# New Beginning

**Summary**

Elara is different, unlike her sister Elena she has never fit in. For years she has been careful to hide her secrets and differences, but now, as her time is coming to an end, and something dangerous draws closer to her hometown of Mystic Falls - everything is about to change. Can she remember who, and what, she is in time? Or will her past consume her? Klaus/OC, Damon/OC. The storyline will eventually move into The Originals.

**Notes**

Please let me know what ya think
Looking back, there isn't a doubt in my mind that I was ever 'normal.' Even as a child, I could see and do things no one else could. It never scared me, however- to me, it felt normal to be able to do what I could.

For many years, I grew up thinking everyone was as 'special' as I was. My mother always told me I had an active imagination, that the things I told her I could see were all in my head. After that, I decided to keep my newfound abilities to myself. I was fearful of what she would say or do if she ever found out that none of it was actually in my head.

I never thought anyone would view my abilities as something to fear until I was forced to show them. I remember the day I first showed anyone my skills as clear as crystal. That day, I learned that to be abnormal wasn't a good thing. That day, I lost the filter of innocence I had to shield my childhood from the horrors of the human condition. That day, I learned you can never truly trust anyone.

It was an average day, like any other. The sun was shining brightly; I remember the way it felt seeping into my skin as my fraternal twin sister Elena and I climbed the trees beside our house. We climbed the trees in our yard almost every day. Even with the day starting as average as any other, it just happened to end up a defining moment in my childhood - all because a swift gush of wind and a few strands of errant hair caused my sister to lose her footing.

It's funny how quickly a few minor things can come together and change your life forever. I watched helplessly from the lower branches as she tried to brush her hair from her face, causing her to lose her balance and fall. I screamed her name as she plummeted towards the ground, her fingers grasping at the empty air as if to catch a stray branch and save herself.

If I close my eyes, I can still see myself rushing to her at the sound of her cries. I can remember the abrasiveness of the tree bark underneath my palms, scraping and scratching my skin as I dropped from the tree. All other thoughts had left my mind as adrenaline coursed through me; I needed to get to my sister.

I had always been protective of Elena. I was born first, even if it was only by mere minutes, so I always viewed myself as the elder sister — her protector. When I finally reached her at the bottom of the tree, she was sprawled out on the bright green grass. Her legs bunched up around her middle as she gasped in pain. I held her in my arms as she cried, telling her everything was going to be alright, to take a deep breath and try to relax. I gently lifted her arm to find that it was turning a purplish color and was twisted in a way that I knew, even at such a young age, was unnatural. Her
pale face was screwed up in agonizing pain, tears streaming down her cheeks. I wanted so badly to help her, to take her pain away. Somewhere deep inside, I knew I could do something to ease her suffering. I was nervous to show her my abilities, but I couldn't see her in such pain and do nothing. If anyone were to accept me for who I am, I was sure it would be my sister.

I placed my small hand on her arm and closed my eyes. I imagined her arm healed, back in its rightful place as it had been only moments before. Bright blue light poured from my fingertips, and her bones maneuvered back into place.

Elena gasped and pulled away from me quickly. She held her arm against her chest in shock, staring at me wide-eyed and fearful. She looked down at her freshly healed arm with hesitation, then screamed.

"W- what are you?" She shrieked, rising to her feet and stepping backward away from me, "Some kind of- of- monster?"

My heart broke. Did she really think of me as a monster? I had tried to help, and I scared her. I never expected my own sister to turn against me like that. My blood began to boil, my heart pounded violently in my chest; I was so angry. I stepped toward her, ignoring the way she flinched back, the disgust plain on her face. I slammed my fist square into her face, enjoying the crunch against my knuckles as her nose shattered. Blood poured down her front as she stumbled backward, falling onto her bum.

"You FREAK!" she hissed. "You're a freak, Elara!"

I earned a nice sentence of four weeks locked in my room for punching my sister. My parents didn't believe it when Elena told them about what had happened with her arm. They thought we had been playing and it had gotten out of hand. There was no possible way I could've healed a broken arm; it was impossible.

They could deny the possibility of Elena's recount of her arm injury, but the proof of her broken nose was right on her face. That one I couldn't deny and didn't particularly want to. I was angry at my sister for what she had said, and as far as I was concerned, she deserved what I did to her in return.

Being whatever I was, I started to be very careful about who I trusted. If a member of my own family couldn't accept me for who or what I was, I feared no one could. From that day forward, I never said another word about the things I could see or do. My sister showed me that I would be viewed as something scary or unnatural. Telling anyone could potentially bring me one of two things: pain or punishment. I chose to keep to myself from then on — I was afraid I would hurt someone again. I didn't want to be the monster my sister accused me of being.

Our relationship never mended. We started doing everything separately after that day, instead of together; I honestly doubt she even remembers why. As we grew, she found her own group of friends, and I found mine. Well, I found one; Caroline Forbes. She had been my sister's friend before she was mine. She and my sister are still friendly, but they aren't nearly as close as we are.

At first, I couldn't stand Caroline. I could hardly handle being in the same room as her. But, the more she bugged me, the more I started to like her. She had a fiery personality, one that you couldn't help but be drawn to.

So, that's how my life went. I hid away until Caroline showed up, dragging me out to a party or school function that I really didn't want to go to. I'd rather stay home buried in a good book, but Caroline would have none of that.
That is until the Salvatore's moved back into town. I had known from the minute Stefan knocked into my sister in the hallway at school that he wasn't human. I could feel it, and not to mention, I had seen him before. He showed up in one of the many memories I had received of my past lives. I'm not yet sure how many times I've lived and died, but I know it's numerous.

Every night, the memories come to me like nightmares. For the longest time, I thought they were until I was visited by one of the spirits that haunt me. Throughout my many lives, I've seen different spirits — some dead, some trapped in limbo, or the 'in-between,' as I call it. It's my way of saying they are stuck in a realm somewhere between life and death.

This particular spirit, Rebekah, was my personal favorite. We had been friends in quite a few of my past lives. Her spirit form has plagued me off and on for as long as I could remember. She isn't exactly a ghost, but someone who tends to get stuck in the in-between, thanks to a very long story full of family drama. We'll get to that later.

I've always been drawn to her and her family. I don't really know why; I have only unlocked a few of my past lives. It's a painful process that I cannot control, and when it happens, it can take me days to recuperate. It's like being forced to eat even after you're full. It makes me feel like I could explode, bursting into a billion pieces if I bumped into something the wrong way. The headaches are the worst part, it feels like someone is pushing hot pokers into both of my eyes at the same time.

So when Stefan showed up, I knew exactly who and what he was. Rebekah had come to me the night before and told me everything was about to change. She told me that once again, I was going to be drawn into her family drama.

Great, that was just what I needed!

Even without Bekah's warning, I had remembered a bit about Stefan. I had run into him before, just as I had the Mikaelsons. I was sure he had come back to town the minute he heard there was a doppelganger of one of the women who had caused his change, Katherine.

Lucky me, this specific doppelganger happened to be my sister. Note the sarcasm.

Thankfully, he hadn't noticed me playing the creepy stalker at the other end of the hall as he spoke to Elena for the first time. I made sure I steered clear of him the entire day. It hadn't been easy, we all shared the same classes, but I had made sure to play hooky and hideout.

I wasn't sure if he would recognize or remember me, but I didn't want to take the chance of him giving me away in front of Elena. I had worked really hard to keep my typical, average girl cover, and I did not want that ruined by anyone.

Especially by some vampire who wanted to stalk my sister because she looked like his ex-lover.

I needed to speak to him alone, so that's what I planned on doing. I would follow a vampire home, knock on the door, and ask to chat.

Smart right?
Chapter 2

I watched as Stefan drove his car into the garage of the Boarding House. He, of course, hadn't changed a bit since the last time I'd seen him. One of the perks of being a vampire, I guess.

After he went inside, I sat in my car and scoped out the place. I knew Damon was here too, I could sense it. I had very few memories of him, mostly just flashes; I assume they were amongst the memories I had yet to unlock.

My phone went off, causing me to jump out of my skin. 'Barbie Girl' played as Caroline's name was displayed on the screen. I smiled as I remembered how angry it made her when I chose that as her ringtone.

"Hello Care, how can I help you?" I asked.

Her high pitched, pissed off voice filled my ears, "Where the hell are you, El?"

I pulled the phone away from my ear and snapped at her, "Whoa Care, you're gonna bust my eardrum! I'm doing something personal," I said with a huff.

"You were supposed to meet us at the Grill, remember?!"

I sighed into the phone. I completely forgot the plans Caroline had made on my behalf.

"Sorry Care, I can't make it. I'll totally make it up to you later, ok?"

I hoped this would smooth things over — the last thing I needed was an angry Caroline.

"You better call me and explain yourself later. None of this personal crap. Got it?" she said firmly.

I laughed lightly, agreeing with her, and hung up the phone. I'd have to come up with some kind of story that would satisfy her; otherwise, I'd be in the doghouse.

I took a few deep breaths, preparing myself for what would definitely be an awkward meeting. I pulled my car into the driveway of the vampire Boarding house. I shut off the engine and checked my reflection in the rearview mirror, fixing my untidy red hair. I slipped out of the car, quickly making my way to the front door. My white knuckles stood out brightly against the dark wood as I knocked. I could feel my heart pounded against my ribs and tried to slow my heart rate by breathing deeply. I knew they'd be able to hear me. I ran my sweaty hands down my jeans, then fidgeted with the frayed sleeves of my jacket as my nerves started coming to the surface.

I heard voices on the other side of the door, and I lowered my head, successfully hiding my face behind my hair. I wasn't sure if they would answer the door if they saw who I was. Then again, I
scolded myself, they have been alive for centuries now, who's to say they would even remember me? Maybe I didn't mean as much to them as I thought I did? The handle jiggled, and my heart leaped into my throat as Stefan opened the door to greet me. There was no way he couldn't hear my pounding heartbeat; it sounded like I had jogged the whole way here. I kept my face turned away, hiding behind my hair as his voice lilted towards me. Its familiar rhythm sending jolts of memories through my mind.

"Hello, can I help you?" He asked, curiously.

My pulse jumped in my neck, no doubt enticing the vampire as I fought with my cowardly self. Patiently, Stefan waited as I took a few gulps of air and pulled at my sleeves anxiously before I finally lifted my face to meet his.

It was like stepping into my own dreams and memories; almost nothing about him had changed. Knowing he was a vampire, I should have expected as much, but for some reason, I was still a bit surprised. The only difference apart from his clothes, of course, was his hair. His dark brown hair was styled differently than I remembered but still framed his face flatteringly. I liked this new hairstyle better now, actually — I thought it suited him better. I tried to smile, but couldn't as his pale face contorted in horror. His forest green eyes widened in disbelief as he took in my features, several emotions fought for dominance on his face.

"Hello, Stefan," I said, simply.

I wasn't sure what the proper greeting was when you haven't seen someone for centuries, but I probably could've said something more worldly than 'Hello.'

"El...Elandra?" He stuttered.

Elandra. I hadn't heard that name for ages. In fact, I had only ever been given that name twice in my entire existence. Once in their time, and the other in my own. It was my real name.

I smiled at his nervous expression.

"It's Elara now, Stefan. May I come in?" I asked, pointing at the door.

His jaw slackened, but his expression stayed in place as he stepped aside to allow me inside. I stepped past him, looking around in awe. Everything was so beautiful. I wasn't new to elegance or riches, but I had been taught to appreciate beauty. I had been poor as many times as I had been rich, so I never took anything for granted. Although I had to say, I liked this home much better than their first.

Stefan led me to the sitting room. I took a seat on the nearest couch, sinking down into the soft material. I giggled softly and smiled up at Stefan standing in front of me, still staring as if I was a ghost. Did he expect me to disappear into a wisp of smoke?

"Would you like a drink?" He offered.

He pointed behind him, towards the bar where a decanter full of gleaming red liquid sat. I looked over at the bar and bit my bottom lip. They had one crystal decanter of blood sitting out next to the Bourbon — they really shouldn't have that in such plain view. I couldn't help but laugh at his offer. He frowned at my reaction, confused.

"We have animal blood too," he kindly offered.

I stood and walked over to the small bar. I made myself a glass of Bourbon, shaking my head as I
eyed the red substance.

"Stefan, I'm human. Well...sorta," I said, shrugging.

His face froze, brow raised as he ran his hands over his face slowly, his posture stiff. Feeling pity for the poor immortal, I gestured towards the couch.

"Why don't we sit down? let me explain."

He watched me take my drink back to my seat and cross my ankles before he joined me. He leaned against the back of the couch and sighed deeply. I took a large swig of the amber liquid in my hand and closed my eyes. I enjoyed the warm burn as it slid down my throat. When I was ready, I turned my body toward him, placing a gentle hand on his thigh. I took a deep breath and decided to delve into what I could. Having only minimal information myself at this point, I was only able to tell Stefan what my own memories allowed. I had only unlocked so much. So far I knew that I was a Reincarnate, someone who is reborn over and over again, never truly dying. I tried to explain everything to him, only leaving out the Mikaelsons and a few other details. I wasn't ready to discuss certain things. Hell, I was still working on some of it myself. To Stefan's credit, throughout my long tale, he didn't interrupt once. When I was done, Stefan took a deep breath and sighed loudly.

"Well, that's a lot. So you're a Reincarnate then?"

I nodded. "As of right now, I have no clue how, but yes."

He ran his hand through his brown hair ruffling it as he did.

"Elandra, there's something I have always wanted to say to you."

Stefan placed his hand on my own and looked into my eyes. I smiled at him, guessing what he wanted to apologize for. Same old Stefan Salvatore, always repenting.

"I'm so sorry for what happened to you. I should have been there."

I gave him a hug, and his shoulders slumped in defeat. Finally, he was able to let go of the guilt he held onto for centuries.

"Stefan, what happened to me wasn't your fault. It's only the fault of those evil bastards who hurt me. Besides, it was centuries ago,"

I tried to ignore the memory of that terrible night. It was something I never wanted to relive. We heard a commotion upstairs as a voice filled the awkward silence.

"Stefan, who the hell was at the door?"

I recognized the voice immediately and stood, turning around my back facing the stairs.

I had no clue why I was so nervous, but I was. My stomach fluttered as footsteps approached us. Stefan stood as well and stepped closer to me whispering encouraging words. I barely heard him.

"Ah, we have company. Who's this?"

The cocky voice sent shivers down my spine. I stayed put, unable to turn around. My whole body went rigid with stress, and I couldn't tell if I was breathing.

"Damon, we need to talk," Stefan said, walking away from me.
"Why? Who is she?" he asked, clearly annoyed.

I could hear footsteps on the carpet behind me, but I remained where I was. I tilted my head to the side, looking at him from behind my hair. From my shield of red, I could see Stefan standing in front of him one arm on his shoulder. He was leaning into him, trying to keep him where he was. Damon was pushing against him, moving towards me, obviously thinking I was someone Stefan intended to use against him. I heard Stefan trying to lead him into another room, but Damon had other plans. I heard a quick rustling of shoes on the carpet before I felt someone touch my arm, spinning me around. I dropped the crystal glass I had been holding, and my green eyes met his blue. I'd forgotten how absolutely gorgeous he was. His raven black hair was shorter than it was the last time I'd seen him. Of course, that was when he was still human, and long hair was the fashion. His blue eyes widened, and he dropped my arm as if I had burned his flesh. He backed away from me, his eyes moving over my face. If I had thought Stefan was surprised by my sudden appearance, it was nothing compared to Damon. His face scrunched up in pain.

"Elandra?" he whispered my name as if it were a prayer.

Hearing him speak my name was all it took. Suddenly, memories were flooding into my mind. I tried to speak, but I couldn't get the words past the barricade of pain. Seeing him had triggered the memory of every moment he and I had ever shared together.

I fell to my knees, my head held tightly in my hands. Voices were calling out to me, but I couldn't see past the pain, nor the swirling memories that fled past my eyes one after another. It was like I was a bystander, observing myself live through events I was only now learning I had lived through. I saw myself in Damon's arms, kissing him and laughing with him. I felt warm tears cascading down my cheeks as I remembered how I had loved him before he went to war. I watched my past self-cry as she handed Damon a picture of her painting in a garden as he prepared to leave. He promised he'd return to her, promised he would never love another. I saw Stefan hold her as they watched him wave goodbye.

The memories shifted, and I was suddenly by her side as she trained with Emily Bennett and Katherine Pierce. Then, I saw as her whole world crumbled when she realized that Damon had returned from the war without telling her, having fallen in love with Katherine. As she listened to Katherine talking about her relationship with both brothers, the memories began to fade. My senses were returning to me, but the pain in my head was fiery reminder of every single memory. It was like someone was breaking my heart and pushing hot coals into my mind all at the same time.

"Elandra, please tell me what's wrong."

I heard Damon's voice in my ear. I lifted my head, finally coherent enough to realize I was in his arms. My head laid against his hard chest, his shirt was soft against my cheek. Stefan was beside us, face pale and lined with worry.

"It's ok, I'm fine. It's just the memories, it's painful when they all rush back like that," I said, pushing myself out of Damon's arms and standing.

It was too hard being so close to him. The pain of what had happened between us was still too fresh in my mind. Damon held my arm as I rocked back and forth on my heels.

"How are you here?" he asked suspiciously.

I made my way to the couch and lifted my hand in the air, ushering for Stefan to explain everything to him, my head was still throbbing. Not to mention the confusion I was feeling. I was in no mood to play twenty questions with Elara. I sensed someone standing in front of me and looked up,
smiling at the glass dangling above my head. The condensation glistened in the light falling from the window beside me. I took the drink gratefully. I drank small sips as I rubbed my temples. As I rubbed my aching head, I felt something on my upper lip and frowned, lifting my fingers to my nose. Looking down, I noticed the bright red smeared on my fingertips, with a sigh, I took a tissue from my pocket and wiped the blood from my nose and fingers. The eyes of both vampires shot towards me. I shook my head, continuing to wipe my nose. I looked away from them and watched the amber liquid in my glass swirl as I tilted the crystal back and forth. The pain was starting to dull. I felt the couch sag as someone sat down beside me. I lifted my head and looked into Damon's blue eyes.

"So your Elena's sister in this life?" he asked softly.

I watched his expression shift as he said her name. It was almost pained reverence. I remembered what Beka told me of what Katherine had done to the brothers after my death.

"Yes, and you're a vampire now, huh?" I laughed.

He gave me his signature smirk. "Yeah, lucky me, right?"

I could sense being a vampire was something he never wanted. His smirk faded to a frown.

"I'm so sorry, El, I should have been there," he whispered.

Deep down, part of me wanted to hurt him. Part of me wanted to come out and say, "Yes, you should have been. You should have chosen me. Loved me." But I couldn't. I still cared about him, despite how things had transpired between us. I wrapped my arm around him, taking in his familiar scent.

"It's not your fault," I told him.

He stood, pulling me onto my feet. I wobbled, feeling my legs shake with the effort it took to remain upright, but Damon held me tightly against his side. He brushed my hair gently from my face.

"You're just as I remember you. How old are you?" Damon asked.

He walked a circle around me, observing me up and down. I started laughing; I felt like his prey.

"I just turned 17. Or did you forget my birthday?" I joked.

His face fell for a moment, eyes clouding over in memory.

"No, I visit your grave every year. I just came back from my visit. August 10th, last month."

I was surprised by his revelation. He visits my grave? I don't even visit myself. The thought of him grieving me, after all this time, broke my heart.

"Oh, Damon, I'm so sorry," I cried.

Tears clouded my vision, but I could see his eyes never left mine. My phone rang, breaking through the aching sadness. Damon's eyebrow lifted at the ringtone. I shifted uncomfortably. No one understood why I'd chosen it yet. I have an odd sense of humor. 'Werewolves of London' ended as I answered the phone.

"Hey, Tyler. What's up?"
Damon's eyes narrowed as he listened to me speak.

"Hey, Ellie. Have you heard from Vick today?" Tyler asked, his voice stiff.

"No, can't say I have, sorry."

An irritated sigh came from the other end.

"Ok, if ya hear from her tell her to call me," Tyler asked.

"Yeah, Ty, I'll do that."

I hung up and slid my phone in my back pocket after glancing at the time.

"Listen, Damon, I gotta go. It's late," I said.

I hated leaving after everything that had happened, but Jenna would be pissed if I came home late.

"Can't you make something up and stay?" He asked, hopefully.

"No, I can't. I promise, I'll see you tomorrow," I pulled my phone from my pocket and outstretched it to him "here, put your number in my cell-"

He took my phone, and after a few seconds, I felt a slight breeze and then a heavy feeling in my back pocket. Damn vampire speed!

"Did you just fondle me, Mr. Salvatore?" I joked.

His face brightened at my familiar sense of humor. I could tell he was glad it hadn't been lost.

"What if I did?" he asked, cockily.

I lightly slapped his face and enjoyed his genuinely shocked expression. He touched his cheek with a smirk.

"How dare you! I'm a lady, sir," I flipped my hair and headed for the door.

He beat me there, opening the door for me.

"Thank you. I'll see ya tomorrow. Tell Stefan I said bye," I said, laughing when he rolled his eyes at the mention of his younger brother.

