**In Her Footsteps**

**Summary**

Post 6 finale. Bonnie's not ready to give up on getting Elena back. She wants her revenge on a certain vampire witch. Another part, awakened through surviving 1994 PW, calls her to explore her new self and see where this takes her.

**Notes**

A/N Canon until season 6 finale with main exception that Kai is still with us as a vampire witch.

Never gonna be over not getting Bonkai storyline.

I was so unimpressed by ending to season 6 that I didn't watch season 7&8 (apart from last few episodes of season 8). Please don't be disappointed not to find overlap with s7 storyline.

For the record, in my version of Vampire Diaries series we would've seen *much* more of Bonnie.
"This is kind of all of your fault."

Bonnie couldn't stop hearing those words in her mind. She was able to eat but she barely slept. She'd lie under the covers, staring at the ceiling, growing more and more exhausted and frustrated as hours went by, finding a little comfort in being able to sigh loudly and know no one heard her. Caroline was coming home late at night and a few times stayed out altogether.

Getting little shut eye, Bonnie barely functioned during the day, nodding off in a coffee shop, the library, once at the Salvatore House. Dozing off felt safer during the day and more so when she was outside her room. Bonnie suspected being around other people made her feel more relaxed, enough so she could fall asleep much quicker than when she was in her own bed. Trying to fall asleep alone reminded her too much of her solitary time in the prison world.

She preferred staying awake to dreaming the same nightmares, same unwanted images of her and her friends fighting enemies and losing almost each night. Losing a different friend each night. She had no control over what she dreamed about so when she was awake she held on to any sense of control she could have.

In the week since Elena had fallen unconscious Bonnie tried to bring herself into some routine. She picked up her spell books, skimming through them, though often she ended up floating one in the air when she'd come across a spell that was too long and complicated. Staring at the swirling book felt meditative.

What worked best to actually give her some relief was running which she embraced easily, sometimes Matt joining her, the two egging each other on wordlessly. She wasn't going to stay indoors and hide. Sometimes she bumped into a classmate who had no connection with the gang and felt relieved to have a normal conversation. But even a classmate eventually asked her about Elena.

As Bonnie laid awake night after night it made sense that her growing exhaustion would gently guide her to sleep more quickly but it wasn't working that way. She didn't remember any dreams unless they were ones of loss and death. Otherwise it was as if her alarm went off immediately after she was finally able to fully rest her eyes. Her mind was lost in a constant loop, playing the last battle with him and the moment she lost. The moment she felt she truly lost Elena.

It must've not completely hit her Elena was gone because she still picked up her phone ready to text her. Like when she wanted to tell her how she went driving and pulled all the windows down and a sparrow flew into her back window. It had taken everything in Bonnie to stop from automatically veering off the road as the bird flapped back and forth. Bonnie spoke slowly trying to calm herself and the bird, as if the bird would understand her pleas for it to stop its jittery movements. The bird finally stopped, perching itself by the passenger seat across from Bonnie, staring at her and cocked its head.

"What're you doing silly bird? The window is open. You can fly out." She pointed outside. She shooed the bird with her hand. The bird remained perched on the window.

"You wanna drive with me a little?" Bonnie asked. "OK. Hold tight."

The bird stayed with her a few more blocks before flying away. Bonnie laughed in relief. But she was actually enjoying the bird's company. The ease of the silent camaraderie.
One morning she looked at the third bed in her dorm room and had a momentary thought that she and Caroline would eventually need to talk about plans for next year's dorm room. The thought shrunk her heart and she tried to shrug it off. She wanted to get it off her chest and share it with Caroline but didn't see her until the next day and at that point she had pushed the thought away.

Caroline and Tyler were spending more time together after Liv's loss. Caroline, having just lost her mom, said Tyler and her found solace in each other. In so many words.

"Hanging out with him... It reminds me what we had," Caroline said when she talked with Bonnie about him. "Do you ever feel - like you're in a place that you need to be in that moment? That's how I feel. We're not dating." She added immediately. "Just hanging out. Almost like we're getting to know each other again." She laughed.

Bonnie understood. She did wonder how Tyler and Caroline bonded over Caroline losing her mom after the way Tyler lost his. She had thought that Stefan and Caroline would find each other so this turn was unexpected but she could see how Caroline and Tyler would be drawn to one another. She saw how Caroline seemed softer and more clear minded after spending time with Tyler. She felt good for her friend though she missed not having her around more.

Bonnie felt a similar closeness when she spent time with Jeremy, but it didn't carry a depth that Caroline's tone seemed to hint at with her and Tyler. It was a bittersweet circumstance that led to Bonnie and Jeremy to each other then for the first time since she got back. The two shared hugs and a few good conversations before Jeremy left. They agreed to stay in touch. Bonnie wasn't too upset that he didn't stay. She actually felt she could breathe easier. He and her shared so much history together and spending time with him reminded her that their romantic relationship remained in the past.

Apart from the added heavy layer that Jeremy lost his sister she did find that she could relate to Jeremy when they talked about Elena. Compared with her vampire buddies, Jeremy and Matt knew what it meant to likely not see Elena again. Bonnie also felt a special gratitude for Matt who looked out for her and warned her to leave town when Elena fell into a coma. She didn't forget that. But then he disappointed her in a recent conversation.

"You betrayed Kai," He told her and looked away almost immediately. They hadn't even talked about Elena until her name came up. She flashed back to what Kai told her except guilt immediately washed Matt's face.

"What's that supposed to mean?" She asked.

Matt didn't respond.

"If you're going to blame me, make sure to make a stop with Damon, who suggested we trap him," Her eyes narrowed as she refused to say Kai's name. "And I heard no arguments from Elena," she said more quietly because though it was true she felt miserable saying it, as though she was betraying her friend. Yeah, Bonnie happily went along with Damon's plan but to only blame her was unfair.

Still, she wasn't seriously going to point the finger at Elena. No one was. Pointing fingers was for those who were still around. Matt apologized later but Bonnie still held the pain of his comment. What would it be like to feel blameless, she wondered sometimes. Jeremy didn't blame her. She didn't feel tense around him for that, like she did with Matt after he made the comment. But after spending time with him she felt more certain that Jeremy was her past.

Little moments like her friction with Matt reminded her how Kai's actions worked to unravel the
group beyond the immediate results of his carnage. He had promised to make her suffer. After killing his remaining family members Bonnie found it hard to imagine what other boundaries he'd cross. Who else he'd want to finish off, Kai killing his siblings only foreshadowing what was coming.

Kai destroyed so much in such a short time after getting back. While Caroline and Tyler coped by finding each other, Damon tried to cope with his pain through supporting Alaric. Bonnie looked after Damon. She found comfort in giving and it helped her feel less lonely.

When she didn't think about Elena, Damon, or her friends, she thought of the wedding scene she had walked in on. Dead bodies weren't something new to her. She had lost people she loved to violence and supernaturals at Mystic Falls before. But she had walked in on a blood bath after years of destruction and death. With this scene she also had Kai's words to replay in her mind.

And then there was the tape he had sent her. She played it again after Damon brought her back to the Salvatore Boarding House after saving her that night. After the tape ended she immediately watched it again. She hoped to find a clue. A window into Kai's head so she could see a vulnerability. A loophole.

"The rule is: As long as you're alive, Elena will remain asleep."

Re-watching it, though, mostly got her fuming all over again. All she had found on the tape was blame and if anything it had gotten harder to separate what she knew was right from Kai's cruel words. Just looking at his face... Her heart had hurt from the wrath that permeated through her. And now the word Bonster was in her head.

She had gotten nothing more from seeing it the tenth time than she did the fifth. Matt had eventually caught her watching it and had made her give him the tape. She had made him promise not to destroy it, unwilling to give up hope that they could find something useful in it.

Kai's accusation that it was Bonnie's fault. And then Matt's statement. But though she knew she wasn't responsible for Kai's actions, feeling guilty gave her a sense of control. She didn't regret leaving Kai in 1903 prison. He proved who he was not even a moment after he returned. He was the same witch who sat across from her in the coffee shop when she asked about the 1903 ascendant. Except the innocent and warm way he looked at her then wasn't him, it was Luke. The only difference between the guy in the coffee shop and the one in the wedding was that he had become a vampire and was more powerful. At the latter he showed her again that he wasn't safe to be around anyone.

When she went to see him she knew Tyler had bitten him and thought it'd slow him down. Her thoughts were firing in all directions. Wanting to get Elena back drove her to him. And something more. They had unfinished business. Perversely she may have hoped that he would listen to her despite the video. That something could be salvaged even though he had killed his family. At the same time she wanted to kill him. She deserted him and he still came back. She wanted to finish it.

And look where that brought her. And he was still out there. He was still victorious. It helped less and less that she knew what Elena wanted her to do.

"You have spent your entire life making sacrifices for me. Now it's my turn to do it for you."

These words didn't help lessen her pain. As each day passed she felt more fervor and certainty that time alone wasn't going to heal it. Fighting death over and over and losing so many people meant that those who stayed behind became even more important. The fact Elena was gone but not really had to mean that it was possible to bring her back. True, maybe it was for one more day until
another hell beast showed up. But it would be worth it.

And so what became more and more important to Bonnie was that she didn't want to never be able to see Elena again. She didn't want Kai to win.

Once that thought was sowed in her mind she wasn't able to shake it. It wouldn't be impossible to bring Elena back. The gang always found a way. She always found a way. She didn't want to mess with the linking spell and not because she didn't consider it. She just thought she'd find another way.

She was glad she was alive and conscious. She didn't regret being saved. She regretted not winning. Her friend sacrificed herself for her, and Bonnie wanted her back. Everything revolved around Elena. She tried to visit her, tried to conjure spells to communicate but Elena was firmly sealed away. And since Kai came up with the spell, a small part of her thought worried he'd be able to hear what she'd say.

Damon couldn't keep the sadness from his eyes regardless of the topic of conversation. He started talking about getting away. Taking a trip and heading to France, maybe Holland. Maybe take a train and travel around Europe. Everything would wait for them back in Mystic Falls and it would be good for Alaric, who had sometimes appeared to be nearly catatonic.

"Alaric is not going anywhere away from Jo," Bonnie said.

"Who said anything about asking him?" Damon raised his eyebrows and shook his head.

"Damon."

Damon smiled. "You got a passport?"

"I'm coming too?"

"Of course." Damon smiled and Bonnie returned it.

"It would be good for you too." Damon said. "And someone has to be the one to watch over Alaric and me so we don't do something stupid. If you were gonna stay here... Well, you do have a knack for avoiding permanent death, but who knows when you're gonna run out of those cat lives." He paused and his smile turned more menacing. "Or maybe I just want to make sure I'm nearby when you take your last breathe."

"And maybe I'm going to get sick of you and dump you in Paris."

"Nah. I think we're stuck together. Elena wouldn't want it another way. And me neither," He added as an afterthought and shook his head again, but she sensed the deepness of his meaning.

She needed to hear that. Between his comments that she not wear a seat belt or chew her meal too carefully she grew annoyed with his attitude. Usually she was able to take it as teasing and she knew he hurt too. But the thought remained that the stakes for her to see Elena again were very different from his.

Bonnie gave the trip a thought but quickly put it aside. That could wait. She wasn't going to have Kai drive her away. She wasn't going to leave and give him more time to plan. It wasn't like he left Mystic Falls. She didn't see him but Caroline and Stefan had spotted him. They both agreed that he seemed to be keeping a low profile. Bonnie guessed he wanted to let the group stew before doing anything.
As she looked at the scar on her stomach that night she thought *I need to protect Elena, my friends, and myself.* His victory wasn't going to last. His victory wasn't going to last. There was a long list of people Bonnie couldn't save anymore but she wasn't going to have him add more people to it. And she was going to bring Elena back before ending Kai for good. The army of many beat one. Next time she'll face him she won't go alone. She wasn't ready to take him on on her own and she didn't want to waste time doing that when she had friends. She'd bring her army.
Her soldiers weren't neatly falling in line with Bonnie's plan to face Kai. In fact her friends' responses to her putting feelers out were edging to demotivate her.

Caroline quickly dismissed the idea and reminded Bonnie of their last conversation with Elena. "You deserve this time Bonnie. She wanted it to be for you."

While Stefan agreed with Caroline not to make a move he first seemed a little more agreeable to the idea of confronting Kai. He argued though that the group wasn't ready yet and that he wanted to be cautious. But while that was what he said, Bonnie suspected he was really after honoring Elena's wishes and didn't want to act at all.

It was easier for her vampire friends to say no, Bonnie kept reminding herself, to cushion her disappointment at their responses. They'd likely see Elena again. But if Bonnie was going to be completely honest with herself she felt a little conflicted too. She remembered the change she felt when she escaped 1994. She fought back and got out of there. She got help from her friends to be sure. But ultimately she chose to see it through. Following the heart of Elena's intentions would mean Bonnie continuing to look out for herself and putting herself first. Elena was safe and in a strange way, Bonnie didn't need to worry about her.

Two factors pushed Bonnie onward. One was sheer rebellion. Bonnie saw her friends' unwillingness to help as them giving up on Elena. She wasn't going to do that. She also imagined that after what Kai had already done that he would continue to target her friends. He would go after innocent people. He needed to be stopped.

After talking with Stefan she didn't ask Matt what he thought. She was concerned he would try to change her mind or worse, put himself at risk. Matt was an asset but he was still human. She didn't share her plan with Tyler either. Whenever the subject of Kai came up Tyler would talk about the violence he would cause him, his grief for Liv overtaking him. Bonnie worried Tyler wouldn't hesitate to kill him before she could finish her plan. Or before Kai killed Tyler first.

She was up to Damon next. Timing was important because she sensed he was on the verge of following through with his traveling plan. Making sure they were alone, she waited for him to get that misty eyed Elena-on-my-mind look and jumped right in.

"No one has heard anything from Kai." She said. "Who knows what he's planning? We shouldn't let him surprise us. Let's surprise him."

It took some chipping away at his resistance but she quickly got to his core. He was struggling with his girlfriend gone and desperately wanted her back. Which made him much more open to hearing her out.

Damon asked to watch Kai's video. After finishing it he put the camera down and took on a pensive look, flexing his hand muscles as if trying to shake off what he saw.

"I really hate that guy. I was out of my mind that night I wasn't seeing straight." Damon said. "I can't believe I didn't kill him. But even if I wanted to do this, I don't want to risk you. Even though you are suggesting something that in the worse case would bring Elena right back and that is really,
really tempting." He laughed.

Bonnie ignored the comment. "How many times have I saved all of you?"

"We usually don't put you on the front line."

Bonnie nodded. "But you rely on my magic. My power. I need to face him. He caused all of this. I wouldn't need to ask your permission to see him if I was going alone, but after the last time I confronted him... I didn't think he'd take me out like that," she was embarrassed to admit it. She shook her head. "I underestimated how strong he was going to be. I know better now what to expect. But I need a partner."

Damon stared into space.

"What if you didn't have to wait?" Bonnie asked.

She knew that would get to him. Damon sighed and looked at her. "And the others? Wouldn't it help us to have a couple more vampires at least?"

"I tried. It's like it's too early for them to even consider it. They're not in the same place as you and me. And we don't want to waste time," she added, clumping her and Damon together as if he'd already agreed to the plan. "We need to stay focused because no one else is. I've been reading about linking spells. If there is any chance to reverse it, we need to know everything we can about it."

"Kai sticks around long enough some supernatural is gonna kill him for existing too much." Damon mumbled.

"After a lot of innocent people die." Bonnie said, though she had a feeling this wouldn't be the factor that'd push Damon to take action. "If someone else gets to Kai then we'll never know the answer." She looked at the mug she was drinking from. "I want to stop him before he gets to someone else we love."

"I don't know why I should be so worried. He's going to be fixated on you judging by that video. We do nothing I still get Elena in no time."

Bonnie scoffed. Damon could get so caught up in his tunnel vision because of his focus on Elena that he'd lose sight on anything else. But wasn't that why she felt more confident going to him than the others?

"Too bad he's not human. Link his life with a fruitfly and be done." Damon leaned back in his chair. "OK. So your plan. We take away his magic with this Lerbetross-"

"Lerethum."

"And we have a regular, though still mentally unstable, vampire."

Bonnie nodded. "Temporarily. Now that he can regenerate his own magic – we need to cut that down to subdue him."

"How temporary is temporary?"

"It's hard to tell, translation's iffy. But I think we have at least a few days and we don't need a long time to get him under control."
"But he can still siphon your magic."

"Yes."

"I hate these little catches. So we capture him and get him to tell us what we want to know?"

Bonnie nodded. "He misses a few meals and it may not matter as much whether he has magic or not. He'll be weaker. That much easier for us to get what we need."

"And once we capture him... How do you stop me from killing him right then and there?"

How to answer that, when Bonnie wasn't sure how she'd stop herself from doing it.

"We'll keep an eye on each other." She said. "And we only need him as long as he has information to give us."

After some more back and forth Damon finally agreed. They were going to get her best friend and his girlfriend back. After that they were going to end Kai.

Bonnie slept better after talking with Damon. She felt reassured to get some control back. She went over her spells and had dinner with Caroline and Tyler, telling them nothing. She danced in her room to take out her built up energy. Stefan and Caroline kept a distance from each other while Caroline and Tyler continued spending more time together. It bothered Bonnie less now that Caroline was distracted since she was working on something of her own.

She couldn't blame Caroline anyway. It wasn't that long ago that she felt a very real love towards Jeremy. Such a different love from the one she felt now. They still had a connection but her deep feelings for him had faded. That probably started a few months in to her time at the prison world. She did remember clearly how Jeremy helped her when she needed him the day she gave up. She was in the garage inhaling fumes and he gave her the push and love to keep going. But since returning from 1994 her everyday didn't include him and she felt no need for this to change.

She did think about him more since she saw him at Mystic Falls but she eventually understood that it wasn't just him she was thinking about. Rather she missed something that she could name when she hung out with Caroline and Tyler. They reminded her what companionship felt like. It had been such a long time. Even watching Damon and Alaric sitting side by side, Damon wordlessly supporting his friend, made her miss that feeling. She wished she could talk with Elena about it.

"Damon."

"What?"

"Focus."

Damon kicked his foot. "We practiced this a hundred times." He grumbled.

"Three times. We practiced it three times. You and I need to be in sync for this to work. This is the closest you can get to doing a spell as a vampire. You have to remember the-"

"Eye contact yes, I know. There's a reason vampires don't do spells."

"And there's a reason this spell works for heretics." Bonnie said as she fought her regret in enlisting Damon's help.
The Mystic Grill was empty apart from the two of them. They had only been there for thirty minutes and Bonnie was ready to lie down. Who knew that this would be what she'd need to help her insomnia? But this was important and she shouldn't have expected smooth prep with Damon even if he was as committed as her.

"This dummy really doesn't fit in for Kai." Damon pushed the Kai dummy that hung from a beam in the ceiling. "We should've gotten a tape of someone blabbing in the background to make it more real." Damon made a grumbling noise as he pushed the dummy again. "I still think the first time we did this it was a perfect run."

"The first time we completely charred the dummy's insides."

"And it felt great."

"We can't get answers from a heretic’s ashes."

Damon sighed. "I know. I'm sorry."

"Just think of the big picture." Bonnie said. She struggled to keep her voice even. Damon relied on her to be rational and think ahead but the first time she did the spell her fury pushed it too far and it disintegrated the dummy's entrails. She didn't think keeping herself in check would be so challenging.

"Nowhere in your witchy couldron could you make this dummy fight back?" Damon eyed the dummy and turned to Bonnie. "Or at least have it lecture at me about how Pamela Anderson and Kurt Cobain should've done a duet together? Guess I'll be honest. I just want to go over my favorite part. Stabbing him with this fork," Damon held up silver forklike item with two long prongs.


"You can't expect me to remember the entire spell. Don't look at me like that. I remember the last sentence. And I definitely twist it?" Damon motioned to the Lerethum, asking with unhidden glee.

"Yes. It needs to keep contact with Kai's blood for at least three seconds."

"We're doing this." Damon picked up the Lerethum and held it to the light.

"We want her back. We're getting her back."

Damon smiled at her and his eyes filled with admiration.

"OK," he said and punched the dummy with one arm, taking out the Lerethum in his other and punching the air with it.

A click sounded from the front door and Bonnie turned her head to it. Damon walked towards the door, looking behind the blinds and then turning back. "I must've not locked it completely."

"OK, one more time."

"How can you still concentrate?" Damon asked, returning to stand near the dummy.

"This actually helps me." Bonnie smiled. And it did. It was like therapy. Damon smirked back.

"Friends."

Bonnie recognized the malice in the voice before she recognized who spoke. She turned her face to
meet it and stood up to face Kai. He was leaning against the bar. She still had the image of him covered in blood but now in jeans and a brown T-shirt he looked like anyone. Like the guy she sat in front of in the diner when she asked about the 1903 ascendant. But unlike that guy there was no warmth (as disingenuous as it was) in this Kai's face.

"I use that term with irony. Or maybe it's not irony, I'm never sure. Workout session before lunch?" He indicated towards the dummy.

Bonnie exchanged faces with Damon who had moved away from the dummy to stand closer to her. She noticed he had stuck the Lerethum in his back pocket. A small jolt of panic went through Bonnie. They weren't ready yet.

Kai gave Bonnie a cold and dismissive glance before fixing his gaze on Damon.

"Kai. Let's skip the how are yous. What brings you here?" Damon kept his tone light.

"You won't believe it, but I stopped by to make myself a snack. In the mood for a burger. You weren't hungry were you?"

"No kitchens where you're coming from?"

"You know, I love the burgers here. Must be some spices they mix with the meat. Just add a little bit of fire and it's scrumptious. Sometimes I like the cook to make it for me but then I really get hungry and I have to kill him and I have to deal with people screaming. Sometimes you just want to have some peace when you're eating. Maybe I got used to being on my own too much. Easier to do it myself. Am I interrupting something? I do have tendency of crashing other peoples' parties. Of course, to be fair, I don't recall inviting either of you when you burst into my life in my prison world. Though when I look back, I'm so glad that you did."

"Unless you want to talk to us about Elena you can get out." Bonnie said.

Kai looked at her with mock shyness in his eyes. "Oh, talk about her we can do all day. Her and I actually spent some time here. I made her dinner. Fun memories." Kai put on a wistful expression. "Bonnie, you look well. Glad you healed. On the outside. Must be a mess in here though." Kai pointed at his head.

Bonnie felt her venom for him nearly burst out of her and she took a deep breathe to slow her thoughts down. Damon and Kai were talking and she wasn't listening. She didn't expect to be filled with so much disdain and she was surprised Damon was keeping his cool.

"I'm patient," Damon's words came into Bonnie's focus. "I don't need you to help me."

"Really? I don't know, whenever you two get together I always get locked up somewhere." Kai levitated a whiskey bottle behind him and grabbed a glass behind the bar. He poured himself a drink. "Somehow neither of you surprise me."

Kai looked at Bonnie who tried to keep his gaze.

"And what is it with everyone putting me away? I get so tired of that. You all know I'll find a way to get back. And you'll just end up with fewer people on this side when that happens. Be happy. I didn't kill Elena, I just put her on hold for a little bit. I mean, Bonnie I know it doesn't mean as much for you for obvious reasons, but Damon, you're like what, 4,000 years old, that's like a fraction of your existence-"

Damon bent over, blood streaming from his nose.
"Unless I get bored first and decide to kill you and Bonnie."

Bonnie felt a sharp pain go from the top of her head and spread down like thunder.

"Wouldn't that be a surprise for Elena when she wakes up."

Kai was targeting them both with his spells, Bonnie realized, struggling to take a breathe, the pain shooting through her limbs down to her fingers and toes. If it wouldn't be today Kai would try to get to them tomorrow, she thought. They had practiced the spell, gone through the steps. And if they weren't going to do anything they were both going to die.

The ache in her body stopped and she looked over at Damon who was still hunched over, but had found a way to blurt out a cutting remark to Kai. It worked. Kai had turned his focus to him.

