Mercy

by silkiemae

Summary

Moonville, Ohio is famous for its residential hauntings. But certainly not for its vampires. Something in Moonville is killing randomly around the little town, leaving victims with their throats torn out and their bodies drained of blood. It just so happens that Klaus came into town a few days after these killings started in search for his brother, Elijah. There, he runs into several disturbing rumors that could help him unlock his centuries old curse, as well as meet a girl that could make him feel for once in his life.
The sky was gray with unshed raindrops, the ground already moist from the humidity. Emma was pulling up to Josie’s Pub for what felt like her millionth shift that week. Her jeep jerked to a halt and groaned a little as she put the brake on. After a moment of assuring herself that she looked presentable for work and throwing her hair in a haphazardly done bun, she locked her car up and headed into the bar.

Immediately, she recognized several faces sitting in their regular booths and smiled in greeting. Though their faces were grave when she entered they returned her smile before returning to whatever it was they had been talking about. It was something she had noticed earlier in the day when she had been filling up her gas tank and even stopping at the local Starbucks for a latte. Everyone had been acting strange this morning.

It was hardly morning now, however, since Emma mostly worked the night shifts. In the mornings she was hard at work taking ridiculously expensive art classes. All her tip money and even half of her paycheck went to paying for those classes and for paying her rent.

Being a struggling artist was hard, but living alone was even harder. She rounded the bar, clipping on her nametag and punching in before catching sight of the owner, Josie. Josie grinned at her, but even she had that somewhat hesitant look on her face.

A sudden gripping fear of losing her job washed over her. But it didn’t explain the strange looks at the gas station and at Starbucks. This was a small town, and gossip spread fast but it wasn’t that small.

Josie met her behind the bar and clapped a hand on her shoulder. “It’s going to be a slow night so we might close up early,” she warned. Emma nodded, already sighing in disappointment. Thursday nights were usually pretty busy, and she got a few regulars that came in, in the hopes of catching her attention and because it usually never worked that left a big tip, hoping that the money would grab her.

“What’s going on, Jo?” She didn’t bother to further elaborate, because it was more than obvious what she was talking about when she tilted her head toward the group that had been talking so gravely earlier. Josie looked at her sharply, her forehead creasing.

“You didn’t hear?”

“Hear what?” Emma was already confused, but as she spoke she began preparing a sanitizer bucket and prepped a rag to wipe down the bar top. For some reason, she couldn’t even fathom what it could be that had everyone in such a stupor.

“Wow, well…Deputy Morris was killed last night,” Josie said, her tone wavering. Emma looked at her sharply, shock written all over her face. How had she not heard a thing like that? Deputy Morris was one of the most respected police officers in the whole town. The town was small and almost everyone knew everyone and almost everyone was close with everyone. Emma had moved there only recently, a few months back to be exact and she was still getting to know everyone. But even this came as a blow to her.

Emma opened her mouth to speak but couldn’t come up with any questions to ask. Morris was
young, and she was aware that his wife was just newly pregnant. She could only imagine what the family was going through. “Do you know how?” It was an odd question, but something in her gut made her feel the need to ask.

“His throat was slit. I guess someone drained the blood out of him. Probably one of those sick Pagan worshippers or something,” Josie said, a look of disgust on her face. Moonville was a weird place to live, given all the hauntings that were claimed to take place. There were rumors of a cult that took sacrifices to keep the ghosts at bay, but Emma was positive that was all it was…rumors. Even so, she never would’ve expected them to sacrifice people.

Emma was aware of how superstitious Josie was, and how she came up with all these nonsensical answers for things that most likely had a very probable cause. But Emma could see no use arguing with the woman so she merely kept that astonished look on her face until Josie was tasked with seating another patron.

_A serial killer in Moonville…_ Emma couldn’t help but chuckle to herself. What else could they come up with?
New York was incredibly musty the day that Klaus received the news of his brother’s whereabouts. He had barricaded himself in a lovely redhead’s penthouse and she now had her head in his lap, her hair fanning around her head like a deep puddle of blood. He couldn’t help but smile at the imagery, because no doubt by the end of the night that’s exactly what she would by lying in.

Though the phone call was unexpected, he was not unpleased to hear the news. A vaguely familiar voice rang through the other end and he immediately recognized Hansen, one of his faithful followers, on the other end. “Elijah has been spotted in Ohio,” the voice echoed through the receiver.

Klaus tensed at the news, but merely answered with an even tone. “How reliable is your information?” The redhead was now by the liquor cabinet, filling a scotch glass with a tawny colored liquid. Hansen was taking too long to answer, so Klaus merely added, “I trust you know what will happen if you’re lying to me.”

Faithful as Hansen was, Klaus loved to keep them on their feet. He could almost hear as Hansen’s eyes widened. “I-I can’t say for sure.”

“What exactly does that mean?” Klaus stood abruptly, finding himself at the window seat at the front half of the girl’s penthouse. He looked out over the city, momentarily entranced by the setting sun and the pink and orange hues cast over the translucent metal of the skyscrapers.

“Well, it was a woman. She called and told me where she had seen Elijah, and then she sent some pictures,” he said and then Klaus’ phone beeped. He glanced at the screen and saw an image message from Hansen. Opening it, his jaw tensed to find his brother wandering around a cemetery. He couldn’t imagine what need there was for him to be there, but it was a lead. If the information was worthy then he may actually have a chance at finding his brother and reuniting him with the rest of the family.

Klaus returned the phone to his ear then, his jaw clicking as he exhaled through his mouth. The redhead had handed him the short glass of liquor and he drained it after he spoke. “Ohio, you said? Where exactly in Ohio?”

“Moonville. Should I head down there and search the place?”

“That would’ve been a viable option before you called to waste my time.” Klaus rolled his eyes, turning from the window and finding the redhead sprawled across the couch staring at him in what she probably thought was a seductive gaze. “No, I think I’ll go there myself. Besides, if my brother was there, I would be the one to know.”

He hung the phone up then before swiftly crossing the room to the redhead. He pondered a moment what her name might’ve been but couldn’t bring himself to care. He had never liked dark haired girls, not since Tatia anyway. No, he much preferred blondes.

“Well, darling. It seems we’re going to have to cut this meaning short.” Quicker than the girl could comprehend he was on her, his face buried in the crook of her neck and his hand on her mouth. The reverberation of her screams against the palm of her hand sent a strange shock of arousal through his gut. His teeth burying into the flesh of her throat and hot red fluid gushing into his mouth.
When she was dead, he admired the scene he had imagined just moments before. Her hair pooling around her like blood, and her ivory skin looking much like a vampire’s. She might’ve made a beautiful vampire, but he couldn’t imagine having to bear that false pretense of a seductive look ever again.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, glancing once more at his cell phone, the photo of his brother still on the screen. “It seems we may meet sooner than I thought, Elijah.”
suspicious minds.

It took two days for Klaus to arrive in Moonville, Ohio. Hansen had gotten there ahead of him and had already set up a place of residence. Of course, temporary as his stay was meant to be, he did enjoy a beautiful home to spend his time in. The first place he went was to the town square, immediately curious about the town having done research on its haunted history.

Most of the hauntings were apparently in the town's mining tunnel, and it didn’t seem to be visible from the town square. No matter, he would seek it out eventually, who knew, it could prove to be fun. Klaus did enjoy the rare ghost encounter.

Though, instead of finding ghosts in the town square he found a poster board with newspaper clippings advertising a series of murders. Immediately, he was curious and closed in on the board. His curiosity turned to anger in a matter of minutes. It seemed that he and Hansen were not the only vampires in town, or maybe they were and Hansen had some explaining to do.

He didn’t miss the missing posters either, several faces peering out at him. He could truly care less about them, but it was the last thing he needed to be found out in a town such as this. Not that they could do a thing to hurt him, but his being a vampire was something he only enjoyed advertising to a choice few.

Sighing, he removed himself from the board and turned to find a pub directly across from the public office he stood near. One that housed what was most likely the sheriff’s department as well as the mayor’s office. A town as small of this hardly needed two separate commodities for the two officials.

Immediately, Klaus figured he could use a drink, especially, if he was going to have to tear Hansen’s head off for being so careless. Might as well let the man live in ignorant bliss for a few hours more, besides he doubted his temporary home was ready for him yet. He had arrived ahead of schedule.

Josie’s Pub held a very warm friendly atmosphere. It was mostly empty, but the evening had just begun and the townsfolk were most likely only just getting out of work. It held what most town bars needed, a pool table, several arcade games and of course a bar. There were also several booths and tables, and from what he could tell by the constant out pour of food from the back room there was a kitchen waiting to serve any who desired it.

He headed directly for the bar, taking a seat and swinging to face the wall of liquor. Scanning the numerous options, a dark skinned girl approached him. A warm smile on her face, and her dark curly hair framing her face—there was a rag in her hands and she set it down to lean over the bar top. Almost immediately, Klaus noticed the exposed cleavage and flesh of her chest.

Tempting, but he wasn’t here for that. At least, not tonight. “What can I get for you?” The woman had a slight accent under her tongue, and Klaus found himself placing somewhere down south. He merely nodded toward the bottle of Jim Bean that looked to be unopened, and the girl turned to pour a glass.

As the dark haired girl set the now half full glass in front of him, the bell indicating another patron rang out. He didn’t bother to look, but rather took a sip of his drink and stared at the photo of his brother on his phone. He was trying to place the spot he stood, or at least memorize the surroundings so that he could find it and search it. Finding his brother was his one and only priority now, and anything else that happened was only a bonus.
Even as he thought it, a sweet voice rang out. “Josie, I am so sorry I’m late. Mr. Anderson took forever to end class.” The girl’s words blended together as she rushed to get them out, her face flushed with embarrassment.

The girl that had poured his drink, who was apparently Josie, waved away her words. “Don’t worry about it.” A moment’s hesitation and Josie took a step closer to the girl, whispering in her ear, unaware that Klaus could hear every word as if she were standing directly in front of him. “The guy at the end of the bar, I got him his drink but please get his number for me if you don’t get it for yourself.”

She only laughed before nodding once more. Glancing over at Klaus, she blushed once more as she caught him looking. The blood in her cheeks was a nice compliment, making her skin look even more like porcelain. Her lips were plump, the ruby color making it unnecessary for her to even wear the mildest of lipstick. Blond hair thrown in a sloppy bun, and tendrils of the golden string hung around her ears, her blue eyes shining out at him.

Approaching him, while fastening a clip into her hair, in the hopes that it would keep her hair from her face, she smiled timidly. She seemed unsure of what to do next so she pretended to look for something beneath the bar. Klaus watched with an amused smile, before doing what she failed to do. “I’m Klaus,” he said, causing her to jump and hit her head on the bar top. He said nothing to that, but watched as her face continued to redden.