I walked to my car, and as I got in, I noticed he was still standing in the doorway, watching me. I waved, shifted the car into reverse, and pulled out of the driveway.
Familiar soft lips caressed my neck, as calloused fingers lovingly stroked my hair. A pair of strong arms wrapped me in a firm embrace and I couldn't remember the last time I had felt this safe, this loved. A warm summer breeze filtered through the trees around us and I could smell the sweet scent of the woods we were hiding away in. The fingers of the man I was wrapped up in traveled towards my chin — lifting my face to meet his — and I found the most beautiful blue eyes. I reached out, running my fingers through his long blonde hair and smiled, brushing my lips against his. When our mouths met, it was like something inside me had finally found its place. His lips caressed mine slowly for a moment, before he pulled me hard against his chest, his insistent hungry mouth, parting my eager lips. I was clay in his hands, forming into something new and beautiful. I gasped as his tongue ran across my lower lip. The heavy beating of my heart sped up to a crescendo, the beats almost spelling out one word. Home, Home, Home. Everything about this man felt right. My skin tingled as he ran his hands down my waist, lifting me into his arms. I wrapped my legs around him, giggling as he walked me over to the nearest tree, backing me up against it. A deep moan reverberated through his chest as I sighed loudly, grasping his hair tightly in my hand. Before I could pull him towards me for another kiss, a loud banging echoed through the woods — the trees surrounding us shaking with each bang — their leaves falling to the forest floor. I blinked wildly in amazement, glancing around us at the falling leaves. I looked at the man — who was still caught up in our shared moment — and seemingly unaware of what had just happened. Shaking my head I decided to ignore it and just enjoy the firm God in front of me. Again, before I could touch his lips with my own, another loud bang, echoed through the woods. The tree I was being held up against shook violently, my back arching in protest as my spine vibrated. I leaned towards the man and lowered myself to the ground. I sighed deeply as the world around me started to become dark. A dream. This had all been a dream. I held on tightly to the Hybrid. I took in one last look, his blue eyes sparkling as he smiled down at me. My Nik.

"Elarrrraaa?!

My eyes flew open at the loud banging on my bedroom door. I looked over at the clock and groaned — it was way too early for this.

"Elara?! You up yet? " Jeremy hollered through the door obnoxiously.

"Jer! I'm awake, for God's sake! Please end your obnoxious yammering!" I yelled back.

This earned me a laugh from the other side of my door. I pulled the pillow over my face, trying to remember the dream I had been having. It involved me and a particular Original Hybrid. I'm not really sure if it was a dream, or maybe memory. Whatever it was, it had been good — no — great.

It had also been a nice reprieve from all the stress that I had piling up since meeting with the Salvatores. Seeing Damon had let loose all of my memories. Now I knew everything. I knew how I had become a Reincarnate, why I live life over and over again. Being cursed by the Original witch over a thousand years ago: I will forever be forced to live until my eighteenth birthday, when the curse will activate, sending me on to a premature and painful death. Then, I will be reborn starting.
a new life. In my new life, I may or may not remember my past, and who I have been to others. It really depends on what sparks a memory. That's one of the worst parts of it, losing huge chunks of my life for long periods of time. I placed my fingers on the bridge of my nose, placing pressure against a potential headache.

I heard rustling from beside me, "What do you want Bekah?" I moaned in frustration, my voice muffled through the fluffy pillow.

A small sigh erupted to my left. I pulled the pillow away from my face and turned my head. As I was expecting, Rebekah sat beside me, head tilted downwards as she twirled a piece of her curly blonde hair between her fingers. Her white flapper girl dress, as always, brought a smile to my face.

"What are you smiling about?" she asked, "Oh, don't tell me the eldest Salvatore has already put you under his spell?"

She made a few dramatic gagging sounds as I threw my pillow at her. I knew full well it wouldn't do anything but fly right through her, but I just liked making her laugh. She has enough pain to deal with, so, when she visits me, I try to make it better, even if it's only for a moment.

I succeeded; She laughed brightly at my false attempt to hit her. I winked and flopped out of bed, and then made my way to my closet.

"If I remember correctly, you fell for the charms of Salvatore once as well, sister,"

I moved a few outfits around and then looked back at her with a smile.

"So Beks, are you gonna help me decide what to wear while your here? I know how much you love today's fashion..." I joked, earning an eye roll.

she sighed. "Ugh, no. Sadly I'm here on business,"

My smile died as she eyed me warily. I lowered the clothes I had in my hands and tried to keep my face from showing too much trepidation. She stood and eerily made her way towards me, her eyes sad and distant — this couldn't be good.

"What is it this time, Rebekah? You know I don't have long to help you anyways," I whispered.

I was using this moment to casually let loose that I had restored all of my memories. Rebekah frowned at me, knowing what I meant, but not knowing I had found out about my impending doom. I needed to tell her that when I had remembered Damon, I had recalled everything about my curse. Including everything that came with it, my life with the Originals being a huge part of that. Katherine, Emily, and I had discussed my curse during the life I had spent with the Salvatores, just before I had died when she had been shacking up with the brothers. I should have hated her, and I did, to an extent, but I had lived too many lives to judge hastily. Damon was as much to blame for coming back early and not finding me as she was.

Rebekah stopped in her tracks, watching my expression closely with watery blue eyes. I turned away from her, placing the clothes I had been holding back in my closet. I casually looked through a few more options as I swallowed deeply, trying to remove the lump in my throat.

"I just turned 17, Beks — which means the curse will take effect on my next birthday. I only have a year,"

I fought back tears as she brushed her hands through her curls nervously. She stepped forward,
joining me in front of my closet.

"When did you remember?" she whispered.

I looked into her eyes, ignoring the grey, ghosty sheen of her skin.

"When my memories of Damon were restored, I remembered everything Katherine had told me the day before I died," I explained.

Her eyes rounded — her confusion was evident. I guess I'd never told her about Katherine.

"Katerina once told you about the curse...?" she asked in shock.

I nodded slowly, wary of her reaction. "Even if she hadn't, all of the memories of my initial life with you and your family came back to me as well. The ones with Katherine were just shown to me first."

Bekah placed a hand on her hip and raised a brow, clearly wanting a more thorough answer. I rolled my eyes and took another outfit from the rack, letting out an exasperated huff when Bekah shook her hand in front of it with a disgusted frown. I placed it back on the shelf and continued.

"Katherine and I have always had an understanding," I said nonchalantly.

It was hard to explain my relationship with Katherine. My time with the Salvatores was not the first I had met Katerina Petrova. Rebekah narrowed her eyes at me, knowing I wasn't entirely open with her.

"Listen Beks, trust me, kay? I promise to help you as much as I can between now and my next birthday," I pleaded,

I threw out my best puppy dog eyes; some of the things I remembered needed to stay with me for now. Let's just say, I had done something the Original Hybrid wouldn't be too fond of...

Rebekah tilted her head before nodding quickly, her blonde hair bouncing. "Ok, well I just wanted to let you know your old pal Katerina is on her way here. She plans on setting things up ahead of Nik. She hopes to earn her freedom by helping with his curse,"

Rebekah let out a haughty laugh. I frowned profoundly and sent my closet a brief look of disdain before I walked over to my chest of draws. I grabbed my nearest pair of jeans and hopped lightly to get my foot in the leg. Rebekah watched me in interest, still adjusting to the fashion of this period.

"So, that's just great. Does she know about me yet?" I growled in annoyance, throwing out my best bit of sarcasm.

I blew a bit of hair out of my face, glanced back at Rebekah, then yanked a black tank top over my head.

"No, not yet. I'm sure she would have called Elijah already if she had,"

She observed my face and shook her head when I reacted as expected. A small smile lifted the edge of my lips at Elijah's name. I missed him, he had always been a brother to me. I ignored Rebekah's smirk and headed over to my vanity, plopping myself down on the stool. I grabbed my hairbrush, quickly yanking it through my tangled red hair. I could see Rebekah in the reflection of my mirror, wincing as I manhandled my hair. She reached out towards me, her hand hovering inches lovingly from my head. She flexed her fingers as if she wanted to run them through my fiery
locks as she once had, before pulling away slowly and frowning. She had always loved brushing my hair. I pulled the brush away and sent her a half-smile. I turned around on my stool and looked up into her eyes.

"Soon, Beks. I promise. I will get you out of that coffin," I said as my voice broke.

Rebekah leaned down towards me and ran a finger over the air near my cheek, a lost look shadowing her eyes.

"I know you will. If anyone can, it will be you."

Standing back up, she tossed a few loose curls over her shoulder and looked down at me with a cheeky grin.

"And, to answer the question you refuse to ask but are dying to know, Elijah is doing fine."

She looked away and frowned deeply as she closed her eyes, lowering her head she began rubbing her neck roughly.

"That being said...so is Nik. He is excited about getting closer to ending his curse," she said, the last bit with strong distaste in her voice.

I took in a sharp breath and turned back around, avoiding her searching reflection as I rolled my eyes, shrugging nonplussed. She knew where I stood on the subject of the Hybrid in question, so why bring it up?

"Elandra, just be careful this time — you know it has always ended badly. The first is why you were cursed, to begin with. Our family isn't good for you," she said regretfully.

I looked up at her reflection with a questioning look and found myself sinking into her deep blue eyes. I didn't want to discuss Nik. It was a sore subject for me. She knew that better than anyone — her entire family did.

"Beks, I have no plans to repeat the past. After all, it would be ludicrous to even try. It's not like it could last, and I don't think he could handle it," I whispered "I don't wish to be the cause of one of his massacres — not again," I added, placing my brush back on the table.

Her face filled with understanding. We had been through so much together, and I would be forever grateful for whatever allowed her to visit me while she was in the in-between. I stood up and turned around, standing face to face with the apparition of my best friend and soul sister. I brought my fingers close to her transparent face and traced the air near her cheek. I wanted to get as close to her as possible, even if neither she nor I could feel it.

"I gotta go, sis. Check-in with me later, ok?" I asked with a smile.

She agreed with a silent nod before disappearing entirely. I took a deep breath and sprayed myself with my Burberry perfume before grabbing my red bag and heading downstairs. Jenna and Elena were talking as I entered the kitchen.

"Elena, Do I look like an adult? As in respectfully parental?" Jenna asked.

I caught the brown doe eyes of my fraternal twin sister scan my outfit with distaste. My shoulders sagged, and I tried to keep my mood from falling as fast as my stomach when I noticed how utterly flawless she looked — as always. Her long, silky brown hair caught the light from the kitchen window as she moved around the room. Damned perfect Petrovas. I shook off my self-
consciousness and gave Jenna a thumbs up brightly.

"Depends on where you're going," Elena said flatly.

I rolled my eyes at Elena and grabbed a pop tart from the cabinet.

"Don't listen to her Jenna, you look hot — and a respectful hot at that!" I laughed.

She gave me a small twirl before she spoke, a laugh still in her voice.

"Jeremy's parent-teacher conference — Hair up or down?" she asked.

She pulled her hair up, and then let it fall to demonstrate. I shrugged.

"Well, one is sexy stewardess," I said. "The other-"

"-Boozy housewife," Elena interjected.

Jenna smiled at us both. "Up it is. You're both feisty today," she said.

"Well I don't know about Elara, but I feel good today, which is rare, so I've decided to go with it. Fly free, walk in the sunshine, and all that stuff," Elena said.

Elena took a bite of her apple as she eyed my pop tart with distaste. I bit into it forcefully, moaning loudly and rolling my eyes into the back of my head.

"I'm just a happy go lucky kinda gal, Aunt Jenna, ya know that. Can't be sad forever," I looked around the kitchen as I made my way to the fridge for some lemonade. "Where is Jeremy?"

Elena looked at Jenna expectantly.

"He left early. Something about getting to woodshop early to finish a birdhouse," Jenna said, shrugging slightly.

I glanced at Elena, and our eyes met for a moment before looking back at Jenna. I popped open the lid of my lemonade and took a swig. Poor Aunt Jenna…

"There is no woodshop... is there?" she asked, her tone falling.

"No," Elena and I said in unison.

Jenna shook her head and placed a hand on her forehead. I stepped up beside Elena and took her hand, leaving Jenna to prepare for her conference, knowing she wouldn't be happy afterward. Jeremy hadn't been coping very well. It was harder on him and Elena then it was for me. After all, these weren't the first parents I had lost. It really does get more comfortable with time. I would see them and all of my other families again very soon, even if it would only last a short time before my next reincarnation.

"I'm driving, Lena!" I shouted.

I snatched the keys from her hands swiftly. Elena sighed and tossed her bag in the back seat before hopping into the passenger side. I slipped behind the car and got into the driver's side. I really loved driving and wanted to take advantage while I could. I never knew if there would still be cars when I lived next. We all could be Apparating everywhere by then. That would be so cool!

"What are you thinking about? You have a huge grin on your face," Elena questioned
"The future. Just wondering about the future," I said, sliding on my sunglasses.

I looked into the rearview, briefly noticing a grey-skinned, blonde-headed Original, smirking and shaking her head from the back seat. I ignored her and continued driving to one of the seven circles of hell, also known as High School.

Elena and I sat quietly in History while Mr. Tanner ratted on about Mystic Falls 145 years ago. Ugh, like I wanted to relive that. It had been rough enough the first time, with corsets and fluffy full-size dresses.

I kept my eyes planted on the shy flirting going on between Stefan and my sister. His spiky dark hair was easy enough to find in a small group like this, even without his striking good looks to add with it. I started keeping a tally of every time they would glance at one another, only to quickly look away. It was sickening. Of course, anyone with my past love life would be annoyed by new, young love — well, young on my sister's side, that is.

I laughed at my own joke, earning a look from Mr. Tanner. I smiled sweetly and ushered for him to continue. I started watching the time instead of the young couple when they finally stopped their glances after getting caught by Mr. Tanner.

I giggled quietly as the bell rang, giving me my freedom. School is a terrible burden after so many centuries of being forced to go. I sidestepped after almost bumping into Elena, waiting by the door for Stefan. I was about to walk away when I noticed him pull a copy of Wuthering Heights from his bag. I snatched it out of his hands quickly, shocked when I turned it to the title page and found my former initials in the corner, written clearly in ink and quill. I caught Stefan's weary gaze and quickly looked at a shocked Elena. I must look like a crazy person to her. My face pale, green eyes wide and hurt. It was silly feeling betrayed by Stefan, but I did. He had given me this book on my very last birthday, and now he was handing it over to my sister. Was he giving it to her? I cleared my throat and handed it to her.

"Wow, a first edition. That's... awesome," I said, a lump in my throat.

I excused myself before Stefan could stop me. I ran into the bathroom and found an empty stall just as a flashback took over. I could see my eighteenth birthday celebration at the Salvatore manor. Katherine, Stefan, and his father surrounded me with smiles on their faces. I knew somewhere Damon was hiding out, too scared to tell me he was home and in love with someone else. Stefan had set up the whole thing, knowing how sad I would be without Damon. I watched myself open Stefan's gift to me. Wuthering Heights. I had been so excited to read it, even if I knew I never would, at least not as Elandra. I snapped out of the past and back into the present, sweat covering my face and arms.

I was shaking as a headache took over. I wobbled on the way to the sink. I turned on the faucet and filled my cupped hands with cold water, pouring it over my face and onto my neck. I held onto both sides of the sink and looked at myself. My dark, auburn red hair, was matted to my pale face, my ordinarily green eyes were dulled by a rampaging migraine that was quickly consuming me. I looked away from my palid features and took a few deep breaths. Bright red against the surrounding snow-white caught my attention, and I looked down to find drops of crimson blood had fallen into the sink, I reached up and wiped the blood from my nose. I quickly rinsed off my hand and grabbed a paper towel. I could hear someone enter the bathroom but didn't bother looking at whoever it was. My head was tilted up, eyes focused on the ceiling as I tried to stop the annoying nosebleed that occasionally accompanied my migraines.

I turned my eyes in her direction and shook my head gently my neck, joining in on the party of pain. I was beginning to feel weak and tired. The agony in my head was almost too much to bear. I looked at Caroline and frowned.

"Yeah, sure. Just one of my headaches," I tried.

She gave me a dirty look, always knowing when I was lying.

"Let me take you home, ok?" she asked, reaching out and taking the hand that wasn't trying to contain my nosebleed. She knew how bad my headaches could get, and I appreciated her concern but knew she couldn't help me, not this time. I pulled away and grabbed my bag, wiping at my nose one last time.

"That's ok Care Bear, I'll have Elena drive me. I'll meet up with you later," I said, heading towards the door.

Caroline pulled my hair away from the strap of my bag and patted my upper back with a sad smile. I squinted at the bright lights of the hallway as I opened the bathroom door, absently waving goodbye as I quickly headed away. I needed help, and I knew where I could get it. This headache was unlike the others. I had taken in too many memories in the last two days. I felt like I was dying, and since it was all because of the Salvatores, a Salvatore was gonna fix it. I pushed open the doors leading to the parking lot and stepped into the shadows at the side of the building.

"Stefan!" I called out, knowing if he were near, he would hear me.

After only five seconds, I felt a gush of wind, and the youngest Salvatore stood in front of me. I knew he could smell the blood because his face scrunched up in fear and thirst. I started to wobble again, and he quickly caught me.

"Elandra! What happened?!" he whispered in panic, his eyes running over me searching for an injury.

"The memories, they are too much this time. Please help me...it hurts, Stefan," I cried, falling to my knees in front of him.

He looked around, trying to figure out how to help me. His confusion was starting to annoy me, so I pulled his warm wrist to my lips for a second, unable to speak anymore. Even the sound of the breeze around us was like a knife to my head. Lifting me back to my feet, he finally understood what I needed. He bit into his wrist, then slowly placed it against my lips. Trying to ignore the foul, metallic taste of the thick warm liquid, I drank heavily for a moment. It was gross, but I was already feeling better. I leaned against Stefan, letting the last of the pain disappear.

"Thank you," I said, wrapping my arms around him.

He brushed my hair down and patted me lightly on the back. I could tell he was uncomfortable, so I stepped back to give him his space. Blood sharing could be very intimate, and for us, it was weird and awkward.

"Are you ok now?" he asked gently.

I wiped my mouth with the paper towel I still had and nodded.

"Yes, it's just a lifetime of memories coming back in a matter of days. Not to mention the memories I still have of this life and others. It's too much for my human mind sometimes," I explained.
We both looked around; luckily, we were still alone in the shadowed alcove off to the side of the school. The leaves rustled around us as we quickly stepped from the shadows, joining everyone else. Stefan tensed behind me and grabbed my hand, pulling me with him towards the parking lot. A large crowd was gathering, laughing and shouting, I was confused until I noticed Tyler and Jeremy standing in a defensive stance in front of each other. I moaned in annoyance as Jeremy shoved Tyler against his car.

"Walk away, Gilbert. It's your final warning," Tyler spat, his hands fisted in Jeremy's shirt.

I let go of Stefan's hand and ran ahead. I quickly stepped in between Tyler and my idiot brother, my hands outstretched on either side. I looked at them both as my red hair flew around me. They both stood back with their fists clenched in front of them, ready for a fight and breathing heavily. I could feel my magic trying to aid me, but I kept it pushed down.

"Listen, Ty, please let it go," I begged him, my eyes pleading.

His own eyes softened for a moment until Jeremy ruined everything by opening his big mouth, unaware of Tyler's little wolfie problem, which makes it very difficult for him to control his temper.

I had been able to sense Ty's inner wolf ever since the first day I met him. As a witch — it had always been something I had been able to do. At this moment, I could sense his inner wolf, teeth bared in anger. Even if he had yet to activate his curse, the wolf was still there — waiting to be released. Tyler's aura was flaring violently at Jeremy's challenge.

"No, this is your final warning, dick. I'm sick of watching you play Vickie. If you hurt her one more time, I swear to God I will kill you," Jeremy threatened.

Tyler moved towards him, and I quickly stepped in front of him, pushing against Jeremy, forcing my brother to walk away. Stefan followed right beside us with Elena observing Tyler. Where had she been during this whole thing? I shoved a protesting Jeremy into the back seat of my car, capturing several odd stares from the people around us, especially Stefan. He knew I shouldn't have the strength I do. I ignored them all and kept my focus on Jeremy, still trying to get at Tyler. I slammed his door shut and turned towards Elena. She was standing beside Stefan, her hand in his and face lined with stress.

"You coming, Lena?" I asked her in a huff of breath.

She looked at Stefan and sighed before hopping in the passenger seat.

"Elandra, we need to talk. There are still a few things I'd like to know," Stefan whispered before I could get in the car.

I stared right at him, officially done with the day. He observed me like I was a wild animal that could bolt at any moment.

"Yeah, I'm sure there are, but right now I'm dealing with family issues. I'm sure you can understand that." I told him, leaning into the car.

I stopped and looked over the top of the car and straight at him again. "Oh, and you need to tell my sister what she is and what you are," I whispered, almost silently, knowing he could hear me.

His face froze, but I didn't care. It needed to be said, especially since Katherine was on her way — along with someone much worse. I slid into the car and started it up. I pulled out of the parking lot with my two annoyed siblings in tow. I tried to ignore the thoughts that tried to fight their way into
my head.

Who is going to take care of them when I have to leave?

These are the types of thoughts that keep me up at night. Though this was the main thought, I would have every lifetime, this one I seemed to have it more than usual.

As we pulled into our driveway, Jeremy jumped out of the car and took off for the house. Before I could shut off the engine, Elena insisted she needed to make a pit stop. I huffed, irritated that my precocious twin sister was dragging me off to who knows where.

She coerced me to stop the car in front of the Salvatore Boarding House and hopped out quickly. I shut off the car and jumped out after her; I could sense only one brother home, and it was not the one she was looking for.

I stepped in front of Elena and opened the door without knocking, heading inside.

Elena stood on the front porch, her face scrunched up in shock.

"You can't just burst into someone's house, El!" she quickly protested.

"Come on, Lena. Stop being so perfect!" I whined.