Bonnie looked at the whiskey bottle next to Kai. She chanted quickly and it crashed loudly against the side of his face. Kai shook his head, shards of glass falling off. His eyes lit up.

"OK. That tickled a little. Bonnie," Kai said. "You know I'm much stronger than you. But don't stop. It won't make me any gentler if you give up now."

Kai shot bottles against Bonnie and Damon. Bonnie ducked and heard a thump in front of her. Damon had fallen in front of her and taken the brunt of the glassware. Bonnie moved quickly, pushing the broken glass back at Kai, circling them around him. She and Damon exchanged looks. They weren't ready, she thought, but would they ever be? Maybe she'd just be stalling if she'd wait longer.

Bonnie nodded shortly to Damon as if to say "we're doing this now." Damon nodded and Bonnie chanted, Damon immediately turning and rushing Kai. He and Kai wrestled in such a frenzy that Bonnie couldn't make out who was who. She cleared her head, the memorized spells appearing to her.

She chanted. "Vertasium bellity seriom."

Come on Damon. Come on, Bonnie silently nudged.

Kai cried out and Damon shot a look at Bonnie.

She continued, "Herenem Loki Senegrem. Selene fremen selene aderem."

"What are you doing?" Kai said. She liked the tinge of fear in his voice.

"Now, Damon!" Bonnie shouted, unsure if he knew she had finished the first part of the chant.

"You're taking my magic. How are you doing that?" Kai said, his face losing his confidence. Just for that Bonnie would do this forever.

Bonnie kept chanting while Damon held Kai still. Bonnie saw Kai was having a hard time to stand up.

"You're going to kill me." Kai said. "Wait, Damon. Bonnie! Wait! I can help you... Get Elena back. You don't have to die."

Bonnie knew the spell alone wasn't going to kill him but imagined that if he didn't know what was going on then that would be the effect. She didn't believe Kai for one second. But Damon stopped. In that moment Kai, his facial expression unchanging, murmured a spell, crashing Damon
backwards. Overhead lamps crashed on Damon's head as he lay unmoving on the floor.

"Bon. That was impressive. Both of you. Damon, you'll excuse us, I want to have a word with Bonnie myself." He said and another set of lamps fell on the heap above the pile covering Damon. "Don't worry Bonnie, I didn't kill him. I think."

Kai tugged at the Lerethum in his leg and tried to pull it out without success. He cried out in annoyance.

Bonnie tapped her magic and realized with some terror that the fight and lack of sleep did its course and had taken out of her more than she would've wanted by this point. But then she didn't expect a confrontation today. She had put a spell over the Mystic Grill to stop supernaturals from sensing magic inside it. She and Damon had come incognito. It struck her that maybe Kai really just stopped by to get some food. Unbelievable.

"I know we didn't finish our conversation. You know, from the other night," Kai said. His leg drooped a little and he leaned on arm on a high chair. "You probably have been thinking about it as much as I have."

She remembered. Remembered standing in front of him in a room full of bodies. She had absolutely no interest in rehashing it. She glanced at Damon, chanting softly. She needed him awake.

"Uh uh, I can hear that," Kai said and Bonnie held her head in pain. Kai sneered at her. "I can see you're tired. Why don't you rest?"

"Sounds more like you're offering me a permanent rest."

Kai smiled. "In good time, Bonnie. For now, I think I need a hand in letting me know how I can get this knife out of my leg."

_It wasn't a- oh whatever._ Bonnie could see that he was sweating and that he was injured even beyond one leg not functioning properly. She sensed his magic was reduced. She needed to finish that spell. She needed Damon awake for that and she needed Kai to keep the Lerethum in his leg.

Kai walked over to her with a slight stumble. "I mean what did you think that you and Damon would get by trying to trap me by yourselves? You remember how it ended last time."

Kai stopped to stand in front her, more than a foot still separating them.

"I mean, I'm flattered by the attention."

How warped that statement was.

"At least Damon was with you to help out this time. Sweet of him though a sorry attempt all in all. Maybe next time you could bring the rest of your friends. So Bon, what was your plan, tie me up until I agreed to help you?"

Bonnie stiffened. She sensed Kai wasn't looking for an answer.

"I've had my own magic for a while, now I have super vampire strength. You remember I can make my own magic. What do I have to show all of you so you understand you can't mess with me? You both tried."

She felt her ankle strain. Was he going to break her bones one by one? No, she told herself. She
chanted and a wave of heat pushed hard into Kai's face. Kai stumbled back, surprised, nearly losing his balance.

Bonnie took advantage of this, murmuring a few words and glasses flew out of their shelves and broke on Kai's back and his head. She wanted to laugh. She felt elated.

Kai chanted quietly and her smile vanished as she bent over, pain piercing her forehead into the back of her head. But she felt his spells were getting weaker. The Lerethum was working.

"If only I could tie your life to your best friend. But there's no one." Bonnie said, trying to swallow her grunt.

"Bonnie, that's the best you can come up with? Come on. You know I like being alone."

_Then why haven't you left? Why haven't you killed all of us?_ But she knew the answer. How would Kai get pleasure from other people's pain if he was alone?

"You wanted to break us. But you didn't. The only way to break us is to kill us." She said.

This time she felt the pain in her chest and fell back, scrambling to get back on her feet. Kai tugged again at the Lerethum.

"You know watching you and your friends over the past two weeks, gave me a different impression. It really filled me with comfort. Or relish. Both, I think both. All of you together cared more about my family than I ever did. And poor Elena." He shook his head. "You deserve this. You left me." He said coldly.

"And I would do it again."

"Really? Even if it would you bring right back here? To me?"

Bonnie still seethed from his comment that she deserved this, bringing back a thought that she couldn't get rid of for weeks. She moved a chair that crashed on him, then another. She thrilled in the mayhem it caused him. She didn't just want to neutralize him, she wanted him to hurt.

She recognized the taunting face he was giving her. She chanted again and a radiating barrier came in front of him. "Damon! Wake up!" Bonnie shouted at her friend. She rushed to him. As she ran she felt herself pushed back and her back hit a column. Kai was in front of her and his hands held her arms back.

"Let go!" She yelled.

Something was wrong. That barrier was supposed to hold up longer and Kai was supposed to be without magic by now. But how could she know for sure - the spell wasn't completed. Kai squeezed her arms roughly and Bonnie let out a yelp.

"Sorry," She heard him mumble but that couldn't be right, she must have misheard him. He squeezed her arms even harder and after a second eased off the pressure, still not letting go of her arms.

She hated that she was virtually out of power and strength. Her anger still lit her stomach but she wasn't able to harness it anymore. Grief and exhaustion dampened it and left a woman who was at the moment without a plan. She tried to keep her face from showing that.

She squirmed against him, murmured a spell and watched with glee how Kai's face contorted in
pain. She was pushing her luck and she didn't care. She loathed him and how close he was to her. He shot his vampire teeth out and then held back, clenching his teeth, and she saw his arms tense up.

Melting his face off. Wasn't that a spell she looked at, after the first time that she told him that's what she'd do when she'd see her face? A gnawing doubt stopped her. What if with Kai dead she'd lose any knowledge of bringing Elena back? She couldn't kill him.

"Who's going to help you? Does anyone know you're here?" Kai looked towards the door and stared out the windows. Now that she was closer to him she saw he had pieces of glass on his cheeks, his hair, his shirt. But he didn't seem affected by it. "You two planned this by yourselves. No one knows you're here." He said with some wonder in his voice.

Bonnie heard the arrogance in his words and the need to hurt him all but consumed her. Her rational mind tried to slow her down. Again she told herself that if she killed him Elena would be gone from her forever. She'd be able to save nothing from the destruction that happened at Jo and Alaric's wedding. But after that's fixed, when she'd get Elena back - she would destroy him and never need to give him another thought.

Bonnie looked at Damon's direction.

"I wouldn't bother with him," Kai said. "He's taking a vamp nap. That was weird wasn't it, how he fell in front of you like that? I thought vampires were more graceful than to trip over themselves."

"What would you know about what sacrifice means?" Bonnie asked without looking for an answer. Kai gave her a small smile and stared back at her as she refused to stand still.

"I don't know why you're struggling so much when you knew you'd end up like this."

She definitely didn't know that and she definitely wanted him to stop touching her. But she stopped moving against his hands, not wanting Kai to keep siphoning her. Kai pulled his hands back.

"Let me and Damon go."

"And-"

"And our friends won't kill you-"

"And let you go because you weren't able to finish whatever plan you had until next time you figure it out? Also, this is really annoying, my leg is asleep. I know that you put a spell on me but I can't siphon it out. Freaky. I figured this knife has something to do with it. Any reason I can't take it out?"

"Have you tried magic?" Bonnie asked.

"Mag-?" Kai looked at his leg. "Why would I need magic?"

Bonnie shrugged.

Kai looked at her suspiciously. "Why don't you use your magic?" He asked.

"I'm all tapped out."

Kai brushed her arm with the back of his hand. Bonnie shuddered. When he was holding her arms he wasn't trying to siphon her like this. It burned.
"You want me to keep you and Damon here until you get it all back? You have some left. Come on. I know how to get to each of your friends Bonnie. Remember that."

Damon was out of commission. She was low on magic against someone with vampire strength. She wasn't going to be able to see this spell through but at least she saw it already slowed Kai down. Maybe for now that would be enough. Bonnie closed her eyes and the Lerethum pushed a little out of Kai's skin. Kai grunted and pulled the rest of it out of his leg.

"Can't say anyone's tried to cook me before," He said, holding it. It slowly melted in his hands and fell to the floor in a big puddle. Bonnie held in her scream.

"I like that you don't give up." Kai looked at the puddle under beside his feet. "After everything you wanted to see me again."

He was taunting her. "I didn't want to see you. I want my friend back." She said.

"You brought us to this point. Don't forget that."

"You killed your family. You did exactly what you said you were going to do in 1994."

Kai considered her. "True. I'm curious, any of them check in on me when I was gone? Make sure I was OK, even though they now knew that my death would mean they'd die? Short sighted really, even if they didn't care about me. But still – why would I want to hurt them if you hadn't deserted me?"

"And not believe that you were a reformed killer? What a terrible mistake I made." She said pointedly.

"People become what you believe they are."

Bonnie shook her head. "People show you who they are. You're not safe to keep around. Your massacred family agrees," She said stubbornly.

"Again, Bon. My family didn't let me stay here. Twice. Why would I leave them in peace? You know, I told my own sister I wasn't going to touch her. Why wouldn't they let me stay-" His voice trailed. "When there's so much fun in this world." He slid a finger on her cheek. She trembled with reverberating pain. He was only showing her how unstable he was. "That's not even fun, Bonnie, you have so little left."

She moved her face away and his finger followed before reluctantly taking it away.

"Coven comes first. I heard that all my life, so much I kept hearing it when I hung out in my own little world for almost years. How was I different from my dad? Because I wanted a coven of one? They trained me to do what I did. What they should've done is stuck to the original plan of letting their firstborns merge. But I guess, if you really want to know, I do regret one thing." He brought his face closer to hers and whispered, "I wish I could've killed them one by one."

Bonnie didn't want to listen anymore. Not to the words or the casual tone he was using to talk about his actions. A murderer justifying killing his family. She felt no empathy for him.

"Now. What kind of games can I play with you and Damon?" Kai put his index finger on his chin. "Flay your skins off? Oh - Maybe reenactment? Have you ever drowned Bonnie?" Kai's face brightened.

Bonnie knew she couldn't hide her fear from her face. She saw something move over Kai's face for
a moment and then disappear, his face returning to its playful and weirdly innocent expression.

"I know. I never get tired of a little dicing. Cooking really perfected my skills." Kai said and motioned with his hand to a knife on the floor. The knife remained still. Kai shook his head. "Sorry. I guess I'm, like, a little excited." He smiled like a little boy and moved his hand over the floor again with the same results.

"Why can't I use my magic? I have magic but I can't..." Kai held his hands up as if they were broken. He muttered a few spells. Nothing happened.

Alarm rushed over his face. "What did you do?"

"I honestly don't know." Bonnie said. She didn't. He wasn't supposed to have his magic. But to still have it and not be able to do anything with it – this she didn't expect. Kai looked down at the melted down puddle and tapped at it. A solid blob now, it seemed to have merged with the floor. Bonnie swallowed a smile at Kai's confusion. He looked vulnerable. She was confused as hell but tried to keep that from showing on her face.

"No, no-" Kai said. "Undo it. What-" Kai's mouth was left open with no sound coming out.

"Loophole, that's the word you're looking for? That's under your feet. I'm sure you'd know how to change it back. With your magic." She taunted him, knowing she had the upper hand.

"Fix it!"

"I can't. I didn't finish the spell."

The power she felt. It overwhelmed her senses. The last time she felt like this was when she stabbed him in 1903 and left him behind. This... Was something else. She saw his face turn from annoyance to calm indignation.

"Maybe I should turn Damon into a pile of dry bones. Maybe then you'll figure out something." Kai said. "I don't have magic, I'll turn to the next thing I have-" Kai shot out his right arm to point behind him to Damon.

Without thinking Bonnie grabbed his arm with her hand and shouted "No!"

Although it didn't look like Kai was going to use his magic, although she had no reason to believe she was going to win a physical fight with him she had to do something to protect Damon. Bonnie looked at her hand and back at Kai's face, seeing from the corner of her eye Kai's face following the same trajectory. She pulled her hand away cradling it in her other hand.

Kai smiled broadly at her and she felt her skin prickle with awareness of how close he was. He wasn't much closer than he had been from when he took out the Lerethum but something in the air had changed. Kai's smile faded as his eyes narrowed down at her.

"What did he do, Bon? For you not to give up on him?" He asked. "You know. Sometimes I wondered," he said, giving her a measured look.

Kai reached his hands out to hers and intuitively she pulled her hands behind her back. He moved closer, pushing her waist with the palms of his hands so her back pushed against the column, effectively locking her hands behind her.

*Smart move,* Bonnie chided herself while her ire at Kai sparked.
For a moment they stood still as Bonnie felt her anger cascading out of her ready to be channeled out. She opened her mouth at the same time Kai bent his face down and closed the gap between them, taking hold of her mouth with his. He kept his lips in place at first, as if savoring the contact. Slowly he started moving them, giving her lazy, short kisses. To Bonnie's horror she responded by her arms going limp, her brain on freeze, too shocked to respond. Kai moved to lick her lower lip, then put it in his mouth, sucking and tugging at it. Too gently for anything she'd expect.

Bonnie murmured out a startled cry but because his mouth was on hers what came out was a sharp and stifled "mm". Kai moaned into her mouth in response. The sound woke Bonnie up from her daze.

"Motus." She said at the same time she broke the kiss, pulling her lips forcefully from him. Kai flew backwards a few feet.

"What's wrong with you?!" She said, vaguely aware her tone was more suited to a guy making an unwelcome advance rather than a murderous villain. Bonnie wiped the back of her mouth and regretted it immediately, thinking that more of Kai was over her. Her lips tingled.

Kai looked at her face, down her body and up to her face again, his face blank. He raised his eyebrows and opened his mouth, still saying nothing. He took a few steps away, took one more glance at her, and vamp disappeared.

What was that? She didn't dream it. No, definitely not. She wasn't getting enough sleep but this wasn't a hallucination. What just happened didn't make sense but everything else was normal. She was at the Mystic Grill and now that Kai was no longer there she was able to hear cars driving by and see people walking outside, only their figures showing through the lowered blinds.

Bonnie looked around her, making sure Kai was gone, and took a deep breathe. She needed to sit down with her thoughts. She and Damon weren't able to finish the spell. Kai was still out there without magic – for now.

Wait - Damon. Bonnie's attention turned to him and she headed over to him.

"Damon. Damon!!" She couldn't see him under the heap of metal and glass. She moved a few pieces of broken metal but some were too heavy and broken glass was everywhere. Damon wasn't showing any signs of waking up. Bonnie didn't doubt he'd wake up eventually. Something told her Kai would take his time to make her suffer. Somehow for that he'd have patience. But Damon would be too heavy for her to carry in the state she was at and in front of witnesses she couldn't compell. She was going to have to call for help.

She was able to get a hold of Stefan and gave him enough details so he would rush over. Stefan said he'd be right there and ended the call.

Bonnie walked over to the hardened silver puddle and put her hand over it, trying to reshape it to its previous form. She was so out of juice she was only able to get it to bubble up a little. She touched it. It was definitely molded to the floor. If Stefan wouldn't be able move it she would cast a spell to protect it from being affected by other magics. She didn't want Kai to get to it. At least he didn't have his magic for now. But he wouldn't be less dangerous without it, her thoughts cautioned her.

Why did he kiss her? Did he put a spell- No, he couldn't have done that. The way he left made her feel he hadn't plan to kiss her. Oh no. No no no. He kissed her. She felt utterly disgusted.

Stefan arrived and picked Damon up, taking in the destroyed Mystic Grill.
"What happened?"

Bonnie opened her mouth and the only word she could say was "Kai." Stefan looked at the dummy that still remained in place somehow and sighed. "You went to him didn't you?"

Bonnie started to answer and Stefan cut her off.

"I knew I should've kept an eye on you both. I'm going to take him back to the house. Are you gonna be OK getting there?" He asked.

"Yeah. I think he's gone."

"You're sure?"

She remembered Kai's blank face after he kissed her. "A witch's intuition," she said with a nod.

Stefan was able to remove what remained of the Lerethum with him, Bonnie promising she'd explain what happened when she'd get to Salvator House. Vampire friends sometimes did come in handy.

After Stefan left Bonnie stood for a moment, taking the scene in and replayed the fight in her mind. *Think about strategies,* she told herself. *Think about what you do from here. About what on earth happened?* Maybe she could use this, but what was this? Kai was unpredictable and unstable.

As she surveyed the room she felt pride. It maybe didn't fit with the destruction of the restaurant but she felt strong. She felt good that she held her own in this fight. Nothing compared to her and Kai’s last confrontation. She wasn't herself at that face off. Talk about something that didn't make any sense. She must've been in some kind of mental block that she tried nothing except casting Ossox twice. But she didn't know then how powerful Kai was. She couldn't underestimate him.

She wasn't looking forward to talking with her friends about what happened. She figured that Damon was going to tell Stefan everything eventually even if she hadn't called him, which meant everyone was going to find out. She was going to tell them – almost – everything. She knew they'd have many questions. She was sure some of them would overlap with her own.

Chapter End Notes

A/N

We were robbed of a proper Bonnie/Kai faceoff in season 6 finale... Bonnie deserved better (I've said that a lot while watching Vampire Diaries).

862euv, thank you for commenting! Would've been great to see Bonnie face Kai in season 7 if writers would've done the right thing and kept Kai on.
Sun streamed through the living room windows at the Salvatore Boarding House. Bonnie lay on a couch rubbing her temples, already imagining her muscles releasing tension through completing a third lap in the pool or running through the park. As soon as she and her friends finished their check in either one was her next destination. Or rather, after helping to clean up the Grill. She was sure she could get Caroline to help get it back in shape so that Matt wouldn't even notice a thing went broken. Or something close to it. She wasn't looking forward to telling her friends that she and Damon didn't finish what they set out to do. She was disappointed. She failed Elena and herself.

Damon had eventually woken up and didn't seem to have any long term damage from Kai's attack. At the moment he was playing with weighted glass, reflecting sunlight into Stefan's face.

"Stop that." Stefan waved his hand in front of his face. "Caroline's gonna get here soon. Can you tell me something more about what happened while we're waiting?"

"Brother, I already gave you the short and take away version. When Kai left he couldn't do magic. I'm not going into the whole thing and then have to catch up Blondie all over again when she gets here."

Bonnie listened with half an ear as her mind went through the play by play of the fight. *You're disappointed but think of what it felt like to stand in front of Kai. To cause real damage.* The courage Bonnie had felt made her feel drunk with power. The power she carried in that face off made her heart swell. *I did that.* She was able to weaken Kai. Though a part of her worried it may only piss him off and lash out more.

And then Kai having done- whatever. She didn’t like one bit that his action was throwing her off. Stefan shook his head. "This was your idea," He told Bonnie.

Bonnie tried not to have her voice match the bitterness his words pulled out of her. "If Elena was back we wouldn't be having this conversation. We all want her back." She reminded Stefan.

Stefan lifted his hands up. "Look, I'm sorry. I just don't want my friend and my brother playing heroes and putting themselves at risk with a madman."

Bonnie didn't consider herself to play act a role. It was real. Seeing her enemy face to face felt more real than running spells to save the day from behind a curtain. That she wanted to face the villain herself wasn't an outrageous move. It was about time. She and Damon knew Kai better than anyone else. Who better than them to face Kai?

"Taking a risk isn't new to us, Stefan. That's what we do for each other." Bonnie said. *Without question for Elena.* Beside the importance Elena held for those who loved her, she was like a sister to Bonnie.

Bonnie heard a knock and Stefan left the room, returning a few moments later with Caroline behind him.

"Did you know about this?" Stefan asked Caroline.
"No, no I didn't." Caroline said. "In fact I thought it was clear that we were going to think about the present and-" she said while eyeing Bonnie "live our lives."

"Harder to do that with a sociopath vampire witch still around," Bonnie said.

"I thought you said he can't do magic?" Stefan asked.

"All I can say is, last time I trust Bonnie's witchy woo to get us out of a mess." Damon said.

Bonnie, distracted by Damon, glanced at him with a perturbed expression though she knew there was no truth in his words and that he was just being a pain.

"Hold on. Kai can't do magic?" Caroline asked Bonnie who was still staring at Damon. "Bonnie?"

"Look," Damon said, "Bonnie and I were going to take away Kai's magic temporarily. Little did we know that, of course, he'd bust in on us and ruin our surprise-" Damon said and caught up the group with what happened before he went down. Bonnie filled the three on almost everything that occurred after that, explaining Kai left after removing the Lerethum.

"Probably felt I was going to get up any minute and cut him in half." Damon said. "So see, it's not all bad. We have a vampire witch who for now doesn't have magical powers. Does it matter whose idea it was?" Damon asked while pointing at Bonnie. "That's at least got to be good news for those of us who don't want our lives linked together. I mean, not us three," Damon said while looking at Caroline and Stefan. "But you know, the others."

"So you two never got to finish the spell?" Stefan said.

Damon sighed. "I was resting my eyes for a second, brother. I didn't know Bonnie would drive magicless vampire away."

"So he has magic but he can't use it?" Caroline asked. "I didn't know that could happen."

"I didn't know either." Bonnie admitted. "It's still there but we somehow blocked his ability to use it. We have the Lerethum but I can't bring it back to its original form. We'd need to do that to reverse the spell and do it again. We have it in a safe place. I don't know how long Kai won't have magic or if there are other side effects. I don't even know if this would affect his linking spell on me and Elena."

"I doubt it'd be so easy," Damon said.

"So like Damon said," Bonnie said, "While he's unable to do magic he's a vampire." After a pause she added, "Who can still siphon magic."

"Listen, both of you tried." Stefan looked between Damon and Bonnie. "You know I want Elena back too. But right now we have another vampire," and now Stefan looked squarely at Damon "who's trying to get her vampire family back. And who knows what we'll deal with then." Stefan said.

"You're not worried that Kai's going to help her?" Caroline asked.

"He hasn't helped her yet. Maybe they could even duke it out. An older vampire has an advantage over him." Stefan said.

"Let me tell you something, that trip to Europe is sounding better and better by the second." Damon groaned.
The conclusion of the meeting wasn't a surprise to Bonnie. Disappointment tugged at her as well as hurt on behalf of Elena. That and the lurking feeling of the threat of two vampires wreaking havoc on Mystic Falls felt very real.

Having gone through all of that, Bonnie was perplexed she slept well that night. *That's the best I've slept in a long time.* But she realized she had pushed herself when facing Kai and as a result felt she had her feet more firm on the ground. She got a bit more equilibrium back. Although it wasn't clear what Kai'd be like without magic it thrilled her that something he wanted so long was denied of him.