“I’m Emma.”
Apartment B4 wasn’t the most fancy place in town, but it was mostly affordable and quaint. It was comfortable for a loner like Emma, and she considered it home—however temporary it may be. She had found the deluxe building by pure luck, and it just so happened that there was a single apartment searching for a tenant. Though the town was small, it certainly held very little housing, and what apartment complexes there were, they were mostly full.

Emma entered the building at one in the morning, her eyes sagging heavily, and her shoulders slumped as she fought to keep the key steady enough to unlock her door. The day had dragged on, and though there was a new patron in the bar who kept her attention for the majority of the night, it didn’t seem to be enough to keep her spirits high.

Three days had passed since the murder of Deputy Morris and more and more people seemed to be going missing. No more bodies had turned up, but not knowing what happened to them was almost worse than knowing they had been killed. It wasn’t as if Emma had been particularly close to any of these people, but she had become so attached to this town that anything that happened to its inhabitants affected her just as much as someone who had lived here their entire life.

When she finally got into the apartment she tossed the key onto the kitchen island, before remembering that she had to lock the door behind her. After stomping over to the door and locking it, she dropped the rest of her belongings on the living room floor and collapsed on the couch. One thing she enjoyed about pre-furnished apartments was that even though their taste was usually terrible, it was comfortable. Or rather, this particular couch was. The cushions sank to match the indentations in her face, causing her to relax and immediately fall into a fitful sleep.

There was a rapid pounding on her door, and when she woke, her body jerked as if she had just fallen off a set of stairs. She groaned, laying on the couch another minute, her face buried in the cushions, no doubt imprinted with the texture of it. If she just barely opened her eyes the sun stabbed into her pupil, sending little sharp bursts of pain in her head.

The knocking continued and speaking more to herself than the one at the door, she got up. “I’m coming, I’m coming.” Not even bothering to check her appearance in the mirror, not truly even caring who it was at the door, she wrenched it back and stood still staring at the person there.

It was the man from last night and for some reason she was completely blanking on his name. It was something different, something old sounding and almost…regal. She was also acutely aware of what she probably looked like to him, her hair a monstrosity and what little make up she wore smeared down her cheeks.

Unable to bring herself to speak, or even say anything without making a fool of herself, she merely frowned at him. He smiled, a startlingly boyish smile, she noted and leaned against the doorway.

“Aren’t you going to invite me in?” That accent of his filled her ears like a lovely melody, and yet, she still could not remember his name. He seemed so pleased with himself, as if he had accomplished
some great feat by catching her off guard.

“I wasn’t planning on it, since I have no idea how you found out where I live.” She didn’t really care that he found her place, it was a small enough town that he could be directed by simply asking where ‘the bartender at Josie’s’ lived. Everyone here was so unsuspecting they would direct him without a second thought. “Is that my jacket?” She noticed the brown leather slung across his arm, and he seemed to look at it as if he forgot it was there.

“Ah, yes, here.” After handing her the jacket, he seemed to be waiting for something, and she was almost prompted to slam the door on him and go back to sleep but she forced herself to stay put and stare at this endearingly handsome man. Another silent moment passed before he cleared his throat and spoke, finally. “Your employer directed me here, her hands seemed full. It seemed the gentlemanly thing to do. After all, I do love a damsel.”

Emma merely stared at him, wishing she had the ability to quirk a single eyebrow. “Losing my jacket makes me a damsel now?” He frowned then, clearly not comprehending something.

“Forgive me, allow me to start over,” he said, something off-kilter about his tone. He was much too formal in that instant, as if he was holding off some type of irritation. “I just enjoyed the conversation we had the other night, immensely, and thought that returning your jacket seemed the perfect opportunity to have another one with you.”

She couldn’t help but notice how pleased he seemed with himself. As if he had come up with the perfect pick up line that would instantly woo her into his arms and she would allow him into her home with no hesitation. But in all honesty, she was tired. All she wanted was to go back to sleep. Today was her one-day off of school, and she still had to work in the evening. Capturing as much sleep as she could was all she wanted so instead of smiling and blushing like he wanted her to, she sighed. “Listen, as fun as that sounds, I can’t even remember your name. If you really want to talk to me again, I’ll be at Josie’s tonight. You can meet me there, I’ll buy you a drink.”

He opened his mouth as if to protest, but she merely shut the door on him. She walked away from the door, and then a muffled cry was heard. “My name is Klaus!
After a hot shower and a bowl of clam chowder, Emma was ready to actually begin her day. Though, she didn’t have much of one left. Klaus had showed up at her apartment door around noon, and even as she slammed the door in his face she knew attempting to go back to sleep would be futile. She tried anyway, trading the couch for her bed—wrapping herself in her comforter and even grabbing her snuggie but as she assumed sleep would not come to her.

She mentally cursed Klaus, but merely went to shower. She used all strawberry flavored hair products and rubbed cocoa butter body wash on her skin. After exiting the shower with two towels, one around her body and the other wrapping her hair, she spent the next half hour preparing her face for the evening. There wasn’t much to do, since she couldn’t afford to be spending money on makeup, but she covered her eyes in a bronze shadow and pulled on some mascara.

When finally left the bathroom, now in her undergarments, the phone was ringing. She groaned, praying that it wasn’t Josie asking her to come in early, but she knew that no one else would bother calling her. She answered the phone, instantly hearing the chatter of the pub in the background and Josie shouting out at someone. Emma groaned, reaching into the pantry to pull out a package of powdered clam chowder.

She poured it in a bowl and added water, before finally speaking into the phone. “Hello?” She winced as she heard a glass breaking in the background and Josie cursing.

“Emma? It’s Josie. Listen, I’m sorry to do this on your day off school but it’s crazy here. Like I don’t know where all these people came from. Can you come in early? I know you’re probably standing in your kitchen half naked right now, but just throw on clothes and get your ass over here,” Josie paused, as there was a sound in the background like a train wreck. “Shit, I gotta go. See you soon.”

Emma, sighing, pulled the warm bowl from the microwave and inhaled the clam chowder. All the while, she was in her room tugging clothes out of her dresser and closet, and finally she ended up in a pair of dark jeans and a pale camisole. She pulled a black sheer lace jacket over it and slipped on a pair of black shoes with bare feet, grabbed her keys and ran out the door.

It only took her a few minutes to get to the pub and she could see that Josie hadn’t been lying when she said it was crazy. The parking lot was full and Emma had such a hard time finding a parking space she had to resign herself to the side of the road.

When she entered the pub she noticed a majority of the familiars, but also several faces she’d never seen before. As she was making her way to the bar she peered at a group of the unfamiliar faces and found Klaus in the center of them. For some reason, she wasn’t surprised.

She reached the bar and Josie was there struggling to carry a tray of beer pints. Emma rolled her eyes, taking the tray from her and looking at Josie questioningly. She waved her away before handing her the strip of paper where the orders were meant to go.

Once again, she wasn’t surprised to find they belonged to the group Klaus was in. With a resigned sigh, she walked over the group, easily balancing the tray above her head. Klaus met her eyes with an amused smile, and straightened up as soon as she was within his proximity.

“Emma, so good to see you again.”
She only ignored him as she set the tray down and began passing the drinks out. Those who took the drinks disappeared throughout the bar, some going to the pool table and others talking with groups of people. Eventually, she was left with a glass of whiskey and Klaus looking at her expectantly.

She hesitated a moment before smiling tightly and handing him his drink. She hadn’t forgotten the promise she’d made him that morning, and while she intended to keep it, some part of her was afraid he might ask for more. Of course, she could always deny him, but the way he was looking at her right now was making her second guess her will strength.

Clearing her throat, she took the tray and turned to leave, only to have Klaus follow behind her. “You know, Emma.” The way he said her name was like it was a new word he had just learned in another language. Something that clearly, fascinated him. “I was thinking about what you said this morning, about buying me a drink.”

“And?” Emma said, circling the bar and blocking him off. He merely walked down the length of the bar with her until he found an empty bar stool. She began pouring more drink orders as people shouted them out at her, sliding down the table and gathering the money as it was left.

“Well, how about I buy you a drink?”

Emma could’ve said something to him, called him sexist or something of the sort. Accused him of not thinking she was capable of buying him a drink, but in all honesty, she didn’t have the time to fight with him so she merely sighed. “Alright, fine. I get off at one, if you stick it out till then, you can buy me as many drinks as you want.”
Klaus sat at the round table surrounded by Hansen and several others. Hansen was staring at a group of women who seemed more interested in their own company than anyone else’s. Klaus, however, couldn’t take his eyes off of the bartender.

She was truly, nothing special. Beautiful, yes. A natural beauty, one that needed no make up and with a flawless porcelain skin that seemed to hold no blemishes. Her blonde hair was long and naturally wavy, and still damp from a shower. But he found her incredibly endearing. The way her brow furrowed as she concentrated, and the circles beneath her eyes made him all the more interested.

He had taken interest in his fair share of women in the last few centuries. But he had taken everything he wanted from them and then later disposed of them. Some lasted longer than others. It was fun seeing how long they could withstand his presence. Some didn’t even last the night.

This girl, however, had slammed the door in his face. She hadn’t even swooned once, though pleased, as he was to get that initial blush out of her on their first encounter, he hadn’t been able to get another. Some part of him yearned to watch the blood flood into her cheeks once more, and he planned on making that happen tonight.

He glanced at the clock on the wall and found that he only had to wait another half hour before he could buy her a drink. He knew that she was hoping he wouldn’t last her whole shift. Probably, she assumed he would traipse off with one of the girls who clearly wanted him as badly as he wanted her. Centuries of practice had given him the determination to get exactly what he wanted, and he would have her.

She had avoided coming to his table the entire night, instead sending the dark skinned girl he had spoken to the other night. Though, clearly, she was more than willing to deliver his drinks. Her smile was obvious, and he could smell the desperation on her skin. Even as she headed to him then, another smile on her face, though this one was more tired, he could tell that her resolve was unwavering.

After setting the glass of whiskey at his table, she glanced behind her at where he was staring. She straightened, biting her lower lip in thought and Klaus finally looked at her, wondering why she was still there. “Are you waiting for Emma?”

Klaus was a bit taken aback by her question, though he simply nodded. “Is that a problem?” He leaned forward, taking the glass and taking a sip.

“No…I just want to warn you, that Emma isn’t that type of girl. It’ll take a lot more than a few drinks to get her into bed,” she said, her brow furrowing in a sudden fit of protective instinct.

Klaus couldn’t help but smile, before tilting his head at the pub owner. “I assure you, that was not my intention at all. But, thank you for the tip.”

With nothing better to say, she turned and left. Klaus returned his gaze to Emma, and noticed that she seemed distraught. Her posture was defensive and there was a man leaning over the bar, clearly trying to keep her attention. He didn’t bother hearing what they were speaking out, only interested in the opportunity to play hero.
He finished his drink, standing and brushing the pants of his legs off. Hansen was quick to stand with him, but Klaus merely shooed him away. After making his way to the bar, disappointing a group of girls who were staring eagerly as he walked their way, he drifted just behind the man speaking to Emma.