Elena's mouth fell open, and she grunted in annoyance, snapping her mouth closed with a huff.

"Fine. Stefan? Stefan?" she called out.

I left her in the doorway and went to make myself a drink. I avoided the red stuff that they had, yet again, haphazardly left in a jug by the Scotch. I would need to remind them that they were supposed to be playing human, and humans tended to keep their blood inside them — not on their bars. I rolled my eyes and tuned in to Elena, now speaking to the elder Salvatore brother.

"You must be Elena. I'm Damon, Stefan's brother," Damon said.

I stepped into the entrance and leaned against the wall a few feet behind Damon. I smiled, inwardly at his predatory posture. He was so different from the man I had once loved, but centuries of a life cursed with Vampirism would do that, I figured.

Especially when he spent that life hell-bent on revenge.

I was told the story of their Vampiric life by none other than the one who had ruined it, Katherine. She had found me centuries after I had left the life I had lived with the Salvatores. She owed me a life debt and wanted to repay it by helping me with my curse. I had saved her life once when she had still been a human. Saving her had led me to my own death, due to a very angry Hybrid. I had met Katherine when she was due to be sacrificed and pitied her. I hadn't been aware of who she was at the time and decided to help her. I very stupidly helped her escape her captivity. I hadn't received all my memories in that life yet, so I was unaware of exactly why she was being sacrificed. When Nik came across me later, he was unaware that I wasn't a doppelganger of the woman he once knew, but her reincarnated. He was already beyond angry at Katherine's escape, so in his fury, he snapped my neck.

That was the only time Nik had ever seen me; I keep myself hidden from him and Elijah. The only Originals to know of my existence and curse are Kol and Rebekah. For now, at least, they are both daggered. As far as Rebekah knows, Nik is still unaware of my affliction.
I followed Damon and Elena into the living room, staying out of Damon's view. He was so enamored with my sister that he hadn't even noticed me yet. I ignored my silly jealousy, reminding myself that this life was just as temporary as the others, and the Salvatores had always had a soft spot for the Petrova doppelgangers. I was snapped out of my daydreaming by the mention of Stefan's ex. I stepped further into the shadows of the large living room, curiously awaiting Elena's response. Was he going to tell her what she was?

"The last one?" Elena asked.

Damon stood in front of her place on the couch. "Yeah. Katherine, his girlfriend? Oh, you two haven't had the awkward exes talk yet," he said, feigning embarrassment.

"Nope," Elena spoke softly, looking down at her fidgeting hands.

Damon gasped slightly. "Oops, well, I'm sure it will come up now. Or maybe he didn't want to tell you because he didn't want you to think he was on the rebound. We all know how those relationships end,"

I leaned against the bookcase behind me. Damon was definitely trying to come between Stefan and Elena, and that wasn't something my Damon would have ever done. I guess the man I knew really was gone…

I ignored the rest of their conversation and decided to head upstairs. I was bored with eavesdropping, so snooping it was. I opened every door I walked passed until I found a bedroom that could only belong to Damon. It was a warm and inviting room, with a massive four-poster king-size bed that sat in the middle of the room. A pile of books sat beside the bed, and I chuckled at the memories they invoked. He had always loved reading before bed.

I walked over to the large oak chest of drawers along the right side of the room and pulled open the first drawer.

"Silk boxers, huh," I said with a chuckle, lifting a jet black pair with a grin.

I closed the drawer and moved on to the next. Unexpectedly, I found a small leather photo album underneath a pair of jeans. I checked over my shoulder towards the door to make sure I was still alone, then slowly opened the album. The first picture was of Katherine, of course. I fought my irritation and flipped to the next page. Next was Damon and Stefan on their horses, faces lit up with silent laughter. I smiled down at this picture, knowing that I had been just out of view happily laughing with the man I loved and my future brother-in-law. I flipped to the next image and held in a gasp. It was me.

I was in the garden, painting. My long hair fell gracefully against my back, and concentration was plastered on my face.

"That's my favorite," Damon said from the doorway.

I jumped, dropping the album. Luckily, it never hit the floor. I felt a stiff breeze, and Damon was beside me, holding the pictures in his hands.

"This is very fragile — we don't want it destroyed, now do we," he said, stiffly.

I looked into his crystal blue eyes and almost forgot that we had ever been apart.

"It's the picture I gave you when you left," I whispered,
It took me a moment to remember my manners, but I was just so shocked he still had it. I stepped away and leaned my head down.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have invaded your privacy,"

I walked further away from him and sat down on his bed, crossing my feet beneath me. He eyed me closely.

"You're different," he said.

"Well, yeah, of course, I'm a bit different. This is a different era. I've lived several lives since we last met," I chuckled, brushing my hair over my shoulder.

Damon sat beside me, taking my hand in his. "I thought I'd never see you again. I never forgave Stefan for what happened to you," he spat.

I gave his hand a squeeze and pulled away, wrapping my arm around his shoulder.

"Damon, it wasn't his fault — I chose to walk home alone. He didn't even know I had left until it was too late."

I wanted to tell him it wasn't his either, but that would mean revealing that fact that I had known all along about his early return from the war, and that he had chosen Katherine. I was sure blaming Stefan for my demise was just a way to hate someone else for what he really blamed himself for.

Damon turned away from me, pain written all over his face. "Did you suffer?" he asked, his voice cracking.

I didn't expect that question, so I wasn't sure whether to tell him the truth or not. Yes, I suffered. Of course, I did. It's a part of the curse; every death I face must be painful. Looking at his awaiting face, I knew I couldn't tell him that. Only two people knew — Katherine and Rebekah.

"No, It was quick," I whispered, choking back the truth.

He ran his fingers through my hair, his eyes asking me for permission. The world around me froze. I wanted to kiss him, to feel the love that had once lived between us, but something was stopping me. I could list off all the reasons why I shouldn't kiss Damon, but the one real reason that was holding me back at this moment had escaped me. Still, I knew I had to say no.

"Damon, we can't. Not now. I'd like to get to know you again, and there are a few things you need to work through — like Elena and Katherine,"

I knew he still held a torch for Katherine. She had really dug her claws into him. I stood, allowing the distance to snap him back into reality.

"You're right. How did you know about Katherine and me?" he asked, almost guiltily.

I wrung my fingers together, the awkwardness of the question makes me nervous.

"She told me, actually. I met her again in the life after the one I shared with you," I said,

I decided to keep the fact that I knew he was with her while he was supposed to be with me to myself. Some things I'd hoped to never rehash, although, I hoped that he would really listen to me and understand what I was saying as I revealed the truth of her location. Naturally, he chose to ignore it. Damon's face fell.
"Listen, I never expected you to stay celibate, Damon," I laughed.

He narrowed his eyes at me, and I couldn't hold his gaze.

"So, there's been others for you...?" he asked grumpily.

I kept my eyes on my feet and shuffled slightly.

"Yes, Damon. I have even loved again, but you have to remember, I didn't always remember you...us. Those memories don't always return," I told him.

He sped in front of me, causing me to yelp in surprise. He leaned in, his nose inches from mine, his eyes looked me over slowly.

"Well, now that I have you back, you should know, I won't give you up again so easily," he said firmly.

I wanted to tell him the truth that he would lose me again in only a year, but I refused to see that kind of pain on his face. After all, he would let me go, he would let me go for Elena. She was as much his weakness as his brother's. I knew after he realized that Katherine wasn't as trapped as he thought she was, he would finally realize she never truly loved him. It would always be Stefan, and truthfully, not even him. Katherine would always choose herself. Until then, I would let him believe what he wanted. I would play along… for now.

"Well, let the games begin. I'm excited too, yet again, be courted by you, Mr. Salvatore," I said with a curtsy.

His answering smile was blinding. A knock on the door interrupted us, bringing a frown to my face.

"Come in little brother," Damon sighed with a roll of his eyes.

I elbowed him in the ribs, laughing at his exaggerated gasp. Stefan walked in, stepping beside me. He looked at Damon and quickly noticed the little distance he put between us. I watched a thought pass across his face before being hidden as he schooled his features. He was angry about something, and I could guess exactly what that was.

He stepped in front of me and took my hand. I leaned my head back in surprise and looked into his eyes. The mischievous and vicious look that was passing through his forest green orbs reminded me too much of Nik at that moment, and that wasn't a good look on Stefan.

"I think you should stay here tonight, Elandra. We don't want something happening while my blood is in your system," Stefan said smirking at Damon.

I pulled my hand from his and growled at his thinly veiled attempt to piss Damon off. I knew it was because Damon had told Elena about Katherine, but still, it was a dick move. I had thought better of Stefan. I stepped closer to him and shook my head in disgust. His smirk melted a bit.

Damon's face fell as he started to come up with his own idea of what led to my feeding from Stefan. He looked at me and then Stefan and his eyes blazed with cold fury.

"You fed Elandra your blood!?" he shouted, pushing Stefan against the wall at Vamp speed.

I quickly followed their movements, a perk of being what I was. Damon held Stefan against the wall by his shirt, his face inked in black veins, his white teeth pointed and bared at Stefan's neck.
Stefan avoided looking at me and smirked, laughing.

"Yeah, she called for me in the shadows beside the school. Again, you weren't there, were you, Damon? But I was, as always," Stefan spat.

I could feel my hands shaking in anger. Damon's face was broken. I could imagine what he was picturing, and it was far from what actually happened. My power surged through me, and I couldn't hold it back anymore. I threw my hands forward and pushed a force field between them. Once they were separated, I pushed them to the floor, holding them, making sure neither could move. They both looked up at me in shocked horror. Damon's oceanic blue eyes were worried, and he strained as he tried to reach out to me.

"How dare you, Stefan! I asked for your help today. I trusted you, and this is how you repay me?!!" I shouted, my voice echoed in the large room.

Stefan closed his eyes, too ashamed to meet my gaze. I used a little extra force to push him further into the floor, enjoying the cracking of his bones as they began to protest, and looked away towards his brother.

"Damon, you should know me better than that. Even if I have changed, I would never do anything with your brother. I am not Katherine! I was sick and used his blood to heal myself." I forcefully spat. "Now, I'm leaving. I know you both are probably a little freaked right now, but I want nothing to do with either of you at the moment,"

I spun on my heels and hightailed it out of the bedroom. I sped down the stairs towards the front door and found Elena waiting for me in the car. Her doe eyes wide, she could sense my anger, but knew better than to ask me what happened. I slipped into the driver's seat and gripped the steering wheel tightly as I started the car, speeding out of the driveway, tires squealing. I finally released the brothers when I could no longer see the large stone house in my rearview.
It had been four days since I had spoken to either Salvatore. Not surprisingly, they had been easy to avoid. Seeing as I'm not my sister, their constant attention isn't necessary. I would sincerely like to bottle whatever is in the blood of the Petrova's, I could rule the world with that shit. Just like Katherine, Elena had everyone wrapped around her finger and fighting for her safety. Hell, she even has a Bennett witch on her side.

Although, things have been going a little pear-shaped for Elena here lately. She's started to pick up on small stuff about Stefan — details of his life that don't make sense. With my sister distracted and in her own little Salvatore bubble, I was able to deal with my issue with the elder Salvatore without intrusion.

Over the past few days, Damon had started playing with Caroline, acting as if she were his personal pop machine. I've been seeing less and less of her — and that was something I needed to take care of. He should know better than to mess with my friend.

Staring ahead at the large white house in front of me, I narrowed my eyes. I could feel my bubbly friend was alone inside and was glad; I didn't want to see anyone else right now. The rustling of the trees behind Caroline's house caught my attention, and I closed my eyes, enjoying the feeling of the light breeze as it swept past me, rustling my hair around my face in a whirl of red. I could smell the wet grass from the rain that had spilled overnight and was grateful for the small modicum of peace the familiar scent gave me.

I stepped up onto the porch of the Forbes residence. There was more reason than just my anti-social mood this morning for waiting to come here until Damon left. I didn't want to reveal myself to him just yet. After everything that had happened between myself and the two brothers, I just wasn't in the mood for any more Salvatore drama. For now, that could remain my sister's forte.

It only took my blonde friend a second to answer the door. Her face was pale and peckish. A long white bandage covered the left side of her neck; the sight made my stomach roll. Her blue eyes widened and then narrowed as she took me in. Before she could shut the door in my face — something the healthy Caroline would have never done to me — I slammed my hand against her door, a harsh smile on my face.

"Hey, Carebear. You've been avoiding me," I said with slight annoyance.

It was true — since Damon picked her up at the Grill, she's avoided me. She's even gone as far as blocking my phone calls, no doubt Damon's compulsion was to blame. He was probably hoping I wouldn't catch him using my friend as an all you can eat buffet. Caroline feigned laughter, looking at her feet as she stepped aside, obviously knowing she was between a rock and a hard place. She knew now that I had her in my sights, and there was no turning back. I can be just as stubborn as she can, especially when it comes to those I love.
"I don't know what you're talking about, girl, I've just been busy with my new man," she said, pulling her hair over her shoulder to hide the bandage, brushing the strands between her fingers nervously.

She backtracked towards the hallway, blue eyes watching me with unease as I nonchalantly took in my surroundings, hands tucked in my jacket pockets. When she saw that I wasn't going anywhere, she let out an aggravated huff and turned around, tracking back towards the other end of the house, presumably to finish getting ready. I waited until she headed to her bedroom before I stepped into the kitchen.

"I'm going to grab a bottle of water!" I shouted down the hall.

I headed for the sink where the water filter system was attached to the spout. I reached into my jacket pocket and took out a little black leather pouch of vervain, sitting it on the counter beside me. Very carefully I took out the water purifier's filter and added a small chunk of vervain, layering it over the screen so that the water could still seep through it. Releasing a sigh, I shook my head, now all I had to do was make sure I'm the one to change the filter whenever it needed it, which wouldn't be too hard considering how often I'm here.

After I put everything back together, I turned on the faucet, allowing the water to run for a moment so that I could make sure the vervain wasn't causing any issues. Once I was satisfied I hadn't screwed anything up, I took a bottle of lemon water from the fridge and headed to Caroline's bathroom and repeated the process. When I had finished with all the filter systems, I even went as far as to add ground vervain to their coffee. I was sure they'd never notice, and now both she and her mother would be drinking vervain every day. I had read in the Gilbert family journals that Liz Forbes was in the know about everything supernatural, so I was almost certain she was already on a daily dose of vervain - but I couldn't be positive, so better safe than sorry.

For the last part of my plan, I headed back into Caroline's room, where she was still getting ready for the day. She stood in front of her vanity, curling her long blonde hair.

"Hey Care, I got you a gift,"

She turned her head quickly at my bubbly demeanor. Her pink, freshly glossed lips parted with a gasp. "What? You didn't have to do that!" she jumped in excitement.

I pulled out the small gold pouch I had in my other pocket. Inside was a delicate silver bracelet with a little heart locket dangling from the end. The pendant was sealed with vervain. That way, I would always know she had something to protect her. I placed it on her wrist and smiled brightly at my best friend. I would protect her for as long as I could.

"Omg, Ellie bean! This is gorgeous with a capital G!" she squealed, delighted by the smell of her charm.

"What is that? Rose?" she asked, lifting her wrist to her nose.

She inhaled deeply, eyes fluttering closed. I hugged her and nodded; she didn't need to know what it was.

"Just promise you'll wear it always. It's like a best friend bracelet,"

I showed her my wrist where I wore an identical bracelet — minus the vervain. For some reason, I've never needed vervain to protect me. I couldn't be compelled. I've never found out why, but I'm certainly not complaining.
I took Caroline's curling iron and finished off a few curls for her in the back, while she put on mascara.

"So, you need a ride to school?" I asked.

"Yeah, that would be great. Damon had to leave early today," she said, fidgeting with a purple neck scarf.

I ignored the mention of my asshole of an ex. The situation with Caroline had shown me exactly how much he had changed. I followed her outside and hopped into my car. Once she had joined me, I drove us both to school, smiling at the idea that Damon would soon realize he could no longer play with my Caroline. I'd make sure I was there for the reveal, just in case he thought of hurting her. Caroline played with her new bracelet's pendant, smelling it over and over again with a smile on her glossy pink lips. Every time she did, a smile of my own would grace my lips, mine one of much less innocence.

I parked beside Elena in the school parking lot. She stood by her car, speaking with Bonnie. Before I had completely stopped the car, Caroline jumped out and sped past both of them. Bonnie raised her hand, Caroline's name on the tip of her tongue, her eyelashes fluttering in confusion — avoiding her friends must be apart of his compulsion. What an idiot, it only makes everyone more suspicious.

"Hey El, what's Caroline's problem?" Elena asked me, her dark hair fluttering in the breeze.

My sister's perfect dark hair fluttering in the breeze, made me want to dump my bottle of lemon water over her head. I shrugged my shoulders for dramatic effect and took a long sip. Shaking her head and turning away from where Caroline had disappeared — much like a female version of Batman, Bonnie turned back to Elena, forest green eyes hesitant.

"Listen, Elena, I'm not saying you shouldn't date the guy. I'm just saying take it slow," she said.

I caught on quickly, understanding Bonnie must have had a vision. Witchy powers activate!

Elena sighed deeply. "You were the one who said go for it," she said.

I ignored the rest of their bickering when I saw a familiar spiky head of hair heading our way. His stupid attractive face irritated me to no end; it was too early for brooding vampires. Suddenly finding my converse very interesting, I watched my feet, tapping my toes in an unfamiliar rhythm.

"Good morning, Elena, Elara. Good morning Bonnie," Stefan said, always the proper gentleman. With a resigned sigh, I looked up at him with a quick jerk of my hand, and for a split second, I saw him as I had once known him. My eyes clouded, my back stiffened.

Stefan stood outside of his family home, bowing to me slightly in greeting as I exited my carriage. His brother, Damon — my Damon — smiled at me from beside him.

I felt tears come to my eyes and blinked them away; not quick enough. Stefan's vampire senses must've picked up the slight smell of saltwater. He gave me an odd look but continued speaking to my sister. She was apologizing for Bonnie's swift exit, that I just now noticed myself.

I shook off the memory...or vision...and looked around me to remind myself of the time we were in.

"She doesn't know you. She's my best friend. She's just looking out for me. But, when she does, she'll love you," Elena tried to explain.
Unbeknownst to Elena, Stefan and I knew she never would. When she found out what he really was, she would hate him. It's in her DNA. Witches of nature were predisposed to hate vampires; their very existence is against nature.

"Here's what you're going to do. Are you free tonight?" Elena asked him, suddenly excited.

"Yes."

Stefan's eyes crinkled as he smiled handsomely. Elena grabbed my elbow and yanked me next to her. My arms flailed, causing me to almost drop my water bottle. I frowned at her exuberance, fixing my hair once I'd regained my balance.

"Perfect. Dinner, our house, 8:00 — You, me, Elara, and Bonnie. You two will spend some quality time, and she'll get to see what a great guy you are. Mission accomplished," Elena said firmly with a grin.

I rolled my eyes, earning a smirk from Stefan, who was watching me with humor. He knew me too well, and he also knew what Bonnie was. It didn't matter how handsome or charming Stefan was; she would never be able to see past his affliction.

I pulled away from her, my 'spidey senses' (as I sometimes humorously called them) tingling something was about to happen. I turned towards the parking lot behind Stefan and zeroed in on Tyler gripping a football in his right hand, positioned to make a long-range throw. I closed my eyes and tilted my head slowly.

"Stefan. The ball," I said, low enough to keep Elena from hearing.

A moment later, a football flew towards us. Stefan spun around quickly and caught it. His face had the definition of shock, obviously curious about how I knew that was going to happen. Along with the force field I had cast on him and his brother, there would be no way I could hide my gift from them any longer. Damn it.

I avoided Stefan's gaze as he tossed the ball back, knocking Tyler backward a few inches. I stepped in front of Stefan and gave Tyler the finger before heading inside. That jackass had made me reveal another one of my gifts. Usually, I could hide the premonitions, but I had spoken without thinking. Stupid, stupid Elara.

I never allowed him or Damon to see my gifts in the life I had spent with them. If I had, and their father had found out, I would have been burned for witchcraft — well, sooner than I had been.

Now I would be forced to explain everything, and I wasn't sure I could trust Stefan to keep his mouth shut around Elena. I didn't want my family to know the truth about me, my gifts, and my impending doom. They would try to help, no matter how many times I told them they couldn't. It's impossible; no one can help me. I would have to spend my last year in this life fighting against what can't be changed.

That afternoon, I sat in the bleachers on the football field, waiting for Stefan's turn to try out. I was oddly excited to see how well he hid his vampire side, especially since he had pissed off Mr. Tanner with his obvious superiority in history class. I eyed the other side of the field where Elena surprised everyone by showing up for cheerleading practice. As exciting as that was (sarcasm intended), my attention was grabbed by an arguing Caroline and Damon. I smiled brightly and hopped off the bleachers, heading for the parking lot. I caught Stefan's eye and sent him a thumbs up, telling him I would handle it. A few feet from their fight, I saw him grab hold of her arm as his
eyes bored into hers. I couldn't help the laugh that escaped my lips, drawing their attention to my approach. He instantly let her go and stepped away.

"Care, can you please give me and your ex here a minute to talk," I said, my voice stiff.

Caroline's ponytail swayed as she nodded quickly. I gave her arm a reassuring squeeze as she passed me. Once she was on the field with the rest of her lively group, I stepped closer to Damon, looking up to meet his gaze. Even with the apparent height difference, his eyes were wary, obviously wondering to himself what I was capable of.

I leaned into him, my mouth near his jugular. I moved my nose against his skin. I wanted the upper hand, and this was the easiest way to throw him off.