Having confronted him head on made her feel satisfied. Not for good. But for now, *I still want to fight back but he doesn't have to be the target.*

She picked up a photo of her and Elena. "I'm not giving up on you," she told her smiling friend. "But I'll do it. I'm going to figure out what I want to do."

Yesterday Bonnie felt hurt on Elena's behalf but she was coming to terms with the fact that Elena wouldn't have felt that way. Three weeks ago Elena invited her to live her own life. Bonnie wasn't going to happily accept this knowing she couldn't share it with her friend. But she was ready to start writing in the journal she got so Elena wouldn't miss anything from what Bonnie was going through.

*Or almost anything.* She saw herself pushing Kai off her. Kai telling her he linked her life with Elena’s. She fought an impulse to scream. *It would be easier,* she thought again, *not to have him remain unfinished business as he wandered Mystic Falls.* Bonnie looked at Caroline’s made up bed and thought back to yesterday’s conversation with her friends. *Yeah, he would, along with other vampires and monsters who'll come up and continue to exist. I'm still going to live my life.*

So if she put all of that on the side what would she want to do? Her stomach filled with butterflies and she felt lightheaded at the exhilarating thought. Being gone and then trapped in a prison world had the mundane result that she missed a lot of school. She still wanted to finish but that would involve choosing a major. She had postponed the decision, the supernatural getting in the way, though she had had toyed with a few options.

Properties of nature interested her, maybe this interest ignited because of her being a witch, so she was drawn to biology and environmental studies. Mixing potions and the precision it required had drawn her to chemistry and her years as a cheerleader drew her to dance.

It was summer, she reassured herself, and she'd have a little time before signing up for classes. If that indeed was what she wanted to do. She wasn't sure. Getting back to some sense of routine may be comforting.

Caroline seemed to flourish in school. She took it for granted she'd finish her degree. Bonnie wasn’t sure when the last time was that she felt assurance she could finish what she started when that assurance had been taken from her so many times. Along with the gratitude she felt for returning, it was disorienting to be plucked back in to her former life.

Even if she lived a long life it would likely be much shorter than her vampire buddies. She could again more easily relate to Matt and Jeremy who didn't have as long time to decide what they wanted to do. Her friends were getting used to a new reality, one without Elena, like she was. But they seemed to not have changed so much since she left. Maybe that’s what they thought of her.

*I wonder who'd I'd be outside my friends.* Who she'd find out she'd be. *Bonnie picked up her phone.*
That morning Bonnie had stopped by a coffee shop. She had avoided looking online at the news since the debrief with her friends but she couldn’t stop herself from picking up a local newspaper, scanning for updates on new deaths. Just because she was going to live her life that didn’t mean she was going to be able to turn off her curiosity and anxiety about knowing whether a vampire witch without magic and another newly escaped vampire were causing havoc. The usual numbers of deaths had been there, with a spike, but it wasn't clear if magic was used.

"Anything new and exciting?" The barista asked her, pointing at the newspaper Bonnie was holding.

"What's ever new here?" Bonnie smiled back, waving off the morbid topic she was reading about.

"You look familiar." The barista said in a friendly voice. "I used to see you here a lot. And then you disappeared for a while."

"Yeah." Bonnie nodded, flattered, now recognizing him too. "You remember?"

"Yeah." The two chatted while she placed her order. Customers overflowed the coffee shop and conversation rose to a cacophony where individual words couldn’t be made out. Bonnie steadied her breathe so not to feel overwhelmed by the noise and motion. It was when loud conversations enveloped her surroundings that she more acutely heard the silence that wrapped her in the prison world. Still, the commotion of people going about their day was also reassuring. She wasn’t alone.

Bonnie smiled at the barista as she took her change back and moved further in the line when she heard someone behind her grumble, "About time he stopped flirting with her."

Who was flirting? Bonnie had turned around and the woman broke eye contact with her too quickly. She had been talking about her, Bonnie realized. The barista was flirting with her? He seemed friendly with everyone. She looked back at him and saw he had moved on to the next person behind her. But as he plugged in numbers in the register she felt him look at her from the corner of his eyes.

She had talked to him over a dozen times. Granted that was a long time ago. But she had come back to the shop after returning from the prison world. They had chatted. She didn't realize he was flirting. Had he flirted with her before?

Later Bonnie walked down the street on the way to her car, taking in her surroundings a little differently. She looked around her and noticed in a way she didn't see before several guys and a few women looking at her with a smile. Her face grew warm at the thought. It had felt damn good. *I never really seemed to have time to think about other guys*, it occurred to her. She was so frequently focused on crises or tragedies happening to her friends or family. Watching her friends' being pursued over and over again she didn't really think about herself.

"You're just not used to guys hitting on you."

She was looking behind her at a guy who had definitely been checking her out and smiled. Not paying attention to the sidewalk ahead she felt a body hit her.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Bonnie had said.

"Ah, I'm sorry. I was just turning a corner and I'm in a hurry. I'm late." A young woman said to her, her laughter diffusing the situation.

"Sounds like a must see event." Bonnie returned the smile.
"Yeah." The woman looked through papers she was holding and pulled one out. "Here." She held it to Bonnie. "I have a feeling you’d want to check it out."

Bonnie accepted the flyer and the woman rushed off, apologizing again that she was running late. Bonnie examined the paper and looked back after the woman who was disappearing from view. She had sensed something strange when the woman bumped into her. Something familiar.

She must’ve been a witch, Bonnie had realized, which would explain the woman’s confident tone that Bonnie may want to come by. She looked more closely at the flyer. It looked a discussion group running some events for the week. They covered philosophy, environmental issues, and identity. She wasn’t sure she was sold on the idea.

Back in her dorm, Bonnie opened her contact list on her phone. Bumping into the woman that morning made Bonnie remember someone she had fell out of touch with years ago. She had thought about getting in touch with her for weeks. Grams had given Bonnie numbers for a few distant relatives and friends of friends in the area. Bonnie had never reached out. Elena, Caroline, Jeremy, Matt, Alaric, and later Damon and Stefan had been her life. Finally Bonnie saw the name and remembered. That’s who she wanted to reach.

"Hi, Santianna?" Bonnie said after hitting dial. "Hi. It's Bonnie. How's it going? I know we haven't talked in a while- Yeah, Sheila's granddaughter."

The two chitchatted for a few minutes. "I know this might be out of the blue," Bonnie said. "But I was wondering, did you want to hang out sometime?"

Bonnie was amused she felt a little nervous asking Santianna to hang out, almost like she was asking someone out on a date. But that nervousness came from being out of contact so long with another side of her family. Santianna wasn't a relative but a daughter of one of Sheila's friends. She was friendly and sounded curious about meeting up with Bonnie, offering to meet with her later that same day. Bonnie agreed. She put some clothes away in her suitcase before heading out of her dorm. She figured she'd get a call from Damon, who'd said something to her before she left the Salvatore House the day before. Once he'd make the decision he'd move fast and she'd want to be ready.

A few hours into conversation with Santianna, Bonnie remembered the kind of connection she could find with another witch. Not better than with another human but familiar in a way that Bonnie realized she had deeply missed. It reminded her of Grams. *I haven’t always had smooth experiences with witches*, she thought, and maybe that was one reason she resisted connecting with them. *How have my relationships gone with my human or vampire friends? Not exactly easy either.*

"I'm happy you called me. Last time I saw you was five years ago?" Santianna asked.

"At least. I know you tried to get in touch with me a few times over the past couple of years. A lot has been going on."

"I get it. Believe me."

Santianna lived near Whitmore campus but didn't go to college. Bonnie met with her at a sandwich place by the camping and outdoor store where Santianna worked.

"I like working at the store but I hope I can spend more time working outdoors eventually. For right now, on some weekends I go out of town and work at Higher Up. I'm a sky diving instructor."

"You go sky diving? Well I guess that makes sense."
"In a family that levitates? Yes." Santianna whispered. Though Bonnie didn't know Santianna and her family very well she remembered her grandmother mentioning that. "The kind of feeling you get in the air... I wouldn't trade that for anything."

"Can't say I've done that." Of the adventures that Bonnie had gone on that wasn't one of them.

"I wish I could get that high without a plane. If you ever want to give it a try, I can get you a discount."

"I'll let you know." Bonnie laughed. She had gone rock climbing several times now and had grown used to the height but jumping from a plane was a different level of adventure.

"You know, you should hang out sometime with me and some friends. We're actually running some events this week." Santiana pulled up the events on her phone and turned the screen to Bonnie.

"That's funny." Bonnie said at the familiar descriptions. "Someone was telling me about this earlier today. She gave me a flyer."

"Really? Did she say her name?"

"No. She was 6 feet or so. Long black dreads."

"Was she wearing a red cap?"

"Yes."

"That sounds like Cheryl. See, it was meant to be. We hang out, learn, practice spells. Coven away from our coven. Maybe you'll learn something," Santiana laughed and winked at Bonnie. "Or teach us something. Sheila Bennett's name precedes her."

Bonnie smiled a sad smile.

"She was a really special woman." Santiana said. "I was going through a rough time years ago. There was something so comforting and honest about her. She could really get on your case. But I loved that she did."

"Yeah. She was amazing," Bonnie said.

"Sorry, I don't mean to upset you by bringing her up." Santiana said and her eyes grew soft.

"No, it's really nice to talk with someone who knew her. I do miss her a lot."

Santiana nodded.

"I miss doing magic with her." Bonnie said. "For a long time I've mostly been doing it on my own."

"Sometimes that's who you can trust most, right?"

Bonnie supposed. But it was also her default choice. She was the core member of her group who was able to do magic.

"Listen, I need to get back to work. But I'm going out with some friends to an improv show later tonight. Some of them are part of the group I told you about. Some just regular, boring humans." Santiana laughed. "Wanna come?"
Bonnie thought of Damon. "You know, a friend of mine, I was thinking I may be going out of town for a while. I probably need to pack."

"When are you leaving?"

"Maybe today."

"That's so cool. I wish I was doing that. Just not on a plane."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't really like flying on long trips. So much sitting still maybe. You have my number. Give me a shout when you're back."

Bonnie said goodbye to Santianna and headed back to Whitmore College. She glanced at the suitcase sitting by her bed. She had started to pack, unsure when Damon would be ready to leave, and she wanted to be ready. But she had only put a couple of shirts and pants in the suitcase. She opened her top drawer and hesitated over her clothes. Her phone rang and Damon's name flashed. Bonnie answered.

"How's my favorite mortal witch doing?" Damon asked.

"I was waiting to hear from you." Bonnie said.

"Bonbon, we're doing it. No more waiting. I think Alaric thinks something's up so I'm gonna wait and grab him tomorrow morning. I'll see you outside my place? Quick getaway will be easier."

Bonnie's yes was on her lips when hesitation held her back.

"Bonnie?"

"Yeah."

"You're coming right? This is the longest I've talked about a plan without doing it. We all need a break. Promise, only limited babysitting duties needed."

*That I have a hard time believing.* Her heart felt heavy. To be the responsible for two grieving men while she was grieving herself. Bonnie again put away the guilt she felt for what happened with Elena.

"You know Damon. I think I'm going to sit this one out. There's some things I need to do. Is that OK?"

"Scared you off with assignment of babysitting duties? Yeah, they'd probably not be limited. But Bon, it's not gonna be the same without you bossing us around."

Going on a trip would be her doing something for herself and taking a break from the town. She'd be with her friends. Still Bonnie felt a pull to do something else entirely.

"Hey Bonnie," Damon's tone took a severe tone. "If this means you're going to do anything you shouldn't that I'd need to babysit you for."

"No, I'm not going to rush off to see Kai again, trust me. I guess just need some time on my own."

"OK. But we get alcohol poisoning I'm coming back to haunt you."
"Sadly that's one thing you can't die from or I would've been at your funeral years ago. Only now I'd be a little upset about it," Bonnie said. She heard Damon laugh. "Look, call me when you get there. If I don't hear from you I'm sending a crisis team."

"Fine. I'll miss you."

"You'll be all right."

"Don't know. Something must be wrong if I'm telling you that," Damon snipped.

"Call me when you get there," Bonnie reminded Damon before they ended the call. Bonnie returned to her suitcase and started pulling out her clothes. After putting the first batch back in her dresser she texted Santianna that she was going to join in that evening after all.

She didn't meet Erik the first time that night. It was a few days later, while she was chatting with Santianna on a bench by the Grill, when Erik passed by and Bonnie stopped him to let him know he dropped his smartphone. They started talking and when Santianna excused herself Erik took the opportunity to ask Bonnie out. He was tall and his hair was a little too long for Bonnie's tastes but his eyes captivated her. He made her laugh. She liked how genuine he seemed to be.

He was definitely not a witch. Neither a vampire nor a werewolf. At first Bonnie expected him to belong to some other mystical group but he was completely human. A group she once thought she squarely belonged to in another life, that innocent girl she was. Now she couldn't imagine herself as someone other than a witch.

After recent losses and drama with Jeremy, Bonnie wanted something light. Spending time with a human who didn't seem to know about the supernatural felt easier. She let Erik know early that she was looking to have fun and get to know him but wasn't looking for a serious relationship. Erik responded well. They went dancing and two days later Erik took Bonnie indoor rock climbing.

Bonnie didn't know what to make of how she slept better. Her mind was more focused on something else. Someone else. She was letting herself get distracted and even if it wasn't serious it didn't mean she wasn't excited to share a part of herself with someone. Erik was attentive in a way that Bonnie hadn't been used to and she felt excited about waking up in a different way than she had in a long time. While a couple of times she felt a bit torn that she hadn't gone traveling with Damon and Alaric, these feelings were overshadowed by good feelings she felt spending time with Erik and her new friends.

"Damon?"

"You know, Bonnie, if you were going to call me every single day you really should've saved your time and come with me and Alaric."

Bonnie laughed, putting the phone on speaker and setting it down on her dresser. She picked up her makeup to put finishing touches around her eyes.

"I just want to make sure that you're still keeping it together. You're watching over Alaric. And I'm making sure someone's looking out for you."

Bonnie heard some shouting and chanting in the background. She had heard chanting last time she had called Damon. "Damon, get up and get some water for your friend."

"Bonnie. Haven't found yourself in any life threatening emergencies lately? Something I'd need to
rush home for in time to see my girlfriend wake up?"

"Sad to disappoint. I'm OK."

"Going on a date?"

Bonnie stared at the phone. She had shared with Damon that Erik asked her out the day he did it.

"Yes, I am." She couldn’t help but smile.

"Again. Can't wait to meet the guy. Make sure to put plenty of grease under your shoes before you go up those mountai- Alaric's saying it's rocks. Rock climbing?" Damon spoke away from the phone then his voice grew louder. “Yeah, make sure you also dip your hands in some olive oil while you're at it- "

"Get Alaric water, Damon. Call me later, OK?"

"No chance witchy. I'm gonna be passed out in a couple of hours. Better luck calling you tomorrow." Damon's voice was muffled as he said to someone else, "Excuse me, water? Thanks. Have a good time on your date Bon. Only do things I'd do." This time Bonnie heard the smile in Damon’s voice.

She felt better checking in on him. She was looking after him for Elena and herself. What a few months alone could do to bring her and Damon closer, of all people, she thought, as she put away her eye shadow. If she had gone on the trip her mind wouldn’t have really been with Alaric and Damon and she wasn’t sure she had it in her to take care of them. Calling Damon was a compromise. Damon and Alaric weren’t alone anyway. They had each other. The time she wasn’t on the phone with Damon she was going to use to take care of herself. To figure out what taking care of herself looked like.

She looked at her reflection in the mirror, stopping for a moment to take in the feeling in her stomach, the anticipation to see Erik and touch him. Excitement of sharing herself as an uncomplicated, non-witch woman for now. She opened her mascara and added a coat to her eye lashes.

She had a few glitches with Erik of course. The first time they kissed. A flash came up in her eyes of the last guy who kissed her. Fleeting but there. That kiss with Kai – she couldn't believe she had frozen like that and let him kiss her that long. Now that a week had passed it felt like he had kissed her for hours even though it couldn’t have been more than thirty seconds if that. Gah, still so long that I let him do it. I was in shock. How wouldn’t she have been?

She didn't have anyone to admit it to and it was probably for the best but she couldn't quite say she had absolutely never imagined kissing Kai (an entry that was definitely not going in her journal for Elena). I only ever thought it for less than half a second. Kai already failed to make a first good impression by attacking Damon. But she had maybe wanted to believe that Kai took extreme action so she could get her magic back. And it was such a relief and rush for her to fire up flames in the store. She had given her friends benefit of the doubt so at that point she wanted to believe Kai.

Later he walked right up close to her, seemingly trying to bond while encouraging her to ignore Damon. It wasn't long after that she learned about what he did and that no good human emotions were behind his seemingly innocent face. But still, when she had looked at his face at that moment she had thought she saw something real. But that was just his charm. Murderers could be charming.
The kiss itself with Kai. She preferred not to think about the kiss at all since it was so bizarre, tried to forget completely, but she still couldn’t erase the uncomfortably nagging feeling that he was gentle in a way she wouldn't have expected of him. She had not seen him before at a loss for words either. She still didn't understand why he did it. She had expected to see him pop up, walking cautiously hyper aware of her surroundings. Thankfully, he made no appearance.

Outside of seeing Erik, Bonnie spent more time with Santianna and her friends. Unsure what to expect and pushed by Santianna, she decided to check out a witch circle’s meeting.

Cheryl appeared to be a self appointed leader in the group, charismatic and welcoming. It was her and Peter, another member, who were the eldest and seemed to behave like the parents of the group. Other than them as far as Bonnie could see the group was made of mostly people her age, maybe mid-twenties at the most.

"I'm so happy you came," Cheryl hugged Bonnie. "Santianna's been talking about you. She's over there." Cheryl pointed in her direction.

Bonnie walked over and sat down beside Santianna and a young man, who Santianna introduced as James.

"Bonnie Bennett?" James said, emphasizing Bennett. Bonnie was going to hear that a few times that night, and she felt a sense of pride and apprehension. She wasn't her grandmother and she didn't know what the others expected when they recognized her by her last name.

"So you'll notice," Santianna said to Bonnie when James got up to grab drinks. "We can be pretty informal. We check in with each other, sometimes we have a discussion about something current that's going on or someone's having an issue they want to get feedback from the group. Usually we break up into smaller groups at some point. Those that want to study spells study. Those who want to run spells do. And Peter and Cheryl watch over and make sure we don't open a door to another dimension – that happened once."

"So everyone's a witch?"

"Yeah." Santianna nodded. "Werewolves have packs and we have our own thing. Here, let’s mingle."

Bonnie knocked on the Salvatore House. Damon was back and though Bonnie wouldn’t readily admit it to him, she looked forward to seeing him back.

"Hi," Bonnie said to Stefan who opened the door. Stefan nodded with warm eyes but his features were tighter than usual. Bonnie walked in the kitchen where Damon was sitting and staring into space.

"Damon." Bonnie smiled. Damon got up and gave Bonnie a hug but his smile was restrained.

"What happened?" Bonnie asked.

"Mommy dearest is missing." Damon sighed. "Couldn't stay away without drama going on back home."

Stefan shrugged.

"Don't pretend like you don't care." Damon said to Stefan.
"She wasn't exactly excited to see me when I saw her last. She was still talking about her real family." Stefan said. "I do care if her being gone means she's getting closer to getting her family. When did you last see her?"

"Some high school students went missing." Stefan said. "I thought for a minute she was actually trying to make a new family but police found them later."

"You're sure it wasn't Kai?" Bonnie asked.

"The way they described the victims and the scene, it sounds like Lily's style." Stefan said.

"Is it possible that she is working with him?" Bonnie asked. That point had come up when they debriefed about the face off with Kai. Maybe it was true after all.

Damon grumbled. "When I talked to her last week – his name did come up." Damon answered.

"You didn't tell me that." Stefan said.

"I just thought about it now. I was barely sober when I talked to her, I can't believe I even remembered it. I don't know how she even found me in Amsterdam… She said she knew someone who knew the bartender. Said Kai was dodging her calls. I told her to tweet at him."

Bonnie felt anxiety in her rise. "We let her out. All these dead people. And if she gets a way to get the heretics out-" She said.

"Was a perfect time to turn off your humanity, brother. We brought her back for you." Damon scoffed at Stefan.

"I turned off my humanity to try and save someone's life."

"Couldn't you have faked it?" Damon stepped closer to Stefan.

"You don't think Caroline would've noticed that?"

Damon kept approaching his brother. "That's your problem, you get too attached to people you don't know and you feel responsible for them-"

Bonnie called out "Stop it! Can we go back to how we're going to deal with this problem?"

Stefan and Damon exchanged glances.

"I mean, at least none of them have magic." Damon noted.

"That is, if Kai still doesn't have his magic. We couldn’t finish the spell, remember?" Bonnie said.

"I need a drink." Damon said and left to the living room. "I can't believe I'm saying this but at least Elena not being here means she's safe."

Bonnie didn't expect Damon to care about people he never met. But those deaths, thinking about people falling victim to both Lily and Kai, upset her.

Her head throbbed but she was still pushing herself to see Erik that night. She didn't want to sit in her dorm room not feeling well. She needed a time out after the witches’ circle meeting. While the last meeting she attended had conversations centered more around spells and mythology, this one was different. Listening to the group talk that evening she was reminded how magic and vampires...
touched lives of everyone in the small town.

One member talked about losing a close friend to a vampire which spurred on others to share their stories.

"I think we need to remind ourselves," James said. "What risk we're taking when we get involved with a vampire."

A few groans were heard in the room as well as sounds of agreement.

"I lost a great aunt in Chicago to a vampire." Santianna whispered to Bonnie. "Gloria. We were close. She was a bartender and she told me that when I got older she'd teach me to mix drinks and I could add one to the menu. I was going to visit her the fall before she was killed."

"That's terrible. I'm sorry." Bonnie said. She knew what it meant to lose people close to vampires. At the same breathe she had close vampire friends. "So I guess that means you agree? That we should stay away from all vampires?"

"Yeah, Santianna, please tell us all what you think." James said.

Santianna sat up in her seat. "I don't think we should write off all vampires. Some vampires keep their humanity switch on. Some don't feed on people."

Bonnie could relate to this as she thought of her vampire friends.

"I just want us to think about price we pay to have them in our lives." James said. "That's all I'm saying. Humanity switch or not, you're at the wrong place, wrong time, with someone whose instinct is to kill you. That's what they're supposed to do. Something goes wrong and you're gone."

The discussion left Bonnie thinking. She wouldn't have chosen to get to know Damon and Stefan. But Elena loved them and she herself found the good in them over time. And Caroline had been her friend before she turned and most of the time she succeeded in being good.

Bonnie felt compassion for Santianna for losing her great aunt and felt compassion for her group. She had only met them a handful of times but she felt how she could grow deep connections with some of them. They got her in a way humans didn't. In ways my friends didn't. Bonnie also recognized why she kept her attachments to her small group of friends. Here was another group of people to care about and to worry about. To maybe lose. Even in the short time of knowing Santianna she felt the two bonded over common interests.

The stories she heard tonight of losses, that along with reading the news earlier, was overwhelming. Deaths spiked again. She didn't know why she kept reading the news. Damon and Stefan's mom now was missing was perhaps a blessing but surely would lead to something worse.

She had left the group early. Since she was already dressed up she didn't need to change and could head straight to see Erik.

Thoughts of death and grief on her mind, she thought to herself that she didn't want to take another loss that night.

So when she saw a struggle and recognized telltale signs of a vampire feeding she ran straight to the commotion. It was stupid and risky. Even though she played the role of hero before and she was a witch to be reckoned with. Vampires still held some advantages and didn't she just get back from a group talking about deaths of witches in hands of vampires? But she wasn't going to ignore an innocent person getting hurt.
"Hey!" She screamed as she ran towards the pair. She didn't even have her stake with her, a habit she had picked up.

A familiar face looked up from the person's neck and Bonnie stopped herself from turning her heels and fleeing.

"Not you." Kai said with exasperation.