“Listen, I’ve come here every Saturday night for the past month. I leave you twenty bucks every time and you can’t even give me your number?” Klaus could instantly sense the hostility in Emma’s posture, clearly she was uncomfortable and he wanted to snap the man’s neck for it.

“Sorry, but I’m not interested. You have to do a lot more than give me money for your alcohol to get my number.”

The man opened his mouth to speak once more, but Klaus stepped in then. “Perhaps you could try buying her a drink, mate?” Klaus said, folding his arms against the bar and grinning at Emma before returning his gaze to the man. Emma rolled her eyes, busying herself with a dirty patch of the bar.

“Who are you supposed to be?”

“The name is Klaus,” he held out a hand and the man scoffed not bothering to take it but merely glared at him. Klaus wasn’t in the mood for petty rivalry with someone even if it wouldn’t last long at all. Instead, he met the man’s eyes. “Why don’t you step outside, it seems you need some fresh air, sir.”

Instantly, the man agreed and turned to step outside. Klaus turned to face a still defensive Emma. Her arms were crossed over her chest, and her jaw tight with controlled anger. “I could’ve handled that,” she grumbled.

Klaus raised his arms in defense. “Just trying to help, love. I’ll be right back, I believe I need some air myself.” He glanced at the clock, and smiled. “Looks like I made your deadline. I’ll be back by the time you’re finished up.”
blue eyes.

The bar was slowly emptying out. All the servers were slowly gathering their tips and handing the rest of the cash to Josie, who was sitting at a bar stool counting out something. Emma was shockingly pleased that Klaus had stuck out her shift. Though, she didn’t know if it was because she was in desperate need of a drink, or it was because of Klaus.

After the server’s cleared out and Klaus appeared at the doorway, Josie made her way over to Emma. “You can have one free drink for the both of you, but the rest, you can just put it on a tab and we’ll take care of it later.” Emma lifted an eyebrow, shocked that Josie was so willing to allow Emma free run of the place while she wouldn’t be there.

“Thanks,” she said, a small smile on her lips. Josie rolled her eyes at her employee before giving her a quick hug, handing her a set of keys and walking out the door. She stopped to say something to Klaus, something that Emma couldn’t hear and then she was out the door shouting for Emma not to forget to lock up.

Klaus was quick to close the distance between the two, though he still left a comfortable gap of space between them. Emma wasn’t sure what to do next so she merely walked behind the bar and removed her apron. She took her time, facing away from him, her pulse suddenly jumping nervously in her throat.

After setting the apron down, and throwing her jacket back over her camisole, she took a seat beside Klaus at the bar. He leaned over the bar, and grabbed a glass of whiskey, taking a single sheet of paper and writing his name and the brand he had taken before slipping it beside the cash register.

Emma had brought two glasses around for the two of them, and as he poured each a glass she pulled the rubber band from her hair allowing her still slightly damp curls to fall around her shoulder. She was aware of the dent in her hair, but merely shook it out and took a sip of the whiskey Klaus had poured her.

They sat in a comfortable silence for a moment before Emma finally looked over at Klaus. She was unsurprised to see him watching her curiously, his gaze intense and making her shift with unease. “What brings you to Moonville?” She finally asked, knowing it was a lame question.

Klaus sighed, turning to his back was to the bar. He seemed to consider his answer for a moment and then seeming resigned spoke. “I’m looking for my brother,” he said, looking to her for a reaction. She kept her face still, unsure of how exactly she was supposed to react. “I haven’t seen him for many years, and I was told that this was the last place he had been.”

“Well, what’s his name? Maybe I’ve seen him. This town is pretty small, it’s kind of one of those ‘every one knows every one’ type of places.”

Klaus smiled tightly before shaking his head. “You wouldn’t have seen him, that I can guarantee.” Emma frowned, unsure of how to respond to that but Klaus didn’t give her an opportunity to. “What about you, Emma? Why are you in a place with Moonville with no family, and no friends.”

Emma was startled into silence. How had he known that? And what made him assume she had no friends? Something about him made her want to tell the truth, maybe it was the way he was looking at her. Maybe it was those strangely amber colored eyes, but she could’ve sworn they were blue…
She blinked, clearing her throat and finally answering. “My parents didn’t agree with my…career choice. They wanted me to do something more productive with my life and all I wanted to do was paint,” she said, hesitating only slightly. “They think I’m attending Ohio State getting a business major,” she admitted reluctantly.

Klaus laughed out loud, smiling at her. “So you are a liar then.”

“What makes you think I’m a liar?”

Klaus leaned forward, suddenly uncomfortably close to her and she dropped her mouth with unease. “It’s those eyes of yours. The way the lashes frame them. They give it just enough shade so you can shield them from those looking, so you can easily hide them if they’re lying. After all, eyes are windows to the soul, love.”

Emma was speechless for a moment, before matching his gaze with one of her own. She made sure to widen her eyes just slightly so that he could have full access to her eyes. “What kind of a soul do I have, then?”

That boyish smile was on his lips again and he leaned forward even more so close, that if she wanted to she could lean forward and brush his nose with her lips. “It’s pure. Innocent. Naïve.”

She frowned then, seemingly unhappy with his answer and leaned back, quick to finish her drink. She could feel it taking its effect on her, her mind was feeling sluggish and her tongue felt heavy. She had only taken two full glasses but Emma had never been that good at holding her liquor. Klaus seemed to notice this and put a cap on the bottle. He finished his own drink, and she wondered how he was not on his hands and knees. He had been drinking the stuff the whole night.

“Come. I’ll walk you home.”
come close.

The night was windy and the cold was biting. Klaus watched as Emma shivered, temporarily forgetting that such a thing was so painful for those who weren’t as gifted as he. Almost instantly, he shrugged off his dark blazer and slipped it over her shoulders. She took it gratefully, the drug in her system taking its toll on her.

“You know, I can drive,” she claimed, looking up at him with wide doe-like eyes. He almost smiled at that, as she tried to play him to get her way. “I don’t far from here.”

Klaus merely chuckled, before bumping her shoulder with his and grinning at her. She looked taken aback but simply blushed and looked at her feet. He wasn’t used to having such a childish relationship with someone. There was hardly any seduction involved, at least not on her part. Klaus hardly ever had to try when it came to these types of things. He either got his way because they wanted it or he made them want it. It was simple, and yet Emma was a challenge he had graciously accepted.

“I’m sure you can, but I would like to walk you home. If it’s not too much trouble for you, that is.” Even as he said, Klaus knew she wanted to decline his offer and crawl into her car. The warmth was tempting her, she could see but the alcohol in her system was also making her hormones disobey any rational thought. Drive away drunk, which was irrational, or walk home with a strange handsome man?

He walked her to her apartment, which truly was only a few blocks from the pub, in a comfortable silence. She was shivering uncontrollably and he had the sudden urge to whisk her into his arms and sprint to her apartment but he maintained the urge, and merely grabbed her forearm and sped up their pace.

“Desperate to get rid of me, huh?” She said with a laugh as they finally came to a stop near her building.

“Not in the slightest. In fact, I would like to spend more time with you. Will you allow me to take you to breakfast tomorrow?” He could sense Emma hesitating, her shivers becoming persistent. He was almost tempted to compel her to agree, but he resisted, finding that he wanted her there willingly.

“I guess. Why breakfast?”

Klaus smiled then, glancing up at a flickering street light. The shadow casting over the two of them made her eyes look enormous and he found they reminded him of a porcelain doll. “It’s my favorite meal of the day,” he said with a secretive smile.

Emma was too intoxicated to really understand the meaning behind that smile but merely nodded, before turning to walk up to the door. Klaus followed her, standing at the bottom of the stairway before she finally turned, her hand on the doorknob and her key now shoved in her pocket.

He could sense an internal battle and finally she spoke. “Would you like to come in?”

Klaus had to fight to keep the smile off his face. Finally. Pretending to consider it, he ascended the stairs until he was on the same as she. He watched as the breath in her throat caught and could tell
that while she was uncomfortable with the idea of letting him into her apartment, a part of her wouldn’t really mind if he were there.

Leaning forward, he could smell strawberries and cocoa butter. His lips brushed the corner of her lip and he pulled away slightly, watching as he eyes widened in surprise. “Maybe next time, Emma. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Then he was gone, leaving her on the apartment complex’s doorstep.
The next morning Klaus stood in front of Emma’s door. He wore a black sweater and dark jeans, his jacket still with Emma. He almost smiled as he reminisced about the night before, it would’ve been so easy to just take her there. He had the invitation, and the alcohol put her in a more than willing stupor, but something had made him hold back. Even he hadn’t planned to kiss her like that, and though it hadn’t been a real kiss it was a rare display of affection that Klaus normally wouldn’t be so eager to display.

He knocked on the door and wasn’t surprised to hear the same groan and thumping as he had the last time he had stood there. The door swung open and once again Emma’s appearance was complete disarray. Her hair stuck up in all the wrong places, her make up smeared down her cheeks. Klaus noticed with pleasure that his jacket was still wrapped around her shoulders.

She stared at him blankly for a moment before something clicked behind her eyes. “Breakfast. Crap, I totally forgot,” she glanced around the apartment quickly, as if looking for assistance. “Come in, I’ll be out in just a second.” Without waiting for him to actually enter her apartment, she disappeared down a hallway.

That first step over someone’s threshold was always so lovely. Klaus couldn’t help but smile when no barrier held him back from her home. To his left was a coat rack; shelving a thick fluffy winter coat and the brown leather jacket he had returned to her the day before. The apartment was shockingly clean considering how forgetful she seemed to be.

The kitchen on his left was spotless, with a stainless steel island top, and a single dish near the sink. The spice rack above the oven was empty, and he could tell nothing in her taste of food, other than that she seemed to like fruit. He examined the fruit bowl in the center island, apples and peaches inside it.

He could tell that she had slept on the couch that night from the kicked around quilts and the pillows splayed over the floor. There were no photographs around the house, other than the standard art displays that usually came with pre-furnished apartments. Other than that, there was a single hallway holding four doors. One clearly holding her bedroom, and the other possibly was a bathroom. But the other two were closed and he could only assume what they were.

Before he could even consider snooping around though, Emma emerged from the furthest door her hair brushed back and her face cleaned of all make up. She wore a dark floral dress with skin-toned tights and a pair of dark velvet boots. His jacket was slung over her arm and she handed it to him sheepishly.

After pulling it on and waiting as she pulled her own jacket on, the two exited the apartment swiftly and walked down a few streets in a comfortable silence. Emma was busy enjoying the rare nice weather, and Klaus was busy enjoying her. The way the smell of strawberries and cocoa butter wafted around her was becoming strangely addicting to him. He almost considered pulling her into the alley and taking her there but he managed to refrain himself.