"I know how you see me, and you should know, you are sorely mistaken if you think I'm still that shy and passive girl you planned to marry. I have been through a lot since then, and I have been taught by powerful and dangerous people," I said quietly, my breath fanning against his neck. "So, if I were you I'd avoid hurting the people I love. Caroline is one of those people, and I have taken measures to protect her. Your compulsion will not work, Salvatore. So back off."

He brushed my hair from my shoulder, and an involuntary shudder passed through me. He smirked at my reaction, taking it as permission to lean in and kiss me. Before his lips met mine, I reared my fist back and punched him, putting every bit of power I could behind it. He flew back against his car, leaving a sizable dent. I shook my hand out, jumping up and down in pain. Already my skin was turning black and blue.

"What the hell, Elandra!" he shouted in annoyance.

I held my hand close to me, whimpering. I felt a sudden change in the air, and Stefan stood beside me.

"What did he do? Are you okay?" he asked, glaring at his brother.

Damon stood and pointed his finger in my direction, accusingly.

"It was her fault — she should know better than to punch a vampire. Even if she did a good job at damaging my damn car,"

He bent over and looked over his car, running his hand over the damage. Stefan took hold of my hand and pulled it towards him. He ran his fingers over the discolored skin.

"Ow Stefan! Careful!" I whined

Even if I had gone through a lot worse, I tended to be a big baby about pain. Stefan smiled at me and continued to look my hand over. I ignored him and smirked at Damon, who was still looking over the damage to his car.

"You shouldn't have tried to kiss me. We are not together," I said coolly.

He flipped me off and looked around for witnesses before popping the dent out as best he could.

"He tried to kiss you?" Stefan looked at Damon and sighed. "What am I saying, of course, he did. You're... you," Stefan said, more to himself than anyone else.

"What's that supposed to mean Stef?" I said, biting my lip and trying not to move my hand.
Damon looked at my hand once and then at Stefan before jumping into his car.

"Well, it looks like you have this handled, brother. Elandra, always a pleasure," he said, nodding his head at me.

I glared at him as he sped away, leaving me in the care of his brother, yet again. I shuddered at the memory. Stefan must have caught on because his face hardened for a moment before he schooled his features. He looked back towards the field before pulling me into him and speeding off. I closed my eyes as the wind rushed past us. I put my face on his chest and held on for dear life. It was like riding a roller coaster without being strapped in, utterly terrifying.

The wind around us stopped suddenly, and I finally forced my eyes open. We were back at my house...in my room. I pushed away from him awkwardly, realizing how glued to his chest I had been.

"Thank you," I said, clearing my throat.

He snickered at my unease and bit into his wrist awkwardly holding it out to me.

"Here, I doubt you want to explain a broken hand to your aunt or sister. I promise to not be an ass about it this time. I'm sorry about what happened before. That was immature," he said blushing, avoiding my eyes.

I gingerly took his wrist and drank from him before he could stain the carpet. His blood repaired my injured hand quickly, and I moved it around, grateful when it was pain-free. Once I was fully healed, I sat on my bed and motioned for him to join.

"Listen, Stef, I forgive you. Hell, I forgive Damon. I just want you both to know that you need to be careful. I will not allow the people I love to be hurt," I said, keeping my voice firm.

"I will protect the people you and Elena care about. I promise. But we need to talk— I need to know what's going on with you," he said.

I felt his intense stare but refused to look at him. This was the moment I had been dreading. I ran my fingers through my hair as I pulled out my phone, sending Damon a quick text to meet us here. There was no way I was going to do this twice. It took him less than five minutes to blow through my window, a single crow feather falling to the floor below him.

"Your dramatics haven't changed much, I see," I sighed.

His face was stern and emotionless. I'm sure he was preparing to kill me if he thought it necessary. I knew if I told them the complete truth, I'd be fighting for my life by the end of the conversation. So, I decided to keep to the basics. I ignored the fact that Rebekah had also joined us not too long ago. I refused to try to explain my ability to see the dearly departed...or daggered. She smiled brightly just to annoy me. I rolled my eyes at her and stood, motioning for Damon to join his brother on my bed. Once he was seated, I stepped in front of both vampire brothers, my nerves on high alert.

"Okay, I have no clue where to start so bare with me," I said.

"Just start at the beginning baby," Damon said with a smirk.

I ground my teeth at his use of the pet name I had always hated. Should I start from the beginning, or would that give them too much information? I glanced at Rebekah for help.
"You look creepy staring off into nothing, Ellie. Just give them the basics. Don't use names," she warned her eyes stern.

She would know exactly what I needed to leave out, so I choose to listen to her. I cleared my throat and let out a deep breath. I paced back and forth, picking at my nails anxiously.

"Well, a very, very, long time ago I lost my parents. My real parents." I started, taking a seat on my vanity chair after Damon glared at my constant pacing. "I had nowhere to go after their death. They were poor, and my mother was a known witch. A very rare breed of witch at that, so, of course, that didn't make her very popular." I ignored their shocked gazes and looked straight at Rebekah, which to the brothers would make me look like I was staring off into the distance, but I needed her strength. The strength of my sister, the one that had been there from the beginning.

"There was only one person in our village who had ever liked my mother; she had befriended her after she had found out what she was. This woman was a powerful witch of nature. When my mother died, she was the only other witch around — well, apart from me. I had inherited my mother's gift, and I was the last of our kind. This woman took me in and agreed to train me as best she could, seeing as she and I were not the same kind of witch. She had a large family, and they were well respected and wealthy. Though, the father was a total dick." I growled loudly. Stefan jerked, looking at me in shock. I leaned forward and smiled.

"Sorry. It's true, though — he really was," I said with a weak laugh.

Rebekah paled and managed a small laugh. I sent her a sympathetic frown and managed to look away. This story was hard on both of us.

"I managed to make my place in the family by helping with spell work and chores. Her children were kind to me and accepted me. Her daughter and I bonded incredibly quickly. She was my best friend. But another development had occurred as well. I had begun to fall in love with one of her sons. After a few years, he fell for me, as well. He and I loved each other deeply, but, when we decided to come clean about our relationship, we were met with hostility." I stood and walked to the window my back to them. "I was nothing, no family, no place in the village, so, we were denied the right to marry," I said.

A single tear fell at the memory of a human Niklaus. He had been so kind and gentle, even though he was being tortured by his beast of a father, he still showed me, love. I could feel a presence behind me and saw the ethereal form of Rebekah, her hand hovering over my shoulder. I gave her a half-smile and looked back at the men in front of me. Their faces were hard, especially Damon. I fought to cringe at the hint of betrayal in his eyes.

"During the next few months, his mother pushed him and me further apart. I thought she had succeeded." I frowned as my eyes clouded over with memories."Until one day, he found me in the woods alone. I had been picking berries for dinner." I closed my eyes and smiled, turning back around to face the brothers I opened my eyes. "I can still smell them if I close my eyes." I laughed, earning a hard glare from Damon. Rebekah smiled and leaned closer to me.

"When I finally realized he was there, he was already on his knee. He gave me this lengthy, beautiful speech about love. I wanted to refuse him, I knew nothing good would come of it, but I couldn't. I could deny him nothing, I loved him too much, so I accepted. We hid it for a long time. We planned on taking his siblings and running away, starting a life away from his horrible father. That was, until the day his youngest brother died. He was murdered, brutally,"

I looked away again, remembering little Henrik, his smile, his laugh. He was kind and gentle. He didn't deserve the death he received.
"After that, his father talked his mother into creating a spell that would make all of them powerful enough to avenge the boy's death. She enlisted my help, and I felt so bad for the poor boy that I agreed,"

I wracked my brain for a way to end the story without giving away the full truth of what happened next. Damon tried to interrupt me, but I held my hand up for silence, my eyes tired and pained. I took a deep breath and looked at the two men; two vampires who could hold me partially responsible for their existence. I turned my head away from them and looked at Rebekah, she grimaced and nodded her head at me. I sighed and pushed on.

"In the middle of creating the spell, the witch brushed her hand against mine, and suddenly I had a knife to my throat. I don't even remember her moving. It all happened so quickly. We had been left alone to prepare — though even if we hadn't been — I wouldn't have wanted anyone to intervene. If the father had found out, it would have meant watching them being beaten for helping me. Somehow when the witch had touched me, she had seen my connection with her son. She had seen my acceptance of his proposal. I barely noticed when she slid the blade from my neck and into the palm of my hand, stealing some of my blood. The witch told me that after we finished the spell, she would deal with my betrayal. I was afraid but knew there was no sense in trying to run,"

At this point, I was openly crying. The next part of my story was hard to recount, for it was the one memory I did my best not to think about. Stefan reached for my hand, but I jerked it away. I didn't want to hold his hand as I revealed I was partially to blame for their condition, even if they wouldn't know that was the spell I was telling them about. I took in a few deep, shaky breaths.

"After the spell was cast, I stood off to the side, next to the witch while the rest of the family sat at the table. I watched in fear as their father stood — I had no clue exactly what the spell entailed or even did, so when their father shoved a blade into each of their backs, I was in utter shock. I remember my knees smacking the ground as I collapsed in anguish. The man I loved lifted his hand and motioned for me to stay where I was, to not move. So, I did. After the last of his children died, he pushed the blade into his own chest,"

Stefan gasped in shock, and I wiped the tears from my face. Rebekah sat beside me on her knees staring off into the distance, clearly remembering her death — and rebirth.

"What happened, Elandra?" Stefan whispered.

I tore my gaze from the blonde beside me and looked him in the eyes. His face was blurry through my tears.

"The father woke up first, as something he hadn't expected to be. Once he realized the spell backfired, he went crazy. He wanted blood, so the witch offered him mine. She told him it was all my fault, that I had done something during the spell that made it fail. It was a lie, of course; she had dabbled in magic too dark to be predictable, and there is always a price for that. She just wanted me out of the way, she didn't want me marrying her son. The father took me by the hair and drug me into the town where he told everyone I was a witch and in league with the evil that had killed his son. Everyone in town knew of my mother, so they were quick to believe I was a witch, just like her. They tied me to a pyre, and the last thing I remember was the ethereal form of the witch's voice in my head. She laughed at my agony. She explained that the blood she had taken from me had been used in a spell that would make me immortal. That I would live life over and over but never being able to enjoy it. I would be forced to remember every life I lived painfully,"

I shifted, looking down at my hands as I picked at my fingernails.

"But the worst part of her curse was the fact that I would never live past the age I originally died
at, 18. I would never grow a day older. So, during every life, I die on my 18th birthday. Always and forever. Those were the last words I heard. The curse took effect just as the fire devoured me," I said, the last few words in the form of a whisper.

Stefan and Damon sat quietly in shock, both their faces pale and lifeless. Damon leaned forward, his elbows on his knees as he shook his head in disbelief.

"I've tried so many times to break the curse, but it never works. I've even found a few friends through the years who have researched and begged other witches to assist me, but I'm older than any witch I've ever met. Even if I technically die and get reborn, my soul is still the same, which makes me the oldest and most powerful witch alive. So, if I've never found a counter curse, then there isn't one,"

My stomach singed at the reminder of what I'll never be able to have; a life. I sat perfectly still as I waited for them to speak. The silence in the room was deafening. After a moment, Damon was the first to speak.

"...Is that why you died in our time?"

"Yes, it is. I died because my time was up. The curse activates on my birthday, and then it leads me to my death. I've tried to resist, but it's impossible, I always lose myself," I explained.

My face was covered in fresh tears. This was the hardest part, trying to help people cope with my impending death. Rebekah sat next to me, a hand hovering above mine.

Damon's face paled even further — something I didn't think could be possible at this moment — his eyes darting from side to side. Stefan patted him on the arm.

"But...you just turned 17..." he choked out.

I stood up and checked to make sure my door was locked; I had begun to hear people downstairs. I lifted my hand and waved it across my room, mumbling a silencing spell. None of my family needed to know about my visitors.

"So, you're going to die in a year, and you're saying there is no stopping it..." Stefan said.

I almost laughed at the loud sigh Rebekah let out.

"God, were you this slow when we dated?" she asked him.

I hid my smile behind my hand and nodded.

"There is no stopping it. That is why you're not to say a single word to anyone. I mean it!" I said, pointing at them both, my eyes hard.

Damon stood at vampire speed and stepped in front of me, looking me over frantically as if he were afraid my curse was about to activate.

"Have you tried vampire blood?" he asked in a huff.

I sighed lightly and placed my hand on his arm, squeezing gently; the leather of his jacket was cool to the touch.

"Of course I have, Katherine actually fed me her blood. I never woke up once she killed me. I just moved on to the next life," I said.
"Katherine?! You trusted her?" Damon spat angrily, yet still avoiding the fact that she obviously wasn't in the tomb.

I stepped away from his heated gaze the fire in his eyes, making me nervous.

"Yes! But if that's not enough I've been given the blood of several different vampires. It never works, Damon. I've come to the conclusion that the only person who can take away this curse is the person who created it and she is long gone. Even if she wasn't, she'd never help me," I yelled, my face red.

Stefan sat on my bed his head bowed in defeat. He knew the truth and had already accepted it. That was one of the best things about Stefan, he didn't kid himself.

I watched Damon pace back and forth in anger, his hands on his hips, jacket sitting against the tops of his hands.

"Stefan, you should both go. Elena is waiting for you, and Damon is going to drive me nuts with his pacing," I said, hoping to end the conversation.

"No! This isn't going to happen again," Damon yelled, "I won't let it happen again."

Damon disappeared out my window in a flash of black. I jumped back and raised my hands in the air in shock, his sudden abrupt departure surprised me. Stefan stood from my bed and stepped next to me. He kissed my forehead gently and looked out my window where his brother had disappeared, probably to go kill a few people and cool off.

"I'll handle it," Stefan said, following after his brother.

I sat down on my bed and put my head in my hands.

"I'm so sorry my family did this to you," Rebekah whispered.

"Don't start again, Beks. I will never regret meeting you or your family. Even after everything we've been through, you all were the best part of it. Always and forever, Beka. Your mother may have used that against me negatively at one point, but spending the time I have with you since then has more than made up for it. Even if your brother will end up killing us both for not telling him about my curse," I said laughing.

"Yeah, he'll probably wake me up just to dagger me again," she sighed.

I nodded in agreement before hearing my name shouted from downstairs. I waved my hand across the room once more before calling back.

"Be there in a minute, Lena!"
I hear Bonnie and Elena's voices from the kitchen as I headed down the stairs. I caught the tail end of a discussion about a particular combination of numbers as I hopped over the last two steps.

"Maybe we should play the lottery!" I announced, walking into the living room.

Elena chuckled at me, then turned back to Bonnie. "Have you talked to your Grams?"

I followed the heavenly smell of Chinese takeout into the kitchen. Bonnie and Elena stood around the island, surrounded by a litter of white boxes full of fried rice, lo mein, egg rolls, and cashew chicken. I looked over my shoulder at Elena before I stole an egg roll.

"She's just gonna say its because I'm a witch. I don't want to be a witch. Would you want to be a witch?" She asked us both.

I choked on my egg roll before shrugging.

"I don't see the problem with being a witch. Yeah, it would change your life but you can't change who you are — and denying it won't change it." I said.

"Well, I wouldn't want to be a witch," Elena chimed in.

Both Bonnie and Elena looked at me like I was utterly insane. I sighed — I didn't quite understand Bonnie's issue with being a witch. However, I did grow up in a different time and was raised to believe in my gifts.

"Listen, Bon, I know how insane the whole idea of you being a witch is, but you're obviously going through something. You need to figure out what that is, and if going along with this crazy idea helps, then go for it. Just look at it as an acting gig, get into character and play along." I suggested.

Bonnie's face lit up in amusement. "An acting gig, huh? That actually sounded like good advice. Look at you, adulting." she laughed.

I tossed the last bite of my egg roll in the air and caught it in my mouth. "Adulting?" I said, swishing my red hair around dramatically. "As if."

I laughed and grabbed a few ceramic bowls from the cabinet next to me. I handed them to Elena and helped her transfer the Chinese food into them.

"Putting it in a nice bowl isn't fooling anybody," Bonnie smirked.

We ignored Bonnie's unhelpful comment and smiled at one another. Neither of us had ever been good at cooking. In most of the lives I've lived, I've never needed to learn that specific talent, seeing as I never live past 18.
"Ok, serving spoons. Where are the serving spoons?" Elena muttered softly, looking around the kitchen.

"Middle drawer, on your left." Bonnie and I said together.

Bonnie raised a questioning brow at me before Elena drew her attention.

"Ok, so you've been in this kitchen like a thousand times," she told her. "And you," she pointed at me with a spoon, "you live here!"

"Yeah, that's it," Bonnie said with uncertainty.

She once again made eye contact with me, her green eyes mirroring my own as the doorbell rang. Elena took the two full serving bowls with her and headed towards the dining room. Before I could make an escape, Bonnie had me cornered. I kept my face blank as she looked me over. I could feel her magic brushing against mine. It wasn't nearly as strong, but it was still impressive — just as Emily's had been.

"There is something different about you... What is going on?" she questioned.

I fiddled with the edge of my sleeve as I stared straight at her.

"I don't know, Bennett, you tell me."

Her eyes widened as she moved her hand closer to mine.

"This is insane! I am not a witch," she said.

In a split second, she had her hand in mine. A vision flowed into our minds. I held Bonnie's hand tightly as a scene between Emily Bennett and me played out in front of us. I was watching from inside my past self. I could feel the sweat running down my face as I ran, yet somehow I could still feel Bonnie's hand in my own. In the vision, Emily and I were both running, our long dresses bunched up in our arms. We were headed towards the woods, an angry mob following close behind. Pain and terror covered our faces. Cries of "Kill the witches!" came from behind us as we both tripped and fell.

I tried to help Emily to her feet, but it was too late. I remembered this day; it had been my 18th birthday, and I knew neither of us would live through this. The curse had led us to the slaughter. The group surrounded us and poured oil over Emily's body before throwing a torch at her feet. I closed my eyes and cringed as her body lit up in flames — I knew all too well how it felt.

The men surrounded me, pinning me to the ground before the vision faded. The scene changed to one of Katherine and me standing in a meadow filled with flowers. Beside us, Emily stood, lifting flower petals into the air. We all smiled as they danced around us. I raised my arm, my hand in a fist; as I opened my hand, every flower surrounding us flew into the air, their petals falling to the ground. I looked into the sky, smiling; it was magical. Bonnie released my hand, and the vision fading quickly. She stumbled away from me, coughing and choking. I lifted her hair as she gagged over the kitchen sink. The surge of magic had been too much for her.

"What the hell was that? Why were you and Elena there?" she asked.

I leaned against the sink once her gagging had ceased.

"Well, Elena wasn't. The woman who looked like Elena was actually her ancestor." I answered.
Bonnie pulled away from the sink and looked me over carefully.

"What about you?" she said.

"Um well, that's a bit more difficult to explain..." I ran my hands through my hair with a grimace. "I'm a witch,"

Bonnie's eyes widened. I coughed awkwardly, then continued.

"I was cursed by another witch a long time ago, cursed to be reincarnated over and over. All my memories always come back to me and seeing as I always have the same soul, I'm basically the same person — just with different life lessons." I explained.

"So, I am a witch?" she asked

"Yes, you are. The woman you saw — her name was Emily Bennett. She was a good friend of mine and a powerful witch, the same as you. It runs in your family." I said.

Bonnie ran her hand down her face. "Wow, that's a lot to take in. Does Elena know about you?"

She suddenly frowned. I quickly raised my hands in the air.

"No, and she can't! A lot more comes with my curse, and I don't want her involved. Please, Bonnie." I begged.

I watched as she mulled over my request. With a giant huff, she consented. "Ok, it's your life."

I stepped closer to Bonnie and took her hands in mine.

"Listen, I'll help you as much as I can, but it would be best if you went to your Grams. I'll come with you if you want."

Bonnie gave me a thankful smile. I felt terrible for her, all this power coming at her out of the blue. It would be a lot to take in for anyone.

"I might just take you up on that, El. For now, let's get this dinner over with."

I started to follow her into the dining room before she stopped in her tracks. She turned to face me a suspicious expression on her face.

"You know what's wrong with him, don't you?" she asked.

I stepped beside her and put my arm on her shoulder. "Yep and I'm not telling. You'll have to figure that out for yourself. Just know, he is a good guy."

I had my moments with the Salvatore brothers, but that didn't change the fact that I knew deep down they were both good guys. I pushed past the kitchen door and walked into the dining room. Elena had done an excellent job of making the table — she'd even lit candles for the occasion. I held in my laugh as I sat down beside Stefan, eyeing me warily. He must still be upset by everything I had told him. His forehead was wrinkled, and his eyes red and blotchy. Elena was babbling on incessantly so I could tell I was the only one to notice his poor mood. Leave it to my sister to be so self-absorbed she didn't even notice her own boyfriend was upset.

When Elena and Bonnie had started on their own conversation about cheerleading, I grabbed Stefan's hand and gave it a gentle squeeze.
"You ok, Stef?" I whispered under my breath so only he could hear.

His face twisted for a second before he responded. "Damon isn't taking any of what you told us well — and frankly, neither am I. We care about you Elandra, we always have," he whispered.

I let his hand go and picked at my food. I knew this would happen when I told them. Both Salvatores have always had a bit of a hero complex. Even though they knew things were different between us now, they still wanted to help. I knew what I had to do to help them come to terms with this; I just didn't want to do it this way. I wanted my last year to be one of peace — but now that plan was out the window.