Of course she was going to bump into him eventually. Foolishly she hoped it wasn't going to happen so quickly. Bonnie looked around her. The street was deserted. A Founders event was going on that night. She had specifically asked Erik to hang out at the Grill so they could be away from crowds of people. If a time out, then all the way.

Bonnie approached Kai until she was standing a few feet away from him and the man he was still holding. Bonnie's heart picked up more when she saw the injured man didn't seem to be conscious. Blood dripped from his neck over his shirt. She sensed magic from Kai but it was like it was behind a wall. It couldn't touch her. She exhaled. He couldn't do magic.

The memory of her last battle with Kai came back to her, The fear she felt, the victory in battling him and slowing him down. The faded recollection of the way that he left. It felt jarring to see him and she looked for any signs of warmth or even ambivalence in his face but only found annoyance and coolness. He was hidden in a nook on the street, with stairs leading to a lower store. People passing by wouldn't easily see him. Bonnie glanced at the stairs and saw two dead bodies sprawled on top of each other. She took a sharp breathe.

"You scream," Kai cautioned, "and I finish my dessert right now."

"Let him go." She wasn't sure where she got the courage to say this so calmly.

Kai let go of the man who, without an anchor, crumpled to the ground. "Like this?"

Bonnie quickly knelt down beside the guy. Now that she looked at him closer it looked like he was weaving in and out of unconsciousness.

"Do you even know this guy?" Kai asked incredulously. Bonnie heard him smack his fingers and she felt ill thinking he was relishing his meal.

"He's one of Caroline's classmates. I think," She answered, expecting she was saying it to herself because Kai wasn't looking for a reply. It did look like one of Caroline's classmates from a psychology class. It was a long time since Bonnie was in the loop of her friends' lives but she must have met him a few times. And really in such a small town reality was that if she didn't know this guy she probably knew his sister, an uncle, or a friend who she went to high school with. She checked the man's pulse and breathed a bit easier when she found one. It was weak but this guy was no doubt a fighter.

Kai's voice interrupted her thoughts. "I'm hungry. You can't expect me to eat cold blood all day. Though truth is I've never tried a blood bag – disgusting – but why would anyone if they have the good stuff?" Kai's face was messy with blood, some of already drying up around his mouth.

Bonnie stood up.

"You don't expect me not to finish him off? I mean it's him or you Bonnie and though I really don't want to choose-

He made a move towards her and immediately crouched down, responding to Bonnie's chant.
"Ow. Moody. Anyway, not solving my problem here Bon." Kai gazed at the man below him.

"He needs a dr."

Kai's expression was cold. "Why would that be any problem of mine?" He looked up and for the first time seemed to take Bonnie in. Bonnie grew very aware of the yellow, form fitting dress she was wearing. "Heading to meet someone special, Bon? Didn't know you'd bump into me, huh?"

"Kai, I see those two bodies, let this one go." Bonnie said, ignoring his question.

"It's never enough what I eat," he whined. "As much as how liberating it is. Do you realize, now I have a license to do what I wanted to do before. Now it makes sense for me to kill people. I need blood to survive and I'm expected to kill people with no remorse. Isn't that interesting? I'm not expected to feel guilty anymore. Except for those who started off with a conscious. Sell outs." Kai laughed and looked at the bodies down the stairs and back at Bonnie who glared at him. Kai's smile froze and his expression turned a little sheepish.

Bonnie knew vampires didn't have to be completely evil. She had first hand experience to know this. She wondered if Kai knew about the humanity switch.

"Just so you know," he said. "These three guys were trying to rob me."

Bonnie gave him a dubious look.

"Or they were being robbed? Someone was robbed." He said. "I ate the robber first."

What was this twilight zone episode that she found herself in? It was so ridiculous that Bonnie all but forgot to be scared. "Aren't you worried we're all gonna get tired of you and kill you?"

"Nah, not when there's even a tiny chance you can get sleeping beauty back."

Bonnie's heart stopped. "I thought you said there's no way to bring her back."

Kai shrugged. "There isn't. But people never give up hope," and with that Kai looked into her eyes. "Do they, Bonnie?" Something about how he looked at her made her turn her eyes away.

"Look, you can't be hungry still." Bonnie said. As if she could rationalize this situation with him. She was desperate. She was losing time and the guy below her was going to bleed out.

"I'm always hungry." He said in a low voice.

That actually made sense. She remembered Caroline telling her. Drinking blood was never enough. And Kai felt no guilt.

"You know what, OK. I was getting to that backwash stage anyway," he said and picked up the man. "Look at me. Why don't you walk off." Kai looked around and pointed behind Bonnie, "that way. You need a dr. You don't know what happened but you definitely got robbed." Kai went into the man's pocket and grabbed his wallet.

The man stumbled away. Bonnie turned to watch him go. As if guessing her thoughts, Kai said, "Don't follow him or I'll kill you both."

Bonnie hoped the young man was going to be OK.

She turned and saw Kai going through the guy's wallet.
"Hm. He was born the same month as Liv. Same year too." Kai paused a few seconds on the guy's license, and looked behind Bonnie, before grabbing the bills from the wallet and throwing it and the license down the stairs. "I don't really need the money. But it's gotta look like a robbery now."

The man gone, Bonnie now had the only thought of getting herself away in one piece.

"Bonnie, that was actually really difficult but it was, uh – what do you call a gesture of something where you don't maim or kill someone?" Kai said.

Bonnie blinked at him. "… Good will gesture?"

"That's it! I knew you'd know." Kai smiled.

A term he wouldn't be familiar with. But Bonnie got a strange feeling that Kai was trying. In fact she started getting an unnerving feeling that he was trying flirt with her.

*Just don't get him to make you touch his chest. No, I need to get out of here.*

"Now that I did good, maybe we can have a conversation." Kai said.

"Good? Who knows how that long that guy's gonna make it and if he'll make it to a hospital," Bonnie said, knowing that while it wouldn't touch Kai, she didn't consider Kai's actions extremely generous.

"Come on, I'm not St. Bonnie. I didn't eat him and I'm still pretty hungry-" He looked at her with burning eyes.

Bonnie shook her head. Kai looked like he was collecting his thoughts.

"These aren't my first guys tonight. I'm hungry but I'm actually more bored. You know what really bores me these days? Not having my magic."

"You have your magic." Bonnie played stupid.

"But I can't do anything with it. My family would love this. And it might be amusing for you but it's not funny at all to me."

"That's your problem to fix."

"Yes," Kai nodded. "I figured that you'd say something like that. How's Lily doing?"

Bonnie tried to keep her face calm. "I have no idea."

Kai smiled. "She's looking for you. I was gonna help her with her hybrids. I stalled a little. You know how it is, you kinda wanna mess with your enemies and friends cause otherwise, what's the point-"

Kai took a step towards Bonnie. Bonnie tried to stay her ground.

"I don't really care about these hybrids. But I care about my magic. Maybe I should ask you one more time."

"I don't know what happened to you. And even if I did, I'm not changing it back." She couldn't help herself from taunting him. She felt the hostility she had for him cutting through her. *Breathe Bonnie.*
"It's only a matter of time until I figure it out." He said, a warning in his voice. "In the meantime, you think I don't have a soul, with Lily you have no idea. You know how Damon can never stop talking about Elena. Guess where that comes from. Lily's not going to stop to get her heretics. You help me out and I'll get her off your back."

Kai didn't know Lily was missing. Or he knew and was still messing with me.

"I can take care of myself," Bonnie said with confidence that she didn't quite feel. "And I'd never trust you Kai."

"Bon. I'm trying to turn a new leaf. I know that it's hard to tell," Kai glanced at bodies near him, "But it was really not easy for me to let that guy go. You don't have to decide now, but I wouldn't wait too long. You can't hide forever."

Bonnie started backing away from Kai before turning around in the direction of the Grill. It occurred to her as she did that she had talked to Kai more these past few weeks than in the entire time she had known him.

"Bon," Kai called after her.

Bonnie turned around.

"You liked it though, didn't you?"

That playful demonic smile. Bonnie's stomach sank. She had no doubt what he meant. She had almost forgotten while talking with him. She was able to shove the thought so deeply over the past few weeks that she almost started to believe she had hallucinated that part of their encounter.

She had no response that she wanted to stay out loud. She turned her head back and hurried her step,

"Go to hell," she mumbled.

"I heard that." She heard Kai call after her. She kept walking, feeling Kai's eyes on her.

Chapter End Notes

Wanted my Bonnie to get some witchy and wizard friends.

862euv, thank you for reading and commenting! I hope to do Bonkai more justice here.

Darksister, you're welcome. Thank you so much for your detailed comments!
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

/ Warnings below /


See the end of the chapter for more notes

As soon as she thought she had enough distance from him, Bonnie called 911. Checking behind her shoulder that he wasn't trailing behind her, she told the operator she wanted to give an anonymous tip. She gave the intersection close to where the injured guy had wandered off to. He may not have been exactly there but he couldn't have ventured that much farther by how he had just about stumbled away.

"I was just a little freaked to get too close to him." She said. "I didn't know what was going on. But he definitely looked like he could use some help."

"We'll send an ambulance out." The operator said.

Bonnie ended the call and took a little comfort she did what she could.

*If only I could give Kai back his magic, the thought slipped in as she neared the Grill. *If that was the price to never see him again. *Would that be a deal that Kai would take, she wondered. *His magic in return to disappearing from Mystic Falls. A selfish thought because though it meant ridding her and her town of him, she wouldn't want him terrorizing another town. Taking the secret to the sleeping spell with him. Still, the idea of him gone from her life for good was nothing if not gratifying.*

*Don't kid yourself, a less familiar voice piped up. *If you gave him his magic back, what would you do with this feeling of power you have over him? *That same feeling you've only thought about dozens of times already. *This was true, she conceded, but she wasn't going to feel guilty for that intoxicating feeling. She couldn't breathe the days after she was left alone with him. Control was taken away from her while he chased, drugged, kidnapped, stabbed, and finally deserted her to go off and destroy his family. If it wasn't for Elena she'd happily end his life and not look back. Her heart shrunk a little at when she thought how she tried to protect Kai's family and the world from him and look what she had to show for it.

She still remembered Kai's theatrics and puppy eyes after his merge, aggressively and impatiently trying to force a forgiveness from her. All she needed from him at the time was to stay far, far away from her. *Guilt keeping him up at night my foot. *That feeling didn't even belong to him but to his brother. She didn't meet Luke but after the tragic wedding ceremony she and her friends mourned their loved ones who died. Learning about him gave her more insight to Kai's post merge behavior.
Locked away or not he'd still show who he really was eventually. Merge or not his soul didn't change. Deep inside Bonnie knew locking Kai up wasn't only for the sake of protecting other people. She took revenge and in that sense did nothing he didn't do. And here you were still fearing him. Him trying to flirt with her next to dead bodies. At the same time warning her that time was running out.

Bonnie passed less familiar streets and realized she had walked further than she needed to. Probably for the best since she needed to cool off before seeing Erik. Ruminating took her over as her thoughts constricted her chest.

She felt rankling hostility from enemies before. Felt similar hostility to Klaus. To Damon. Kai was no exception. But with him. Bonnie turned and headed back to the Grill. The seething fury bellowing when she sent her magic away. His cold stare as she walked into the barn. That she could deal with. That they had in common. The Grill's sign became visible again.

Then he goes and turn the tables on her barely two weeks ago. Doing something that didn't make her any less wary of him. To know that they shared a kiss. She genuinely thought he'd never bring it up. Of course he'd want to mess with my head. It was just that no other villain had tried it before. Why wouldn't- there was Erik, nodding at her from his table. His face lit up and she immediately felt her shoulders and stomach relax a little. She could easily get used to this she thought as they hugged.

"Bon, everything all right? You look a bit shaken." Erik said.

She'd be worried if she wasn't after the morbid scene she had left. That on top of everything that had gone on recently.

"Yes." Bonnie lied. "I'm just sorry I kept you waiting. I see we weren't the only ones who didn't make it to the Founder's party. I thought no one would be here."

"Maybe they figured these parties are all the same."

"Coming from you, a history major."

"They usually tell the same stories at these events." Erik looked over his menu. "OK, so I do get some kick from hearing some of the speeches. If we get Professor Peterson we actually hear something outside the founding fathers' version of events. But she's not talking tonight and I didn't see any speaker I would've tried to get you to go for."

"Still, thanks for meeting up here."

"Sure Bon." He said.

She had the ridiculous thought of suggesting he call her by a different nickname. She wasn't going to get Kai to change how he called her. Like that was even a priority with Kai. I need to stop.

At Erik's smile and easy going nature Bonnie felt the words about the scene she had just walked away from sit at her throat. The overwhelming urge to tell him what happened surprised her. She'd only known him for about a week. Anyway, it was only a small group of insiders who knew what really went on at Mystic Falls. Insiders who mostly had added abilities to protect themselves. To tell Erik would mean to trust one person – a human – with a lot.

In the short time since she met him Bonnie already saw how the advantage of Erik being an outsider was also a problem. There was no way around it. He was a target simply by dating her. It made her want to avoid doing anything outdoors with him. But she didn't want to be afraid. She
was already sneaking vervain to his food and drinks. Sometimes she told him it was a seasonal herb and sometimes she added it surreptitiously in small amounts to dishes that were already flavorful in hopes he wouldn't notice. It wasn't ideal but neither was imagining his response when she told him that vampires, werewolves, and witches roamed his world. And by the way, he was dating one of them, but hey, the bloodsucking part he didn't have to worry about.

Before the date was over Bonnie already wanted to see him again.

"Bon."

"Bonnie."

Her eyes opened as if she just heard her name being whispered. She groaned, her brain still swimming in sleep, her thoughts moving even slower than before she took her nap. Her shoulders were loose like she just got a massage and her chest was knotted, but pleasantly so. It was a lovely dream though she couldn't remember it. She closed her eyes to hone in on the images before they slipped out and dissolved. As a witch it was easier to hold on to memory of dreams but she still had to concentrate to do it.

Hands over her body. Kissing. Fingers caressing her shoulders and her back. Awake Bonnie smiled. No wonder she felt so relaxed. Dream Bonnie held her hands behind her neck having been told to keep her hands to herself. Erik's arm pulled around her waist and his hand ran down her arm. Bonnie recognized vaguely that she was back at the Grill except she was sitting on a table. His hands left her body and she scooted backwards as he joined her on the wooden surface, his eyes shining at her warmly. Dream Bonnie's hands dragged against her thighs to stop herself from reaching out to him. She needed to touch him as much as she enjoyed this game and the mischief in his eyes. She could feel his hand gliding down down her arm, moving to her stomach. His left hand held her waist nearly tickling her. Another hand on her back.

Awake Bonnie laughed at her counting one hand too many. Dreams had their own rules. Dream Bonnie looked down at her stomach and felt a body behind her. Her memory focused back to Erik's hands, his mouth. His chest. Another set of hands, rings adorning these fingers, hugging her from behind. She couldn't see his face but her body melted into him. A guy wearing a hoodie.

I don't really need to remember. At this thought Bonnie's skin prickled and a puzzling sense of alarm gnawed at her. The images kept coming, though, and pleasure with them and she let herself be pulled back.

She couldn't see his face but she knew who it was. Kai was behind her. Hands, she didn't know whose, going lower and lower down her chest. Someone's tongue in her mouth. Erik kissing her neck.

Dreams were random images mixed up together, she breathed. Granted, that was more the case for humans. For witches that wasn't always the case. But it wouldn't be the first time she dreamed about sex where guys she knew made an appearance. Those dreams usually didn't mean anything. She couldn't feel guilty about this. She didn't need guilt. But the images flowing freely now were no longer wanted.

Kai's hands, rested on her thighs, palms turned up. An invitation, and Bonnie laced her hands in his. Erik still smiled at her, his eyes still holding mischief. Bonnie, untangling one hand to reach for Erik's, leaning backwards while keeping her eyes on his face. Erik's face nearing her and Kai-

That's OK, I don't need to remember the rest. Bonnie rolled off her bed and stood, swaying on her
feet briefly, lightheaded from getting up too fast. She glanced at her phone. She needed to get ready to leave soon. Maybe she’d even have time to go running later.

She countered the guilt that rose in her. It was somehow even stronger than the repulsion she felt at Kai featuring in that kind of dream. *I have no control over that.* She saw both guys last night. Bonnie sat down at her desk and mindlessly opened the anatomy book Elena had left behind. She had found it on top of Elena's dresser some weeks ago.

Besides running, maybe she could check back on the on-line pharmacology class later. She had signed up for it on a whim. Maggie at the witches circle, or the Green Tent as some of her new friends dubbed it, told her about the free on-line course site. Choosing an on-line class felt much less paralyzing than choosing a major.

She had time to figure out what she wanted to study and what career she’d eventually want to choose but she felt crushed by a sense of urgency to make a choice. She was back in present day, no longer an anchor, no longer dead. Bonnie leafed through the anatomy book, acutely aware of how quickly her freedom and life could be, had been, taken away. Perhaps that’s why she felt like she didn't have enough time. For that she needed to believe she'd have time pursue the life she wanted. But no one could promise her safety.

She couldn't remember the last time she felt safe for a long stretch of time. Maybe high school. It was around the time she started practicing magic she became more interested in chemistry and biology, finding overlap between them and magic. Medications could be like potions in how they affected mind and body. So pharmacology seemed cool to look into. This course was on a whole new level though.

She stopped on the Human Respiratory section. So interesting to think about breathing when considering supernaturals.

Kai’s hands. *Not again.* His fingers. She wanted to concentrate on Erik so of course images of Kai came in in high definition. She still wasn't looking at him, her focus still on Erik, but she didn't need to. How easily she leaned back into him. How Erik pulled from her after they kissed and how fixedly both men's attention was only on her and how without hesitation she pulled her right arm, Kai still holding onto it, and pulled the back of his neck and brought him closer to her until their lips touched and she felt him give himself to her.

Letters flew in front of her, words from the book gliding in the air. She played with them like magnetic poetry before putting them back inside the pages. She touched an illustration in the chapter and lifted it, leaving it to hover in front of her.

*What am I gonna do, wallow in guilt for having a pair of eyes? Hell no.* A long time ago she was attracted to Kai. She filed the dream away. It didn't change anything. She had other matters to concentrate on right now.

She stared at the illustration. If only she could pluck the information from the pages and plant it in her brain. Even though she didn't like the idea of cheating. But she barely had enough credits to be a sophomore and it was hard to learn about this without some foundation.

She swirled the image around in front of her. *I wonder...* She glanced at her phone. *How was it this late already?* She pointed the image back to its original spot, quickly got ready, grabbed her purse and keys and headed for the door.

Caroline didn't miss the teasing in his voice as she and Tyler followed him to the living room. She felt more than a little grateful she was going to see Stefan in a group setting, which was virtually the only way they interacted since she started spending more time with Tyler.

Tyler and her were still taking things slow. She had no intention of replacing Liv and he admitted his feelings for his ex weren't completely gone. Caroline understood. Tyler still loved her when she died. Circumstances were different for Caroline but she had had her own beginnings with Stefan. Tyler told her that he missed her even when he dated Liv. Similarly, early on after the massacre when they talked she felt the closeness between them draw them back to each other. Her heart hadn't completely left him. They spent time talking, seeing live music shows, finding out how they did and didn't change. Sometimes they silently mourned in shared solitude, him for Liv, her for her mom.

Maybe this would lead to something more serious. Maybe not. But for now this was what she needed. They understood each other and seemed to know on a deep level what each needed. She found comfort that.

"Where's Bonnie?" Caroline asked when they only found Stefan. Come to think of it, since Erik she hadn't seen her a lot. Maybe even before, she acknowledged as she tried to remember the last time she and Bonnie hung out together.

"I called her. I think she's hanging out with her new witch friends." Damon said. "You know she didn't go with Alaric and me on the trip for them? She knew them for like, a second."

"Not counting Alaric, she made a good choice, as far as I can tell." Caroline smiled sweetly, having never met Bonnie's new friends. Tyler laughed.

"You can catch her up, seeing as you two are roommates." Damon said, ignoring her words. "Stefan's worried about us having two vampires on the loose. To be honest, I myself don't like to share my position with too many other vampire villains. Brother?"

"We spotted some vampires." Stefan said. "They seemed new."

"Lily's making more vampires?" Tyler asked.

"Damon says Lily's not here." Stefan glanced at Damon.

"She's in New York. An old girlfriend dropped me a clue. Always good to stay in touch with an ex. Never know how that could work out right?" Damon said. Caroline felt her cheeks flush. Always give it to Damon to draw out any tension in a room. "I'm thinking she's probably trying to figure out a reunion with her misfits. Back here, Detective Monk has a theory about the mystery murderer."

"Mystic Falls is not a stranger to vampires. But victims having been dying in twos, threes, or bigger groups. Not just that, they're people who know each other. The last couple of people who died were parents. Another two were a couple." Stefan said.

"Could just be coincidence." Caroline said. "A new vampire who’s extra hungry."

Stefan shrugged. "Two survivors of what seemed to be a vampire attack were a couple. They said the guy who attacked talked to them. Pitted them against each other."

"Yeah. That sounds like Kai." Tyler said.

"Twisted." Caroline shuddered. "And this is him without magic?"
"So when do we kill him?" Tyler asked.

Caroline looked at the brothers.

"I know we've been keeping him around for Elena, but it's not like he's holding her captive." Tyler said.

"He's not?" Damon asked.

"We have her somewhere safe and she's going to come back. In the meantime it's no surprise that Kai's terrorizing people in this town. It's just a matter of time before he goes after one of us." Tyler said. "Again."

"We can't give up on Elena." Damon said and turned his attention to Caroline and Stefan.

"We talked about this." Stefan started.

"No. I don't care what Elena told us. She wouldn't give up."

"We're not giving up." Caroline said.

"You really think she'd want to be shut away while her human friends, her own brother lives probably his whole life without her?" Damon asked Tyler.

"This isn't about us." Tyler said. "This is about you not being able to handle being separated from your girlfriend."

"What if Kai lied and the spell is reversible? He didn't even keep his promise to our mom to bring her family back." Damon said.

"So what do you suggest?" Caroline asked.

"We get the information we need. Then we kill Kai." Damon said.

"You tried that already." Stefan said.

"Yeah, and we ended up with Kai without magic. An evil butterfly without wings," Damon said. "How about this metaphor. We cut out the piece of his brain that has the answers we need and look we already have a partially dead Kai."

"I think you lost the metaphor." Stefan said.

"It's gonna be hard to trap him. He knows we're looking for him." Caroline said.

"I'm not listening to this." Tyler said and started to walk out.

"Tyler," Caroline called after him.

"No. What am I even talking to Damon for? What about you two?" He looked at Caroline and Stefan. "This guy murdered his entire family. Nothing good will coming out from him sticking around. I'm not waiting around to see more of us die because of him."

Tyler held Caroline's gaze before walking out.

"Maybe I should've taken him to Amsterdam." Damon said. "Would've eased up the tension a little. And let me guess. You're on your boyfriend's side right? Although – which one?" He looked
between her and Stefan who grimaced at him.

"I think Tyler's making good points," Caroline said pointedly. "Since when do you agree with Damon on this?" She addressed Stefan.

"Kai wants his magic back. He's trying to get a reaction out of us." Stefan non answered her. "Damon's suggestion was better than mine. I suggested we give him back his magic to get him to reverse the spell. And then kill him."

Caroline figured Stefan may be persuaded by his brother. It'd be hard for him to see Damon in pain.

"And what, forget the heretics I kept hearing about that I'm sure he'll bring back the second he gets his magic back? Have you thought this through?" She asked through gritted teeth.

"If it makes you feel better we can't find him to do any of this." Stefan said.

"Usually he finds us." Damon agreed. "We get Bonnie to do a locator spell." He pointed at his brother.

"She's starting to move on with her life." Caroline said. "We're not putting her in the middle of this."

"She'll do it." Damon said. "It's Elena."

"I need to go find Taylor." Caroline said.

"Blondie." Damon stopped her. "You realize, if Tyler could have his witch back, he would do anything for it?" Damon asked.