Emma looked at him then, a sparkle in her eye as the sun reflected her dark blue irises up at him. She truly was a fascinating beauty. They reached the diner he intended to take her to in only a few moments. It was a fifties looking restaurant, with red booths and stainless steel tables. The menus laminated and black and white, and the name of the store in big cursive neon letters.
He brought her to a booth, not bothering to wait for the host to do so. They were handed menus and then the two searched for their meals. Well, Klaus really didn’t need to and since he already knew what to order he watched Emma. The way her lashes just barely brushed her cheeks when she looked down. How her ponytail unintentionally curled to the side to brush the dividend between her neck and shoulder.

A waitress stopped by the table then, interrupting his observation with a coffee pot and some frivolous questions. He realized that she had asked him if they were ready to order when Emma was staring curiously at him. Emma was ordered a stack of pancakes and he simply asked for an omelet. He was actually rather full, the meal he had the night before was rather filling.

When the waitress was gone, Emma leaned on her elbows across the table, squinting at Klaus. He mimicked her motion with a quirked eyebrow. “What are you doing here in Moonville?” He wondered if she had forgotten the conversation they had had the night before.

“I told you, I’m here to find my brother.”

“Then what are you doing here with me?” This question caught him off guard and he merely stared at her for a moment. Both her eyebrows were raised, almost disappearing beneath her bangs. Her fingers folded together, resting beneath her chin.

“I like you,” he said finally, pleased when she blushed. “You’re the rare type of company I like to keep.”

Emma didn’t answer but pulled her arms back and set them on either side of her on the booth. She was thinking of something and he wanted to ask her what, but instead he came up with a different question.

“What are you doing here with me?”

Emma grinned then, rolling her eyes and taking a sip of the water that had just been set on the table. “I didn’t have anything better to do and was pretty damn excited for free pancakes,” she said, that same grin on her face.

Klaus rolled his eyes. “I see, you just can’t admit that you like me too.”

“I’m sure you’re quite the catch, Klaus. But for now, I’m interested in getting to know you. It’s not every day that the new guy in town asks you to breakfast.”

As she spoke both their meals arrived and Emma rubbed her hands together like a villain in a cheesy cartoon. Klaus chuckled and watched as she drowned the pancakes in butter and syrup and carved into them.

“I’m interested in getting to know you as well, Emma,” he murmured under his breath. Though he was sure that his way of getting to know her was a little different than what she had in mind.
Klaus walked Emma to her door, though this time he didn’t just leave her at the door stoop. He didn’t kiss her like he had the other night either, but instead gave her this secretive sort of smile before leaving her feeling odd. She had a hard time admitting to herself that she actually did like Klaus. She wasn’t sure in what way yet, but he was definitely beginning to grow on her. Even as she thought it she realized that all of their conversations had been incredibly vague and off kilter. The only thing she really knew about him was he was English, handsome and looking for his brother.

As she turned to enter her apartment she froze. The door was slightly ajar, and her heart lifted in her throat. Part of her wished Klaus were still there so that he could come in with her, save her from whatever menace was inside. But then she realized just how foolish she sounded even to herself and brought the longest key between her fingers.

Timidly, she opened the door, peering inside. Her fist was clenched in a ball, each key sticking out between her fingers like jagged claws. It could’ve just been that she was clumsy and had forgotten to close and lock the door properly that morning—but Emma would rather have a burglar than admit that she had forgotten something as crucial as that.

It turned out that she was right in suspecting someone breaking and entering though the moment she fully entered the apartment. A head of long brown hair poked up from the ugly brown couch and instantly she relaxed her arm. Though her heart remained in her throat. Even though she didn’t exactly want to attack this person, she never thought she’d see them here. Not in a million years.

“Aimee?” Emma gasped, her hand flying to her chest as if that could stop the rapid beating of her throat. “What are you doing here?”

Aimee only smiled, lifting herself from the couch and setting a magazine on the coffee table. Her hair was down to her waist now, tangled at the ends, and her eyes were bright as ever. “It’s good to see you too, little sister.”

Emma was only able to roll her eyes and hug her sister. At least it wasn’t a serial killer. She pulled away, gazing cautiously at Aimee. “Do mom and dad know you’re here?”

“Yes, but I promise I won’t tell them that you’re not living on campus. They’d probably eat you,” she laughed. “But I’m curious, are you actually going to school up here or do you always just go out with ridiculously attractive English men?”

Emma opened her mouth to protest but Aimee was quick to cut her off.

“I was creeping in the crack at the door, that’s why it’s not shut all the way. Seriously, please tell me you’re sleeping with him or something because my sex life is nonexistent. I need to live off of yours,” Aimee said while simultaneously pulling her sister over to the couch. “So, tell me everything. And by everything, I mean everything. I want every detail. Is he a biter? Does he talk dirty? Does he say things like ‘crumpet’ or ‘good god this is jolly amazing.’”

Emma couldn’t help but laugh at her sister’s insistent badgering. She had almost gotten used to the quiet without her. Put the two together for long enough and Emma would never have to say a word. Aimee would be more than willing to do all the talking for both of them.
“I’m not sleeping with him, Aimee,” Emma muttered. Then at Aimee’s immediately disappointed expression she said, “But he is very handsome, I’ll give you that. He got me drunk last night and walked me home. Was a perfect gentleman, and I’m pretty positive I invited him in but he declined.”

“So you weren’t just coming home from a night of incredibly rough sex?” Aimee’s disappointment was like a breath of fresh air. It was almost like being back home again and whenever Emma had even the slightest interaction with a boy Aimee would jump on her the moment they were alone.

“No, he was walking me home from breakfast.”

“Well, that’s sweet, I guess. Sweet and boring.”

“Boring is sometimes a good thing, Aimee.”
Emma and Aimee walked into Josie’s Pub, this time, however, they were patrons. No one would ask Emma to get them anything, no one would beg her for free alcohol. Tonight she would be able to enjoy herself. As they took their seats at a small round booth, Emma noticed with disdain that the regulars who had always badgered her for her number were at the bar, now bothering Josie.

If her sister weren’t there she would’ve forced herself to go up to the bar and tell the men off, but she forced her attention away from it all. Josie was probably enjoying it anyway, she always dressed to please the male eye.

“Is there anyone worth having sex with here?” Aimee asked, sipping on a Shirley Temple. Her eyes travelled the bar, and Emma couldn’t help but roll her eyes at her sister’s persistence. After Emma had told her nothing was going on between she and Klaus, Aimee wouldn’t stop talking about him. Asking if he was available to her then and Emma found herself strongly disagreeing. After that, Aimee had come to the conclusion that Emma was actually madly in love with him and the two should wed.

Though Emma was the younger of the two, Aimee seemed to act like a teenager most days. She was the type of girl who would make up wild fantasies that could clearly never happen just to entertain herself.

Aimee’s eyes sparkled for a moment and before Emma could ask her why, the answer was in front of her eyes. “Klaus,” she said, surprised that she wasn’t surprised to see him. Immediately, Klaus made himself comfortable among the two, sliding in next to Aimee. His eyes remained on Emma though and a man slid in next to her, he was blonde with shining grey eyes.

Instantly, she was annoyed. She opened her mouth to protest, to even yell at the man next to her to get away but Klaus was already talking. He looked at her sister and grinned, holding out his hand. “I don’t believe we’ve met.”

Aimee exchanged a glance with Emma, one that spoke of mischief and Emma immediately knew she was going to regret coming here. “I’m Aimee. You’re dating my sister.” And there it was. Emma felt her face turn hot as she blushed furiously, looking anywhere but at Klaus. She could feel his gaze on her.

Josie stopped at their booth then, a tray with a few drinks on it. She set them down, reading out an order that probably Klaus had made. Then she circled the booth and handed Emma a piece of paper. It was a newspaper clipping, and skimming it quickly she nearly dropped it.

Her hands trembled barely, and she felt nauseas. “Emma? What is it?” She couldn’t tell who was talking, Aimee and Klaus’ voices had blended together.

“Another murder,” she murmured. “Two actually. One was…Mr. Anderson, my art teacher. The other was the guy who was bothering me at the bar,” her voice cracked. She was more upset about Mr. Anderson than anything. The man had been a huge inspiration to her painting and everything else she had ended up making. But something about the fact that the man who had been hitting on her just a day before being another victim had her feeling partially responsible. The article said he was found in an alley not too far from here, killed the same as Deputy Morris and now Mr. Anderson.
“Cool, you didn’t tell me you had a serial killer!” Aimee exclaimed, her Shirley Temple empty now. She had that lazy eye that told Emma she was getting tipsy, and she simply rolled her eyes at her sister.

“Guess I won’t be taking art for a few weeks,” she muttered.

Klaus grinned at that, and Emma wanted to hit him. How could this be something to smile at? He looked away almost instantly though, something clearly catching his attention. “Hansen,” he said sharply and the blonde man next to her looked where he had been looking just a moment ago. Hansen stood abruptly and left the table.

“What was that all about?” Aimee asked, batting her lashes at Klaus. Once again, Emma was shocked to find that she was instantly annoyed by this. Klaus seemed to pay no mind to Aimee though, and looked at Emma before sliding a piece of paper across the table.

“Don’t open that until you get home,” he said, and then disappeared after Hansen.

Aimee frowned, trying to snatch the paper from her sister. “Well, open it! What if it’s a nude picture of him!”
Klaus pushed his way out of Josie’s Pub searching for Hansen in the near black alley. The heavy flow of rain wasn’t helping his search and he could always see things just fine. “Hansen!” His irritancy was obvious in his voice. Sitting with Emma had been the highlight of his day. He had spent the majority of it scanning cemeteries that matched the setting in the photo of Elijah.

There was still the mystery question of who sent it and why. Then of course, was his brother really here? Or had he been? Eventually though, he found a headstone that matched one his brother had been standing by. It wasn’t of any significance. The only thing that mattered was that Elijah had been here, and he may still be here. It was entirely possible he was the one doing all the random killings though Klaus doubted it. If Elijah were anything, it was controlled and it was subtle.

Just as Klaus was about to follow a shadow he saw in the back of the alley, Hansen popped up in front of him. His jacket slick and his hair pressed against his forehead. His eyes were wide, and the traceries of vein beneath his eyes were fading away. “I thought I saw—it doesn’t matter, let’s go back inside.”

Klaus didn’t bother to question Hansen, for he really wasn’t in the mood. He really only wanted to go back inside and smell that sweet scent of strawberries and cocoa butter. Drawing things out like this with Emma was near torture for him, but he needed something to keep him occupied during his search.

The sad thing was he really did enjoy spending his time with her. She was an interesting type of girl, one who had some depth to her that she spent a lot of time hiding. He was curious to dig it out of her, and if completely necessary he would compel it out of her if his time grew short. It was always more fun to play the actual game rather than cheat.