"We will figure this out, Steffie," I said with a wink.

I hoped using his old nickname would help calm his nerves. His answering smile was breathtaking.

"You're going to let us help save you?" he whispered in shock.

I nodded, holding back a frown. I hated that they would have to someday come to the realization that nothing could be done. I guess it couldn't hurt to let them believe what they wanted for a while longer. I nodded slowly and rubbed a circle around his thumb before letting go of his hand. Elena and Bonnie's conversation had come to a full stop to once again include Stefan.

"Bonnie, you should have seen Stefan today. Tyler threw a ball right at him, and..." Elena started but was quickly cut off by Bonnie. It was painfully obvious she was still against Stefan.

"Yeah, I heard," she said.

I gave Stefan a sympathetic smile. In Bonnie's defense, it really was for a good reason. She didn't know what he was, yet— but she knew it wasn't good. I mean, what person would want their friend to be in love with a bloodsucking vampire? Even if they were one of the good ones...

A relationship with a vamp can end one of two ways; death, or an eternity of being undead. Neither option is really all that glamorous to someone that cares about you. Believe me, I've thought about it for myself at one point, before I realized vampire blood wasn't an option for me. Katherine offered to save me, and I had obviously considered it. For me, it was a simple choice; I was already immortal in some ways. Being a vampire would be better than living a half-life. For Elena, though, it won't be easy. She has the chance at a full life. One where she could have children and grow old before moving on to the next life. One I'll never get to witness. Elena and I have never really gotten along, but she was still my sister, and I wanted her to be happy.

"Why don't you tell Stefan about your family?" Elena asked, staring at an irritated Bonnie.

Her face was scrunched up in annoyance. Anyone could tell she didn't want to speak about her family with him, and all the witchiness that accompanied them.

"Um, divorced. No, mom. Live with my dad." Bonnie said, moving her food around with her fork.

I looked down at my chopsticks and smirked at her. I expertly picked up a noodle and ate it, challenging her with my eyes. As I had expected, she laughed at my dorkiness and grabbed some chopsticks. I was hoping to lighten the mood and had succeeded.

"No, about the witches. Bonnie's family has a lineage of witches. It's really cool." Elena said

I swear, my sister doesn't have an ounce of tact in her! How anyone could ever fight over her or her ancestors, was beside me. It's not like any of them had been frickin' Helen of Troy.
Bonnie once again scowled irritably. "Cool isn't the word I'd use," she said, meeting my gaze.

Stefan looked between us with a curious look on his face.

"Well, it's certainly interesting. I'm not too versed, but I do know that there's a history of Celtic druids that migrated here in the 1800s." Stefan said, a professor like tone to his voice.

I hid my smile behind another eggroll, earning a glare from Elena.

"You're gonna bloat if you eat all the egg rolls, Elara." she sighed, shaking her head.

I rolled my eyes at her taking yet another eggroll in protest. "I'm not gonna live forever, Lena. Might as well enjoy life."

This time, I earned a glare from Stefan. He mouthed "Not funny!" at me, with a look that could kill.

"My family came by way of Salem," Bonnie said, a hint of pride in her voice.

I could see a lot of Emily in her. It was a comforting thought to think that I hadn't actually lost Emily. She would want me to look after Bonnie for her… even if it was actually Damon, she had tasked with the duty.

"Really? Salem witches?" Stefan asked, as if he was astonished.

"Yeah," Bonnie said.

I stood at the sound of the doorbell, more than excited to escape this annoying and stressful hell.

"I wonder who that could be?" Elena asked.

I walked past the living room, glancing longingly at the tv and couch, to answer the door. I unlocked the top lock leaving the chain in place and opened it slowly. An uneasy feeling settling in my stomach. A familiar head of blonde hair caught my attention.

"What are you doing here, Care?" I asked my eyes taking her in. She smiled up at me brightly, her blue eyes shining, a pie tray in her hands.

"Surprise! Bonnie said you guys were making dinner, so we brought dessert," she said cheerily.

I grumbled softly at the word "we." shutting the door and quickly unlocking the chain. I swung it open and stood to the side. I could guess who she meant.
"Who is we, Caroline?" I said, already knowing the answer.

"Hey, Ellie bean!" Damon enthusiastically said, stepping into view; ruffling my hair as if I was a child.

I pushed his hand away and stepped outside, closing the door behind me. I stepped in front of Caroline and looked her over. Physically she looked ok, her skin was still a bit pale, but other than that she looked good. I touched her skin; it was warm. She didn't feel like she had suffered excessive blood loss. I made sure she still wore her bracelet and looked into her eyes. She took a few steps back, which I followed and raised a brow.

"Look at me, Caroline," I said.

I used my gift and seeped into her mind. I checked for any fuzzy or missing memories. When I found nothing, I backed off.

"Go ahead and take the pie inside Care. I have something I need to ask Damon." I said, looking only at him.

Caroline gave me a speculative look and opened the door, heading inside. She was quickly replaced by an angry Stefan.

"What are you doing here, Damon?" he growled, advancing on his brother.

I stepped in his path and placed a hand on his chest. When he stopped, I gave him a small reassuring smile. Turning back to Damon, I crossed my arms.

"How did you get Caroline to agree to let you come with her?" I asked curiously.

She appeared to be ultimately herself, and I needed to know what tricks he was trying to pull.

Damon ran his hand through his hair with a smirk. "I used my animal magnetism. I don't need compulsion to get her to do my bidding, Elandra," he said.

I closed my eyes, trying to reign in my temper — it didn't work. I opened my palms and pushed him against the house using magic. I tilted my head and bit my lip.

"Listen here, Damon. That girl is my best friend, and I'll be damned if you get her involved in all this supernatural bullshit! Leave. Her. Alone!" I spat angrily.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and calmed down a bit, I closed my hands, quickly releasing Damon from my spell. I pulled my shirt down and adjusted my hair. When I was done fixing my appearance, I took in a deep breath and ran my hands down my face.

"Just please don't bother Caroline again," I said.

Damon stood up, straightening his clothes. "Fine. But, you can't just avoid me, Elandra. We have to figure this curse out while we still have time."

I took a step back and finally looked at him — really looked at him. His eyes showed immense exhaustion. His dark hair was ruffled and messy from his hand continually running through it; a nervous habit. His blue eyes were dull and lifeless. I finally understood how much my curse had affected him. I shook my head in anger.

"Don't you both see what this is doing to you? This is a part of the curse. It hurts not just me, but
I felt Stefan's hands on my shoulders. My body sagged under his touch, and Damon noticed instantly.

"So you and Stefan hanging out now, huh? It seems like you really don't need my help, not when Saint Stefan is available," he growled.

Stefan's hands left me within a second.

"Damon, he is here for Elena, not me. But, I have agreed to let you both help me." I said.

His face lifted slightly. "Ok, so you gonna let me in?" Damon smiled.

"You know you've already been invited in." I sighed, opening the door and letting them both pass by me.

By now, everyone had converged to the living room. I flopped down onto the couch and lifted my feet onto Elena's lap. Stefan snorted a laugh as she threw my feet off her, nearly knocking me off the couch.

"I cannot believe Mr. Tanner let you be on the team — Tyler must be seething. Good for you, though, go for it." Caroline said.

I smiled lovingly. Most people thought she was a self-absorbed bitch, but I loved her. She was funny, smart, and loyal — all the things I look for in a friend.

"That's what I always tell him. You have to engage. You can't just sit there and wait for life to come to you. You have to go get it." Damon said with a boyish grin.

I heckled lightly at his fake enthusiasm. "Yeah, cause that's exactly what you do, isn't it, Damon? Wait! No — that's getting drunk and living in the past. Sorry, my mistake,"

His eyes narrowed at me, and I earned a slap on the arm by Elena. "Elara, behave!" she whispered angrily.

Stefan meanwhile was biting his lip to keep from laughing. Thankfully, Caroline started jabbering away, bringing the attention back to her.

"Yeah, Elena wasn't so lucky today. It's only because you missed summer camp. God, I don't know how you're ever going to learn the routines..."

"I'll work with her. She'll get it." Bonnie said.

"Well we could put her in the back," Caroline said thoughtfully.

Caroline's talkative nature was something I was grateful for today, even if she was talking about cheerleading. I sat back against the couch and put my head on my hand. This whole conversation was boring — she acted like cheerleading was the essence of life. I loved Caroline, but she was so naive. I wished my biggest worry in life was not learning a cheerleading routine...

"Just put her in the mascot uniform and have her jump around," I blurted out.

I bit my lip and squinted. Oops. Maybe I should've thought before I spoke. Elena kicked me in the side with her foot.
"You know, you don't seem like the cheerleader type, Elena," Damon said.

"Oh, it's just because her parents died. Yeah, I mean, she's just totally going through a blah phase," Caroline took a sip of her drink, "She used to be way more fun — and I say that with complete sensitivity," she added awkwardly.

"It's ok, Care. I'm just glad I have El and Jer. I don't know what I would do without them," Elena said

What an odd moment of sisterly kindness. Usually, I'm not mentioned in her sibling bonding speeches. My stomach dropped, and I quickly stood and swallowed the lump in my throat.

"I'm gonna go for a walk, I could use some air," I said quickly.

Before anyone could say a word, I was out the front door. I couldn't stay there any longer. Knowing that Elena would be losing someone else close to her very soon affected me tremendously. I ran off the porch and kept running. I had no idea where I was planning to go, but I just needed to run. I put everything I feared behind me and just ran from it all. I felt constricted in my jeans but didn't care. My muscles burned as I pushed myself forward. I didn't stop until I saw Wickery Bridge in front of me. I stopped right in the middle of it and sat down. It was stupid, but I didn't care. I laid down and looked up into the sky. The clouds blocked out the light of the stars, it reflected my mood perfectly. I felt blocked by everything that was going on in my life. Every new day only brought me closer to my last one. It's an odd feeling, knowing you're going to die. It really makes you reevaluate your priorities. You never really know how lucky you indeed are until you know you're going to lose everything you have. Even though I've lived hundreds of lives, leaving one never gets easier.

"You planning on dying early this time?" a familiar voice said.

I sat up quickly and spotted Katherine leaning up against the bridge. I jumped up and ran into her arms. "Oh God, I've missed you, Kit Kat!" I squealed, using the nickname I had given her ages ago.

Katherine's eyes narrowed — obviously still against the name — as she hugged me back, before pushing me off her. "I see you're still the clingy type," she said, looking down at her nails. I pushed her arm and sat on the side of the bridge. My legs dangling over the edge. "This is where my parents died. Well, my current parents. I don't really know why I'm here." I said a questioning look on my face. I really had no clue what led me to this bridge. But something Katherine had said had started to make me think. She sat beside me, and we both stared at the water below us.

"Would it really be so bad to die early, Kit? I mean, it would put so many people out of their misery. Both of the Salvatores think they can stop the curse." I said.

Katherine's face was angry and surprised. Her hair blew gently in the breeze, and she brushed it behind her ear. "You know something. I never thought I'd see the day when Elandra Rioult gave up. That's not very Viking of you, ya know." she said.

Hearing my real last name made my eyes water. It had been a very long time. "Katherine, I'm just so tired," I whispered.

I laid my head on her shoulder, and we both sat in silence.

"They will be here soon. That's why I'm here — I'm preparing a few things. It will earn me my freedom, El. If anyone can help you put an end to the curse, it's them. You just have to tell them." she said.
I sat up and tried to make out her expression, but she was wearing the darkness like a mask. "The last time I met him he killed me because he thought I was some doppelganger sent to haunt him," I said.

"Yeah, well that was a very long time ago. Just don't mention that during that life you're the one who helped me escape him. Without you, I would never have gotten out." she smiled.

"Yeah, and he found me when he was looking for you and snapped my neck." I laughed.

That had been one of my quickest deaths, I was only 15 at the time. I was working in the castle, unaware of who owned it until I met Katherine, and she explained her situation. I still remember the surprise on her face when I showed up in her room.

"Did I ever thank you for that?" she said.

"Yeah only every five seconds while I led you outside and to your meeting point with Trevor," I said.

We both laughed at our mutually fucked up past.

"Stay out of my way while I'm here Elandra. I don't want to hurt you, but I will get my freedom." she firmly said.

I knew what Katherine was capable of, but she also knew I would fight for my family.

"You know I can't let you hurt my friends or family Kit. But, I'm not going to go out of my way to mess with your plans. The only time I'll get involved is if you try to hurt someone I love." I told her honestly.

She held her hand out to me, and I shook it. "Well then, may the best bitch win," she said.

I shook her hand and smiled.

"Here, here."
Chapter 6

I woke up as the sun peeked in through the blinds. I covered my face with my pillow and grumbled. "Stupid mornings. Stupid sun."

I wasn't in the mood for the day to begin yet. After the horrible dinner last night, and the realization that Katherine was in town planning on starting trouble, all I wanted to do was stay in bed and hideaway.

And not to mention, the death of Mr. Tanner.

It had been a fun realization to come home to, Damon killing someone. I knew he'd changed, that he wasn't the same Damon I fell in love with, but I had hoped he wasn't this far gone. I should've never told him and Stefan what was to come. It was a stupid idea, now I had two angry, volatile vampires on my hands.

"Someone is still not a morning person..."

I pulled the pillow from my face and lifted myself up. Rebekah sat on the other side of the bed, smirking at me.

"Ya know, Bekah, Most people would think waking up in bed with the ghostly figure of their best friend a bit odd. But not me, ya know why? Because this happens every damn morning — Can't you haunt Nik, instead?" I whined.

Rebekah frowned at me and hopped off the bed.

"You know Nik can't see me, but for some reason, you can. Sorry sis, but until I'm undaggered, this is where I'm gonna stay," she said.

I gave her the finger and stepped into my bathroom to shower. Once I was done, I slipped on a pair of jeans and a band tee — Def Leppard, to be exact. They were my favorite band. I ignored Rebekah's gasp of horror at my outfit and headed downstairs carrying my grey converse. Jenna sat on the couch, hissing at the news anchorman on television.

"Scumball — Scumbucket,"

I sat down beside her and slipped on my shoes. "Who are you talking to, Jen?" I asked with a smile.

She looked at the screen with pure hatred.

"Him." she spat.

I laughed, earning a glare from her as Elena stepped off the stairs.
"The news guy?" Elena asked.

"Also known as Logan "Scum" Fell. Did your mom ever tell you guys why I moved away from Mystic Falls?" Jenna asked pointedly, looking at us both.

I held in a gasp and stared intently at the man on the TV. He had brown hair and an angular chin. He wasn't terrible looking, but definitely not good enough for my current Aunt.

"Oh, no way — you and him? He's cute." Elena said, looking at Jenna and then back at the TV.

I smiled at her and shook my head. Sometimes I forgot that she was basically a normal teenage girl, and didn't have as much life experience as I did.

Jenna scoffed. "He is not cute — there's nothing cute about him! Wait, what are you doing with that?"

Jenna eyed the family heirlooms Elena was packing up. I noticed the gold pocket watch that was meant to be handed down to Jeremy and frowned deeply. As if he knew exactly what was happening, Jeremy came bounding down the stairs just as Elena and Jenna were discussing our Great Grandmother's wedding ring. Neither Jenna nor Elena noticed the way his face fell for a moment before being replaced with anger. He was about to make Elena pay for her thoughtlessness.

As I headed towards the kitchen, I overheard him ask how much the heirlooms might sell for on eBay. I cringed; that conversation wouldn't go well. I grabbed an apple from the fruit bowl, still eavesdropping until the doorbell rang and broke my focus. I smiled at the familiar aura of Stefan washed over me. I made my way back to the living room just in time to see Elena pulling Stefan up the stairs towards her room. I laughed at his carefree smile and shook my head. I had to admit it was nice seeing him so happy, even if I thought it would never last. I knew they would both be spending a while succumbing to their teenage hormones — even if one of them isn't technically a teenager — so I decided to head out. There was no way I wanted to accidentally overhear whatever they were doing.

"I'm heading out Jen," I called to Jenna as I grabbed my car keys, "I'll be back later!"

At her hollered okay, I headed out the door. There wasn't much to do in such a small town, so I decided to head to Caroline's. I was sure she needed help picking out her dress for the Founders party anyway.

I slid into the car and made my way to the Forbes' house. The closer I got to the house, the angrier I became. I could sense him there with her — and he wasn't supposed to be. I thought I had taken care of that problem, but apparently, this was going to be harder than I thought. I growled in frustration and gripped the steering wheel tightly, making my knuckles turn white.

Damn Damon Salvatore! Damn him to hell!

I jumped out of the car as soon as my keys were out of the ignition. I stomped towards the front door, going through all the ways I knew to kill a vampire; they were plentiful. I had asked him one simple thing — to stay away from my friends and family, and yet here he was. I slammed my fist on the door repeatedly. I could see the Sheriff was already at work, so I didn't need to worry about freaking her out.

"Caroline Forbes! Open the damn door, NOW!" I hollered, staring daggers at her white front door as if it was the vampire I was pissed at.
I cast a silent spell over her house to make sure he couldn't try and escape before I got to him. I smiled evilly as I felt the power of it blanket the home. The door swung open to reveal an irritated Caroline. I pushed my way inside and ignored her protests.

"Look at me," I said, pulling her pale face towards mine.

I held her still and peered into her blue eyes. When I found no new empty spaces in her memory nor anything fuzzy, I frowned and let her go.

"Why. Is. Damon. Here?" I asked through clenched teeth, enunciating every word.

She huffed loudly and crossed her arms in protest of my question.

"He's here because he is my boyfriend," she said.

I closed my eyes and took a deep calming breath. I grabbed the scarf that was still wrapped around her neck and removed it. There, exactly where I knew they would be, were several faded bite marks. I grimaced and wrapped the scarf back around her neck.

"You have no memory of how you got those, do you?" I asked.

Caroline fidgeted with the scarf and started blushing furiously. "Damon says we use to "play" a bit roughly," she whispered with a giggle.

I stared at her for a moment before I sighed deeply. I spun around and marched up to her room and found Damon sprawled out on her bed reading, one of the Twilight novels.

"What's so special about this Bella girl? Edward's so whipped," he said.

I leaned against the door frame and rubbed my hands across my face as Caroline walked past me, towards her closet. She picked up a blue dress and stared at it.

"You have to read the first book first. It won't make sense if you don't," she said, lifting the dress and shaking it in my direction.

"You look better in yellow Care, you know that," I said, eyeing Damon with distaste.

"Ah, I miss Ann Rice. She was so on it," he said, ignoring me.

"How come you don't sparkle? And how do you know about him, Ellie?" She asked curiously.

I almost forgot how much I hated the after-effects of compulsion. It would be excruciating for me to wipe away the fogginess and bring back Caroline's memories, and I didn't want to put her through that. At least I knew everything she was doing now was of her own free will.

"How about you tell me how you are okay with all of this, Care? You know what he is and what he is capable of, yet you still wanna date him? That doesn't sound like you ."

I stepped towards her and crossed my arms. She still held the blue dress in her hands and was looking it over. I pulled the dress away from her and tossed it on the bed, where Damon was staring at me intently.

"I don't know, Ellie. I'm not afraid of him," she said, shrugging nonchalantly.

My mouth snapped open, and I turned towards Damon.
"You didn't!" I shouted.

If I hadn't been so angry, his obvious discomfort would have made me laugh, but at that moment, I found nothing funny about what was happening. He had compelled my best friend to have no fear. I knew I should have checked her previous compulsion before feeding her the vervain. I jumped onto the bed and started hitting any part of him I could get my hands on.

"Are you completely insane?! She could get herself killed this way, Damon!" I yelled while hitting him on the shoulder.

He tried to escape my swinging fists, but I sat on top of him and pinned him down. My red hair flew around wildly, looking almost like the fire I felt inside of me. I knew if he wanted to, he could easily escape me, but he appeared to be attempting to keep himself in check.

"Ow, woman! get off me!" he hollered.

I slammed my knee into his stomach and rolled off of him, ignoring his humph of anger. I pointed a shaking finger in his face, fighting to control my rapid breath.

"You will fix this, Salvatore," I said sternly.

My voice stayed firm, despite the hilarious shocked expression he held. I pulled Caroline from the corner of the room where she had hidden herself during my outburst. I smiled warmly at her and gave her a playful laugh.

"Sorry Care, I have some history with Damon here, and it's not pleasant," I explained.

Her eyes widened, and her face became stiff and cold as she eyed Damon.

"What did he do to you, Ellie? I'll kill him!" she spat.

I almost cried at her determined and faithful expression. She was such a good friend, even in the face of all this craziness.

"It's in the past. So, wear the yellow dress tonight and meet me at the Grill later, okay?"

I grabbed Damon's hand and pulled him off the bed. I pushed him out of the bedroom door, calling back to Caroline.

"I'm gonna borrow your boyfriend for a bit."

"Okay, just don't break him!" she hollered "I don't wanna go solo tonight!"

I pushed him down the hallway and out the front door. He shook me off and straightened his black leather jacket.

"So, you gonna tell me why I was trapped in there until now?"

I pulled my hair into a high ponytail and narrowed my eyes. The wind whipped past us, making his dark hair sway in the breeze. I ignored the jolt I felt in my stomach and let out a breath I didn't know I had been holding.

"I used a spell. I didn't want you escaping before I could kill you." I said plainly, with a sly smile.

He squinted his eyes at me, amusement evident in their blue depths.
"I think you just wanted an excuse to get on top of me," he said, smirking.

I started towards my car, and he walked silently next to me.

"Damon, we both know I wouldn't need an excuse," I said slyly, sliding into the driver's seat.