Caroline flinched.

"Damon." Stefan said.

"No, that's OK," Caroline said. "Maybe he would. But Elena's not dead. Bonnie wants her back because she'll never see her again. You not getting Elena for a fraction of your immortal life and losing your mind over it for who knows how many people to die just shows that you're a man who's in desperate need of a life."

"I thought all witches could levitate." Bonnie laughed.

"Not everyone levitates their babysitter." Santianna said as she stood in the air on her tip toes, her arms in the air posing like a ballerina. "Good thing my parents usually hired a witch. I couldn't do much more damage than that. My sister could cast magic as early as I can remember but the only thing I could really do for years was levitate. People or objects. Everyone else in my family started practicing young."

"Sometimes I wish I could do magic as a kid." Bonnie said. Maybe she would've been able to get herself more quickly out of difficult situations. Or her friends or family. "But everything was much less complicated before I knew about vampires and monsters."

"Yeah. And those monsters aren't waiting for you to figure it out." Santianna levitated higher and laid on her back, floating softly in the air.

Maybe they weren't, but it was only after Elena got involved with Stefan and Damon that Bonnie
got caught up with supernatural villains.

Neither Bonnie nor Santianna had yet shared much about what each of them encountered as a witch. Bonnie shared even less at the witch's group. The two spent a lot of their conversations still catching each other up on high school stories, favorite spells, and parties. Safer topics.

"This feels so good. Bonnie, come on, step back from your grimoires and show me some cheerleading moves. Miss Sheila used to try to get me involved by telling me how much you loved doing that."

"What, in the air?" Bonnie laughed.

Santianna nodded. "We practiced enough spells for our meet up tonight."

Bonnie put the grimoire she was reading aside and got on her feet. She didn't often levitate. She felt her weight give to her spell, her feet lifting before catching herself for balance. She practiced a few routine moves in her place to Santiana's delight, then successfully flipped in the air. Santiana floated in the air observing her, her posture relaxed, like she was sitting on a cloud. Bonnie tried to walk towards her but found her steps fumbled. Walking for longer than it took to do a routine was harder than she thought.

"How do you walk like you're walking on something firm?" Bonnie asked. This was outside her comfort zone and she didn't like that. She liked having a strong hold on her spells.

Santianna responded by walking in the air as if she was walking up steps, laughed and sat down as if she was sitting on a staircase. She paused as she seemed to think about the question. "It may sound funny but I think I imagine the ground under me. And practiced and lost my balance over and over."

Bonnie tried again and stumbled. She was finally able to take some steps but her feet felt like they were walking on ground made of jello.

"Here, try this." Santiana said. "I'm easier to picture. Try to land on my shoulders. With your feet right here." Santiana put her palms on her shoulders.

"Oh no." Bonnie shook her head. "I'm going to hit you in the face."

Santianna paused. "Come on, try. You were a cheerleader. June's got excellent healing powers."

"It's just you and me out here," Bonnie reminded her. "No June from any witches’ circle nearby."

"We're just an express ride away." Santiana jumped in the air as if jumping from a trampoline before returning to her spot. Bonnie shook her head again.

"Boring. OK, how about this. See that tree?" Santiana pointed at a tree a several feet away. "That branch? Try to land on it. Just – do it slowly."

Bonnie concentrated and moved higher to the tree and carefully sat on one of the branches. The branch gave to her weight and Bonnie lost her balance and fell, adrenaline rushing through her body. The ground came at her without forgiveness and a moment before hitting the ground she caught herself and fell on her side.

"I don't know what's going on with me. I'm not as focused as usual." Bonnie sat up slowly. Santianna eyed her softly.
“I’m OK,” Bonnie said.

"Guess when you're dating someone that focus just goes out the window." Santianna said.

Bonnie rolled her eyes. She made the mistake of telling Santianna about Erik and got friendly needling since.

"Still I wish I could do this for school." Bonnie said. "I wouldn't have to worry about what human job I'd need to get. Be a witch for a living. A psychic."

"Witches mixing openly with humans. Didn't really work out for us so well, historically." Santianna raised an eyebrow.

"I know." Bonnie nodded. "It can just be lonely sometimes."

"When you practice by yourself, yeah. When you fight by yourself."

Bonnie nodded again. "I have a group of friends. I'm not alone."

"Witches?" Santianna asked with new interest.

Bonnie shook her head. "Mostly not."

"Vampires?" Santianna asked, lowering her feet to the ground.

A few quiet seconds later Bonnie knew it was too late to say no. She wanted to tell the truth, at least to Santianna, but after after a few witches’ circle meetings she wanted to be careful what she says. Still, she didn’t speak.

"Don't ever bring this up in front of James, but I dated-" Santianna took a deep breathe. "a vampire once."

Bonnie knew she couldn't hide the surprise from her face. "Yeah? What happened?"

Santianna looked away. "Levitate me."

"What?"

"Enough practicing with objects for today."

Bonnie glanced at the assortment of items that she and Santianna were messing around with earlier.

"You sure?"

"Of course." Santianna said.

Bonnie raised her palm and Santianna rose from the ground.

"I'm going to shoot air at you. I want you to block it." Santianna said.

"With wh-" Bonnie started talking and felt a strong woosh of air come at her. Bonnie blocked with the first spell that rose in her – fire. It blew in Santianna's face and she fell back. Bonnie rushed to her.

"Are you OK?"

Santianna grunted. "That was stronger than I expected."
"Why did you do that? I could've really hurt you."

"Cause we don't get warnings, don't we? If you know anything about monsters, which you do." Santianna eyed Bonnie.

"I never knew a gust of wind would hurt so much." Bonnie said. Santianna didn't have to teach her about monsters. She knew all about not getting warnings to losing people she loved. People she never fully got to mourn.

"I know you haven't talked about it much at our meetings. I don't blame you. I haven't told anyone about Rob. The vampire. But I can tell battles aren't new for you." Santianna said.

Though it was true it didn't mean Bonnie was ready to talk about it. "What happened?" She changed the subject. "Between you and your boyfriend?"

Santianna looked away. She opened her mouth to say something and shook her head. "He's gone." She said. "It got messy. But I really loved him. I think." Santianna laughed.

"When you say he's gone you mean-"

Santianna nodded.

"I'm sorry."

Santianna smiled. "The other night I was picking a fight with James. I don't think he forgave me for dating a vampire. And, that, if I was smart, I'd never do again. But I don't like thinking it's one side over the other. Witches against vampires. Witches against everyone else. There's a whole lot of gray. But with that I guess I'm proof it can get really messy."

Santianna sat up. "I guess I want to know what you've been through as much as you want to know about the gossip with me and my vampire ex."

Bonnie and Santianna practiced a few more spells before Bonnie left to head home to have dinner before the witches circle.

Santianna's words about her boyfriend resonated a little with her. A human or vampire could tear your heart apart. When Jeremy was with Anna – it no longer cut through her heart like it did when she first found out. But he had hurt her deeply.

She was dating a human and she didn't want to stop but again Bonnie wondered how Erik would protect himself against what she faced about once a week. She was still figuring out how to protect herself.

Bonnie stayed back after the Green Tent meeting ended and witches and warlocks dispersed. She glanced at her phone for a message from Caroline. She didn't see any which hopefully meant her friend was going to show up on time. I just about remember what she looked like without Tyler standing next to her. She was excited to spend time only with Caroline tonight.

A local newspaper caught her eye as she looked around her in the vestibule. She avoided looking up news on her phone so far that day.

Earlier that night when everyone broke into smaller groups she ended up again with Santianna and James. They were going to practice telepathy but were slow to get started. Maggie, one of the younger witches at 19, brought a fairy tale book she had as a kid and passed it around.
"We do a whole lot of cursing in this one." Thea, the fifth witch in the small group said, as she flipped through the book.

"Here's what I'm asking," James, Bonnie saw, was already warming up. "How we can protect ourselves from vampires taking advantage of us? Compared to us, being immortal, we may start thinking they're invincible. You gotta remember that even with that and super strength they come to us for help." James said.

"That I can agree with. Leveling the playing field." Santianna said.

"How do you think we do that?" James asked.

"I have a feeling you've thought of it before." Maggie smiled. "We limit contact and make trades that make sure we're protected. We work in groups so if one of us is attacked the others can help. And OK, we know, your game plan is not associate with them at all."

"Since I know that some of us entertain the idea of vampires," James glanced at Santianna. "The rule is the second it's not reciprocal relationship, we're done. I don't have a death wish."

"It's easier if you're not friends with them." Maggie said. "I'm not. But I know people who are."

"Friendships are never completely reciprocal. You're always doing something more for your friend at one point and the other way round." Santianna said.

"Yeah, but like Cheryl told us. That's a different price you pay when it comes to vampires." James said.

Bonnie felt her cheeks redden. She wasn't new to dying or sacrifice. Though not just for vampires, for humans too.

"I think we've all sacrificed ourselves for someone else. Sacrificed something. What price are you paying?" James asked.

"You say that all the time." Santianna snapped.

"We witches and warlocks seem to have a short memory span," James said. Maggie laughed.

"OK, can we practice this stuff now?" Santianna said. "Thea, you ready?"

Bonnie sat across from Maggie, a brunette around the same height as her. The exercise wasn't meant to read another witch's mind but rather communicate without words. Still, Bonnie was nervous about the possibility of someone reaching into her mind to read anything.

Cheryl always reminded everyone that if a witch wanted to sit out an activity they could but there was usually friendly banter to egg each other on.

Bonnie's body tensed as she and Maggie shared the spell. Bonnie felt their two chants combine and mix, circling them. She stared at Maggie's face, searching. Maggie stared back, the two eventually breaking into smiles.

"It's not working." Bonnie said.

"It takes time," Maggie said. "It helps if you've known someone for a while"

"She means trust them." Santianna said.
"Took me five seconds to know you to read yours… Ato Essandoh." Maggie smiled to Santianna. "But I won't share what you thought exactly. Though it's no secret" She winked.

Santianna made a face at her and turned to Bonnie. "But really it's about the connection you have with another witch and opening your mind to it."

Bonnie was just relieved the spell didn't work, she though absentmindedly as she stared at the front page of the paper, scanning for news. Though she was trying to read Maggie she was still afraid she may reveal something of her own.

With talk about fairy tales and how they connected with reality Bonnie couldn’t resist asking about sleeping spells. She tried to keep the question as vague as possible but found it hard to hide the excitement at getting insight from other witches about what happened to her. Maggie encouraged Bonnie to talk with Cheryl and Thea and James both agreed that from what they've heard spells like that were extremely dangerous to mess with.

Yeah, yeah, she promised Elena. No looking back. Focus on herself. But the spell affected her too. It was draining to think about.

Cheryl had in the end approached her after the meeting. Bonnie didn’t get a chance to ask her question as Cheryl talked about how she knew Bonnie’s grandmother and was glad she was coming to meetings. Bonnie got the sense that Cheryl knew more about her than she let on which made her curious. Grams hadn’t mentioned her. As she thought about this Cheryl went quiet and Bonnie realized she waited for an answer. Cheryl asked again if Bonnie wanted to be matched with an elder, like a mentor. Unless she already had one?

"I don't really need one." Bonnie said. "I've been OK on my own."

"Think about it." Cheryl told her. "You deserve to have that."

"OK. Thanks." Bonnie said earnestly. As she made to go Cheryl stopped her.

"I'd be careful. You know?" Cheryl said. "Around who you keep company." She added quickly, "I'm not judging you for being friends with vampires. I have a few myself. I get why you wouldn't tell everyone your business."

"How do you know about my friends?" Bonnie asked.

"It's part of what I do. I look out for us. And I want us to be careful. Witches talk and we know something's coming."

The way Cheryl looked at her reminded her of grams’ cautious expression and it was too much. It was jarring to think about how much Cheryl knew. But Bonnie believed her when she said Bonnie was welcome to continue to come to meetings. And Bonnie wanted to. She could talk magic with witches and warlocks. She could relate to them in a way she couldn't with her friends. She didn't need a mentor though. She had enough new people in her life.

"Bonnie!" Caroline interrupted her thoughts with a hug.

"Ready to go?" Caroline asked.

"So ready."

The two walked out into the street and the warm breeze.
"So we just have to stop at the supply store and get a few things for the Midsummer's night party. They already want to start setting up tommor-"

"Care."

"It'll only take a few minutes and then we can go get some food. Here, it's this way. Right around here." Caroline guided her friend.

"I'd ask you how you got roped to helping organize a party you have nothing to do with but I probably don't need to."

"Just doing a favor for the council." Caroline shook her head. "My mom loved the Midsummer's Night party. I think she and my dad had some good memories there."

Bonnie smiled gently at her friend. Caroline smiled back.

"I'm glad we're getting to hang out tonight." Caroline said. "Earlier today-"

"Are you Bonnie Bennett?" A guy with shaggy hair appeared in front of them, wearing a brown shirt and jeans. Bonnie and Caroline stopped and Bonnie assessed him. Had she seen him before? She wasn't sure.

"Who are you?" Bonnie asked. Something about his tone threw her off.

"You look just like her in the photo." The guy smiled.

That was creepy. "Have we met before?" Bonnie pressed.

"I don't think so." He said, pulling out a large gleaming knife. Bonnie held her hand up in an offensive stance, her fingers rolling with magic, when the guy took the knife to his throat. "He said your time's almost up."

"No!" Bonnie and Caroline called out. Caroline jumped at the guy as he sliced through his throat.

Bonnie only saw blood as Caroline struggled with him over the knife. Caroline's strength overpowered him and she threw the knife to the side. The man fell to the ground and Caroline rolled him on his back.

"He's losing a lot of blood." Caroline said.

The words brought Bonnie back from her stupor and she took off her sweatshirt, bunching it together and approached the two, bending down to apply pressure to the the man’s wound.

Caroline bit into her wrist and brought it to his mouth. Bonnie saw her fight the veins in her face. All the blood made Bonnie’s stomach churn and her heart beat in her ears.

"Is he drinking?" She asked Caroline with a tremble in her voice.

Caroline nodded. "What do you think he meant? Time's almost up?"

Bonnie shook her head quickly before her mind cleared. She was about to speak when Caroline said, "He was compelled. Did you see his eyes?"

"Yeah."

"Imagine you weren't here Caroline. Would Bonnie have made it in time? Though she’s no stranger to saving lives, I guess." A bored voice sounded and Kai walked out from the shadows.
"Where did you come from?" Caroline said, mirroring Bonnie's thoughts.

"People steal something from me, I like to stay close."

Kai kept a distance as Bonnie saw her sweatshirt bleed through. Caroline kept her wrist on the man's mouth while she fought the urge to pass out from all the blood. Kai’s face fired up her resolve to keep her feet steady. Unwanted images from earlier that day resurfaced in her mind. She shoved them out.

"Maybe if you just gave me something you took back. Maybe then you wouldn't have to see me at all." Kai said. "We could all move on. Though, I gotta admit. A tiny part of me is hoping you won't give in right away. This is almost better." He said.

Kai took a few more steps closer.

"Stay away from us!" Caroline called and Bonnie set a barrier. Kai stopped right in front of it.

"Mmmm. How is it that even without magic I can still feel it? Oh Bonnie, you saved one guy, but at what cost? Do you want to have to do this for the rest of your life? Cause I'm not going anywhere." He pointed at himself and put his hands in his pockets. "I know I said I was going to give you time but then I remembered, what's the point? Give more time for your rag time team to catch me and spoil my plans?"

He rushed at the barrier and Bonnie motused him off. Kai flew back.

"Bonnie, that tickles." He laughed. "Let me just siphon this off." He said with a raised hand to the air. "Good thing I didn't lose that ability right?" He asked and it was as if his body grew taller with her magic.

He put down his palm. "Give it back."

"Never." Bonnie said, barely acknowledging that this response thrilled her too much.

"Bonnie." Caroline said. Bonnie wanted her to leave with the guy. She took pressure of her sweatshirt, Caroline replacing her hand at an awkward angel. This was between her and this heretic.

She struck an offensive spell at Kai who held onto his stomach. It was a strong spell but she knew she didn't have an endless supply. She had already used some for the shield and she had a desperate vampire witch in front of her.

"Bonnie. We need to leave." Caroline said.

"No." Bonnie said. Her friend was right. The injured guy's essence was weak and he was barely recuperating. She just wanted to wave it over Kai's head. The edge she had.

"Bonnie." Caroline said again.

*What if I just killed him?* What would be so wrong with that? *Hadn't I earned it?* Wouldn't it rid the world of a villain? It's not like Elena wouldn't still be alive.

*Elena.* Never to see her.

She and Kai held each other's gaze. Why was he was waiting to charge at her? She briefly felt thrown by the intimacy of their exchange.
Chanting started behind her. Bonnie turned around to find Maggie and Santianna approaching. Kai smiled before surprise washed his face and he bent over.

"Get out of here, vampire." Maggie said.

Kai barely stood up, his posture stiff. His aim now turned to the witches. The witches pushed back. Kai attempted to run at them again before growling loudly. Bruised, he coldly moved his eyes to Bonnie.

"This isn't going to stop." He said and vanished.

"Did you feel that?" Maggie asked Santianna, breathing heavily. "He practically inhaled our magic. That wasn't just a vampire."

"Yeah." Santianna said and looked over the injured man. "Is he OK?"

The young man's eyes were closed but color had returned to his face. Bonnie moved her bloodied sweatshirt to find that his injury healed. She breathed easier.

"He'll be OK." Caroline said.

"Are you a vampire?" Maggie asked Caroline.

The question prompted Bonnie to notice blood around Caroline's mouth and veins pulsating near her eyes.

"I. Um-" Caroline started.

"Caroline's my friend." Bonnie said protectively, knowing Caroline wasn't going to be able to compel her friends to forget what happened. "She gave him her blood. He's going to get better."

Santianna took Caroline in with what looked like curiosity while Maggie furrowed her eyebrows. The guy stirred. "What's going on?" He asked. His glazed look was gone. "Who are you?"

"You're OK." Caroline glanced at blood at the guy's shirt and his face followed her glance.

"Hey, look at me. You got in a bad fight." She held Bonnie's blood soaked sweatshirt. "Forget this happened and go home." Caroline said and the guy got up and left.

"I wish I could forget." Maggie said and scrunched her face.

"Got in a fight?" Bonnie asked Caroline.

"What was I gonna tell him, he got in a bad shaving accident?" Caroline asked back.

"So you two are friends?" Santianna asked. Bonnie read no accusation in her tone.

"Yes." Bonnie said, biting the bullet, before going on to make introductions between the three women.

"Bonnie told me about you and this meet up group she's been going to." Caroline said.

Santianna gave a small smile and Maggie nodded.

"Who was the vampire?" Maggie asked. "Are you in trouble?"
Bonnie stopped herself from looking at Caroline. "Not anymore than any other day at Mystic Falls."

Maggie nodded absentmindedly. Bonnie could tell Santianna was brimming with more questions. She tapped Maggie's arm instead. "We should get going. You OK?" She asked Bonnie.

"Yeah."

"She's got a bodyguard." Bonnie overheard Maggie say as she walked away from Santianna. "Maybe if James knew they could be useful like that."

"He's gotta know."

"Still. That was really cool. I should have June teach me her healing spell."

Bonnie's composure began to crumple as the two's conversation faded.

"Bonnie. We're going to figure this out." Caroline said.

"If you weren't here to feed him your blood-"

"You would've figured it out." Caroline insisted.

"I can't heal people from cutting their jugular."

"Then maybe you should take a lesson from your new friends. Kai's not the worse that we faced." She tilted her head. "OK. He's pretty bad. But you already faced him. And stole his magic. How badass is that?"

Bonnie smiled.

"This is where we get hot chocolates and plan how we'll stop the world from ending? Bonnie? We're in this together."

Bonnie looked after the spot Kai was standing at.

"Bonnie?" Caroline's tone turned more severe as Bonnie didn't respond.

"Guess you'll bite me if I say no?"

"Yes. I will."

"Care!"

"This guy means business. I'm not letting you put yourself in danger. None of us will."

Bonnie doubted that and felt some surprise at the resentment she felt.

"This is where we get hot chocolates and plan how we'll stop the world from ending?" Bonnie
"Spiked hot chocolates. Drinks first. Stop the world ending later." Caroline smiled.

"I missed you." Bonnie said. "I know that your busy with Tyler. And-

"I missed you too." Caroline said. "And you've been busy too. I want to hear more about it."

After the women washed up and finished at the general store they headed to the nearest restaurant they could find.

"You know, I was talking with the guys earlier." Caroline said. "Stefan thinks Kai's targeting people who know each other. Relatives, couples."

Bonnie felt nauseous again. "That's sick."

"It's creepy." Caroline agreed. "What do you think that's about?"

"He's a sociopath." Bonnie said. She didn't want to delve into reasons Kai did anything. What would be the point?

Caroline looked through her bag of supplies. "Maybe… Maybe it's a way for him to do therapy."

"Caroline. That is too morbid and disturbing."

Caroline looked up from her bag. "By the way, you are going to the Midsummer's party right?"

"Care, how can you go from that straight to a party conversation?"

"How else will we fill the time between school and battling evil? Hello."

Give him his magic back and he'd leave he said at one point. Somehow she didn't believe that.

Nowadays too much bourbon led Damon to take walks and he'd often end up at a spot he and Elena had hung out at. Which was probably how tonight he ended up on a path to the Hot Sauce. It was a new and rare late night food joint that they stopped by between Elena's internship and Damon avoiding Jo destroying his house. Didn't get to stop by that long before... Still less depressing than ending up at the crypt that housed her, though he had ended up there too.

For a change he'd rather be the unconscious one while his love waited for him. Though, Katherine did turn out to be a deceitful, back stabbing wench. If he'd switch places with Elena, though, he wouldn't be able to protect her.

As for letting Kai stick around, this meant he had a ticket to get Elena back. That's it. Dead people were already dead and couldn't be helped. Though Elena wouldn't want to hear this, and while he tried, he didn't have the same loyalty she had to humanity. His own friends paled to his devotion for her. Stefan tried to keep Damon in check from going after living human blood. When he wasn't the Ripper he really was a bore. Stefan didn't need to try so hard. Eating people just didn't taste so good for Damon lately.

He had no regrets for saving Bonnie. But missing Elena and having drunk so much tonight his thoughts started to jumble, he wasn't sure if he wouldn't ever hesitate to save his best friend. Even if he loved her. Elena meant too much.

Uch, he definitely drank too much. He was even starting to hear Kai's chatter. His words grew
more distinct and Damon found him sitting outside his joint. Though instinct told him to attack, he knew well enough this wasn't the best time as he quietly slipped out of sight behind a nearby store. Kai’s tone didn't change. Good, he didn't see him. Damon locked on his voice.

"Doesn't seem like the kind of place you'd choose to stop by for a bite."

"No, can't say that the local menu is dazzling." a woman's voice answered. His mom. She traveled fast.

He listened in.

Chapter End Notes

I'm thinking this story will be completed in about 6-7 chapters.

Darksister -- Thank you for your note!

862euv -- Really appreciated that detailed review. Ha, that was a huge step for Kai. ;) I so wanted Bonnie to have witch friends on TVD if not her own coven.

6876lite -- Thank you so much for your kind words. I hope you enjoyed the new chapter.
"Something on your mind?" Kai asked in a detached tone.

"I was looking for you." Lily said. "Damon suggested I'd – tweet? – at you. I decided that if I'd walk around this time of night surely I'd find a young man looking for a late night treat. No doubt you, if I recall."

Alcohol swirling in his head, Damon tried to focus on the words that winded sluggishly into his brain. He could hear hope in Lily's voice. Hope and uneasiness, like she was holding back her irritation. Guess New York didn't work out for you.

Kai pointed at his fries as an offering. Lily smiled weakly and shook her head.

"Let's not waste time." Lily said. "You and I had an agreement, but here I am. Still looking for my family."

"Your family? Your family." He repeated the words slowly. "Oh yeah. Yeah. The ones that turned me into a buffet. Course. You know, like the last eight times you asked me about it, without magic I can't do anything to give them to you. For that you need a Bennett ingredient." Kai said as he resumed eating his food.

