only a child. He may not like the boy, but he wanted to stay in his good books.

“Wel met, Heir Malfoy,” he said with a small bow. “I am Heir Hadrian to the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black.”

Malfoy gasped. “That can’t be true,” he said accusedly, “You’re lying. Lord Black doesn’t have an heir.”

Hadrian merely raised an eyebrow before fishing around in his bag and pulling out the Black Heir ring, showing the family crest emblazoned on it.

“By Merlin’s beard,” he breathed, his eyes practically falling out of his skull they were bulging so wide. “Well - um -” his pureblood training must of kicked in because he seemed to regain some vestige of his dignity as he bowed, deeper than Hadrian had, and said, “Well met indeed, Heir - Heir Black.”

Hadrian raised an eyebrow at the two wideset boys behind Malfoy, and the blonde heir blushed. “Oh, of course, sorry - this is Crabbe, and this is Goyle.”

Hadrian smiled, and sat back down. He slid his book back into his bag, and tilted his head at the young Malfoy heir, a clear invitation for him to sit. He wasn’t looking forward to spending the next few hours alone with this boy, but he knew it was a good opportunity to spend some time alone with a very influential peer.

Malfoy sat down across from him, and Crabbe and Goyle sat down next to him. “So, Heir Black, how is it that I didn’t know about you? I wasn’t aware Lord Black had a son.”

Hadrian tilted his head and the corner of his mouth twitched up. “He doesn’t. He never had children, but I’m his godson.”

Malfoy furrowed an eyebrow. “What’s your surname?”

Hadrian inhaled and braced himself as he said, “Potter.”

For the second time in as many minutes, Malfoy’s jaw dropped. “You’re Harry Potter?”

“Hadrian,” Hadrian corrected, “but yes.”

Malfoy’s mouth opened and closed, but no words came out. Finally he seemed to recover. “Well,” he said, swallowingly, “that is… interesting.”

Hadrian hummed in agreement.

The rest of the ride passed with polite idle chatter and small talk. By the time the Hogwarts Express pulled into Hogsmeade, Hadrian was almost twitching with the need to do something. His life on the streets wasn’t easy, and he was always on the move, always doing something. Elena had schooled him on polite small talk, on sitting up straight, on how to flatter someone without seeming pathetic and needy, but he hadn’t been prepared for how much sitting still he would have to do.

He practically leapt out of his seat when the train came to a stop. Privately, he was also glad to be away from Malfoy; he would be polite because he needed to, but he in no means liked the boy. In fact, he actively disliked him.
“Firs’ years this way! Firs’ years, follow me!” Came a booming voice when they stepped on the platform. Hadrian raised his eyebrows at the enormous figure it came from.

“Who is that?” He asked Malfoy under his breath.

“That’s Hagrid, the Hogwarts gamekeeper. I heard he’s some sort of savage, he lives in a shack on the grounds and occasionally gets drunk and sets fire to his bed.”

“Firs’ years this way! No more ‘n four to a boat, now!”

Malfoy and Hadrian climbed into a boat and were followed by a slender dark-skinned boy that Malfoy seemed to know.

“Blaise, this is Heir Hadrian of the Noble and Most Ancient House of Black. Heir Black, this is Blaise Zabini.”

Zabini didn’t react other than a simple raised eyebrow, and Hadrian couldn’t help but think that he would get along very well with Elena. “Well met, Heir Black,” Zabini said coolly, giving Hadrian a shallow bow.

“Well met,” Hadrian replied. He opened his mouth to continue the conversation when he heard a chorus of small gasps, and turned to see what everyone was gazing at.

An enormous stone castle towered over the lake, its many windows sparkling against the inky blackness of the night.

“Hogwarts,” Hadrian breathed.