When the two entered the bar, he felt a flood of disappointment rush over him when he noticed that the booth Emma and her annoying friend had sat at was empty. He felt his lips tighten into a frown and he merely glanced around the bar for someone else to occupy his time. There was the thought of simply showing up at her door once more, but he knew the other girl would be there. So instead, he remembered the paper he had given her and smiled, knowing fully well her curiosity would get the better of her and she would willingly follow his instructions.

In the meantime, the blonde in the corner booth would have to hold his attention.
cemetery drive.

Emma waited until Aimee was fast asleep to open the slip of paper Klaus had given her. Aimee had been persistent and the two had even wrestled. Aimee’s curiosity had been overwhelming and it had grown on Emma, but still she refused to let the other girl know what it said. It was silly really, but for some reason she wanted to keep it to herself.

Aimee had passed out on Emma’s bed while the two were watching some sappy soap opera. It was in Spanish and the English subtitles made absolutely no sense so the two simply guessed what was actually happening. Their depictions were inaccurate but the two spent the majority of the night laughing and eating over-buttered popcorn.

Her sister was sleeping face down, her arms hanging limply off the bed and a blanket haphazardly over her rear. Emma stood up, sneaking out of the room to open the sheet of paper. It wasn’t paper, really. It was too thick, almost like sketching paper. As she unfolded it she was pleased to see how elegant Klaus’ handwriting was. It was curvy and elongated when it needed to be drooped.

The paper held only an address and a time. She could only assume it was meant for today since it held no other information. She frowned, glancing at the clock and then back at the paper. The paper indicated that she should arrive at midnight, but the clock in front of her said 11:45. She cursed, grabbing her keys off the counter and slipping on a pair of ballet flats.

She darted out the door and got into her car before speeding off toward the street name given. She has no idea where it would take her, but when she arrived it certainly was not what she expected at all. She hesitated before parking, almost sure she had gotten the address wrong, but there was nothing else in sight.

A cemetery loomed before her and instantly she regretted her choice in men. Or at least, the men she allowed to charm their way into getting her breakfast. What kind of psycho invites you to a cemetery?

Sighing, she kicked open the driver’s door and got out. Completely unsure of where to go, she wandered aimlessly down the broken path provided in the center of the cemetery. She chewed on the inside of her cheek as nervous habit, glancing around and almost as if she were in a corny horror film, smog flooded the cemetery.

A sudden silly thought darted through her mind. What if Klaus was the serial killer? What if she was his next victim? But that was absurd, because he was Klaus and he was ridiculously handsome and cultured. But he was new to the town…but then again he had arrived several days after the killings happened, so if couldn’t be him.

She mentally smacked herself out of the thoughts. The dark and the fog were making her paranoid and all she really wanted to do was find Klaus and yell at him for being idiotic and dragging her into some creepy place for the dead.

Just as she considered turning around and heading back to her car, she happened upon dozens of tiny dotted lights. She frowned, squinting to attempt to better make out what they might be. She then realized they were little lights of a patio, one that belonged to a much larger house.

Against her better judgment she followed the path toward the house and was pleased to see that it was in fact a rather lovely home; one with dark mahogany wood, slick with polishes and cream
columns holding a balcony on the highest floor up. She reached the front door and pounded the elaborate doorknocker. The sound seemed amplified in the quiet; the only other sound was of distant crickets chirping.

The door flung open and Emma started. Klaus opened the door seeming to loom over her, but his smile was warm and he widened the door and allowed her to step inside. “What is this? Some sort of booty call,” she joked, though Klaus’ expression did not change.

“Of course not,” he murmured, noticing her bare arms and the goose pimples that decorated them. “You’re cold. Let’s get you to the fire.”

Emma seemed to notice then as well that she had forgotten her jacket and cursed herself once more for being so forgetful. She couldn’t stop staring at the walls around her. Gold and bronze walls and frames housing French paintings, and Victorian rugs with crimson borders. The staircase was wide and grand and everything seemed to be made of the same mahogany wood.

He took her to a room filled to the brim with books. There was a roaring fire in a grey stoned fireplace, and blood red leather sofas around it. He sat her down in one and took a seat across from her after pouring himself a glass of scotch. He had offered her one but she declined, saying that she would have to drive home.

Klaus merely chuckled to himself as if he were listening in to a joke only he could hear. Emma suddenly felt tense, incredibly uncomfortable like something terrible was about to happen. But the only thing happening was the fire thawing her frozen skin and Klaus sipping at his drink. He was staring intently into the flames, as if searching for a picture inside them.

“So, Klaus. What am I doing here?” As Emma spoke she stood, walking to a random bookshelf and scanning the titles there. There were several she recognized. \textit{The Iliad, A Tale of Two Cities,} and \textit{A Time to Kill.} But then several she couldn’t even read.

“I noticed how upset you were about the deaths today and I wanted to offer you my sympathies.” Emma snorted, unsure of how exactly to react to that. She knew that he meant well, but the way he worded things some times was just so old fashioned.

“And that’s all you brought me here for? To offer me \textit{your} sympathies?”

“No, that’s not all.”

Emma turned then, expecting to see him still at the couch but he was directly in front of her now. She started, the words that had been on the tip of her tongue vanishing. She hadn’t even heard him come up and now there he was. For a moment she could’ve sworn there was something wrong with his eyes. Something snaking beneath his eyelids, but as fast as she noticed that it was gone and instead his lips were on hers.
kiss me.

His lips were warm and overwhelming. For a moment she remained rigid, shocked by just the touch of his mouth on hers, and then she found herself melting as his hand reached up to clasp the back of her neck and the other wound around her waist. Her fingers bunched in the fabric of his sweater and her knees buckled as he kissed her.

He held her up with ease, seeming not to even notice her inability to hold herself up. He caught her lower lip between the both of his and her teeth caught his upper lip. Finally she was able to gain some semblance of control but her legs still felt like jelly and her hands entwined around his neck, her fingers curling in his hair. She felt him smile against her lips and his fingers crept up the hem of her shirt, resting on her waist. The touch of his skin against hers sent strange vibrations to her core, and she let a gasp out as he pressed his body against hers, causing her to collapse against the couch.

The crackle of flame and the sound of her catching breaths were the only sound in the room. He occasionally let out a growl as her leg curled around his waist and then he was lifting her into the air until she was somehow straddling his waist. His head was tilted up as he once again captured her lips with his and unable to control the lust in her gut she clawed at the hem of his shirt, lifting it over his head.

She didn’t miss the amused grin on his lips as she did so and while she was running her fingers along the soft white skin of his chest, he was trailing small butterfly kisses along her throat. Occasionally grazing his teeth along the soft flesh there, her pulse beating wildly as his hands cupped her rear.

“Wait, wait, Klaus. This is…” she cried out as he playfully bit her shoulder. With a great amount of strength she managed to push herself away from him. The expression on his face was still amused but she didn’t miss the slight annoyance there. “This is too fast. I just met you and I…”

Even as she trailed off and her tone was still definite she couldn’t bring herself to remove herself from his lap. Her hands still rested on his chest and for a minute she was certain that there was nothing underneath. Almost like no heartbeat, but maybe that was just because the rapid beating of her own heart was overlapping his. Distracted, she removed her hand from his chest and stood up.

Running her fingers through her hair, desperately trying to clear her head. She could still taste the alcohol that had been on his tongue, and it wasn’t doing well keeping her focused. He smelled like mint and salt, and she wanted to run back to him. Glancing over at him, she noticed he hadn’t bothered putting his shirt back on, which lay in a crumpled pile at his feet.

“I think I should go home,” she said reluctantly. Klaus merely let a defeated sigh out before standing and grabbing the shirt. He pulled it back on before walking over to her and she had to crane her head just to meet his eyes.

“I’ll walk you to your car,” he murmured before pressing his mouth firmly against hers once. Then he grabbed his jacket and put it around her shoulders once again. The two walked in a familiar silence, but this time he had laced his fingers through hers, keeping her hand pressed against his chest.

Once again she noticed that she could feel no heartbeat beneath the material of his shirt, but she was more focused on the feel of his callused fingers encasing hers.
When they reached her car she noticed the smog was still there and it seemed to have trapped her car in it. She sighed, unlocking the door and going to get inside. Klaus pulled her back though, smiling once more and she braced herself for another kiss. Kissing him was like taking a drug. Each time was completely disorienting and she needed all the support she could get just to handle it properly.

“This was certainly a revealing night,” she muttered breathlessly. Klaus only chuckled before holding the car door for her. The door shut and she drove off down the path, Klaus standing with his hands in his pockets. As she was about to leave the gates she looked in her rearview mirror in the hopes to catch a glimpse of him but there was nothing but the fog.
Klaus felt sick. The evening hadn’t gone at all like he had planned, and yet he was completely pleased and disgusted with himself all at the same time. The two conflicting emotions were giving him a headache and so he grabbed his half full bottle of whiskey and took a swig from the nozzle. He growled, annoyed that it wasn’t immediately settling his nausea and chucked the bottle into the fireplace. The fire roared in disapproval and Klaus found himself sinking into the sofa.

He could still smell her there. Strawberries filled his nostrils as he closed his eyes and remembered the way her skin felt beneath his skin, smooth like butter. He could still hear the sweet gasps she made when he touched her somewhere unexpected; he could still hear her pulse hammering against her thin skin.

If she hadn’t stopped him when she had he probably would’ve torn into her flesh. But wasn’t that the plan all along? To have his way with her and then dispose of her like he always had done before. Then why had he let her go? Why had he walked her to her car and given her his god damn jacket again?

He felt foolish, and exhilarated at the same time. Wanting more and more. But instead he stood up and paced the room, trying to figure out how he could better ease his tension. The answer, as always, was simple. He just needed a drink.

Hansen was in the attic settling Klaus’ more valuable furniture, and other than that the house was empty. The rest of his entourage was out enjoying themselves, and he should’ve been doing the same.

It took him only moments to find something to sink his teeth into. A slender girl with dark hair and wide green eyes. She was walking home alone, and he once again found himself shaking his head at just how trusting this town was. He took her in only moments, appearing before and charming her with just a little help from his more advanced attributes. Then she was lying limp in his arms against one of the brick alleyways.

After disposing of her body and tearing the skin away from her throat a little more to better hide the teeth marks there, he found himself making his way toward Emma’s apartment. He knew she and her friend would be sleeping by now, but that still wouldn’t hurt to take a peek.

Only a moment later he found himself in her room. He had skipped over the brunette girl who had been collapsed on the couch, murmuring something about a list of different plants. He ignored her before sidling into Emma’s room and instantly his was awestruck. What about this girl fascinated him so? He couldn’t find the answer anywhere, but as he gazed down at her now he didn’t care.

Her hair was fanned across her pillow, her arms spread on the mattress. The moon filtered through the blinds and gaze the room a blue hue. He sat cautiously on her bed and simply looked at her. The way her lashes brushed against her cheek and her lips parted as she breathed. Maybe he could wait to kill her, maybe he didn’t have to do it so soon.
waiting game.