"I still don't understand why you waited to give them to me."

"Busy. Weddings to crash, old friends to visit, families to wipe out. Told you all this already too." Kai said.

"You did all that in one evening was my understanding." Lily said tersely.


"To whom? There's nothing else I could give you."

"Maybe I liked being the only one. Sole heretic." Kai held a single fry in the air. "Or maybe I didn't want the creatures that made my life miserable to get out for a little bit longer. Not everything is
about you, Lily."

Lily flinched at Kai's description of her family and she clasped her hands on the table. "If you mean
that they fed on you, they did what anyone would do to survive." She said, trying to keep empathy
in her voice. "But I do apologize if they were more vicious than they should've been. They hadn't
eaten in so long."

Kai waved her words away.

"As much as you want your family, believe me, I want my magic more." He drank his soda and
smacked his lips. "Just like that as much as you wanted to see your family again I wanted to murder
each and every one of my loved ones." He laughed, nearly giggled, like he was recalling a sweet
memory. A few heads nearby turned his way and he shook his head like he had been joking.

"You don't regret any of them dying."

"I guess it's hard for you to understand since you're so hell bent on your family reunion but me –
no." Kai shook his head. "Well maybe- No. I was going to say my twin. She was pregnant too." He
paused. "Nah. More Gemini witches to go after me? When you're choosing between yourself or
prison for all eternity it's an easy choice. And it was fun." Kai looked around him. "I missed this
place. I missed killing people." He said in a lower voice. "But you know, since I turned killing
people doesn't feel the same. Eating people doesn't feel as good as I’d thought it would. That's not
normal, right? I was super for it but it turned into kind of a let down. Gives you a second's high and
then I'm bored again."

Lily studied Kai like she considered responding to his monologue, but instead said, "So if you don't
want leverage from me are you trying to use it against Damon?"

At this, Damon listened more carefully, trying to concentrate through a blanket of alcohol.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell you." He played with his straw.

"You'd rather tell me how you can't get a young, run of the mill witch to give you back your
magic?"

"She's a whole lot of things, but she's not ordinary." His jaw locked. "You think I'd be this long
without magic otherwise? There I was, finally getting around to giving you your heretics, just had
to get some food first, Grill's burgers are to die for, and poof, magic sucked up." He lifted a fork
and stared at it, then looked back at Lily, picking at his chili. "I wanted to kill her. I want to." He
licked his fork clean and gritted his teeth into an exasperated smile. "Not just because she's trying
to stop me again from getting what I want. The other day I was eating this guy and I let him go
cause she was there. Tried to use him as a bargaining chip. Play nice. She walked away. Didn't
even check to see he was OK. Didn't get me any closer to getting my magic back, I could tell. And I
just couldn't stop thinking about it, how I didn't kill him. I found out where he lived. I started
killing the neighbors on his block. One by one. Police kept showing up. Neighbors barely looking
at each other in the eye. All that cause of me." He said with wonder in his voice before snapping
out of it. " But then, and this was awful, I couldn't kill anyone for a week. I still ate them but I
healed them. Or I couldn't leave. It's really inconvenient. Like a delayed — conscience."

"Kai, I do feel compassion for your situation." Lily nodded and sighed. "But we resolve this and
maybe you can get back to being normal. Surely you can find a way around this impasse?"

"You think I haven't tried?" Kai sat back in his chair. "You think I haven't spent hours… I can't
find a shortcut around it. And I need the Lerethum back."
"The what?" Lily lowered her eyebrows and looked at him blankly.

"She used it to take my magic. So I can't kill her. Damon's worthless, no way he knows the ins and outs of the spell. Sorry."

*I'm not the warlock, weasel.*

"That's not his expertise."

"Thanks mother." Damon mumbled.

"All I know is I need my family back." Lily splayed her hands on the table. "I wish I could help you, but If I'm not able to get your help, I'll need to find them without you." She clasped her hands.

"There is one way I can get my magic back." Kai said.

"Yes." Lily perked up.

Damon's heart whispered, *Elena.*

"It needs the sacrifice of every child under 18 in Mystic Falls."

"This was a waste of my time." Lily turned her face away.

His mom didn't believe Kai, Damon could tell, but for a second he did. And for just a little less than that he had thought, *OK, what else?*

Kai burst out in laughter. "Come on, chill a little. Of course there's something we can do about it. If you'll help me get my magic back, I'll help you get back your band of freaks."

"I suppose I can't take your word this time." Lily met Kai's eyes.

"If you think about it, I just didn't get the chance to get your family back before my magic was stolen from me." Kai moved to his second plate of fries. "You're sure you don't want any?"

Lily considered the offer and shook her head.

"Just now when I told you about sacrificing kids, you considered that didn't you?" Kai said playfully. "That's why I like vampires. Conscience doesn't matter, you want and you take. I miss that."

Lily tilted her head at him in confusion.

"That's what I felt like when I was human. Then I merged with Luke. Long story." He shook his head at Lily's increasingly befuddled expression. "I became kinder. That was weird. Then I became a vampire. It was supposed to cure me. But I can't think straight."

"Your emotions are heightened." Lily said with reassurance. "Becoming a vampire doesn't erase who you were. I suppose you honestly didn't have much time to prepare."

"I didn't really read the pamphlet. But I didn't think it'd be like this."

*Was he asking for mother's advice? Isn't that something.*

"I didn't even know about werewolves until a month ago. Anyway, I want to turn it off."
"Humanity switch?"

"I can't find it. Can you believe that? I think it's the merge. I think somehow it's put my on switch on hold. Like I'm broken. I mentioned how inconvenient all this is right?"

"It's not easy to learn all this on your own. Not just the humanity switch. If you bring my family back, we can help you."

"With what?"

"Living as a vampire for a start."

"I don't play well with others." He tilted his head at her.

"We have something in common." She ignored him. "You're new to this world just like my family and I are. Surely you have questions about being a vampire. You said it yourself."

Kai pushed his plate away and put his arms on the table. "Say I had a question. How long did it take you? To adjust to being a vampire?"

"I know you know about my past. Damon told me. It was only with my family that I found peace and I-" Lily paused. "Slowed down."

"I'm sure your real family is touched." Kai said, mirth and a hint of intrigue washing his face. "Yeah, I don't really mind the killing. I mean, I didn't. Turning into a vampire was supposed to stop my humanity." He said emphatically. A few drunken eyes turned to him and Lily. Lily gave Kai a look as if to say keep your voice down. Kai smiled.

Lily laughed. "Who said that?"

"Have you met Damon?"

"Hey." Damon said out loud and caught himself.

"Damon tries." Lily said.

Second time, mother. I should thank you later.

"I guess I gave him a hard decision. Friend vs. lover. You should've seen it, it was a beautiful set up."

"I heard." Lily said.

"He chose his friend," Kai kept going. "But you think if he didn't let the friend die, if he got Elena back, he wouldn't have felt ecstatic? In time he'd forget the guilt. Come up with a story so Elena won't think it was him behind it. Awful couple, I'm rooting for Stefan and Elena myself. Guess we'll find out eventually."

"Who you are doesn't change when you become a vampire." Lily insisted. "Initially emotions feel far more intense, like I said. All of them. And don't think for a moment the humanity switch turns them off. It just numbs them."

"Still better than this." Kai said. He took on a thoughtful look, like he was deciding whether or not to share something else. "People are just. They're too much to figure out. You know what I was doing-"
Unwilling to resist joining the conversation any longer, Damon had already begun sauntering over to their table. He sat next to his mom. Lily's eyes widened.

"Interrupting." Kai sighed.

"Just saying hi to my mom." Damon smiled lazily. "Mother, I told you it was best not to talk to other unstable vampires."

"Damon. This isn't the best time." Lily looked from Damon to Kai. "You've been drinking?" She scrunched her face as she turned to him.

"Only a lot." Damon smiled. "Let me guess. Talking about your band of zombies. Guess they're not zombies anymore. Oops." He smiled at Kai. "I for one can't wait for the sibling rivalry. Kai, how's tricks? You thought about getting a tall black hat and a bunny to keep the witch image alive? Wait, that's a magician... I guess a cauldron then and," he snapped his fingers. "A broom."

"Adults are talking, Damon." Lily said. "I would leave if you don't want to cause a scene."

Damon laughed. "Adults?" Lily's curt tone not lost on him.

"That's funny Damon." Kai said. "Maybe you should be home setting your alarm clock to 80 years from now to when your life will have meaning again."

"Boys." Lily said. "Damon, if we could talk later please."

"Maybe I had something I wanted to ask Kai." Damon said.

"Wow. You become a vampire witch and everyone's after you." Kai sat back in his chair with a look of satisfaction.

Lily glared at Damon. Damon pressed on. "Maybe I can offer both of you what you want. You, your magic wand, and you, your real family."

"You'll give Kai his magic back?" Lily turned fully to Damon, not responding to the venom in his words, her voice laced with emotion.

"He'll give me my girl back, I'll get Bonnie to help him get his mojo back. You can have your friends back, I don't care." Not when I'll have what I want. Damon grabbed a fry from Kai's plate and gulped it down. "Not as good as I remember."

"You know what you're asking me? I reverse the spell and Bonnie goes to sleep and never wakes up." Kai said.

"Bonnie will be fine, because you're going to magic a way around this stupid rule you set up," Damon said confidently.

He didn't plan on approaching Kai with the offer. It wasn't just the alcohol in his system talking. It was her memory. How it was fading way too fast from behind his eyes. Her laugh, her kiss, her spirit. Kai was too strong not to know how to break a so-called foolproof spell. He just needed the right incentive.

"I'll find a way to get my magic back one thousand times before I give any peace to you or to-Bonnie?" Kai's face turned pensive. Damon followed his eyes to find Bonnie several feet away crossing the street, walking on a parallel path to them.
"What do you say, Kai? Should we pay her a visit?" Lily asked with a smile.

"No, you won't." Damon said. "You will stay away from her," he said to Kai. "And you and I need to talk," He said to his mom.

Lily's face turned thoughtful as she looked after Bonnie. "Let me talk to her." She said to Kai. "Maybe a woman to woman talk will get through to her."

"I'm getting tired of waiting." Kai said.

"I know. We'll find a way to get what we both want." Lily said. Kai nodded, unconvinced. "I think I know what to tell her."

"Mother, your invisible son? Still here."

"Kai, please excuse us. And please do stay in touch this time."

Kai smiled at her. Damon suspected his concentration was no longer on either of them as he and Lily set off to follow Bonnie's trail.

"I don't need a chaperon, Damon." Lily said as the two rounded the corner away from Kai.

"To do some warped intervention with my best friend?"

"Your best friend?" Lily glanced at his face as she kept walking. "How the situation changes with the love of your life incapacitated. Kai painted a different picture. Said you'd be thrilled if your best friend died."

Damon grabbed her arm. "Mother. As much as I dream about Elena back it's not going to come to Elena or Bonnie."

"Son, that is exactly what it will come down to."

"I can't believe after everything you're buddying up with Kai."

Lily laughed. "Who were you just offering a deal to, your best friend Bonnie?"

"I'm trying to get back the love of my life."

"Is that more or less honorable than what I'm trying to do?" Lily tried to pulled her arm back. Damon was thrown for a moment by how strong she was but he held on.

"At least my girl won't chomp the town's population."

"They will not do that. And if they did, you wouldn't care. Not if you have Elena. Tell me, if that is all you care about, having the person you're missing back, how different are you from me?"

"The difference is I care about Bonnie." Damon squeezed Lily's arm.

"Hi Damon."

Damon turned to find Bonnie walking towards him.

"Lily." She said in a tired voice. "You two looking for me?" Bonnie asked.

Lily smoothly broke apart from Damon and smiled.
"Bonnie. Just the witch I was looking for."

Bonnie spread her arms out to her sides. "What would you want, I wonder?"

"Only this-" In a swift motion Lily was in front of Bonnie holding her up by the throat. Fear flashed in Bonnie's eyes and her face contorted in distress.

"You have caused me so much pain." Lily said. She turned her head to Damon as Bonnie thrashed her arms. "Just like that. You think Kai will help you? Surely you don't want to keep waiting. No witnesses. Of course you tried to stop me. Elena will believe you."

Bonnie tried to kick with her feet, struggling to speak as she choked.

Behind her Damon imagined Elena materialize from the shadows. He could hear her laughter as he twirled her while they danced. And then he saw Bonnie's lifeless body under their feet.

Bonnie fell to the ground as Damon grabbed his mom's arms and crushed her against the wall. Bonnie struggled for breathe behind him.

"How does that feel?" He held his mom by the throat. He glanced behind him to find Bonnie hold her neck as she slowly stood up.

"I'm almost sorry that there aren't witnesses." Damon said. He felt Bonnie coming closer behind him.

"Damon." Lily shrieked.

"Wrong tactic mother."

"Damon." Bonnie called as she walked up to him.

"I'm not letting her go." Damon said. "She's the one that gave Kai her blood. She got us here as much as Kai did."

"Damon." Bonnie said as Lily struggled to breathe. "Let her go."

Damon looked at Bonnie, annoyed by the growing concern in her voice. "Or what?"

Bonnie motused Damon back. Lily gasped for air.

"Come on, I barely touched you." Damon said.

"Damon, that's your mom." Bonnie said.

"Yeah, are you new?" Damon asked.

"Damon. You may be worth keeping." Lily smiled.

Her smile, not fitting to the strained moment, turned something in Damon's head. He looked at Bonnie before returning his eyes to Lily who winked at him. Damon blinked and turned to Bonnie, reading her body language. To his mom again.

"Bonnie?!" he looked Lily up and down.

Lily nodded, and put her finger to her lips.
"What's going on here? Who's this?" Damon's eyes ping ponged between who he saw a moment ago as Lily and Bonnie.


Bonnie-Santianna smiled and put out her hand. Damon took it and looked back at Lily-Bonnie as he shook it.

"Another vampire friend." Bonnie-Santianna said.

"What of it?" Damon asked.

"Damon. Play nice." Lily-Bonnie said.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Damon asked, his face still shrouded in disbelief. "Where's Lily?"


"We hope." Bonnie-Santianna nodded.

"Thanks for the save Damon." Lily-Bonnie said.

Damon coughed. "Sure."

"Wish your vampire instincts would've kicked in a little quicker." She nodded at Bonnie-Santianna. She held Damon's gaze.

"I drank so much Bon I'm not strong on my game. I did save you, didn't I?" Damon slurred, making a face like he was trying to make sense of who was standing in front of him.

"This is all ways creepy, mother Bon. Would've been nice to know you were gonna do this."

"Caroline was supposed to tell you. Haven't you been checking your phone? You're the one who butted in on me and Kai. Though then I would've miss all of this." Lily-Bonnie pointed between her and her new friend.

Damon felt his pant pockets for his phone and pulled it out, pressing a few buttons before looking wide eyed into space. "My phone battery died."

"What were you doing at Hot Sauce?" Lily-Bonnie asked.

"I took a walk. Elena and I used to hang out there. Look can you two switch back? This is really messing with my head."

"We should get out of here." Bonnie-Santianna said. "I put a spell so Kai can't hear us but if he decides to follow us here he may have some of his own questions."

"Come back to my place." Damon asked Bonnie-Lily who nodded. Damon vamp sped away.

"Let's get out of here. We should have enough juice to levitate quietly out of here." Santianna laughed.

"It's so strange to see myself in you." Lily-Bonnie said. And it was strange to see herself levitate with ease, looking at the body she usually inhabited get off the ground with a serene expression on her face.
Bonnie-Santianna held out her hand and Lily-Bonnie grabbed it and the two were gone.

Traveling back home from a trip or an event always felt shorter than getting there. Similarly, reversing the projection spell took Bonnie and Santianna a few seconds.

Bonnie went over her conversation with Kai while she and Santianna flew as well as her words with Damon as Lily. She and Santianna laughed about the latter acting as Bonnie. Santianna seemed to get lost in her flight after that.

Damon let them in with the familiar glass of whiskey in his hand. Bonnie couldn't imagine he needed more alcohol.

"Stefan's not home." He closed the door behind them. "I'm not sure where he is. Did you tell him about this?"

"We couldn't reach him." Bonnie shook her head.

"I'll catch him up. Gotta charge my phone." He sipped his drink. "I can't believe I thought you were Lily. That really messed with my head." He pointed with his glass at Santianna. "Who's this and why am I trusting her?"

"Because she's my friend and I told you to."

Damon made a thin line of his lips. "I don't like new people."

Bonnie raised her finger at him to stop him from speaking. "Quiet."

Damon pouted.

"What did you and I want, Damon? To trap Kai to get information from him. Caroline and I were walking and we saw him alone. No one's been able to track him down. Her and I decided, maybe we try something different. Maybe we get him to talk to us. Who would he talk to? Lily was the closest thing to a confidant he has compared with – anyone else as far as we know. I gave my friend a call." Bonnie smiled at Santianna. "Asked if she could help."

"Why would you help?" Damon asked.

"Cause Bonnie needed it. And it sounded like it'd be fun." Santianna said.

"No plan? Just went on a whim?" Damon asked Bonnie who nodded.

"Well, we had a plan." She corrected herself. "And backup." She pointed at Santianna. "But it did call for some improvising."

For an impulsive plan she felt pretty pleased with herself. She not only fooled Kai, she fooled Damon. Lily's own son.

"How did Caroline get on board? She was against this whole thing."

"She doesn't want the town taken over by heretics. Something about how it spoils her routine. And if you didn't interrupt me I may have gotten a little more out of him."

The truth was she was surprised herself that Caroline agreed. But she wasn’t going to ask too many questions.
"If I wouldn't have shown up, what would you have done? Offered yourself as bait?" Damon pointed at Santianna.

"We had a plan." Bonnie spoke up. "Now we need to regroup. Nothing we've never done before."

"What were you trying to find out?"

"How close he was to getting his magic back. What plans he has for this town. If we can get Elena back."

"How." Damon corrected her.

"How." Bonnie repeated. *Of course. How.* "It'll help to know just what kind of a threat he is to us."

To them and to Mystic Falls. Maybe that wasn't Damon's priority but Bonnie cared about her town and community she grew up in. Even if the supernatural pulled her away.

"How much of our conversation did you hear?" She asked.

"I dunno. There was a lot of him rambling on and on about his tough life as a vampire with a pointy hat, it's a little bit blurry at this point."

"Damon, you're barely standing up straight." Bonnie observed.

"I'm doing fine, witchy. Heh, I guess you're both witches." Damon giggled nonsensically. "If I was a little more sober I'd ask your friend Santa what she knows about sleeping spells. What do you know?" Damon's voice sharpened and he drew closer to Santianna. "Could you get her back for me?"

"I just heard about all of this tonight." Santianna said and raised her hands. "Give me a minute to catch up Dorian."

"Find out." Damon said, either too drunk or too focused on his task to notice Santianna butchering his name. "Two witches are always better, right? Where my friend failed, make it work." Santianna wasn't as petite as Bonnie but Damon still towered over her.

"Damon. Back off." Bonnie said, annoyed by his overly aggressive stance. Damon reluctantly took a step back.

"So what do we do now?" Damon spoke with a lighter tone but Bonnie still heard the tension in his voice. He walked over to his phone and pushed some buttons. "There's a party." He raised an eyebrow. "I'm not coming." He said dropping the phone back on the counter and walked back.

"You are." Bonnie said. "It'll be good for you. Elena would want you to go."

"You know," Damon sighed. "That's not going to work each time Caroline throws a party."

Damon started saying something and Bonnie interrupted him. "In Amsterdam and Brussels parties were fine. You can drink your bourbon outdoors at Mystic Falls too."

"Fine. But I'm not talking to anyone." He set his empty glass down. "Now who's gonna tuck me in?"

"Good night Damon." Bonnie groaned. "I'll see you tomorrow night."

"Good night Bonbon. Hey. That was pretty freaking cool." Damon said.
Bonnie nodded, hearing Damon's thank you between the lines. Adrenaline was rushing out of her body and she was ready to crash as well. This was just the first time. She was going to get more next time she talked to Kai.

Her limbs ached as she ran through the streets. Over the past month Bonnie was becoming more familiar with what it felt like when her lungs ran out of air, not due to a spell or battle but because she was moving her body. She was spending more down time running and swimming and right now she needed a break from sitting down and running spells. This was her meditation. Clearing her mind would help her untie the knots of the spell she was trying to nail down so she could get through the humps of her pharmacology course. She missed school. The material still felt abstract and she hoped the spell would help visualize the terms she read. It was illuminating. Learning the inner workings of the body complemented her study of magic and its effects.

The muscles in her lower legs started to cramp but she didn't stop, needing to give outlet to the steam she was holding. She never breathed as deeply as when she was running and the rush after the fact was as good as a victory over a foe.

It was a risk to be sure when she called Santianna last night after her and Caroline's idea took flight. Somehow the coincidence was too sweet, Caroline mentioning Lily was out of town followed by Bonnie and Caroline noticing Kai from afar, following him from a distance until he settled at Hot Sauce.

Santianna had been the first witch Bonnie thought of to call for help. She had realized the price she'd pay. She'd finally need to share more information about herself and more than what she was ready to say but this was for an important cause. Having seen Santianna face Kai she felt that if she needed back up the two of them could ward him off together.

Bonnie had wished she could see Santianna's face when she had caught her up as quickly as possible over the phone. Santianna had had a few questions before she said she was on her way. Bonnie had actually felt relieved to tell someone else what she was dealing with.

It wasn't just that she needed back up though. She didn't at all enjoy the humility in acknowledging she couldn't do the spell alone. It wasn't an easy admission. She knew and took pride in her powers as a witch. She was the go-to for her friends and felt more powerful to know that they depended on her. But a projecting spell like this needed serious juice. She'd need to interact with Kai and for that she felt her magic alone wouldn't be enough to fool him. She didn't want to take any risks. Too much was at stake.

Reluctantly, she admitted to herself that he knew her. Even if his magic was out of whack, he'd know it was her unless she made the spell as airtight as possible. Witches could sense each other's aura. It was more than that though. She didn't know what that meant and certainly didn't want to spend more time thinking about it.

"Hold on, it's Tyler." Caroline had said before answering her phone.

Bonnie had gotten off the phone with Santianna by this point and was running through her impending confrontation with Kai. An air of giddiness inflated her chest as anticipation sent flames through her stomach. I'm enjoying this too much. This feeling of power. I don't care. She peeked over and saw him eating and knew he'd take some time. She glanced at her phone. It wouldn't take Santianna long to get there.

Even though Bonnie didn't plan it this way, she had thought of what she'd say to Kai if Damon and her had succeeded in trapping him. As for playing Lily, though Bonnie's interaction with the
vampire were very limited she had gleaned some information from talking with Damon and Stefan, 
even Elena. From observing them talk to each other about Lily. Bonnie paid attention. Frankly, she 
was going to let Kai take the lead, remembering Kai usually didn't need a lot of encouragement to 
talk.

Caroline had ended her call and clutched her phone. "Bonnie, I'm sorry. Tyler's in trouble. A 
werewolf related thing. We could do this another night. We found him once."

Bonnie had barely hesitated. She had Santianna. She was good. Now as she ran she thought that 
maybe she felt she needed to prove to herself she didn't need vampire body guards. She had a 
begging of a new posse. At the time she was itching not to postpone the meeting. She even found 
it in her to ask about Tyler.

Bonnie pushed herself to keep running, slowing her pace some but pushing through the screaming 
ache in her side. If her body hurt, her heart hurt less. Maybe she'd make it to the park area that 
always felt too far to get to even though she loved running between the greenery. Maybe it felt too 
far cause she was so often finding herself caught up with her friends and their crises. **What were 
these thoughts?**

What was this gnawing feeling in her chest? Was she having doubts about bringing Elena back? 
After all, that was one of the reasons that she approached Kai in the first place. She promised Elena 
that's live her own life but old habits died hard. She also wanted to know if on his own he was 
getting close to getting magic. Could she find out more about his weaknesses? About what she and 
her friends had to worry about when it came to him?