He leaned into my window his arms placed above him on the roof.

"Oh Elandra, you know you always have permission to straddle me," he said, his signature smirk still glued to his face.

I put my keys in the ignition and leaned towards him, my eyes never leaving his. For a moment, I could see uncertainty flash in his eyes. I knew, even after all these years, that he still saw me as I used to be. The proper lady who he was preparing to marry. The woman who he needed an escort just to be able to spend time with.

He needed to remember that I was no longer that woman. I had lived so many lives since then. I have loved and lost and was just as capable of these silly flirtatious games as he was. My warm breath fanned across his face filling the air between us with the sweet smell of peppermint. His long lashes brushed against my nose as he looked down at my pink glossed lips.

"Oh, Damon, you have no idea what I could do to you. You forget I'm not Elandra anymore. I'm not some sweet innocent girl you can make melt with a few words."

I brushed my nose against his, smiling as his breath hitched. I pulled away and started the car.

"See ya later, Damon,"

I gave him a salute and pulled away from the curb. As I drove away, I watched him in the rearview mirror. He stood staring after me for a moment, before vanishing in a quick flash. I bit my lip and leaned into my seat. What the hell was I getting myself into? Flirting with Damon was a terrible idea. Our past should stay exactly that — the past. Getting involved with anyone would prove to be very stupid. I couldn't bring someone into my life only to break their heart. I shook my head and pushed the thoughts away. Now wasn't the time to think about it.

___________________________________________

The doorbell rang as I was going through my closet later that day. I tilted my head to the side as the warm aura of Tyler Lockwood wafted over me. I could feel the presence of his dormant wolf and knew if Jeremy opened the door, we would have trouble. I hopped over the rainbow of clothes covering my closet floor and jumped down every other step in my rush to get to the door. I halted right before the door and tossed my red hair back over my shoulder before yanking it open.

"Hey, Lockwood," I said, upon seeing his bright smiling face.

I've never had a problem with Tyler. We had always had a friendly relationship, and apart from Caroline and Matt, he was the only other person in Mystic Falls I would actually call a friend. Bonnie and I got along to an extent, but Tyler and I hit it off as soon as we met. If it weren't for the fact that his temper was always fluctuating — due to his dormant wolf — then we would have hung out a lot more. Well, that and the fact that we had lost our virginities to one another, one drunken night when we were fifteen.
A dark memory had just resurfaced, one that always caused me a lot of pain, and Tyler (along with a large bottle of Vodka) was there when I needed someone to just help me forget. After the fact, we both felt kind of awkward around one another.

"Hey El, I'm here for my mom. I'm supposed to pick up a box of stuff," he said, running a hand through his hair.

I grinned at his nervousness and ushered him inside. "Yeah, I think I saw Elena messing with that stuff this morning," I said, looking around the living room. "Elena!"

Elena and Jeremy started down the stairs, the latter with an angry and betrayed look on his face. Elena pulled on her green top anxiously as Jeremy approached Tyler. I stepped between the two hormone-ridden boys.

"He's here for his mom," I said casually.

Elena grabbed the box from the closet under the stairs and handed it off to Tyler.

"It's right here. Please be careful."

Jeremy pushed past me and looked Tyler up and down. "Yeah, be careful, dick," he spat.


Tyler laughed behind me, sneering. "It's okay Ellie, he's just a punk,"

I huffed loudly as I used all my strength to keep Jeremy from attacking him. "Ty, seriously. Just take the box and go."

I used one hand to push Jeremy towards Elena, and the other to push Tyler out the door. Once I knew Elena had ahold of our brother, I followed Tyler out the door.

"God Ty, do you have to bait him? You know what Vick means to him right now."

Tyler set the box of heirlooms in the back of his truck.

"Would it help if I said I actually like Vicki?" he sighed.

I leaned against his truck and gave him my best 'are you serious' look. He laughed at me and sighed.

"I really do, El. I just...you know me. I have trouble expressing myself, and sometimes it's like I can't control my attitude. I can be such a dick,"

He sighed heavily, seeming to have trouble explaining himself. This was the side of him that many people missed out on. He was always trying to be the stereotypical jock, and with a father and mother like his, its something I could completely understand. Tyler had a rough life: yeah, it wasn't the typical rough that a lot of people suffered through, but that didn't make it any less raw. It was a life someone like my brother would never understand.

"I get it, Ty, you don't have to explain yourself to me,"

I punched him in the arm, and he leaned his head against my shoulder briefly before switching back to his usual distant self.
"Okay. Thanks for the old junk. I'll tell my mom to be careful with it," he said, winking.

I shook my head at him and stepped away so he could pull out of the driveway. I waved him off and then headed back inside to resume my search for a Founders day outfit. As I passed my sister's room, I could hear her and Bonnie debating what color nail polish to use. I was just about to pass by when I heard Bonnie bring up Katherine's name. I paused and listened quietly to Bonnie explain Stefan, Damon, and Katherine's past relationship. I almost laughed at Damon's immature way of trying to get in between his brother and Elena. I ignored the sting of jealousy that flared up inside me at the idea that he was still hung up on Kat, and walked into my room. My phone buzzed to life just as I shut the door behind me. I pulled it out of my back pocket and smiled down at the text from Matt.

Hey, odd question. I need a date for the Founders thing, wanna come with me? It would make seeing your sister with that new guy a lot easier to swallow.

I laughed loudly at his awkwardness and sent him back a quick sure. I tossed my phone on my bed beside a lounging Rebekah and headed back into my closet. Once again, I groaned in frustration as I tossed hanger after hanger onto the floor, struggling to find a suitable dress.
I stepped out of the closet with the perfect dress in tow. It was a simple gown, but for me, that's what made it perfect. The eyelet lace halter top sparkled in the light as I did a twirl in front of the full-length mirror. I smiled as I admired my reflection; thankfully, the dress was ankle length, so I wouldn't have to worry about tripping on the stairs. I tended to be a bit of a klutz.

I decided on a loose side french braid for my hair, hoping to achieve a beautiful look with minimal effort. This seemed to be my typical philosophy because honestly, I didn't really have time to care or worry about what I looked like.

I patted a shimmery shadow overtop my eyelids, and swiped on some lip stain that matched the dark wine color of the dress. After sliding on my ballet flats, I gave myself one last once-over; I was passable, at least.

I rolled my eyes at the loud wolf whistle from behind me but had a difficult time hiding the smile creeping onto my face.

"Thank you, Beka. If you approve, then I obviously did something right," I said.

I gave her a grandiose twirl and nearly tripped over my own feet. Rebekah laughed merrily, clapping her hands to applaud my clumsy show.

"You better get outta here before you fall and break your neck — didn't you do that once?" she asked.

She bit her lip, trying to reel in her laughter at my expense. I sighed, shaking my head.

"Yes Beka, that was actually a death of mine. I fell down the stairs and broke my neck; the curse is a bitch."

I forced a chuckle at this, and Rebekah frowned. She had always been able to tell when I was faking humor to hide my sadness. She ushered me out the bedroom door before I could fall into a 'woe is me' depression.

As we were at the top of the stairs, Elena exited her room, phone in hand. I stopped dead in my tracks — she looked beautiful. Her knee-length orange dress complimented her brown hair marvelously. She'd chosen to wear her hair down, save a single strand on each side, and her sweetheart neckline highlighted her collarbones expertly. I tore my eyes from her gown; the expression she wore was making me nervous.

"What's up, Lena?" I asked.

Instead of answering my question, she bypassed me and bolted into Jeremy's room. I followed her and stood back, watching as she started hitting him.
"Ahh! God, what now?" he asked, covering his head with his hands.

Rebekah stood beside me, watching them in amusement. "You gonna do something?" she whispered, although only I could hear her. I shook my head, continuing to remain silent as my two siblings bickered.

"The pocket watch — Where is it?" Elena accused.

Jeremy looked at her incredulously. "What watch?"

Elena stepped back, her hands on her hips. "The one you stole from mom's box. Look, Mrs. Lockwood just called me freaking out. It was on the list, Jeremy, and she can't find it. She thinks she's the one who lost it."

I looked away from them for a moment, trying to remain impartial. It would do me no good to get involved, but it was hard not to. They could both be mad at me for not playing favorites if they wanted, but eventually, I wouldn't be here to play mediator. They needed to learn how to deal with one another without me.

Still, it was tough to remain neutral when Jeremy was the one who was supposed to inherit the pocket watch. Since it's technically his, he should've been the one to loan it out — and only if he wanted to.

Jeremy stared at Elena contemptuously and shrugged, "Maybe she did. Maybe Tyler took it."

Elena looked at me as if I was supposed to jump in and yell at Jeremy for being childish, although she was acting just as annoying. I threw my hands out in front of me and shook my head.

"Not involved," I said.

Elena gave me her best 'so angry her eyes were bulging out' expression and turned back to our brother.

"Don't even play that card, Jeremy, you took it. If I go online, am I gonna find it on eBay? Is that how you pay for your pot?" she snarled.

At that, I stepped further into the room. Anger coursed through me — How dare she act so damned, holier than thou.

"Hey, Lena, that's not cool. You have no right to act this way — just 'cause Jer is handling mom and dad's death differently than you are, doesn't mean he would ever sell dad's watch." I said, jabbing my finger in her direction. "The one that was supposed to be his in the first place!"

They both looked at me in silence, shocked that I had said anything. It had been a very long time since I had gotten involved in direct family matters. After I took a few breaths, I nudged my head towards Jeremy.

"Where is it, Jer?" I asked softly.

He stood and walked over to his desk. Pulling out a drawer, he retrieved the watch and looked at Elena.

"Screw you. I would never sell this, okay? At least someone still understands me," he said, looking at me as he held the watch firmly in his hands.
I stepped away from Elena and put my hand on his shoulder. Elena sighed and looked anywhere but at us.

"Then why did you take it?" she asked.

I scoffed quietly. Of course, she didn't understand...

"Because it's supposed to be mine, just like Ellie said. Dad told me it goes to the firstborn son. His father gave it to him, and...now what?" he asked, handing the watch over to Elena.

I shook my head and walked back over to the door.

"...And he was gonna give it to you," Elena said, finally understanding.

Jeremy looked at me, and I nodded in support.

"Yeah," he said.

Elena looked down at the watch, frowning. "Look, Jeremy, it's still yours, okay? Mom promised Mrs. Lockwood. What do you want me to do?"

I bit my tongue trying to say out of it, but to no avail, I couldn't keep myself from calling Elena out on her bullshit. It was the classic Petrova 'only I matter' philosophy — they can't bring themselves to understand unless it matters to them or affects them directly. She was slowly proving to me how very much like her ancestors she was becoming.

"I don't know Elena, you could tell her to shove it. That the watch was never yours, nor moms, to give out. It was Jeremy's, and dads, and it's all he has left of him." I huffed.

Jeremy sent me a grateful smile and my rigid shoulders relaxed. He needed someone to understand him without judgment, and I could give him that — for now.

"Just take it and get out, Elena," he said, turning away from her.

Elena brushed past me with a harsh look in her eyes, directed at me, of course. I had chosen a side (something I really didn't want to do), and to her, it had been the wrong one.

Looking into the teary eyes of my brother, I knew I had chosen correctly. He was the one who needed me the most. He had no one, yes Jenna and Elena tried, but neither of them was willing to simply be there for him all while allowing him to make his own mistakes. They pushed and pushed, judging him for everything he did. I walked over and sat down beside him on the bed.

"This room is...musty. Maybe open a window," I joked, trying to lighten the mood.

He forced a chipped chuckle and leaned against my shoulder.

"Thanks for trying sis," he said.

I smiled at his tone of voice, it was soft and warm — something I usually didn't get from him. He was always blunt and sarcastic; I could often appreciate that — well, most of the time, at least. I was just as sarcastic as he was, but I did miss my brother. The one who used to sit beside me on the porch swing while I read, drawing pictures of our neighbors or random wildlife. He used to be so fun and care-free...then we lost our parents, and he fell into a dark pit.

One that even I couldn't get him out of.
He was drowning, and I just left him. I told myself it was to save him more heartache once I died, but in the end, it wasn't for him. It was for me.

I was pulling away from everyone to save myself. I wanted to hide away until my birthday. I knew now that I couldn't do that anymore. I had to be there for my family until I no longer could. I would save him. He was my brother — my responsibility. I had lost so many people already, and I was sick of it. Maybe Damon and Stefan were right. Perhaps I could fight this...

"I love you Jer, I'm sorry — I've been so out of it these last couple of years, but I'm here now," I whispered, "I'm back."

He pulled away from me, attempting to wipe the tears from his eyes without me noticing. I looked away so he could retain his 'manly dignity.' I bit my lip to keep from smiling and looked back when I knew he had composed himself.

"I'm glad. I've missed you. Aside from mom and dad, you were always the one I could depend on," he said.

I ruffled his hair, much to his displeasure, and then stood up.

"Well, I'm here — If you ever need anything, let me know. I'll get the watch back for you Jer, I promise."

I smoothed my gown as he smiled brightly. I made to exit, and he followed me out to the hallway.

"Hey, Ellie," he called to me once I reached the top of the stairs, "You look beautiful, by the way,

I pulled my dress up and curtseyed for him with a laugh.

"Why thank you, good sir," I said, with my best southern belle impersonation.

He bowed to me and took my arm to help me down the stairs. By the time we had reached the last step, we were both laughing so hard we had tears in our eyes. It felt wonderful to laugh with him again.

Jenna was waiting for us at the bottom, a bright grin on her face. She appeared to be stifling back tears.

"You look lovely, Elara," she said.

The doorbell rang, giving me an excellent excuse to escape her teary gaze. As I headed to answer the door, I noticed Elena pull Jeremy to the side, a determined look on her face. I frowned until I saw dad's watch in her hands. I was pleasantly surprised that I didn't even have to guilt her into giving it back.

I opened the door to reveal a handsomely dressed Matt Donovan. He was smiling broadly as I ushered him inside. He gave me a quick once-over.

"Wow, Elara. You look amazing," he said breathily.

I moved my weight from one foot to the other, unsure of what to say. He was my sister's ex after all, and I didn't want to give him any reason to believe this was more than what it was. Matt was a great guy, but he wasn't for me.

"I'm almost ready Matty. I just need to grab my clutch and talk to Jeremy about something," I said,
slowly backing away from him.

"Okay, I'll be here," he replied.

I headed back up the stairs and ignored the greyish spirit that was leaning against the wall, eyeing me suspiciously.

"So, who's that?" Rebekah asked as I reached for my clutch on my desk.

"He's just a friend — Elena's ex actually. He asked me if I would accompany him to the party. He is still not over Elena," I explained.

She gave me a tight-lipped frown and stared me down.

"What Beka? I promise there is nothing romantic between us," I turned to face her, narrowing my eyes. "I'm wondering, why would that bother you, though?"

Rebekah turned away with a dramatic huff. I crossed my arms and tapped my fingers against my elbow — something definitely was bothering her.

"What is it, Beks? After all this time, you should know I won't be angry with you. No matter what it is."

I reached out, and my hand hovered over her shoulder. She spun around her eyes, glassy with unshed tears.

"It's completely insane," She said, shaking her head, "It's just...when I saw you with him...it felt like you were betraying my brother. It's crazy, I know! I honestly don't even care if you do. It's just...your relationship with him gives me hope, and deep down I wish you two could work it out." she looked at her feet, then shrugged sheepishly, "Even though I know that is impossible..." she added, her voice cracking.

My heart sank further and further with every word she spoke. It was like hearing all my deepest and darkest thoughts expressed out loud. Should I tell her that I secretly wished for the same thing? That when I'm alone, and there is nothing left to distract me, my thoughts always find him?

"Rebekah, I understand. No man will ever possess my heart the way your brother does — not even Damon. You have nothing to fear, and even though we both know how insane the thought of a relationship between Nik and myself would be, I will never truly give up hope,"

I struggled but somehow managed to hold back my own tears. Rebekah gave me a half-hearted smile and ran her hands over her face with a small shake of her head.

"Okay, okay — enough of that! You have a party to get to, and I should check up on my brothers," she said, with a disgruntled sigh.

I ran my hands down my dress and checked my hair, smiling mirthfully "Okay, give them my love,"

"Yeah, I'll do just that," she laughed.

I gave her a quick nod and smiled at her lovingly. "See ya later Beks,"

I headed down the stairs and found Jeremy in the living room, talking to Matt with a stern look on his face. Oh no, what now?
"Hey, guys. Everything okay?" I asked, tilting my head at them.

Jeremy looked me up and down with a bright smile, his eyes crinkling. He looked so proud, and it made my heart lift and heal after the dark talk with Rebekah.

"Yeah, I was just making sure Matty here knows the rules. Ya know — different sister, different rules," Jeremy said, with a sly grin.

My mouth dropped open. I could feel my cheeks reddening. I opened and closed my mouth like a fish out of water. It wasn't often that I was speechless.

"And I was explaining to Jeremy that this wasn't a date. Just two friends." Matt said, speaking for me when he saw how flabbergasted I was. Always the gentlemen.

I closed my mouth and tried to control my blush as my brother watched me intently, his smile growing at my discomfort.

"He's right, Jer. This is strictly a 'friends' thing." I said, tartly.

Jeremy nodded at us both and slapped Matt, none too gently, on the shoulder.

"Okay, don't stay out too late sis," he said, grinning.

Matt took my arm and led me to the door. I turned partially to see Jeremy over my shoulder and gave him the finger, which only earned me a thumbs up and a loud laugh. When Matt tried to turn around, I pushed him forward and allowed him to open the passenger door of his truck for me.

I thanked him and watched Jeremy laughing at me from the living room window. I pulled my phone from my clutch and sent him a series of hateful texts, full of colorful language. I watched him receive them as Matt joined me in the car.

I grinned smugly as he quickly stepped away from the window, eyes wide. I leaned back in my seat as Matt pulled out of the driveway and down the street. I watched the scenery pass by with a genuine smile on my face.

The driveway of Lockwood Mansion was packed full of cars as we pulled up. I leaned forward and looked at all of the people piling out of their vehicles and heading inside. I could see Elena and Stefan heading through the door as a man approached the driver's side window. He told Matt to pull up closer to the house, so the Valet could park his truck for him.

"You ready for this?" I asked.

His face was slowly losing color — he wasn't much for this kind of thing, and I felt sorry for him. But he was under the Petrova spell and couldn't help but want to be around Elena.

"Yeah..." he quietly said.

I allowed the Valet to open my door, and I carefully hopped out. I looked up at the beautiful brick house adorned with white pillars and fought back the memories associated with the last time I had been here. Thankfully, Matt ignored my pink cheeks as he fixed his black suit. Gently taking my arm, he led me inside.

"Let's do this," he whispered to me as we passed through the massive front doors.

The entryway was packed full of guests and waiters alike. A tray of champagne was in front of us,
and I reached towards it, pulling away two glasses. I handed one to Matt.

"Drink quickly before we come across Sheriff Forbes, "I joked.

I almost spit out the tart liquid when he started chugging his down. He really didn't want to be here.

I could see Elena and Stefan looking at a display a few feet in front of us and pushed Matt away from them and towards Caroline, who was picking at a plate of food she held. I took his empty glass and sat it on a passing tray.

"Here, talk to Care for a bit. I'm gonna find Elena,"

He tried to object, but I wanted to warn Elena that we were here so she could keep the PDA to a minimum. I didn't want Matt hurting any more than necessary. I pushed through the crowd and grabbed myself another drink. I sipped slowly when I came upon Elena and Stefan.

"Your parents?" Stefan asked her.

Elena shook her head a melancholic expression on her face.

"There's a lot of history here," she said, taking a glass of champagne from a server.

I stepped beside them and noticed our parents wedding set inside the display case. A wave of memories passed through my mind, and I placed my hand on Elena's shoulder. She jumped slightly, the gesture pulling her from her thoughts. Once she realized it was me, she put her head on my shoulder as we both lived within our memories for a moment.

After a few minutes, Elena headed to the next display, and I followed closely behind her with Stefan in tow.

"Hey, Elena. I wanted to let you know I came with Matt," I started, as she read the old Founders registry.

Her head snapped towards me for a moment, pure shock on her face.

"Oh...well..." she started before someone behind me caught her attention.

"So, the oldest Gilbert twin and Matty blue eyes. Ya know, I didn't peg you as the type to go after your sister's ex," the voice, one I recognized instantly, said from behind me.

I growled quietly and turned to face Damon Salvatore.

"Hello, Damon," I plainly said.

I tried to avoid his crystal gaze but couldn't help being drawn in. His eyes were clouded and expressionless. Something was bothering him.

"So, you and Matt?" he asked.

I rolled my eyes and repositioned myself to face my sister.

"It's not like that, Lena. He texted me and asked if I would join him as a friend. I wanted to let you know so you and Stefan could keep things G rated, for Matt's sake," I explained.

Her eyebrows raised, and she placed a hand on her hip.
"And since when do you care how Matt feels?" she asked.

I rubbed my forehead and tried to keep myself calm. My sister seriously knew how to push my buttons. I downed the rest of my champagne in one swift gulp.

"I've always liked Matt... Just be kind, okay?"

Damon took the glass from my hand when I tried to snag another. I grumbled at him and pushed past the small group to find Matt and Caroline. Once I was out of Damon's line of sight, I grabbed another glass and stood next to Caroline. She was talking to Matt about her mom. I listened in to their conversation until Caroline excused herself and made her way to Damon's side.

I followed her and was just in time to hear her ask Stefan to dance. She led him to the dance floor, and Damon used the opportunity to make his move. I had to admit, I was starting to become ready for Katherine's return.