Emma sat up in bed, hating herself for telling Josie she’d pick up those early morning shifts. Since she no longer had art class to attend, at least not until they found a replacement teacher, she needed something to bide the time. Aimee was and always had been a late sleeper, she would sleep well before Emma returned from work and would probably never notice she had left. Especially with the hangover Aimee was bound to have.

It took her a few moments to get ready, having showered after she came home from Klaus’. With a sudden twinge in her gut she recalled the events of the evening and couldn’t decide whether she hated herself or not. Giving in like that was not something she was used to doing but she really hadn’t wanted to say no to Klaus.

She smiled as she tied up her hair, remembering the feel of his lips against hers, the scruff on his cheeks scratching at her hands. The feel of his fingers tugging at her hair felt almost current and she shivered slightly before going to her closet and pulling on a grey v-neck and a pair of black jeans.

The day was nice, chilly still but nice enough to walk. So with Klaus’ jacket wrapped around her shoulders she made her way over to Josie’s bar knowing the questions she’d received. For once she was glad to open the bar because then it gave her a chance to explain without the curious listening regulars.

Josie had long ago given Emma her own key since she was normally the one closing shop, so it didn’t come to much surprise that she had to unlock the back herself. She stepped inside hearing the muffled radio station from the front of the bar. Other than that and the sound of her footsteps the bar was silent.

“Josie,” she called out. But there was no answer and she found herself checking the clock to see if she was just ridiculously early. But no, in fact she was ten minutes late. So where was Josie?

Frowning, she made her way to the office. The door was wide open and the lights were flickering, her computer was on a stats page of the previous nights totals. She saw candy bar wrappers and empty energy drinks in the trash bin.

Then she went to the bar area and froze. Her gut twisted at the scene before her and she ran to the limp form on the floor. Josie was dead though, and no matter how loud Emma yelled at the girl she remained immobile. She caught sight of the tear in her throat and the blood leaking down her chest. Somehow she imagined the sight would be more gruesome, finding the work of a serial killer. But in fact, Josie looked peaceful aside from the tear in her shirt and the wound at her throat.

Emma’s vision was blurred with tears as she hesitantly released her friend and pulled a cell phone from her pocket. She dialed the police station and explained to them what happened. Knowing it would only be a mere minutes before they showed up she peered around the room, hoping for some indication of who had been there before. But she found nothing…and then there was something.

A photo, crumpled in Josie’s right hand. Frowning, and wiping at her eyes she took the photo and smoothed it out against her thigh. There was an image of a dark haired girl, and a poised man in an elegant suit. His jaw was strong and his chin was dimpled, but the girl facing away from the camera’s lens was faceless.
Something flashed in her vision and she tucked the photo away quickly, before standing to unlock the front door. The two detectives shoved past her to examine the body, telling her to have a seat. She did so and while she waited she sent a text.

By the time the coroner was there Emma’s eyes were dry, and she only felt sick. She kept her arms wrapped around her torso and her head between her knees trying desperately not to vomit or faint. A soothing hand found its way to her back and she jumped, sitting up so fast that she immediately had a headache.

Klaus sat beside her with that same amused smile on his face, though this time there was a crease in between his eyes. Emma let out a sound that was similar to a laugh and a sob before burying her head into his shoulder.

They sat like that for a few moments and Klaus scanned the area around him smelling nothing but blood. He realized why the moment he got a good look at Emma, she was clutching a thick piece of paper, one that had her friend’s blood smeared on it.

“What’s that?”

“Josie was holding it when I found her,” she whispered, handing the photo to Klaus. She watched in an odd fascination as his jaw tightened and his lips pursed and a single word escaped his lips.

“Elijah.”
“What?”

Klaus started, looking from Emma to the picture in his hand. The man was clearly his brother Elijah, there was no mistaking him but for some reason he could not place the woman. He refused to let himself believe it could be the person he had been searching for; he refused to let himself believe it could be Katerina. There were so many things he’d like to do to that woman, and yet he refused to believe this girl was she. Besides, the hair was much shorter than he last saw it, he could never picture Katerina doing something so drastic.

“Nothing, you say your friend was carrying this?” Emma nodded and he glanced over at the body, which now had a thin white sheet laying over it. Clearly this was left for him, and him alone. He glanced at Emma once more, her eyes raw and her cheeks red. Emma was their way of getting to him. He mentally cursed himself for allowing this game to go as far as it had, and yet he couldn’t bring himself to end it.

He merely put his arms around Emma and waited until the police and coroner had left the bar. They were ushered out as the town closed the bar for the day, and he walked her to her car where he helped her settle in the passenger seat. When they arrived at her apartment, he walked her to her door and followed her inside.

Emma’s sister was on the couch twitching in her sleep and completely oblivious to any change in the scenery.

“Will you stay? Just for a little while?” Emma said suddenly, turning to face Klaus. He nodded and allowed her to pull him toward her bedroom. When he caught sight of her bed, the image of her asleep in it flashed past his eyes. He had stared at her for quite some time that night, watching her sleep and the way her chest raised and lowered with each breath. But the thought of tearing her throat out then and there was always in the back of his mind and he never completely pushed it away. He wanted more though before he would kill her.

She pulled him in the bed beside her and he wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her back to against his torso. He was pleased to find how easily she fit against him, and he buried his face against her hair. Inhaling the sweet smell of strawberries, he lay with her until her breathing slowed and she was in a fitful sleep. He could sense her nightmares; the way her heart quickened against his palm, and her breathing hitched.

Her nightmares were not his worry though. He left her after awhile, enjoying her scent and her warmth until he remembered the photograph tucked in her jacket. Before he left he took it from her, and made his way back to the cemetery.

Entering his home, he headed straight for the attic. It was quiet there, but he knew Hansen was not far. He gazed at the fine oak coffins containing his family. He traced a thin finger along Rebecca’s coffin, before turning upon hearing Hansen’s entrance.

“She’s here, and someone’s left me a message with a dead body. We need to find him now,” Klaus hissed, showing the photograph.
When Emma woke alone she felt cold. Cold and lost. The sky was orange as the sun began to set and she could hear the sound of water running and knew Aimee must be showering. But she couldn’t bring herself to move, only to stare at the ceiling with her hand on the spot Klaus had been.

She couldn’t decipher why she had the feelings she did, especially after knowing him for such a short amount of time. She briefly considered what to call these feelings, and could only find a blank space, there was simply feelings that she couldn’t describe. She just knew she wanted him near her and was overwhelmed by how disappointing waking without him beside her had been.

Then she turned her head and remembered why he had been with her in the first place. Josie. Her throat tightened, and ached. She had thought that maybe it could’ve been a dream, maybe Josie was sitting back at the bar wondering where she was. But Josie was somewhere else entirely, all that was left was an empty shell.

A lone tear trailed down her cheek and she wiped it away hastily before sitting up. There was nothing she could do now. But the afterthoughts of a job hung in the back of her head. She had no idea what would happen now that Josie was gone. Josie’s Pub was such a popular place there was no way it could be shut down for long. New management would have to take over, and she had no idea who that would be and what if they didn’t give her her job back? Then what would she do?

Emma felt so selfish in that instant. Thinking about her future, and worrying more about that then the fact that one of her best friends had just been murdered. That cold feeling washed over her again and she wished Klaus were there to comfort her in some way. She wanted his arms around her.

Letting out a shuddering breath, Emma finally forced herself to get up and leave her room. She pulled a cardigan on before leaving and tightened it with her hands before searching for Aimee. She came out of the bathroom towel-drying her hair and smiled upon seeing Emma.

Her expression immediately dropped when she caught sight of the make up smeared across her cheeks and blood shot color of her eyes. “Em, what happened?”

Emma explained then, and the two ended up wrapped in each other’s arms on the couch. Emma’s eyes were too dry to cry anymore, and Aimee simply stroked her hair “Don’t worry, Emma. They’ll find the bastard that did it and he’ll be locked away forever. Don’t worry, babe, I’m here.”
Time running.

Things remained very quiet for the next week. Klaus had disappeared, Emma hadn’t seen him since Josie’s death and he only stayed in contact with the occasional phone call. Aimee was really her only company. She didn’t have a job; she didn’t have school. Boredom was slowly seeping into her brain and she feared it would drive her crazy.

It was five days into that next week that she got a phone call. She answered groggily, and a voice spoke to her and immediately she felt some familiarity there. “Emma Graham? Is there an Emma Graham at this number?” The man speaking sounded incredibly cultured, and she was momentarily at a loss for words. It reminded her so much of Klaus, of the voice she’d been missing for what felt like ages.

“Yes, this is Emma,” she finally choked out.

“Hello, Emma. My name is Elliott and I’m picking up Mr. Anderson’s art class and am trying to contact his students. Are you still interested in taking the course?”

“Yes…yes, of course I am!”

“Great, we’ll see you Monday then.” The phone died then and Emma felt a buzz of relief wash through her. Finally, some type of activity to keep her occupied. Aimee was only so much of a distraction to her problems. Even then she couldn’t bring herself to think about, so she merely walked back to the couch with her sister and grinned.

“What?” Aimee said, shoving a handful of buttered popcorn into her mouth.

“Someone’s replaced Mr. Anderson. So I get to go back to school,” Emma said with a grin. Aimee swatted at her sister, in a show of sibling affection before returning her focus to the television.

They had been watching some horror movie with a ridiculous amount of blood and carnage, but Emma was too excited to care. She found her cell phone before scrolling through the list of contacts—one that wasn’t very long, and landed on Klaus’. She doubted he’d care, but she needed to share this excitement with him even if he didn’t seem to want to see her.

She sent him the text and waited impatiently for him to respond, but it never came.

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On Monday Emma made her way to class in a white t-shirt and a pair of loose fitting jeans that already had clay and paint smears covering them. Her hair was pulled back and she carried a case of brushes and other drawing pens with her.

When she got to class she was shocked to find that she and two others were the only ones to show up. She didn’t recognize the two that sat at the front of the class, their backs straight and alert, but it didn’t matter since she liked the quiet when she worked.

She was even more surprised to find that her teacher looked as formal and professional as he had
sounded. He wore a neatly pressed pinstriped suit, with a close fitted tie. His jaw was sharp as were the rest of his features, and his hair was slicked close to his head. For looking so uptight he was very handsome, and she had a hard time focusing on the fact that he didn’t look anything like an art teacher.

“Ah, you must be Emma,” he said, with a tight smile before walking over to her and hovering above her desk. Emma only nodded before staring up at him and noticing he had a shocking set of green eyes, one that looked oddly familiar. He blinked and she snapped out of that temporary trance before he cleared his throat. “Good, we can get started then.”

They didn’t do anything artistic really, but merely discussed art history. She found herself dozing off, staring curiously at Elliott before she blinked once more and realized that not only had the time completely disappeared, but also the only ones left in that classroom were Elliott and she.