She was keeping her promise to Elena in some ways. She was spending more thoughts on her 
pharmacology class since she started it which meant she was thinking more about her future. Still 
apprehensive that she really could have a future, she cautiously embraced the budding energy she 
gave to this topic.

It was a thrill, to combine her powers with Santianna and the other witches as they worked on 
spells together. She enjoyed the Green Tent meetings and the community of witches. She couldn't 
ignore the undercurrent of just how many of its members' held hostility towards vampires. She was 
confused about how she felt about that. She even considered Cheryl's words. Watching herself and 
Damon – even though it was Santianna in her body it was as if she was looking at herself – 
something came up in her when she saw them. Made her remember when Damon turned her mom. 
Which dredged up memories she had shoved deeply in her heart. Her mom leaving her again 
despite Bonnie's pleas. Bonnie's felt a deep stab in her heart. That was why she didn't think about it.

Damon took away her mom's choice to be a human and her mom later refused the cure. Bonnie's 
words to Damon that she mostly wanted to give the cure to him echoed ludicrously in her mind. 
Like she chose Damon over her mom. Her mom had betrayed her but so had Damon. Blood wasn't 
aways thicker than water, but surely her link to her mom was stronger than to Damon.

If she wanted more to give the cure to Damon over her mom it was in part out of a selfish reason to 
have her mom in her life – even though she wasn't consistently in it – longer.

It was nothing short of surreal to look up at herself choking. She was unable to stop herself from 
checking Damon's response. The spell wasn't rehearsed and Bonnie was impressed she and 
Santianna pulled it off. After Kai's words about Damon's humanity and all the exchanges Bonnie 
and Damon had about her mortality since Elena was gone… How couldn't she get worked up?

When Damon approached Santianna at the Salvatore House with demands Bonnie responded 
protectively. She tried to think of instances she was protective of herself when Damon or her other
friends asked, or demanded, help from her. What they gave in return. How much could she depend on them? And if she couldn't depend on them as deeply as she thought was that OK? Just as it was reasonable for her to say no if she needed to look out for herself?

She felt her throat sting. She had gotten to the park, not remembering how she got there, and turned to a more secluded area, her vision clouded by salty tears. She stopped under a willow tree where she had found refuge before, slinking between its leaves to a secluded spot. She bent over, clutching her knees as she sucked breathe deeply. Tears flowed and it was hard to cry and catch her breathe.

What wasn't she crying for? For her mom. For her dad who was violently taken from her. For herself as a child trying to find comfort. Her grams. Dying. Being alone. Again and again. Memories of loss and pain flooded her and overwhelmed her senses. Tears that she had cried before and tears that she had held back. She wished, like so many times before, that she could talk with Elena. But Elena had herself been distracted so often.

How was it when she thought about her dad, about her mom, she felt numb? The pain she felt over her grams' loss still tortured her sometimes. But her friends elicited stronger feelings in her than her own parents. Maybe because they had been more present in her life. Her mom had left her twice. Chosen to protect Elena over her. She didn't resent Elena for that, her friend not having control over it. But she needed her mom. She needed her dad. Tears took her over. She felt like she was feeling the loss for the first time.

She let the anguish take over her though she was sure for a few moments that it might kill her. She pretended her grams was beside her, holding her pain with her. Pretended that Erik was holding her. That Caroline, Elena, and her were snuggled together. After several minutes her breathing slowed as her sobs quieted down. She lied on the grass, the willow's leaves sheltering her from the brunt of the sun though rays still slipped through.

*I need to put myself first.* Why was it so hard for her to do this this? It just felt so lonely. That was an odd thought. But saying those words, that she wanted to prioritize herself over others, she couldn't quite picture what they meant. Saying the words didn't make her feel less loyal to Elena or her other friends.

She had already started doing it though. When she stayed back when Damon and Alaric left on their trip. When she was pursuing a class instead of making sure Damon was OK at every moment. Starting to date to seek pleasure and comfort for herself.

Recent memories rose, ones she avoided when she went over her conversation with Kai earlier that day. She couldn't objectively read Kai's response to her because she wasn't an outsider. She looked at him as Bonnie with everything that had already happened between them. In this sense, she felt like it was her sitting in front of him unless she looked down at her body or clothes. Her heart wasn't racing but it didn't need to. She caught herself over and over again taking shallow breathes in, reminding herself to breathe more deeply.

"I'm a little nervous." Bonnie had admitted to Santianna when her friend had arrived as she paced back and forth. Caroline had waited until Santianna showed up to leave. Even though Kai seemed very focused on his food Caroline wasn't taking any chances. Once Caroline left Bonnie's outward bravery chipped a little.

"He's perceptive. He's a monster but he can sense people." *He can sense me.* An ominous thought. He was an unpredictable enemy and she was fighting with a new ally. She wasn't backing down though.
"I have a spell in mind. If we use both our magics we can throw him off your aura. There's another thing. Even though we're witches, we have physiological responses similar to humans. But together we can control it. It makes sense you'll be nervous but not like he's your sworn enemy nervous. Make sure he doesn't touch you. Try not to have an hour long conversation with him the first time. I'm here if he wises up." Santanna assured her.

She just needed a bit of freak out moment before putting on her big girl pants and doing it. She had it in her, she soothed herself. She pictured Erik rooting for her and smiled.

Her hands had been getting clammy as she started walking towards him. Clammier. When she had clasped her hands while sitting in front of Kai, she had been trying to keep them from moving everywhere, like her soul had been reflected in them. Made sense. He was an unpredictable monster.

Kai's confession about what he did to the neighbors of the guy she saved had made bile rise in her throat. She had had to fight from her face showing the revulsion she felt. She had tried to help the guy and it backfired.

In present day, Bonnie swallowed lingering guilt. It was easier to destroy than to build. She didn't want to fight any less.

She was impressed at her ability to ad-lib, to try to share the least information in return for the most. Kai was much chattier than when she last saw him, which made sense. She didn't feel the same animosity from him as she did when she was Bonnie. She felt Kai was unhappy with Lily the way he talked to her.

She couldn't believe he had made her comfort him. Talk about a surreal. More than once. Offering comfort came natural enough but with him, after everything, it gnawed at her that she had to do it. She had sold it though. Maybe she shared with Caroline her calling, she laughed to herself.

Bonnie had read about a common fantasy to imagine what it'd be like to be invisible. Hear what others said about you when you weren't there. She didn't care what Kai thought of her. But as a foe she was a tiny bit curious.

She did readily sense he wasn't as restrained with her when he thought she was Lily. His body language was more relaxed. He had even tried touching her once during their conversation before she subtly moved away. Sometimes when he had looked straight at her, not averting his eyes she had to remember he wasn't looking at her. It was absurd that one conclusion she came back with was that he was flirty. She didn't think he was flirting with Lily, but there was just something about how he related to other people, women – maybe men now too because of his brother – he oozed something sensual. That's really terribly disturbing. But it was real. Something too, that she couldn't put her finger on, was altogether missing in the way he interacted with her as Lily.

What was that feeling she had, something warm and good, relating to her conversation with Kai? She couldn't pin point it and rushed through their back and forth, finally settling in on the memory. It was his amusement when he fake apologized to Lily and told her he wasn't sorry. It was a silly moment but at that time she had recognized he was teasing. He had withheld something to help Lily. In that moment she had seen her own sense of power reflected in him. If he was on the good side, she had even thought fleetingly, if he used it for good – that was hot. She felt her face warm at that acknowledgment.

Too bad she couldn't observe the interaction as an outsider, like it was a movie. Like what she was trying to do with the anatomy pictures in the book she studied. Maybe once she'd work it out, she could try a variation to use it the next time she played Lily.
Small comfort, *that* dream barely crossed her mind when she spoke with Kai. Maybe because she was so focused on trying to act like Lily. The dream linked Erik and Kai in a way which unsettled her. With time those memories would clear, she comforted herself. *Speaking of, stop picturing that Bonnie* and she blinked a few images that sneaked behind her eyes.

So many thoughts about flirtation.

She even saw flirty vibes between Damon and herself, again, as Santianna in her body, and that was a whole lot of weird. It wasn't just Santianna's spirit in Bonnie's body. It was reacting to the chemistry she saw between Damon and her body in a way she hadn't before. Santianna had commented on that before they had ended their night, not before getting Bonnie to promise to catch her up on what she hadn't told her.

"It was really weird seeing you as me." Bonnie had said.

"I wish I had sat in front of Kai. Wasn't it a rush?" Santianna had said with glittering eyes. "If it took this for you to finally tell me what you've been doing the past few years, it was worth it. I can't tell you all my secrets and get nothing back. Like which one of your dozens of vampire friends did you date?" She had looked at Bonnie quizzically.

"Uh, how about none of them."

"Really? Not even Damon?"

"No, definitely not." Bonnie's eyes had nearly jumped out of their sockets.

Santianna had nodded at her.

"What?"

"I just felt a little, eye check out." Santianna had thrown an arm out.

"He's dating my best friend."

"Oh. Elena? Hmmm. We can't control who we're attracted to right? We can still date somebody and be attracted to someone else."

As much as she didn't need these thoughts, she knew the basis of them was true. She was attracted to other people when she was dating Jeremy.

"Thanks for letting me do that. I wasn't going to hurt you. Good reflexes." Bonnie had said.

"Yeah, I did do a good job." Santianna had laughed.

"I needed to see what Damon would do."

Bonnie had wanted to confront Damon after what happened. He had been so sloshed though that she decided she needed him sober to confront him about how he hesitated.

Bonnie closed her eyes, grateful to be lying down but feeling jagged pieces of branches and stones stab at her back. She moved around a little to find a more comfortable spot, smiling against the sun peaking through the leaves. The wind pushed through and she closed her eyes. She loved the brushing noise it made. Like she wasn't alone even when no soul inhabited the planet with her. In the prison world she found comfort in it. It sounded as loud as a symphony there.

*It felt good to be needed.* She knew how that felt. And it felt good to know that when she needed
something, someone, and she reached her hand out that someone was there. Someone prioritized her.

She should call Erik, make sure he'll still be free tonight. His voice comforted her. She started moving her hand towards her pocket before stopping and resting it on the ground. Just a few more seconds of basking in this oasis spot.

Her phone buzzed and curiosity called her to take it out. Caroline's name flashed on the screen.

"Hi Care. Everything OK?"

"Hi Bonnie," Caroline said in a bright tone. "Tyler's better. I have to catch you up. I'm so glad you picked up. I called Damon and he said you're OK and mumbled something about how he hates parties and Shakespeare and hung up on me. By the way, you better be going tonight. I'm gonna be helping them set up today because as usual some people leave everything to the last second, yes I'm talking to you. I told you to set the table over there. Sorry Bonnie- No over there. OK, I'm taking a break, Jeff, I'll be back soon. Soon!"

"Care?"

"Sorry, hold on." Bonnie heard shuffling. Several seconds later Caroline spoke again. "I needed to walk away for a minute. Bonnie, I'm dying to know, how did it go yesterday?"

Chapter End Notes

862euv: Awesome! I do like the idea of Bonnie teaming up with witchy friends. I know there's not a lot of Bonkai in recent chapters, I'm building up some things...
Chapter 6

Bonnie leaned her forehead against the open anatomy book. The spell was just not going anywhere. She lifted her face in time to see the three dimensional figure of face and lungs collapse. Three hours she had been working on this with her muscles aching to relax. She closed her eyes and rubbed her temples. Keeping her eyes closed she sat back in her chair. The words and bones still came into view behind her eye lids.

She had played around with the textbook's image earlier and slowly expanded it, adding details to it. Soon she had formed it into a 3D figure. Initially she rejoiced at the success. It sparked an idea. Bringing together spells and study made schoolwork more fun. That was also the case in high school. That was the thought three hours ago.

The door opened and Caroline followed carrying a couple of bags.

"Hi," Bonnie spirits lifted at the possibility of distraction.

"Hi. Oh. I like those." Caroline commented on the flowers on Bonnie's desk. Bonnie had set the vase there as motivation but in the last hour she didn't even see them. At least that meant I was focusing. Bonnie had moved her desk beside Elena's bed so it now sat under a window.

"Good date?" Caroline asked in a sing song voice while she put her bags by her bed. "The one I finally get to meet tonight?"

Bonnie nodded, breaking into what she expected was a goofy grin as she looked at the reds and yellows sitting in the vase. "Yeah. Is that for the party?"

"The bags?" Caroline took off her jacket and put it away. "Yes, last minute party supplies. I finally had to go so I could get ready. Don't even have time to shower." Caroline motioned at the flowers. "Are those for finishing the second week of class?" Caroline opened her drawer and leafed through her clothes.

"The pharmacology course? No. They're just for me." Bonnie's shoulders tensed as she thought about her class. Caroline's face softened as she put her hand on her chest. Bonnie smiled and touched one of the yellow flower's petals. With that her body relaxed a little.

After hour two of studying I should've called Erik and asked him if he wanted to hang out and done that. It's not like I'd be giving up on studying, only putting it aside for a bit. It still hasn't been too long since I've gotten back home. Couldn't I celebrate being alive a little longer? Rock climbing sounded a hell of a lot more fun than studying.

I'll have plenty of time to figure out a major. As long as she stayed out of trouble. As long as my friends stayed out of trouble. Bonnie looked at Caroline who had moved to her second drawer and was grabbing a second dress to add to the first she had set on her bed.

"It's not a serious class anyway." Bonnie fingered the flowers' leaves as she stared blankly at Caroline's dresses. "I don't know if I'm gonna stick with it. I've been out of school so long-"

"Bonnie." Caroline said with a hint of sternness in her voice. "What did you tell me?"
"I don't know, something about 'I'll give it my best try Caroline.' Otherwise you wouldn't leave me alone." She picked up a pen and fiddled with it between her two hands.

"That is not what you said." Caroline stopped busying herself with her dresser.

Bonnie lifted her hands. "Fine. I was going to act like I had taken some time off." She stared at her pen. "Anyway, who knows what I was thinking." She pushed her chair back and it screeched against the floor.

"Show me what you were working on." Caroline walked up beside Bonnie. "Come on." She said when Bonnie didn't budge. "Move this," Caroline reached for the textbook.

"I need that." Bonnie pulled the book back. She took in a deep breathe and moved her seat closer to her desk. Turning to the right page, she repeated the spell. A 3D image of lungs and a face came together above the desk in a fit of colorful lights.

"Wow." Caroline turned her face around the image. "Bonnie, that's amazing."

"Touch it," Bonnie said.

Caroline moved her hand forward and glanced at Bonnie who nodded. Caroline brought her hand closer and poked at the lung with her finger. Her finger immediately bounced back and she gasped.

"What was that?!"

"Did you feel it?" Bonnie asked, her heart jumping in anticipation.

"Like someone poked my lung." Caroline clutched her shirt. Her face washed with surprise.

"Did it hurt?"

"No. It felt a little weird."

"Good, it shouldn't hurt." Bonnie leaned back on her chair. "I wasn't sure it would work with vampires," she paused. "Care, I hope this isn't weird. With your mom-." Bonnie started. She wasn't around when Caroline's mom was sick but realized that what Caroline was seeing may have reminded her of difficult memories.

"I'm OK." Caroline nodded. "You're not trying to make some intricate voodoo dolls are you?" She asked, cautiously moving her finger to the image's face. "I don't feel that,' she said, touching the image's cheek.

"Try the lips. Works?"

Caroline nodded.

"I'm still working on it." Bonnie said. "I'm only doing to help me study. It's a kind of kinetic and visual learning." Bonnie reached out to touch the 3D image's chin. "But I'm stuck. Sensing the inside of your body is the first step. The next is to feel your body's physiology. So how the steps your body takes when it breathes or how your blood travels through your blood vessels. But that's when it falls apart."

Caroline said as reached out her finger again to poke at a different part of the lung and pulled back with a soft squeal. The 3D image quaked and fell apart.

"Sorry." Caroline said.
"That's OK." Bonnie rested her head on her cheek and turned her head to Caroline. "Maybe the problem is the course. I mean, if it takes me a long time to get a spell down I usually work at it. I take the time. In high school chemistry was easier after I started practicing magic but it's not helping here."

"Bonnie, can we go back to how cool this was?" Caroline waved at the spot Bonnie had projected her magic and her face lit with admiration. "Hello! You haven't exactly been able to make your classes. You want to give it more than a few days-"

Bonnie shook her head.

Caroline tapped Bonnie's desk. "You have much more time than that to figure out what you want to do. And that's what you're doing."

"I don't remember why I chose this subject."

"Let's start with, you were thinking that you need a future."

"I don't have to go to school to have a future." Bonnie tapped her thigh. "Can I make it long enough here to have a future? The daunting thought she still held back from speaking.

"If you could tell me that you were passionate about something, I'd let you." Caroline looked pointedly at Bonnie before walking back to her dresser.

"Let me?" Bonnie asked, confused. "Let me not go to school?" Bonnie understood and smiled at her friend's bossiness. Caroline with her humanity on was a true cheerleader. Bonnie had forgotten.

"Yes. Look, do you need magic to study for this course?"

Bonnie tilted her head. "I don't know. Practicing magic just feels natural. Like using it will really help me understand this coursework."

"If this is about getting over the challenge of figuring out how to use, I have no doubt you're going to get it. I've seen you do it for me. For us, when we needed you." Caroline turned to face Bonnie. "You're all in. Whatever we're dealing with you figure it out. Now you're doing it for yourself." Caroline said.

It made me happy. It made me happy to feel needed, to know that my friends relied on me. Studying was different. It wasn't even that to do something for herself still felt a little foreign. It was that she usually didn't have enough time to focus on herself without a calamity falling to Damon or Elena or Caroline. A crisis distracting her from school or another task she was working on. She hadn't gotten the chance. Helping others inevitably ended up in me thinking a lot less about myself. She thought of yesterdays run. When she Caroline called her and heard Bonnie’s distress in her voice, she had dropped what she was doing and joined her, hugging her for minutes under the willow tree.

A stubborn thought knocked in Bonnie’s brain. With the returned boogeyman in town and Lily and heretics being held off by a thread, would she be able to focus on any kind of future? One with her friends and the new ones she made at the witch's circle? With Erik.

Caroline was moving her mouth and Bonnie realized she was daydreaming through her friend's speech.

"- And now you have a perfect study buddy. He'll teach you about history, you'll teach him about biology." Caroline smiled playfully before turning to rummage through her closet again. "Where did I put that dress?"
"Those two don't work?" Bonnie got up and picked up one of the dresses on Caroline's bed.

Caroline dug deeper in her closet. "No, there was a turquoise one that I just remembered would be perfect. You want to try that one on?"

Bonnie shook her head. "What about you? Is Tyler coming to the party?"

"Yeah. He'll be there." Caroline pulled out her black dress and straightened it carefully, not making eye contact.

"Wanna tell me what's going on?"

"I don't know." She looked down and then at Bonnie. "He and I, we've been through so much. Here I thought Stefan and me were going to be something and then my mom died and... He and I weren't even at the same place this year." She picked up strands of hair off her dress. "And Tyler and I, we always got each other. Even when life didn't put us together at the same place." Caroline smiled and paused. "I just can't help but think. He's still mourning Liv." She nodded her head absentmindedly. "Of course he would. She died such a short time ago. I'm still mourning my mom. We're having fun together but it's not just that. I know it's more. I just don't want to be a callback to her," Caroline said of Liv.

"Have you talked to him?"

Caroline shook her head. "It's so good to be with him that I try not to think about it. But it'll need to happen. Not tonight though. Tonight I just want to party with my friends." Caroline said and smiled. "Isn't it nice to be with someone with no history?" She put her discarded dresses away.

Bonnie laughed and sat on her bed. "Yeah, though the whole part with not telling him I'm a witch? Getting a little harder."

"Are you going to tell him?" Caroline joined Bonnie on her bed.

"It's weird, even though he's human... I feel like I can trust him. Eventually. It's still a big confession."

Caroline hmmed. "So it's getting serious." She asked with renewed interest.

Bonnie smiled. "It's not that serious. We can still see other people."

Caroline's eyes widened. "Are either of you seeing other people?"

Unbidden, Bonnie remembered her dream and tried to keep her face blank. Get images of those hands and rings and face out of your mind. "The rule is we let each other know if it's getting serious with someone else."

"Oh. Like if you sleep with someone else?"

Bonnie grabbed her pillow and playfully hit Caroline's side with it. "Yes. Do you have to know everything?"

And if she considered getting friendly with someone other than Erik, she'd have a whole long list of guys she'd get anywhere close to before entertaining the id-why is that even popping up in my head?

"Or if you like someone else?" Caroline asked, stretching the fourth word.
Bonnie nodded.

"It's been a while since Jeremy, hasn't it?" Caroline asked like the thought had just crossed her mind.

"Even with him I spent a while being dead or gone," She meant it as an observation, but though she smiled she could hear the bitterness in her words. Bitterness not only because of time lost with Jeremy.

Caroline nodded. "You know, I was thinking about what you told me when we talked on the phone, you meeting with Kai-" Her face turned to Elena's bed.

"Don't tell me you changed your mind." Bonnie said in a cautioning tone.

"Hey. I'm on your side. We were together when we saw him and I was behind you talking to him. I just know that Damon's going to keep pushing to get Elena back-"

"It wasn't just Damon, Caroline. It was me too. And as far as we know, Lily's still in New York. Unless you heard something new?" She leaned towards Caroline.

Caroline shook her head at Bonnie's elevated tone. "No, no. Damon heard from his ex today. Lily's still there. Look, I only want you to be careful. When you told me what happened you sounded excited but you sounded a little freaked too."

"I'm being careful." She said. The words stood on her lips. Her and Kai, a couple of weeks ago. Had it been that long? His breathing getting heavier as he kissed her. Her body reacted to the thought and she resisted the terrifying temptation to lick her lips. Remember what he told you - just yesterday. He let one person go when you bumped into him and then killed off his neighbors. Loathing replaced her pleasant response. That was better.

It was that she didn't share what happened with him that made it into a seemingly much bigger deal. She felt the confession tickle her tongue. What good would come out of it? As to being careful, that may have been a little late. Interacting with an unpredictable Kai wasn't the safest approach and neither were her plans to again talk with him as Lily. But what made that different from the other times she had taken risks for her friends?

"You know when Damon, when Lily threatened me," Bonnie said. "Or, the woman he thought was me- he hesitated." She paused. "For some reason it reminded me of – just situations that hurt in the past. When he chose Elena."

"You don't think he's changed." Caroline said.

"I want to think he has. He fought to get me back from 1994. I'm getting Elena for her and me, not for him." Bonnie got lost in her thoughts. She looked at Elena's bed. "You know we'll eventually need to talk about that."

"I know. I know. Not tonight." Caroline said.

"I still expect her name to pop up on my phone." Bonnie put her hands in her lap. "You know. I know it's terrible..."

"What?" Caroline asked when Bonnie didn't speak.

"Sometimes I think," Bonnie closed her eyes briefly. "I don't have to worry about her. She's safe. While I'm… Alive. Just by being alive I'm keeping her safe because she'd always get mixed up in
one disaster or another. Then I feel awful I even thought that."

"Hey, Bonnie. You're right. She is safe."

"I wish she was here, it doesn't mean that I don't want her to be here." Bonnie sat up.

Caroline took Bonnie's hands in hers. "Me too. I- when I thought about Stefan, this past year, I thought more than once that while she was here that there was a chance they'd find each other again. Even though she was with Damon. When she was gone, before Tyler and I found each other… I thought it may be easier. Talk about a terrible thought."

"It's just a thought." Bonnie reassured her friend, though part of her felt alarmed at Caroline's confession. But if she gave voice to any thought that passed through her, others may not think of her the same. That had to apply to others too.

Caroline glanced at her phone. "I need to get going. You should see how they were setting up seats. It's like they've never done it before." She jumped off Bonnie's bed.

Bonnie gave her book a last glance before making her way to her dresser and opening her second top drawer.