Maybe after he realized Katherine was safe, and that she was never in the tomb, he would finally leave Elena alone. Hopefully, the big reveal will get the Petrova's out of his system.

I stepped to the side, just out of sight, to listen to their conversation.

"I want to apologize to you for being such a world-class jerk the other night when I tried to kiss you. There's no excuse. My therapist says I'm...acting out, trying to punish Stefan," he said.

When had Damon tried to kiss her? I felt anger stir in my stomach and tried to ignore it. I wasn't jealous, was I?

I rolled my eyes and continued to drink my champagne, it would be her own fault if she fell for his bullshit. I hoped she was smart enough to see through it.

"For what?" Elena asked him.

He inched closer to her without drawing attention to it.

"It's all in the past. I don't even want to bring it up. Let's just say that the men in the Salvatore family have been cursed with sibling rivalry. And it all started with the original Salvatore brothers," he told her a very fake, sad tone to his voice.

I turned my head to find Stefan and Caroline, who were both still dancing together. He was whispering something in her ear. I decided to leave Damon to his petty lies and save Stefan from an overly bubbly Caroline.

I set my glass down on the small silver table beside me and walked onto the dance floor. I swayed my way to them and stopped beside Caroline.

"Hey Chicka, mind if I cut in?" I said.

She looked past me to see Damon still preoccupied with Elena.

"Sure, Ellie," she said.

I switched places with her, and Stefan placed his hand on my hip. He allowed me to put one of my hands on his shoulder, and my other arm around his neck. A new song began to play, and I smiled at the choice. It was one of my favorites — Shut Up and Dance, by WALK THE MOON. We began to move as the first verse started. I looked past Stefan and watched Elena and Damon, who
were still talking by the display cases.

"Thanks for rescuing me. I think Damon asked Caroline to pull me away so he could talk to Elena," Stefan said.

I gave him a coy smile. "I think your right. He was talking to Elena about the original Salvatore Brothers," I said.

Stefan's face fell for a moment before he controlled his reaction. "So that's his plan," he said flatly.

We continued to move across the dance floor, both of us dancing as if it were as natural as breathing. To us, it actually was — we'd had centuries of practice.

"You shouldn't have to worry about Caroline much. I made sure she had a nice supply of vervain," I said, as I twirled about. "Although, before I dosed her, he compelled her to have no fear, so that's something we'll have to deal with,"

We danced past Matt, and I sent him an apologetic wave. I didn't want him to feel like I abandoned him for the same person Elena had.

"Well, at least there's that. Isn't there something you can do for her? Using magic, I mean?" he asked.

I frowned and shook my head. "Yeah, but it isn't an option. It's excruciating and could potentially kill her. I'm thinking I wean her off the vervain long enough for him to fix it. Under supervision, of course," I added, quickly.

We started to slow our precession across the floor long enough for Stefan to dip me. I laughed merrily and saw Damon eye us from the other side of the room. Elena sent me a dirty look as he lifted me back against him once more.

"Show off," I laughed.

He shrugged and twirled me around. I giggled and added a few flares of my own to the dance. I lifted my leg and wrapped it around his midsection, allowing him to dip me once again. While I was lowered, Damon approached us. Stefan pulled me back up, and I dropped my leg. I spun behind him and pulled him with me further onto the floor.

Damon was stuck on the other side of the room, blocked by the many people who had joined us. I noticed Stefan was beginning to lose his momentum — as he searched around for Elena. The sympathy I felt for him made my stomach churn. He was always on duty, I couldn't remember the last time I saw him genuinely having fun. Yeah, he was enjoying his time with Elena, but he was always on guard and stiff with her. I think the only person I had ever seen him let go with was our old friend Lexi. Someone he wouldn't know I had seen him with, and a friend he didn't exactly know we shared. It was just something that had never come up between us, as Lexi rarely came around. Which was why Stefan so rarely had fun.

I pulled his face in front of mine and gave him my brightest smile.

"Let's have some fun, Stefan," I said, laughing, "Dance with me,"

His eyes lit up as I swayed in front of him, waving my hands out in a 'come hither' fashion. He laughed loudly and started moving with me. I threw my arms up and just gave myself away to the music. It was the most fun I'd had in ages.
He grabbed my hands and held them in the air with his, twirling me around and around. My red hair fanned around us as the lights from above shined brightly with the music. I was laughing hysterically as Stefan gyrated towards me, his eyes shining in the twinkling lights. His face was full of joy and laughter. It was a refreshing difference, and I was glad that for just this small moment, I helped him forget who and what he was.

I saw Damon and Elena make their way through the crowd and knew our fun was over. I leaned against Stefan and whispered in his ear.

"The fun's over. I think we're in trouble. Thank you for dancing with me," I said, pulling away.

His face fell, and he leaned into me.

"No, thank you," he said simply.

As he pulled away, the song ended, and the fun suckers had joined us.

"Looks like you guys were having a blast," Damon said, his eyes flashing irritably.

I ignored his hateful tone and forced a smile for Elena.

"You have to get Stefan to dance more. He's a great dancer," I laughed.

I pulled her beside me as a new song played. She shrugged me off and frowned.

"I think we should go, El. It's getting late,"

I huffed and looked around me for Matt. Unfortunately, I couldn't see him.

"Okay, party pooper. I'm gonna look for Matt,"

As I pushed my way through the crowd, I could feel someone following me. I ignored them; instead, I continued looking around for Matt. Of course, he must have seen me with Stefan and decided to leave. I stood by the front door and debated my options. I really didn't want to go with Elena and Stefan — being the third wheel is never fun.

"Matty leave ya behind?" Damon asked from behind me.

I ground my teeth together and turned towards him.

"Yeah, looks like it. You wouldn't mind giving me a lift, would ya?" I asked exasperatedly.

I hated myself for asking. After I had found out Damon had made a move on my sister, he was the last person I wanted to be alone with.

"Sure, I can't just leave you to fend for yourself, now can I?" he said, smirking

I bit my tongue and started outside, sending Elena a text that I was on my way home. I stood beside his car until he unlocked it and then slipped inside. The driver's door opened, and he was seated before I could blink.

Stupid Vampire speed.

I turned on the air and sat back as he pulled out of the Lockwood's driveway. The tension in the air was thick, and I hated the awkwardness of it.
"So, since when are you and my brother buddy-buddy. Was it not his fault you died in our time?"

His tone was laced with venom. I closed my eyes and let out the breath I had been holding in.

"That was not his fault, and you know it. Your brother and I are on friendly speaking terms, and we were just dancing. I'm surprised you even noticed, with how enamored you are by my sister," I spat back.

His brows furrowed and his grip on the steering wheel tightened, causing his knuckles to go white.

"That wasn't what it looked like," he grumbled through clenched teeth.

I couldn't help the sarcastic laugh that escaped.

"So, the kiss you tried to share with her, was accidental than?"

I couldn't believe he was trying to tell me he had no feelings for Elena. He looked at me in surprise. Obviously, he hadn't known I had heard them.

"That was a mistake. One that won't happen again," Damon said softly.

I avoided his gaze and looked out my window.

"What you do with Lena isn't my business. You are free to try for her affection if you want. But I'm telling you right now, she is more like Katherine than either of you realize. This will not end well," I said, finally meeting his gaze.

His blue eyes were emotionless, and I hated the fact that he looked as lifeless as Stefan had. I could still remember how full of life they had once been. Katherine really had destroyed not only their relationship but their souls as well.

The car pulled up beside my house, and he shut off the engine.

"What happened to us, Elandra?" he whispered.

I kept my eyes on the house beside us.

"I don't know. We are both different people now. You fell in love with Katherine, and her love not only changed you but everything and everyone around you. We can't go back to how we used to be, Damon,"

"I really am sorry, El. I never wanted any of this to happen. I need you to know that I still love you, in spite of it all," he said.

I looked at his face and found nothing but the truth his words held, and I knew that a part of me still loved him.

"I know. I still love you too, but that doesn't change anything. You still love Katherine, and you have feelings for Elena. I can't and won't be a backup," I said.

His face filled with regret. "I wouldn't ask you to be," he said.

I opened my door and looked back at him one last time.

"Can we be friends? As cliche as that sounds." I asked, with a small smile.
He gave me his signature smirk.

"Yeah, you won't get rid of me that easily," he said.

I shook my head at him and got out of the car. I closed the door and leaned into the window.

"Of course not. Life without you? How boring," I said, with my own smirk. "Goodnight, Damon."

He smiled back at me, nodding.

"Goodnight, Elandra."
I opened the front door and was surprised to see Bonnie, waiting inside our kitchen.

"Hey, El, is Elena with you? She sent me an S.O.S. text, told me to meet her here,"


"No, she just said something about Stefan, but gave me no details,"

I chugged the entire bottle of water quickly — no way was I going to have a hangover tomorrow.

"Okay, well I'm gonna head upstairs and get outta this dress," I said.

She nodded and grabbed two containers of ice cream from the freezer. I almost laughed at her serious expression — it was as if she were preparing for battle. I grabbed another bottle of water and headed up the stairs just as Elena flew through the door, her hair was in disarray and her dress crumpled. She looked a complete mess.

"Elena...are you okay?" I asked, from my spot on the stairs.

She lifted her head and sent me a glare. "I don't know, Elara. Ask Stefan — you seem to be great friends," she spat.

My eyes widened, and my mouth fell open as I watched her storm into the kitchen.

Wow, she is really pissed.

I hurried upstairs and into my room. I stepped into my closet and took off my dress as quickly as I could. I needed to figure out what the hell had happened, and I had a terrible feeling. I grabbed a t-shirt and a pair of jeans and dressed. I put my flats back on and grabbed my cell phone just as it began to ring. I looked at the caller I.D. and was surprised to see Caroline's name and number flashing up at me. I slid my finger across the screen and answered.

"Hey, Care," I said casually.

I could hear her panicked breathing on the other end as she attempted to choke out words.

"Care, Caroline — what's wrong?" I asked urgently

"He w-wanted-" She blubbered for a moment more, squeaking through hysterics

"Calm down, I can't understand you,"
"Ellie, he wanted me to help him find a crystal. I...I'm so scared. Elena saw my neck earlier and freaked out — I think he blames me. Please, help me," Caroline cried.

I didn't even have to ask who she was talking about. I had been afraid this would happen. Elena was never one to keep her nose outta other people's business.

"Caroline, listen to me. Where are you?" I asked.

She was quiet for a moment as she took a few deep breaths. "I'm still at the Lockwoods. That's where he said he hid the crystal. He left me to go and find it, but I'm afraid he is gonna come back Ellie," she said, sniffing.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly, trying to control my emotions.

"Okay, just stay there," I said, "I'm on my way."

I hung up the phone and slid it into my back pocket. I opened my window and closed my eyes. It had been a really long time since I had attempted this spell and I wasn't sure how well it would work. I concentrated on a mental image of what I wished to become — a small falcon.

"A me intuitus facti sunt,"

I felt my body shrink down and change shape as my spell took effect. I stretched out my grey wings and lifted myself into the air. As I passed by my window, I could see my reflection in the glass. The spell worked — I had indeed become a small falcon.

My wings were mostly gray but tipped in black. My stomach and neck were covered in white feathers. I flew easily past my house and across town, enjoying the feeling of the wind in my feathers. The Falcon was my favorite form to take.

I approached the mansion and lowered myself to the ground, perching on a tree branch. I used my advanced hearing and listened carefully for any sign of Caroline. A few moments passed before I could hear her crying out.

I flew closer. I could hear her speaking to someone and lowered myself to the ground, whispering the counterspell in my mind. A small light erupted around me, and my body took its original shape.

"I swear, I didn't say..." Caroline said, crying.

I ran forward and saw Damon standing behind her with his arms around her waist.

"Shh, shh, shh. It's okay. Unfortunately...I am so over you now. El will be angry, but I'm sure she will get over it,"

Anger clouded my judgment as I rushed towards them. Power surged through me like a supercharged electrical shock — he would be sorry he messed with my best friend.

"I wouldn't, Damon," I growled angrily "I warned you and yet here we are,"

His head shot up and met my gaze, trepidation plastered to his face.

"I will never forgive you if you hurt her, Damon. Don't...please," I begged.

I didn't want to hurt him, but I would if he forced me too. Someone had to protect Caroline.

"This is who I am, El. You were the one who said we couldn't go back," he said, wrapping his
hand around Caroline's neck.

I took a step towards them. He squeezed, making Caroline cry out in pain.

"Stop, Damon! Stop!" I yelled fearfully.

I lifted both of my hands out in front of me, my breath shaking as I exhaled.

"She knows too much," he said "I have to get rid of her;"

Tears formed in my eyes as my hands started to shake.

"Don't make me do this, Damon," I pleaded "Don't make me choose — You won't like the outcome;"

It felt like time stopped as he looked at me. I could see him make his choice as his eyes filled with regret, and before he even moved a finger, I had made mine. I shook my head sadly and closed my outstretched hand. With a loud snap, he fell to the ground, temporarily dead. Caroline stood shakily where he had left her, looking at me in fear.

"Care, come here, it's okay, it's okay;"

She fell into my arms, shaking and sobbing. I looked up as a quick breeze filled the air — Stefan now stood beside his brother, staring at his limp body in shock.

"How...what happened?" he said, exasperatedly "I was coming to find him;"

I placed my hand on Caroline's forehead, and she went limp in my arms. As I laid her on the ground, a small talisman fell from her hand. I recognized it immediately; it had belonged to Emily Bennett, and I knew precisely why Damon had wanted it.

I picked it up without Stefan noticing and moved my hand above Caroline. She began to float beside me. Stefan looked at her then back at me, trying to understand.

"I snapped his neck, Stefan. He took things too far when he threatened her. I warned him..." I said, with sadness in my voice.

Stefan stepped beside me and looked Caroline over.

"Is she okay?" he asked.

I ran my fingers through her floating hair and frowned.

"Yeah, I'll handle it. She needed to rest, and I didn't want her to panic;"

He shook his head and grabbed his brother's body. He threw him over his shoulder without much effort.

"Well, I'll take care of Damon. You just handle Caroline and Elena — she's pretty pissed at us both. She thinks we were flirting, mix that with the fact that she knows I'm hiding things, and you get a furious Elena," he sighed.

I rolled my eyes at her ridiculousness and folded my fingers. Caroline moved forward as we walked away.

"How are you getting her home," Stefan asked.
I bit my lip and shrugged. "I guess the easiest way would be to send her home magically, but that spell can be complicated, and I've not been practicing."

Stefan readjusted Damon and smiled. "If anyone can do it, it's you. I better get him home and locked up."

Stefan sped away quicker than I could blink. I looked at the empty night before me and took a deep breath.

You can do this — you've done this a hundred times in the past.

I turned to face Caroline and lifted my hands above her. I closed my eyes and pictured her room in my mind. I made sure to remember every detail correctly, so I could be sure she appeared where she was supposed to.

"Mitte illam, ut ubi pertinet,"

I spoke slowly and clearly, ensuring that I was speaking the correct incantation. With a bright flash of light, she was gone. I waited for a few minutes before I pulled out my cell and called Sheriff Forbes. The phone rang a few times before she answered.

"Hello?" she asked.

I put on a fake carefree smile and made sure it was presented in the tone of my voice.

"Hey, Mrs. Forbes, Its Ellie — I just wanted to make sure Caroline made it home safely. I didn't see her when I left," I said.

There was a rustling sound on her end, and I could hear a door open.

"Yeah, she is in bed asleep. Everything okay?" she asked.

I lifted my head towards the sky and closed my eyes in relief. "Yep, just checking up on her. You know how I tend to worry,"

I could hear her close Caroline's door before speaking. "She is fine. I'll tell her you called," she said.

I said my goodbyes and slipped my phone away before I transformed and headed home.

It had been three days since the Damon and Caroline incident. Luckily I had been able to cloud Caroline's memories. The only thing that would make her remember everything was the change, and I sure as hell didn't plan on letting her become a vampire.

The Bennett Talisman sat on my bedside table as I dressed for the day. I could feel its power radiating around me. I knew it wanted to find Bonnie, and I debated on whether I should give it to her or not. I knew what it was capable of and wasn't sure If I should allow it to be used for what it was meant for. I could very easily destroy it, but it wasn't mine. I knew it shouldn't be me who decides its fate.

It was like I could feel Emily yelling at me for even considering allowing it to fall in the hands of someone who would use it to free those trapped in the tomb. After all, I was a witch and was supposed to hate vampires.

The crystal sent another burst of energy my way. I huffed and spun around to face the damned
thing.

"Okay, okay, I get it. I'll make sure you get to Bonnie," I said, exasperatedly.

I pulled my hair into a messy bun and fixed my pink tank top before grabbing the crystal and slipping it onto my neck. I patted it and sighed as I felt a surge of acceptance. It knew I wasn't planning on using it and was allowing me to wear it without pain.

"Thank you," I said.

I grabbed my car keys and slipped out my door quietly. No one else was up yet, and I didn't want to wake anyone. It was only five, and I would be flayed alive if I got caught sneaking out this early. I hopped over the squeaky step in the middle of the stairs and slipped into the kitchen. I grabbed a bottled yogurt from the fridge and tiptoed to the front door. I slowly opened it and stepped outside, then sprinted to my car.

I put my car in neutral and pushed it out of the driveway before starting it up and driving away. I grumbled for a minute, annoyed about being over a thousand years old and still having to sneak around before opening my yogurt and drinking it.

I passed by the town square, where the shops were still dark and quiet. I had always loved being up before everyone else. It was peaceful. As I passed over Wickery Bridge, I slowed my car and rolled down my window. I reached into my pocket and grabbed a penny before tossing it out my window and into the river below. It was a silly little tradition, but it was my way of remembering my parents. I continued my journey to the Salvatore boarding house and put my hand out my window so I could feel the breeze. I hated that my peaceful morning would be quickly made hectic the moment I stepped foot inside the Salvatore's house, but reminded myself that I had too. I couldn't just let Stefan handle everything with Damon — who knew what he had planned.

I pulled into their drive and tucked the crystal under my shirt before getting out of the car. I walked up to the front door and headed inside without knocking. I felt like the brothers and I were at the point in our relationship where we can be open with each other, house and all.

I checked the living room for Stefan, to no avail — he must be with Damon. I looked through the rest of the house until I came across the cellar. I listened carefully and could hear muffled voices. This must be where he is keeping Damon.

I headed down the stairs with my hands grazing the stone wall beside me. All I needed was to trip and crack my head in a house with vampires, especially one who likes to fight his true nature. As I reached the last step, I could hear Damon's voice.

"Where is my ring?" he said.

So that was Stefan's plan? Lock him down here without his daylight ring?

"Won't be needing it anymore," Stefan said.

I stood beside the entrance to the room, out of their line of sight. I was sure at least one of them had heard or smelled me, but neither acknowledged it.

"How long have I been here?" Damon asked, his voice weak.

I felt a single pang of guilt before reminding myself of what exactly had caused this to happen.

"Three days," Stefan said plainly.
I could hear someone shuffle before Damon spoke.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

I leaned against the cold stone wall and listened to Stefan describe the process of desiccation. My face scrunched up at the idea of Stefan starving him to the point of mummification.

"I've injected you with enough vervain to keep you weak. Once your circulation stops, I'll move you to the family crypt, and then in 50 years we can reevaluate," Stefan said.

I tilted my head against the wall and had a quick internal battle with myself. Could I do this to him? I knew how dangerous he was, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get the image of him when he was human out of my head. He was a good man. Was there really no saving him?

"I'm stronger than you think," Damon said weakly.

I could hear Stefan move closer to where Damon's voice could be heard.

"You always have been. But you're not stronger than the vervain, and we both know it. I'm sorry. It didn't have to be this way, but you forced my hand." Stefan said, exiting the room.

He looked at me briefly before he shut the door and locked it. He walked past me, and I stood in place. I put my forehead against the door and ground my teeth together. Dammit, why was this decision so hard? I gave the door one last look before ascending the stairs. I headed into the living room where Stefan was talking to a man, whom I guessed was the last living Salvatore.

"He's awake. He's weak, but it's probably best to stay out of the basement. I'm not sure how dangerous he still might be," Stefan explained.

I walked over to the liquor and poured myself a glass of bourbon. Stefan swiftly took the glass from me.

"It's a little early for that Ellie, don't you think?"

"Yeah, you may be right, but it's either this or deal with the extreme guilt I'm feeling right now," I muttered.

Stefan wrapped his arm around my shoulder and put his chin on my head.

"It's for the best. Damon can't be trusted."

I took the glass back from his hand and downed it in one gulp.

"Can we?" I asked shakily.

I placed the glass on the bar, more forcefully than anticipated, and walked out of the living room and towards the front door.
I opened the door to the house just as Jeremy was heading upstairs. I tossed my bag on the couch and followed him up. Oddly enough, he made his way into Elena's room. I had thought they were on the outs, but they were talking as I walked in. I ignored whatever they were saying and threw myself on Elena's bed. I wasn't much for open displays of affection, but after the crap day I'd had to deal with, I could really use a little sibling time.

"Gah, this day sucked, Lena!" I said, throwing my head in her lap and ignoring the oomph of protest that escaped her.

I covered my face with my hands and listened to her and Jeremy's conversation.

"Is Vicki in there?" she asked, nodding her head in the direction of his room.

My eyebrows rose at the revelation. Well, well, well little Jer getting it on with naughty Vic...

"You and Vic? Wow, I hope you wrapped it, Jeremy," I said without thinking.

Elena's mouth shot open, and she grabbed her pillow and used it to pummel me in the face.