He had loosened his tie and removed his jacket, his hair looked frazzled as if he had run his fingers through it numerous times. But somehow she had blacked out the entire class and couldn’t remember a single thing. She looked down at herself, and found no paint stains and not a single movement done on her part across the parchment.

Frowning, Emma stood up and gathered her things. As she was about to leave, Elliott’s voice called her back. “Don’t forget to tell Klaus what we’ve discussed, Emma.”

She merely nodded before heading back home.
Emma walked home in a daze completely forgetting that her car was left in the school’s parking lot. She found herself noticing little things and forgetting them just as easily. Like the squirrel speeding up the elementary school’s sign; or the way the white walk sign flashed at her. She even missed her apartment door and continued walking on down the road until she found herself on the outskirts of town.

Frowning, she blinked away the haze in her eyes and looked around her. She was in the cemetery outside of Klaus’ home. She couldn’t remember walking there, or even the thought to go there, but she was there and now and she might as well go say hello.

She didn’t even realize that Klaus might still be on his vacation, but she continued along the path. It took her a moment to realize that fog was coming in fast, and the sun had begun setting behind her. She watched as shadows crept behind each of the grave markers and a feeling of uneasiness settled in her gut.

What good reason did she have being in this cemetery at night? She should just turn around and go home, and yet she found she was unable to. She simply continued to keep walking forward until she reached the barely familiar doorstep of Klaus’ manor home.

She grabbed the knocker and slammed it on the wooden doors hearing the sound resonate through the home. Almost as if she were in some horror movie, the door creaked open of its own accord. It was almost as if the fog were turning into finger tendrils and beckoning her inside and shoving her forward at the same time.

The thought that she was entering at an unwanted time didn’t even cross her mind, but she continued forward until she stood in the library. The room was the most familiar place there that she felt that should be where she could go and at the same time there was a force stronger than that of memory compelling her to go there.

It wasn’t Klaus she found in the library though. She frowned for a moment, recognizing the man but forgetting his name. He had sat with her and Aimee that night at Josie’s pub and just as quickly disappeared out the door. What was his name?

“Emma,” the man said in surprise, stepping forward. “What are you doing here?” She opened her mouth to speak but he held up a finger. “Stupid question. You’re here to see Klaus I imagine. Well, he’s not here right now.”

“I can see that.” It took Emma a few tries before she could form the next sentence, something in the back of her mind told her the words weren’t for this man but she somehow managed to force them out anyway. “Could you tell Klaus that Elijah says hello?”

Something happened in that moment that Emma couldn’t quite decipher. The man stiffened and she remembered his name. Hansen. The sound of glass breaking reverberated to her bones as Hansen dropped his glass of scotch. Then Hansen was moving toward her but he was vibrating and he was moving very fast and yet she saw him moving slower than any normal human being. He was in front of her then, his fingers wrapped around her throat and snakes crawling under his eyes. “I’m sorry Emma, I can’t tell him that.” He leaned forward, his black eyes searching hers. “And I can’t have you telling him that either.”
Then he bit her.
welcome home.

Emma was aware of pain and the fact that she was slowly losing the ability to see or even to hold herself up. Her knees were sinking and black was slowly clouding her vision. She wanted to scream but it was like he was sucking away her voice as he tore into her throat. She was only able to claw feebly at his shoulders until they too fell limp at her sides.

So this is how I’m going to die. Even as she felt her energy ebb away she kept picturing those snakes crawling under Hansen’s eyes but she was picturing them under someone else’s eyes….Elliot’s, he had those eyes as well. But he wasn’t really Elliot was he? He was someone else…he was the reason she was dying now.

Vaguely, Emma recalled hearing a snarl, and then there was an even sharper pain at her throat. As if the strings of a marionette were being snapped she collapsed on herself, the back of her head smashing the corner of the coffee table and then she lay on the floor. There was something hot all around her, something wet and it was soaking her throat and her hair, but she couldn’t move to brush it away so she simply lay there.

Were her eyes still closed? Or was she blind now? It didn’t matter because she just wanted to sleep, it was too much work to keep awake…

I’ll just go to sleep now. It’ll all be okay.

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Klaus wanted to kill him. He wanted to tear him apart and spread his limbs across the library but he had to know why. Hansen couldn’t just attack Emma for any reason, and even if there was no reason he wanted him to suffer. Fear was the worst pain the mind could come up with and he would make Hansen die of fear before he gave him an easy death.

“What have you done?” Any calm demeanor he had possessed before evaporated the moment he saw Emma bleeding to death in Hansen’s arms. There should’ve been several things more concerning, like that fact that he didn’t want Emma dead at all. He wasn’t killing Hansen for the mere fact that he scorned Klaus of the kill, he was going to destroy Hansen for harming Emma. His heart seemed to beat when he was with her, and he would let no man take that away from him.

Hansen struggled; clawing at Klaus’ hands even though he was smart enough to know his death was imminent. There was absolutely nothing he could do to defeat Klaus, nothing anyone could do. Klaus grabbed hold of Hansen’s jaw and forced him to meet his eyes.

“Why have you done this? Why are you trying to hurt Emma?” he growled, his grip tightening to a bone-crushing grip. Hansen cried out and Klaus released him, but kept his forearm pressed firmly across his chest.

“Elijah has contacted her and wanted to send you a message and I couldn’t let that happen.”

“Why not?”
“Katherine would kill me if I did.”

Klaus froze. “Katarina?” He spoke more to himself than to Hansen. How was it possible that Katarina Petrova was behind this? “Tell me everything, now.”

“I don’t know all the details. Katherine had me take the pictures of her and Elijah speaking in the grave so that I could send them to you and preoccupy you with finding your brother. She never said what she was looking for, or what Elijah was looking for. My orders were to keep you in Moonville.”

“And you did that by killing…you are the one who killed Josie, aren’t you? Why did you bring Emma into this?”

“I didn’t. The bartender was just the easiest kill.”

Klaus paused, trying to decipher everything. Elijah and Katarina working together. Against him? No matter there’s nothing they could do to stop him, not now, not ever.

“Elijah is here?” Hansen nodded. “What about Katarina?”

“I don’t know where she is, last I heard she was heading to Mystic Falls.”
When Hansen was laying on the floor his head in the fire and his body in a crumpled heap, Klaus ran to Emma. The thoughts running through his head were innumerable but at that moment nothing mattered by Emma. Nothing mattered but making her come back to him.

He scooped her into his lap, one arm at the pulse in her throat and the other under her shoulders. “Emma?” He couldn’t even manage to get his voice above a whisper, he found himself frantically brushing her matted hair away from her face. She was slick with sweat and blood and when he pulled his hand away from her head he understood why she wasn’t responding to him.

The sound that came from his mouth shocked him more than anything in that moment could’ve. A sob. A single sob burst from between his lips as he realized the back of her head was bleeding and she could have brain damage if he didn’t act soon enough. Without a moment’s hesitation his teeth tore into his wrist, and he was prying Emma’s lips apart with his fingers to press the wounded part of his skin to her mouth.

It seemed like eons before the skin at her throat began to close. Blood was still smeared in her hair and on her throat but the wound was gone and tenderly feeling the back of her head he saw that the gash there was healed as well. He let out a breath he felt he had been holding for years, even though he hadn’t needed oxygen for nearly a century.

Emma’s eyelids fluttered and the moment he was able to look at her and her chest was rising and falling normally he wanted to do nothing more than hold her forever. Her forehead creased and she stared at Klaus, her hand coming up to rest on his cheek. She smiled and then seeming to realize something her mouth popped open and she felt her throat only to find nothing there.

Klaus realized then what she was looking for and what she would soon see if he didn’t act fast. He kissed her quickly, and grabbed her face between both of his hands, and forced her to look at him. “Emma, go to sleep. When you wake up you’ll just remember hitting your head, nothing else. Nothing of Elijah, and nothing of Hansen. Close your eyes and go to sleep. When you wake up, everything will be as it was.”

After a moment a look of peace went over Emma’s face and then she let her eyes flutter shut and she was sleeping peacefully in his arms. He carried her to his room and laid her beneath the covers before making sure that Hansen’s body was removed and completely out of sight. He shut the doors to the library and found one of his ‘associates’ lounging about in the kitchen before ordering them to remove anything out of the ordinary.

Then he returned to Emma’s side, and lay beside her in the bed. He took that time to allow his mind to run rampant. Hansen had been almost useless, but he had enough information to pique Klaus’ curiosity.

What the hell was Elijah and Katarina planning? He could find no explanation other than perhaps they were plotting against him. Klaus knew Elijah was seeking the rest of their family, and Klaus had every intention of returning Elijah to them. He just needed everything to be in order before he could do that. Until that time however, he needed to find Elijah and Katarina.
When Emma finally opened her eyes the sun was high in the sky and the familiar sound of running water reverberated through the walls. She sat up, rubbing at her head and glanced around her apartment. There was nothing out of the ordinary just the pounding in her head.

She stood and made her way to the kitchen, grabbing an orange from the fruit bowl and peeling away the skin. When she was biting into it, allowing the food to settle in her stomach and ease whatever queasiness had made its bed there, her sister came out from the bathroom. Emma was unsurprised to find Aimee completely naked, but her sister winked at her and began dressing.

“So stud, where were you all day yesterday?” As Aimee spoke she winked at her sister, and Emma was utterly confused. Aimee didn’t need a verbal notification to see Emma was clueless. “You were gone before I woke up and didn’t come back until...well, this is the first I’ve seen you since the day before yesterday.”

Frowning, Emma scratched at her head again. She couldn’t even remember anything about yesterday. All she remembered was the call she’d gotten about art class starting up and her excitement to return when she went to sleep. But now everything was a blur. “I must’ve gotten incredibly drunk last night or something, because I have absolutely no idea,” Emma said. She tried a laugh but it was too painful.

“Must’ve been one hell of a party.”

Emma laughed, throwing the rest of her orange away and headed toward the bathroom. She had the sudden feeling as if she were very dirty. She wanted nothing more than to be rid of whatever filth was coating her head, whether it is real or her imagination. She shut the door and turned on the water to almost scalding and undressed and stepped inside.

As she let the water rub away any tension in her joints and cleanse that invisible dirt from her skin she closed her eyes and tried hard to remember anything from the previous night. Aside from a headache she could find nothing. There was not a single thing she remembered doing the night before and she was more worried about that than anything she’d ever worried about before. She was shocked by how frustrated her amnesia was making her. She almost wanted to cry, but she merely furiously scrubbed shampoo into her hair.

Just as she was wrapping a towel around herself she heard someone knocking on the door. She didn’t bother going to get it knowing Aimee would, but it was then the knocking kept coming. “Aimee! Can you get that?”

She made a sprint for her bedroom and quickly pulled on some clothes, and then realized that Aimee had never answered her. She frowned, peaking out into the living room to find it empty and then sighed when the knocking came again. “Coming, coming...” she muttered before yanking the door open.