"Oh!" Caroline said. "You should wear your white and blue dress. It's beautiful on you."

Bonnie searched through her clothes. She did like that dress and had barely remembered the last time she wore it.

"I hope we don't regret Damon coming." Caroline started changing. "We all get to grieve but I'd rather he not act out at my party."

"I know. Who's gonna watch over him? Between me and my date-" I need a break too.

"I'll talk to Stefan." Caroline smoothed the hem of her dress. "He'll keep an eye on him. I think-"

Caroline continued talking and while Bonnie listened with half an ear. The spell she had practiced earlier burned through her fingers. She'd stick with her studies. It was the next step taking her to her future, however it'd play out.

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Trying to keep momentum, Bonnie spent a little time after Caroline left the dorm to work on a different assignment in her course. She arrived at the party feeling reinvigorated on her study progress and wondered at what Caroline would think of Erik. *It had been a while since I introduced friends to someone new. About time.*

Bonnie chose the dress Caroline recommended and walked into the square, the live band's music blowing through worried thoughts. She surveyed some party goers already twirling and moving together and felt her body called to join them. The warm summer breeze spread smell of magnolias in the air.

Gardens surrounded the edges of the square and small red hot air balloons lights were strewn intermittently with white LED lights. Bonnie wasn't sure how the hot air balloons related to Midsummer's Night's Dream but the lights added a mystifying feeling to the party.

"Bonnie!" Caroline called out and Bonnie joined her and Stefan. Stefan nodded amiably at Bonnie.

"This place looks amazing Care." Bonnie looked around her.
Care perked up like a peacock. "Thank you." Caroline nodded her approval at Bonnie's dress. "Now that you're here, where's-"

"He's coming, he's coming," Bonnie smiled and looked at her phone. "Oh, he's here," she looked up, searching for Erik in the crowd. After a few moments she sighted him and waved. He smiled and waved back, starting in her direction.

Caroline murmured to Bonnie. "Cute."

"I think so," Stefan said dryly.

Bonnie welcomed Erik with a hug.

"How're you doing?" She asked him, giving him a kiss on the lips. They exchanged pleasantries while she felt Caroline and Stefan watching her. She turned to them, letting go of Erik's hand.

"Hi. I'm Erik." Erik smiled at Caroline and Stefan. Caroline's smile threatened to take over her face and Bonnie felt touched at her friend's happiness.

Stefan reached out his hand to Erik when Bonnie felt someone bump into her a little forcefully. Annoyed but allowing that space was getting tighter she moved away but still felt someone pressed beside her. Stefan and Caroline's expressions shifted and coldness wrapped her as she realized something was wrong. She didn't need to look to know who was at her side.

"Hi everyone. Having a good night?" Kai smiled at the group. "I know I'm super excited about the band. Who knew I'd get into grassroots music?"

Bonnie shifted to separate himself from him in the tight space she stood with the group. She was already pushed against Erik otherwise she'd move closer to him. It was hard to miss that out of the group he was the only one smiling back at Kai.

"Someone call for reinforcements?" Damon sided up to Erik, glaring at Kai.

"OK, now we have the magic number of supernaturals needed to face one heretic." Kai said. Several sets of eyes opened wider. Kai said offhandedly to Erik, "Dungeons and Dragons reference. Hey, I think I know everyone here," Kai swept the group with his finger, "Except for you. I'm Kai," Kai shot his arm out. Quickly guessing as to what Kai was doing Bonnie moved to intercept his hand but Erik, oblivious to any threat, took Kai's hand and shook it. Kai glanced at Bonnie who looked away.

"Erik." Erik smiled. Bonnie felt herself soften at his sweetness.

"Erik. Interesting." Kai held on to his hand. Erik in turn shook his hand a little more forcefully while keeping his face friendly.

Bonnie tugged on Erik's hand to pull it away and wished Kai'd take half a step back from her. Erik kept his eyes on Kai, a little perplexed, while he took Bonnie's left hand in his.

Bonnie's eyes followed Erik who introduce himself to Damon. She already felt Damon's snarky response coming. Her attention wasn't fully on them, though, as she responded to the eyes she felt on her face. She turned her head slightly and looked up, unintentionally pausing at Kai's mouth, nearly taking a step back which would've landed her on Erik's feet, before finally stopping at his eyes. Kai returned her gaze.

She wasn't used to standing so closely to him. Why would I be? It's not like he had given her any
reason to trust him. She fought the urge to push him which would've been the only way to put any
distance between them. He was so near it felt intimate to keep eye contact. He didn't look away and
stubbornly she kept her eyes on his. This was power play and that she knew how to do with him.
As she skewered him with her eyes she felt surprised to recognize something warm in his face. For
a moment her heart stopped. **He wouldn't bring anything up, would he?**

It was awful, knowing they shared something no one knew about. **I wish I told Caroline. Why? It
didn't mean anything.** She thumbed Erik's hand and brushed off her discomfort as she looked back
at her date who still chatted with Damon. **Don't think about your dream,** another unwelcome
though came as she stood sandwiched between Kai and Erik. Bonnie flicked her eyes to Caroline
who was eyeing Kai suspiciously. Stefan, on the other hand, looked like he was assessing Kai, as if
figuring out if he was a threat. She felt Kai lean towards her.

"We're calling it a truce tonight, OK?" Caroline stepped forward and Kai turned to her. "You-" She
pointed at Kai. Bonnie nodded at Caroline to get her attention to remember Erik. "Any problems
and we all are going to be on you."

"Me? I'm just here to enjoy a party." Kai swept the group with his eyes. "Have a great time.
Especially you," Kai edged towards Damon which inched him a little closer to Bonnie, his arm
brushing hers. Bonnie moved back her arm, feeling her heart skip a beat, before Kai turned around
and walked away without looking back. She sighed in relief as her body relaxed reassuring herself
that whatever she saw in Kai's face was him trying to mess with her.

"Weird guy." Erik said. "How do you know him?" He looked at Bonnie.

Bonnie opened her mouth and willed an answer to form on her lips.

"One of Bonnie's exes. He's taking the break up real bad," Damon widened his eyes and left the

group. Bonnie resisted dropping her jaw as she looked at his retreating back. Though it was Damon
after everything she didn't think he'd joke about that. But he did like drama.

"That explains it." Erik said.

**That explains nothing and what does that mean?** Caroline rolled her eyes at Damon's back.

"I-I think I'm gonna meet Tyler up front. Just to uh, let him know he really wouldn't like the band." 
Caroline nodded at Bonnie. Bonnie understood. It was better to keep Tyler away from Kai or at
least warn him that Kai was there.

"I'm gonna grab a drink. Do you want anything?" Stefan motioned at Bonnie and Erik who asked
for beers.

"That guy really your ex?" Erik asked after Caroline walked away.

Bonnie gritted her teeth into as innocent smile as she could. "No. We used to hang out, kind of a
program exchange thing. We had a rough falling out," She covered. She barely believed the lie
herself but for now it was the best she could offer. "Why did you say 'that explains it'?"

"I dunno, I thought he was going to ask me to a duel." He laughed. "Which would be a shame,
cause I left my sword back home today." Bonnie couldn't help but mirror Erik's playful features. If
he was threatened by Kai he didn't show it.

Bonnie laughed. "He's just being a jerk." She paused. "He's not well. But I wouldn't worry about
him. I'd worry about having fun with your date." She tugged at his collar.
"That I can do."

These few words sprouted joy from Bonnie's stomach to the rest of her body. *Couldn't I pretend to feel safe and a little normal for one night?* Still be a witch but one who danced with her date and put crises and enemies on hold, regardless of how close they were. She nestled into him and the two chatted about their day.

"Where did our beers go?" Erik asked after a few minutes.

Bonnie looked around for him. "I can't find him."

"I'll be back," Erik kissed Bonnie and walked off.

Caroline sauntered up to Bonnie, looking at her phone.

"That was close." She put her phone away. "Tyler's held up."

"I told you to keep enemy list to your parties to 0, you don't listen to me." Bonnie teased.

"The problem with outdoor parties. Invitation lists don't hold up. Where'd your date go?"

"Looking for the bar or Stefan, whatever comes first."

"First impression? I like him." Caroline swayed with the music. "I'll give him the third degree another time." She said with a smile. "He wasn't freaked out by Kai and just played it off though he was clearly trying to get in Erik’s head."

"He holds his own." Bonnie had lost her visual on Erik and she stood on her tiptoes to look above the crowd. "He is still human though."

"I'll keep an eye on Kai. Enjoy your date. Unless someone else catches your eye and maybe you bail on him, makes you take a beeline for the other one." A grin was pushing itself from Caroline’s mouth.

"Caroline."

Caroline erupted in a fit of giggles.

"Will you not tease me about our conversation earlier?"

"I'll try. I just wanted to point out I saw some guys taking a second look at you. Hey, date everyone."

"Hardly." Bonnie laughed. "I think my dance partner is calling me. I'll see you later."

Caroline smiled back and Bonnie left, heading in Erik's direction. To be teased about having more than one guy, that was a change too. How Caroline and Elena navigated two guys she wasn't sure. Even if she wasn't in an exclusive relationship, navigating one guy was enough.

Santianna hadn't made it to the party but Bonnie spotted Thea, another Green Tent member, dancing with a woman she didn't recognize. Her and Erik joined them. After a couple of attempts Bonnie separated Thea from the foursome and whispered to her, hoping the music would dampen sound to any unwelcome vampire ears.

"What's up?" Thea asked.
"I just wanted to let you know. There's a vampire you should watch out for here," she said and gave brief description of Kai. Kai stood at the side of the party nursing a drink, surveying the crowd.

Thea searched the crow. "Who, the guy standing alone in the jeans jacket?"

"Yeah."

"That's him?" Thea asked again.

"Yeah. What?"

"Sometimes I can tell. Thanks for the heads up." Thea returned to her dance partner without a second glance. Bonnie was grateful Thea didn't ask a lot of questions.

She was sure she could've kept on dancing but it was time for a water break. Bonnie excused herself from the group and made her way through the throng of dancers. As she stepped out of the crowd she felt a little relief to not be surrounded by a tight group of people.

She turned to her left and nearly hit the lean body in front of her.

"Not interrupting you, am I?"

"Yes." Bonnie said to Kai.

"A good party." He said unfazed. "A little dull but I've been to worse."

"What do you want?" Why do you have to stand so close? She discretely took half a step back.

"You know, if we're going to have a truce night it works better if you play nice." Kai put his hands in his pockets.

"The best way to do that is not talk to you." She smiled tightly.

"That's a nice looking guy you brought with you." Kai glanced to the dance floor. "I mean, I can see why you'd want to keep that under wraps. Risky, bringing someone in, who doesn't seem to have any sorts of special powers around nasty monsters that bite." He gave her a small smile.

Bonnie's magic ignited. "You're not going to touch him."

Kai's face lit up and she wondered if he could sense it. "Oh Bon, just a little?" He looked at her like he was asking for a second slice of cake. If this conversation wasn't all types of disturbing, she'd think he was flirting with her.

"Just two seconds ago you were talking about a truce." She said.

Kai took out his hands from his pockets and brushed his thumb on his chin. "It's a joke." He laughed. "I've killed everyone I needed tonight." He patted his stomach. Bonnie cringed and looked away from him. "OK, that's probably not true. Does that upset you?" He tilted his head. "I kinda went on a binge. I know, why would I tell you this? It's probably not gonna get me what I want," He raised his fingers towards her arm and Bonnie moved back. "I think about that all the time. When I don't think about blood which is also, all the time."

He reached to her for her magic she was sure but a shudder held her that in that moment she wanted him to touch her. So I'd have an excuse to use my own magic on him. But it wasn't just that, she thought in alarm. The past two times he had stood close to her over the past few hours she felt, she felt this disconcerting excitement, that only calmed down when some distance was put again
between them. She hated it. It didn't make sense and she desperately wanted it to stop. He just talked about killing people without showing any remorse. No part of her rational mind accepted this.

Caroline took a moment to enjoy the lights and the music. After organizing a multitude of parties she became sensitive to the feel of a space, if people were having a good time, if something had to be adjusted. This was perfect. As usual the time she spent on all the details, including researching bands and choosing lighting, turned out a successful party. Her eye returned to Kai who seemed to be keeping to himself but she also checked her phone often, in the last few minutes texting Tyler who had still not arrived.

Speaking of, it’s been a few minutes since she’d seen Kai. She raised her glass to her lips and looked around for him spotting him with Bonnie. She hesitated whether she should intervene but Bonnie seemed OK. The way they stood Caroline only caught a glimpse of Kai's face and she expected his expression was not similar to the one that Bonnie was giving him. The smell of blood entered her nostrils-

*Oh, no.* Not at her party. Caroline set her glass down and moved quickly to the scent, finding Stefan and Damon in an empty spot away from the square, hunched over a young man's body.

"What's this?" Caroline asked.

"A late dinner." Damon crouched down and turned the guy's face to the side revealing a bloodied neck with multiple puncture wounds. "Messy eater."

"Don't tell me-" Caroline glanced at Damon.

"I didn't do this." Damon said and scrunched his nose. "Can't you smell? This guy had a cold. Only a newbie would make the mistake of wanting a taste of that. Unless he was desperate."

He was right, now that Caroline took a moment to sniff the air. It was like what sour milk smelled like to a human.

"Kai?" Stefan asked.

"Do you know when this happened?" Caroline asked.

"Just now. The vampire disappeared right when we got there."

"Anyone see you?" Caroline asked.

"I don't think so." Stefan said.

"I need to warn Bonnie," Caroline pulled out her phone.

"What happened?" Bonnie stepped to the group. "I sensed you all moved so I tracked you." Bonnie took a look at the man lying on the pavement. "Damon-"

"It wasn't me." Damon turned his hand palm up and gave his brother a flabbergasted glance.

"It's a fair question." Stefan said.

"Sorry ripper." Damon said. "Why don't they ask you?"

Caroline ignored the two and turned to Bonnie. "Stefan said this happened five minutes ago."
Maybe Kai-

"Kai talked to me for the last ten minutes." Bonnie said with resignation. "Maybe Erik should leave. I can help you."

"No one's leaving." Caroline said. "Everyone is staying and having a good time."

"I hope not as good as this guy." Damon said.

"Bonnie, you're the one with the date. One of us should enjoy that. We'll handle this." Caroline nodded at Bonnie.

"I don't remember agreeing to that." Damon scoffed.

"I'm sorry, afraid someone will take your spot at the bar?" Caroline asked and turned to Bonnie. "Go." She repeated.

"Let me know what happened as soon as you find out." Bonnie said.

"OK."

It hurt to say it but Tyler had still not shown up meaning Bonnie was the only one who could enjoy the night with her guy. And she should. Bonnie left and Caroline strategized with the two brothers before the three left in different directions.

On the prowl for the vampire, Caroline returned to the party to try to scout the killer. She spotted Kai chatting with a brunette woman not too far from the bar. It wasn't the first time she saw him speak with someone that night but it was the first time his body language seemed so… Friendly. The woman touched his arm and his shoulder. It wasn't just one vampire she had to look out for.

"What're you doing?" Caroline walked up to Kai.

"Enjoying a flirt and a kiss." Kai barely turned his head to Caroline. Caroline bulldozed her way between them and faced the woman.

"Look at me," Caroline said. "He's a terrible guy and a waste of your time. Tell everyone you know."

The woman blinked at Caroline, glanced at Kai with more than a little repulsion, and disappeared into the crowd.

"I was in the middle of something." Kai looked after the woman walking away.

"Yeah? Well, I like to keep deaths at a minimum at my parties." Caroline said.

"You know, I don't need to talk to a woman to feed on her." Kai raised his glass to his mouth and drank. "All I have to do is sneak her out while you're all busy doing whatever it is people do at these things."

Ugh. Annoying guy. But he did look a little out of place. Carefree by the looks of his posture but at the same time removed from everyone else.

"Look, I'm being good. I was just having a friendly conversation. It's been a couple of decades, the dating vibe's all different. I haven't killed anyone tonight." He raised his finger. "Well, that's a lie. But that's what we do. Oh wait, you're – Caroline. You're a recovering vampire. Such a waste to be confused." Kai sipped on his drink.
"I don't have to remind you that us recovering vampires aren't killing you because Bonnie still thinks that we can use you to get Elena back. I wouldn't push it." Caroline narrowed her eyes.

"So Bonnie's the reason I'm alive? Who would've thought." Kai smiled. "I guess it's less urgent for you she'd be back. You can wait." Kai turned his face away while keeping his smile. Caroline tried to follow his gaze.

"Come on," Kai took Caroline's attention back before she saw what Kai was looking at. "If I'd come for food, grocery shopping in a den of vampires, vegetarian or not, isn't the best plan. What I was thinking was maybe I'd practice some of my new empathy."

"Looked to me like it went missing some weeks ago."

"You know – wait a minute." Kai put his hand on a young man passing by. "Hey could you get me some gin and tonic?" The man nodded at him blankly. "Thanks. You want to dance?"

"No."

Kai's gaze returned to the dance floor. Caroline shook her head. She spent enough time on him. Now that the woman Kai spoke with was gone and hopefully spreading the word about him, it was time for her to leave.

"OK, I'm going. You remember to behave or-"

"You know when I was a kid my family isolated me." Kai turned his face to her. "On account of being a bad siphoner. Couldn't even touch anyone." His tone was cold as if he was distancing himself from the words.

Now why Kai was telling her that, she had no idea. Kai observed the dancers on the floor. "I don't care now but back then that messed me up big time." He said with indifference. His gaze seemed to lock and she followed it to the dance floor. To Bonnie and Erik were laughing as they moved together.

"Maybe I wondered what I missed out on?" Kai asked. "Even though this looks so boring. I don't know how people are having fun doing this. Don't you find other people so... Disruptive sometimes? But I guess without them I might as well be back in prison. And then who would I kill?"

Kai shrugged as if saying "what can you do?" and glanced at Caroline.

"I'm kidding! I have a tiny conscience now."

The man Kai had compelled returned with his drink. "Thank you." Kai said and set down his beer bottle at a nearby empty table stand. "Manners are everything." He told Caroline.

"Look, new vampires' feelings are heightened. I heard about this merge-" Caroline said.

Kai held his hand up. "I passed intro to vampire class, don't worry. I mean, the parts that were remotely interesting. I'm good." He sipped on his drink. "How did you find out about it? Oh yeah, must have heard it from my dead sister's ex boyfriend right? Word is that he's your boyfriend now. Fickle guy. Haven't seen him around." He rolled his head to the sides. "I was hoping to catch up."

Caroline tried not to be blown away by how casually Kai mentioned his dead sister or be moved otherwise by his words.
"How do you know anything about that?"

"I have eyes. You make a cute couple. All things considered. It's really hard for me to say bad things about Liv. I can still say I loathed my dad-" Kai turned his eyes up as if churning his head. "Yeah. I guess Luke wasn't much of a fan either."

Whatever was left of Caroline's patience was quickly dwindling.

"OK. Good chat. Have a good time at the party and keep this in mind: Bonnie's my best friend. If you do anything to her-
"

"Now you, she didn't talk so much about in prison." He looked at her with a bored expression. "Although all I heard about was Elena." He looked back at the dance floor.

"Care to tell us how we could get her back?"

Kai smiled and after a few seconds shook his head. "Nah. Don't feel bad, I'd just much rather disappoint Bonnie with no information. So who's Erik?"

Caroline squinted her eyes. "What do you mean?"

Kai sipped on his drink. "He's not a vampire. He doesn't have magic. He's just a regular human." He said with disdain. "He doesn't even look like he's a wannabe hunter like your other boring human friend."

"You hurt him, you hurt Bonnie. You die. Sounds good?"

Kai looked away. "They sent me the most annoying one." He finished his drink and set it down. "Tell your friends I'll behave. You know, unless I don't." He took a few steps backwards, bumping into someone, then turning around. A woman walked up to him and offered her hand and motioned with her head to the dance floor. Kai glanced at Caroline, smiled and painted a halo above his head, and took the woman's hand.

*I'm so tired of this.*

Bonnie sidled up to her.

"I saw you chatting with the enemy. Should I be worried?" Bonnie took a gulp from her beer.

Caroline glanced at her phone. "I just wanted him to know we're keeping on eye on him."

The two looked at Kai dancing.

"Did you find the vampire?"

Caroline shook her head. "No. Too bad Tyler didn't make it. We could've used his help. One fatality free party's not too much to ask for, isn't it?"

"No. Apart from that, Care, this was a great party. I'm sorry Tyler didn't make it."

Caroline nodded.

"Kai didn't give away his evil plan did he?" Bonnie asked in hushed tones.

"Kai? No. But-" She raised her voice before lowering it. "He did-"
"Hi, ready to go?" Erik appearing from behind Bonnie, hugging her waist. Bonnie relaxed her body against his.

"Sure." She covered one of his hands in hers before stepping beside him. "Care, is there anything I can do?"

"No." Caroline shook her head. "It's OK."

"Text me later?" Bonnie asked, keeping it vague, and Caroline nodded back with a smile.

_That's it. Time to get a drink._ Kai was dancing with someone new and Caroline needed a break from watching him for a minute anyway. She looked back at Bonnie. _Kai seemed particularly interested in her date. Tough to date humans, even moreso those who had no idea about supernaturals._ Caroline started pacing towards the bar. _Not that supernaturals were always easier to date._ She wished Tyler had made it tonight. Kai hadn't backed down after meeting Erik, standing close to Bonnie. _Weird. Almost..._ Caroline slowed her footsteps, then stopped. _He was jealous._

As they left the square Bonnie and Erik laughed about the couple who had waltzed around them all night. Keeping an alert eye around her, Bonnie asked Erik what he thought of her friends.

"They seemed cool but truth was I liked spending time with you the most." He pulled her to him by her waist.

Bonnie laughed. The same was true for her apart from a few moments tonight. There wasn't any escaping vampires and she was glad three were looking into it. She'll check in with Caroline later.

She wondered if Stefan was moving on from Caroline. If Damon had a good time despite sitting at the bar which was where she spotted him throughout the night. She didn't stick around to even ask Caroline what happened with Tyler. This was unusual. Even if she was left out of any drama she'd catch up quickly, wanting to make sure her friends were OK. Tonight she didn't. _And it was OK._ Her heart rested. She'll have time for that.

She trusted her three vampire friends to defend themselves and each other. It felt good to know her friends were nearby if Kai was going to act out. He seemed to have a good time by the time she left by what it looked like from him dancing. _Maybe not having magic was the best thing that ever happened to him_, she thought mockingly.

She hoped the woman Kai dancing with was OK and trusted Caroline to keep an eye on him, if anything so that her party would keep a low guest murder ratio. _What would it feel like to dance with him? Ugh, what was that?_ She breathed in Erik's cologne.

Her conversation tonight with Kai ended quickly after he shared he fed on people before the party.

"Right, we're not talking about that tonight either." Kai had said. "Sorry, I forget that at a party you don't spend a lot of time talking about death." She expected his face to match the mocking tone of his voice his expression took on a hint of bewilderment which nearly confused _her_.

"Stay out of my face and stay away from Erik." She barely finished her sentence before she turned and walked away. Kai didn't approach her after that.

Something was strange about seeing him dancing with someone else and she couldn't put her finger on it. Not only her concern for the woman he danced with. It wasn't jealousy. She couldn't figure it out. Only that it was a very strange feeling. She held on tighter to Erik's hand.
862euv - As always, thank you for commenting and for leaving detailed thoughts! It was cool to think about what would happen if Bonnie had in canon more of an opportunity to come to her own, make choices to explore her witchy community and think of her identity outside of MFG and step outside her role as her friends' savior.

Anon5378 - Thank you so much! I appreciate you leaving a comment. I had fun thinking about how Bonnie would've played Lily. While this is def a Bonkai fic though I realize I spend quite a bit of time on Bonnie so it's also Bonnie centric. I do plan to focus more on them. It may take 1-2 more chapters to get there. Hope you enjoy reading the fic in meantime.

Thank you to readers for reading and for folks who kudo'd.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!