Klaus’ worried face greeted her and she smiled at him, glad for any type of comfort. Quickly, she wrapped her arms around his neck and he pressed his mouth to her temple but immediately tensed. Emma pulled away, frowning. “What is it?”

Klaus didn’t answer but merely stepped past her and turned down the hallway. “Klaus? What’s
going on?” But again, Klaus was silent. She followed him into the hall but he was just coming out, and took her arms to keep her from moving further.

“You don’t want to see that, Emma,” Klaus whispered, his face grave. Emma felt empty then. She didn’t know what had happened, she had no idea of what Klaus had possibly seen but that feeling in her gut told her everything she needed to know.

“What is it?” she whispered, but Klaus merely loosened his grip on her, knowing that if she wanted to see it he would be unable to stop her. “Klaus?” The desperation in her voice cracked and she shoved past him and glanced in the open doorway of the guest bedroom.

Aimee lay in the center of the bed, her eyes wide and staring at the ceiling, completely void of any life. Emma took a furtive step forward and collapsed. Aimee’s throat was torn apart, and blood was slowly soaking into the mattress and staining her pale skin.

Aimee was dead.
pointless apologies.

Emma sat on the couch, her fists clenching the fabric of the quilt wrapped around her. She stared, unseeing, at the television, watched the fragmented shapes run around and laugh. In that moment she felt as if she would never laugh again. She felt like she wouldn’t be able to ever muster a smile again.

Klaus had just sat down beside her, keeping his distance but never taking his eyes off of her. She knew that her face was splotched with blood patches and salty tears, but she didn’t care. The police were searching her apartment now, and she could hardly bring herself to care, let alone answer any questions the police were bound to ask.

She didn’t even want to think of the situation let alone speak of it. If she hadn’t gotten into the shower, if she had bothered to listen to her surroundings…she might’ve been able to save her. Her sister was dead and it was all her fault. Emma felt shaken and she only knew of the sob that escaped her throat when Klaus wrapped his arms around her. The warmth of his touch was what made her collapse.

Sobbing into his shirt, as he stroked her still slightly damp hair, she waited for them to carry the body out. Even as she was allowing herself this temporary release with Klaus she knew that any moment Aimee would be leaving her apartment in a body bag, and she would never see her sister smile or laugh or do anything ever again.

Finally the coroner’s came and escaped into the hallway and a detective walked into the living room and took a seat across from Emma and Klaus on one of the armchairs. He was quiet for a moment and waited for Emma to regain her composure, and wipe the tears from her face. The detective gave a friendly, sad smile and cleared his throat. He pulled out a notebook and glanced at both of them.

“You’re the victim’s sister?” Emma nodded, choking when he referred to Aimee as ‘the victim’.
“Can you tell me everything that happened?”

“I was in the shower, and Klaus was at the door when I got out. He was knocking and I shouted for Aimee to get it but she never did…so I went to get it. Klaus was there, he came in and then…he found Aimee.”

The detective immediately turned to Klaus. “You found the victim?”

“Aimee,” Klaus corrected. “Yes, I found her. I was heading to Emma’s room to grab something I’d left here the other night, and peeked into the guest room. The door was cracked, and I saw Aimee there.”

The detective nodded, jotting down in his little notebook. He looked back at Emma and then Klaus once more. He waited until the coroner’s left to speak again. “That’s all I have for right now, we’ll go analyze any evidence we’ve found and contact you soon Miss. Graham.”

“I’ll walk you out,” Klaus said, rubbing his hand soothingly down Emma’s spine and getting up with the detective. Emma watched the two speak at the door; Klaus’ face was incredibly intense as he spoke but the detective simply nodded and left the apartment.

After another moment, Klaus sighed and rubbed his hands down his face. There was an expression there that was different from any Emma had ever seen before. She couldn’t read it, couldn’t even
guess what it could be. It was gone in an instant though and Klaus was coming back to her.

“Emma…” There was nothing to say. No means of condolence that he could possibly give. The only thing Klaus could do was hold Emma, and hope she didn’t break in his arms. “I’m sorry, Emma. For more than you know.”
Klaus feared leaving Emma alone for too long. He didn’t know what her mind was like in that moment or how she would react if left alone. But he couldn’t stay with her any longer, not with the amount of guilt stored in her chest. He managed to convince her to go down to the diner and get some coffee, and told her he would meet back with her soon. He told her he had some important errands to run. She was too upset to even get angry at him leaving her at such an important moment. She was too upset to even tell the truth to the detectives, to tell them that Klaus had just known where Aimee was.

When Klaus finally left Emma in the diner, he hurried home. He couldn’t be out in the open, let alone anywhere near where Emma could see. He knew there would be someone waiting for him at home, someone he could sink his teeth into. He nearly ripped the large oak doors off of their hinges when he got home. He found a young girl waiting for him in the den, he grabbed her and he didn’t even hesitate to rip into her throat.

He was a fool. He should’ve known that if Elijah could get to Emma he would get to anyone close to her. He closed his eyes as he fed on the girl, and tried to block the day’s events from his mind, but they refused to leave.

*Klaus couldn’t stay away. He had brought Emma home that night and planned to disappear, hoping that maybe he could find Elijah and Katarina and never speak to Emma again. It would be better that way. To leave her before things got too serious, but somewhere in the back of his mind he knew they already had. He knew that he was in far too deep and no matter how hard he’d like to try, Emma would stay with him.*

He returned to her apartment after dropping her off, set on saying goodbye. Explaining that his ‘business’ called for him elsewhere, and he didn’t know when he might be coming back. He never even got as far as to speak the words. The second he entered Emma’s apartment he knew something was completely off. He could hear the running water of the shower, and upon seeing Aimee he knew Emma was the one in it.

Aimee was staring at Klaus with a strange sort of lucid familiarity. He knew the look immediately and knew the outcome that would take place. He glanced down and saw Aimee holding a dagger, and recognized the white ash coating the dagger. So Hansen had snuck Elijah a dagger. What had the fool planned to do if he successfully killed him? The fool would never be reunited with their family, or maybe all he really wanted was to rip out Klaus’ throat.

“Elijah sends his condolences,” Aimee said before lunging at him. It wasn’t a fair fight at all, and somehow Klaus knew that Elijah expected this. Elijah knew Klaus would kill Aimee, and he knew it would cause grief on the one thing Klaus was truly starting to care for. Klaus did the best he could to make it look like a typical murder; he had already bitten her so he tore his fangs down the wound to try and make it look like someone had stabbed her. He carried her over to the guest room and laid her on the bed, tearing open her blouse and ripping her skirt.

He didn’t care for Aimee. Didn’t care that she was dead. He cared that Emma would find her sister, and be broken. If there was one thing Klaus knew, it was the importance of family. He had just taken Emma’s family, and there was nothing he could do to bring her back. Klaus felt spoiled, the only thing he had to do to see his brother’s and sister again was to open a few coffins and remove some daggers.
“I’m sorry,” he whispered before leaving the room and turning back around to console Emma.

The girl fell to the floor, dead. Klaus wiped his mouth and turned to face his brother. Elijah stood in the doorway, arms crossed and a satisfied sneer on his face. “Hello, Niklaus. So good to see you.”
Klaus lunged at his brother, shoving him into the bookshelves. They collapsed around Elijah but didn’t keep him down for more than a moment. The two become splotches of fine pressed suits and dark hair as they fought, just a blur to the human eye. Elijah managed to shove his brother a good distance from him, and spoke before Klaus could attack again. “Don’t you want to know why I’m here, Niklaus?”

Klaus hesitated, he swallowed thickly, straightening up but refusing to let his guard down. “I want to know why you’re trying to hurt Emma.” It was the wrong thing to say, he should’ve left Emma out of it, should’ve pretended he didn’t give a damn. But it was too late now. Elijah laughed, straightening his jacket and picking one of the books up off the floor. He brushed off the splintered wood and returned it to a salvageable shelf. He would’ve continued cleaning up the mess, but he caught his brother’s eye and sighed.

“It was never about your Emma, Klaus. It was all about you. I must say, I didn’t expect you to become so fond for the girl, but maybe it’s because she reminds you so much of your beloved Rebekah. I see the similarities, the blonde hair, the blue eyes.” Elijah laughed, thinking of his sister and her hotheaded temper, oh how he missed Rebekah.

“She’s not Rebekah, she’s different, Elijah. She’s good.”

Elijah turned to his brother, disgusted. “You, my dear brother, are not good.” Elijah took a deep breath, regaining his composure. “But that’s besides the point, I’ve come to help you.”

“How could you be of any help to me?”

“I know how to break your wretched curse. Your dear Katarina found me.”

“Katarina? So she’s still alive then? Good.” Klaus thought for a moment on how he would seek his revenge on the girl who ruined his only chance at reaching his full potential.

“She told me of another doppelganger. One who can break your curse. She’s in Mystic Falls, and in fact she’s very much like your Emma. She’s good.”

Klaus seemed to have forgotten everything that mattered in that moment. This was something he’d been searching for, for centuries. A way to end his curse, a way to end his loneliness. Perhaps he could finally reunite his family. “You’ve met her?”

“Yes, but getting to her may be more difficult than wanted. She has guardians. The Salvatore brothers, weren’t you friendly with one of them?”

“Yes…Stefan. Rebekah fancied him.”

“And you put a dagger in her chest for preferring him to you, yes I know. I’m willing to help you Klaus, don’t remind me of what you did. They think I am dead, they are completely oblivious to what’s coming; I’ll go ahead of you. Say goodbye to your girlfriend, Klaus. We’re going to break your curse.”

Elijah left then and Klaus stared after him, nearly falling to his knees trying to figure out what had
just happened. He didn’t trust Elijah. He knew that given the chance he would stab him in the back, but if what he was saying were true he had to leave, he had to go to Mystic Falls.

“Klaus?” He heard her voice, and realized that in a matter of moments everything would be destroyed. He froze, turning, seeing the dead girl on the floor, the destroyed room. Nothing would stop her from fleeing, and he didn’t think he’d be able to bring himself to make her forget again.

“Klaus, are you in there?”

Klaus closed his eyes and waited for Emma to find him. There were dozens of things he could’ve done in that moment. He could’ve caught her, met her out in the foyer instead of letting her find him among this wreckage. He could’ve compelled her to forget him, but somehow he knew this would be better. If she saw the monster that he was, if she knew what she had gotten herself into she would run. She would run and never look back and Klaus would never see her again.

He heard the door open and he slowly bent over the lifeless girl, her blood still on his hands. He let his eyes darken, let his teeth wake up. Emma’s soft gasp sounded throughout the room, he knew she was looking, searching for him and then there was that intake of breath as she caught sight of him. He turned then, facing her. Showing her what he was, what he would always be. Klaus had no shame in being a monster, but he knew that Emma’s purity would be terrified of that monster. There was no way to make it okay.

“Emma,” he whispered. He saw her face then, her wide eyes, and her dropped mouth. She cried out, and ran and he knew that he had lost her forever.

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