"Ewww! Ellie that's disgusting. I don't wanna hear about what our brother does with Vicki or anyone else!" she shouted.

Jeremy was laughing loudly at our little display. I pulled myself away from Elena and jumped up beside Jeremy.

"What!? It's a valid and important thing to ask. I don't wanna be an auntie yet! Plus, Vic is...experienced. I just wanna make sure he is being safe," I tossed the nearby pillow at her face, then looked at Jeremy with a fixed expression. "So, you are being smart, right, Jer?"

He tried to hide the red shade the was beginning to cover his face without success. He put his hands over his eyes with a grumble. I laughed at his embarrassment and pulled his hands away, revealing his cherry red features.

"Ya know Jer, they say if you're too embarrassed to discuss sex than you're too young to be having it." I joked.

He pulled away from me and threw himself on Elena's window seat with a huff.

"We are being careful, El, and I know all about her past — it doesn't bother me," he said, indignantly
I sat back down beside Elena and laid back in her lap, shrugging.

"Okay then, that's all I wanted to know,"

Elena ran her fingers through my hair as we were all quiet for a moment.

"God, isn't it weird how adult our conversations have become? I can remember when we were all fighting over each other's toys. Where did the time go?" Elena asked.

Jeremy and I looked at her, our faces overcast with memories.

"We grew up, Lena. I miss our childhood as well but try to remember that we get to experience new things now. Like college, marriage, children," Jeremy said. "there is still so much to come,"

I quickly wiped the tears from my face as I imagined their lives. It was a sad and beautiful thought. I only wished I could be there to share it all with them.

"Ugh, enough of the heavy stuff. Now, how about we discuss why Lena is a pouty potato?" I said in a sing-song voice.

Elena smacked my forehead and sighed deeply. "I'm miserable," she said petulantly, her bottom lip sticking out a bit.

"Aww, poor little Lena. What happened?" I asked playfully.

I was hoping to lighten the mood because I knew exactly what was wrong with her. Stefan was still continuing to hide everything from her. She continued to play with my hair and looked down at me with a sullen expression.

"Stefan and I had a fight,"

My thoughts were confirmed. My eyes shifted to Jeremy, who had been tapping his foot impatiently. I could tell there was something he was hiding.

"Well, you should go get something to eat," he said.

I gave him a quizzical look as I slipped off of Elena's lap. I grabbed her hand and pulled her off the bed.

"Jeremy is right. I'm pretty sure I saw some strawberry ice cream in the freezer," I said.

I pushed her out the door and down the stairs. When I made to follow her into the kitchen, Jeremy grabbed my wrist and held me back. He put his finger against his lips and smiled at me. We waited in the living room, and I understood why as soon as Elena said Stefan's name. Jeremy pulled me back toward the stairs.

"He is gonna fix her dinner as an apology. He asked me if I'd help lure her downstairs," he said.

I shook my head and bit my bottom lip as we headed back up the stairs. "I really wanted that ice cream," I said, longingly.

Jeremy's laugh was all I heard as I pouted all the way into my room.

I was looking at myself in the mirror, eyeing my purple and black two-piece with a hateful glare. Why had I allowed myself to be talked into this stupid car wash? I wasn't even a cheerleader! I pulled at the top trying, in vain, to cover more of my cleavage. I felt incredibly exposed. My suit
was just an average two-piece, apart from the black jewel placed conveniently between my breasts, but I still felt like I was basically naked. I mean, I could remember the days when a woman would be called a whore for revealing her legs, and here I was now, leaving very little to the imagination.

Damn Caroline and her shopping addiction. I should have known she had ulterior motives for offering to buy me a swimsuit. I gave the suit one last spiteful glare before throwing on my purple shorts and a tank top. Gods, this is gonna be so humiliating...

I grabbed my matching purple flower-shaped sunglasses and hooked them onto my shirt. I quickly braided my hair and sprayed on some sunscreen before headed downstairs. Elena and Bonnie had left five minutes ago, so according to 'Caroline Standard Time,' I was running late.

I yelled my goodbyes to Jenna, who was still somewhere in the house and made my way to my car. I hopped inside and winced as my skin met the hot leather. I turned the air on full blast and switched the radio on.

I was already nodding my head to the beat of the music as I pulled out of the drive. I tapped my fingers on the steering wheel, singing along to the music when a black blur sped past my window. I screamed and tried to keep from swerving when I noticed a crow flying towards the windshield.

At the last minute, it changed direction and once again flew past my window. My breathing was rapid and substantial as I tried to calm myself down. My mind raced frantically when I realized that the crow had been much more than a bird. It was Damon.

I turned into the school parking lot and parked my car. I leaned into the steering wheel and let a few tears escape. He was calling for me, but what could I do? He was dangerous and explosive — he would be out for revenge, and that would lead to so much unnecessary loss. I heard a loud whistle and wiped my face before looking out my windshield to see Caroline. She threw up her hands and ushered for me to get out of the car. I waved and took a deep breath as I climbed out. I locked my car and ran over to Caroline, who was talking to a small group of people all wearing their own suits of torture.

"No friend discounts. No freebies. No pay-ya-laters. We are not running a charity here," Caroline barked, her hands on her hips, "No, we are not,"

I stood next to Elena and Bonnie, both smiling at Caroline in exasperation.

"No, we are not," Elena whispered, with barely restrained laughter.

I kept my mouth closed; too many thoughts stole any amusement I could have felt at Caroline's forceful attitude. Caroline looked down at her clipboard and began barking orders. I looked over to see Stefan heading towards us and sidestepped away from him. I wasn't ready to talk to him yet. My guilt was still too thick. I wasn't sure what he would do if he knew Damon was calling out to me. Luckily I was distracted by the hurricane that was Caroline Forbes.

"The event is called Sexy Suds, ya know. Why are you still dressed?" she asked.

I looked down at my shorts and tank top with a sigh and pulled my shirt off over my head. As I was slipping off my shorts, I could see Elena and Stefan kissing off to the side. I almost tripped in a mild shock. It was so strange seeing them kiss. All I could see was Katherine, which confused me because oddly enough, I never saw Katherine when I looked at Elena...until now.

"Okay, put your clothes in your bag and head over to Bonnie and Matt. You'll be pairing off with Matt while Bon works with Tiki and Tyler," Caroline ordered.
I looked away from the little public display of affection that had me baffled and moved over to Matt. I could see Matt was feeling just as sick by Elena and Stefan's presentation as I was.

"Uh-uh, no. None of that tortured pining stuff," Bonnie told him.

I couldn't help but smile at this.

"I'm just observing," Matt said.

I patted his shoulder as I passed him. I put my clothes in my bag and laid it on the ground next to Bonnie's stuff.

"Okay, let's get soapy," I said, earning a laugh from Matt.

I grabbed a sponge and began washing the red car in front of me. I ignored the stares I was getting from the guy we were washing the car for. I jumped slightly when the grey figure of Rebekah appeared beside him. She was looking him over with disgust on her face.

"God, look at this guy, Ellie — as if he'd ever have a shot with you. Ugh, he is disgusting!" she said aghast.

I bit back my retort, knowing how crazy I would look just carrying on a discussion with an invisible person. I continued to wash the windows trying to avoid the water Matt was flinging at me.

"Ya know, I have a few brothers that would love to meet you. One in particular," Rebekah said to the man who was now greedily staring at my ass.

I stood and adjusted my suit in embarrassment. Matt noticed my unease and grabbed the bucket of water that sat between us. He caught the eye of Tyler, who was standing behind the guy. They both tossed their buckets of water at the creep. Rebekah jumped out of the way, even though she didn't need to, just as the water hit him. He screamed in surprise and started to chase Matt and Tyler around the car. They were both laughing and shooting me smiles. I giggled along with Bonnie, who had used her powers to splash a rude Tiki after she had started whining about us mistreating the customers. Our fun was quickly ruined when Caroline stomped towards us in a blonde storm of fury.

"What are you guys doing?" she yelled.

We all looked at one another, all speaking at once. Caroline grabbed the creep by his ear and pulled him towards his car.

"Get outta here," she said.

The guy flipped her off and jumped into his still soapy car and sped off.

"Elena is out of towels and those shimmy things," Caroline told me pointedly.

I nodded sheepishly, "I'll go get some," I said, smiling back at Matt and Tyler.

They saluted me as I walked away and towards the school. The cold air greeted me and sent a shiver down my spine as I entered the empty halls. The eeriness of it all made me jump when my shoes squeaked on the freshly waxed floor. I kept my head down and tried to ignore the weird feeling that walking through the halls at school in my bikini gave me. I could honestly say it was an experience I never wanted to repeat. Finally, I reached the supply closet. I made to open the
door when a shadow at the other end of the hall made me stop.

"Hello? Care?" I said, squeezing my eyes shut in annoyance.

I was the dumb girl at the beginning of every scary movie ever. I grabbed the handle of the door and pulled it open — I was not getting killed today. I grabbed what I needed and kicked the door closed behind me. I quickly headed back the way I came when I heard a familiar, pleading voice behind me.

Dammit.

Slowly I turned around to see a flickering version of Damon.

"Elandra. Elandra, help me. Help me,"

I stomped my foot down in anger when the image flickered again and disappeared. He was totally gonna make me regret this. I dropped the towels and ran outside to my car.

I sped towards the Boarding House, slamming my hands on the wheel repeatedly.

"Fuck, Fuck, Fuck!" I yelled with every hit.

What the hell was I doing? He was going to hurt people! Yet, I couldn't turn around, not after hearing his voice call to me. He was still my Damon and was once my best friend, and I would be damned if I left him to mummify and suffer.

I wasn't the kind of person to leave him like this — It was almost like another curse. I trusted and saved people until I had nothing left to give. Angry tears filled my eyes, but I refused to let them fall. I would just have to deal with whatever this caused. I could bury the guilt — I had too.

My tires squealed as I sped into their drive. I had to hurry; I wasn't sure how long Stefan would be gone.

Stefan, Gods he was gonna hate me.

I shook my head forcefully, I didn't have time for depressing thoughts. I entered the house quickly and scanned my surroundings for Zach. Luckily I found him on the couch asleep. I quietly stepped beside him and touched his head, causing him to fall into a deeper sleep — I didn't want him to get hurt. I would hate to be the reason the Salvatore bloodline was lost.

"Elandra, please," Damon said, his voice lilting through the air almost seductively.

I ran to the cellar door and carefully took the narrow steps one at a time. I finally made it to the door and looked in through the tiny window.

"You called?" I said sarcastically.

His eyes were lifeless, and his face was a sickly pale color. He licked his dry, cracked lips, and I could see his hunger. I felt pity surge in me, and I started to unbolt the door. I stopped and looked him over again.

"Don't kill me, Damon," I said.

His blue eyes cleared for a brief moment as he took in my words.

His weak face turned grave, " I would never hurt you, Elandra," he said, his voice dry.
The corner of my mouth lifted in a sad smile, "Now we both know that's not true, Damon," I whispered.

He turned away from me and started to fall, his strength giving out. I swung the door open and lowered myself down next to him, only just then noticing I hadn't changed from my bikini. I shifted slightly and felt the rush of blood in my neck and face. I sat on my knees and lifted his heavy head onto my shoulder.

"Damon, Damon! I'm gonna need you to drink, okay," I said.

His eyes were closed, and breathing was erratic. I looked around in panic. My gaze landed on a jagged stone by my foot, and I grabbed it in determination. I held the cold stone in my shaky hand and took a deep breath.

"Okay. Okay, I can do this," I whispered.

I took the sharper end of the stone and laid it against my neck, I dug it into my skin and let out a rush of air through my teeth. I could feel blood trickling down my throat as I tossed the rock behind me. Grabbing Damon's head, I laid his lips against my neck. I let out a relieved laugh as he started to lick the blood from my skin. I kept my eyes on the wall in front of me when he began to hold his own weight. A jab of pain told me he had finally inserted his fangs into the small gash I had made. He wrapped his arms around me and held me close as he drank my life's blood. The hand I had on his shoulder started to falter as I grew weaker — he was taking too much.

"Damon," I murmured, barely able to keep myself awake.

Slowly he pulled away, allowing me to see his vampiric face. It was frighteningly beautiful. In my weakened state, my mind was having trouble processing what was happening, but I was almost certain he let out a pained moan when I ran my fingers across the black veins under his eyes. My eyelids fluttered closed, and my hand dropped from his face.

"El, stay with me. Here, drink," Damon rushed out.

I could feel his wrist on my lips, and I parted them as best I could as the salty, coppery taste of his blood filled my mouth. I gagged and tried to spit it out, but he kept my head still and bent down to my ear, "You have to swallow it, sweetie. I took too much, and you're weak," he mumbled in my ear.

My mind caught up finally, and I allowed myself to accept his blood. I instantly felt better and let him help me sit up. I ran my hand across my mouth and wiped the red liquid from the lips. I looked up at his nervous face and couldn't help but grin at him.

"Well, that was something," I said.

He chuckled and stood up in front of me, offering his hand.

"Thank you for helping me, El," he said.

I brushed off the dirt from my legs.

"But, you didn't have to dress so...provocatively," he slyly said, obviously knowing how uncomfortable I felt.

I slapped his arm and growled, less than menacingly, at him. A noise from above drew our attention to the fact that we were not alone.
"That's Zach. Please don't hurt him, Damon. He is still your family, please," I begged him, taking hold of his arm.

He pulled me into his arms and kissed the top of my head.

"Okay, as long as he doesn't try anything, I will let him live. But, Stefan is gonna pay, El," he said menacingly.

I looked up at his face the pale grey look was gone. He was back to his annoyingly beautiful self.

"Just leave Elena out of it," I said.

He kissed my head again, lingering for a brief moment before, with a rush of air, he was gone. I looked around at the dark and empty cellar with dread filling me. Things were about to go to hell.
The sun shone brightly as I laid in the soft grass. I shielded my eyes with my hands and looked up at the blue sky. The only clouds in sight were thin wisps of fluff, proof that it would remain a beautiful day. The heaviness of my thick purple dress the only thing stopping me from climbing the plush trees surrounding me. I've always thought it so unfair that women were limited by such outrageous attire, especially in the stifling heat that accompanied this time of year. I removed my hand from my face when a rustling met my ears. I sat up slowly, once again hating the ridiculous corsets I was required to wear and looked past the trees. I prayed the intruder was just an animal, and not one of my prankster little brothers.

"Joseph, Gerald?" I called.

When I wasn't met with an answer, I used the nearest tree to gain an aerial view. I brushed the grass and dirt from my gown and climbed into the trees and casually glanced around me. I was still unsure of what, or who, had made the noise, and I was starting to worry. It was only last year that I turned 16, and remembered the many lives I lived before this one. It had been a wake-up call to finally know what dangers lie in the shadows. From that point on, I made sure to stay aware of my surroundings. I stopped in my tracks when a stick broke behind me. My heart sped up, and I placed my shaking hands at my side.

"Hello?" I called out.

I turned in a circle, my newfound magic crackling quietly in my palm. I was untrained in the art of magic and tried to keep myself under control. I was afraid someone would find out and hunt me down, so I pulled my hands against my chest and took a deep breath. I struggled to control my emotions, it wouldn't be smart to lash out and reveal myself.

I turned around and stared into the empty woods. I couldn't see anyone or anything, but that didn't mean I wasn't being followed. I started to back up until I hit something hard and warm. I let out a startled scream and spun around, causing myself to trip and fall back. I threw my hands out in an attempt to catch myself, and a warm, sweaty hand grabbed mine. I was pulled back against the chest of whomever I had run into. I pushed away and stomped my heeled shoe against their foot. I grasped the bottom of my dress and started to run towards the manor, hoping I would find a servant near the entrance of our property. I could hear the person I hit, a male by the sound of their voice, crying out in pain.

"Elandra, wait! Please, I'm sorry!"

I slowed my retreat and turned towards the familiar voice. Damon was leaning against a tree, his dark suit splattered with mud and dirt. He had one leg lifted from the ground and a pained
expression on his face. I dropped my gown with a small nervous giggle.

"Damon?" I asked.

I ran towards him, grabbing my fan from the pocket of my gown. I smacked his arm with it repeatedly,

"You- nearly- scared- me- to- death," I growled, enunciating each word with a hard smack to his upper arm.

He attempted to shield himself with his hands and step backward away from me but failed miserably.

"Ah, Elandra! I apologize — I didn't mean to frighten you,"

I huffed in a mixture of annoyance and exhaustion, my restrictive gown making the physical exertion of lashing out at Damon extremely difficult. I placed my hands on my hips and stared him down. His raven black hair was wet with perspiration and sticking to his forehead. His eyes were as blue as the sky as he stared at me pleadingly. This silly man was impossible to stay angry with. I bit my lip, trying to keep an annoyed expression on my face instead of the smile that threatened to escape. I obviously wasn't fairing very well, because his pleading appearance lifted into a bright and cheerful smile. He knew all too well that he was my greatest weakness, and he could get away with almost anything.

I stomped my foot in a very unladylike manner and sighed, "You're forgiven, Mr. Salvatore," I said.

He pushed himself from the tree and took my hands in his.

"Well, that is an excellent thing, Ms. Miller, because I don't think my poor heart could handle knowing you were angry with me,"

The smirk on his lips was all too enticing. This man would surely be the death of me.

He kissed my cheek gently and with great care. I ran my hands through his hair and nuzzled against his broad chest. He felt safe.

Being with him was something I would never tire of. He kissed my head and slowly pulled away from me. He leaned down and placed a gentle kiss against my lips — he tasted like heaven. I moved my lips with his in well-practiced unison. After what felt like only seconds, he pulled away and took in a few deep breaths. I smirked at his disheveled appearance. His face was red, his eyes dilated and dark. I gave him a moment to collect himself and adjusted my gown. I loved these stolen moments with Damon, but for some reason, I was feeling a bit strange all of a sudden. A frown marred my features when a peculiar image crossed my mind. Where Damon had once stood, another appeared in his place. The man was of similar height and build as Damon, but his shoulder-length hair was a dirty blonde instead of Damon's black. I looked up into his eyes which were a beautiful blue-green that left me with a strange feeling of awe. The handsome, dimpled smile that graced his lips made his entire face light up. His eyes looked down at me warmly, and I couldn't help the feeling of adoration that gripped my heart tightly. I've seen this man many times in dreams and memories, but why had he crossed my mind now? It felt like I was betraying Damon and I hated it, yet even so, when I shook the thought from my head, and Damon was once again the man in front of me, I felt a sharp stab of pain in my chest. Niklaus, his name had been Niklaus. I felt fingers on my chin, and my face was pulled up to meet the worried eyes of my future husband.

"Are you feeling well?" he asked in concern.
I pushed the memories of Niklaus back into the recesses of my mind and smiled.

"Yes, I am well. Just tired and a bit overheated," I said softly.

He removed his hand from my face and guided me from the woods, towards my father's property.

"Let's get you indoors. Stefan is waiting with Joseph and Gerald. I'm sure they will want to go riding later,"

In the distance, I could finally see the manor and was relieved. The strange memory that plagued me left me exhausted and ashamed. I held Damon's hand tightly within my own and looked up to him. His eyes were bright as he spoke of going riding with Stefan and my brothers. It was their favorite past time, and I loved to see them so carefree. I nodded at the appropriate moments so that he would think I was listening to him — which I was, just not as aptly as I usually did. I just couldn't shake off the memory of Niklaus.

"Elandra, Damon!" Stefan called from the garden.

I looked up and waved. To my amusement, Stefan was carrying a large bundle of red roses. My mother would be angry with him. She hated it when he messed with her roses, which I'm sure is why he continued to do so. He, like my brothers, loved working my mother into a frenzy. Damon guided me up the stone steps and into the brilliantly colorful garden.

"Hello, Stefan. My mother will be very put out with you. You know her roses are off-limits," I said, taking the proffered roses.

His face lit up in a dazzling smile as he leaned in to kiss my cheek in greeting. His bronze hair was ruffled and windswept. I brushed it from his forehead with a light chuckle.

"I see you have already been roughhousing with my darling brothers," I said.

He patted Damon on the shoulder and smirked at me, "You have to watch out for this one brother. You can't get anything past her," he jokingly said.

Damon leaned down and kissed my hand, his eyes full of love, "Oh, I know, brother. I quite enjoy the way she keeps me on my toes,"

I grinned at their banter and shook my head. Lifting my skirt as I continued past them, "I best put these into some water. Please, don't wait for me, enjoy yourselves. I'm sure Jo has already prepared the horses,"

I looked back at them, using the roses to point towards the stables. Stefan took Damon's elbow and made a scene of guiding him away from me.

"You will see her again! I know the separation is painful, but you must go on! I'm sure the beautiful Elandra could use some peace and quiet for a change," he hollered in a mocking tone.

Damon pulled Stefan under his arm and ground his knuckles into his head. I could still hear Stefan's protests as I closed the door. I watched them from the kitchen window wrestling with one another all the way down the hill that led to the stables. Once they were out of sight, I put the roses in a vase on the table next to me. I sat down on the wooden stool near the window and looked up at the sky, which no longer reminded me of Damon's eyes, but that of another.
I woke up with a start. The dream, or memory, was one I hadn't thought of in some time. What had brought that on? Was it my recent time with Damon, or the fact that for the first time in centuries, I would soon be seeing Niklaus again?

I pulled my red hair from my face and rubbed my eyes with the heel of my palm. Ugh, this was not what I needed right now. It was as if the past was trying to come back and bite me in the ass. I rolled over and screeched lightly when I noticed someone in bed with me. I started swatting at whoever it was and moved away. I had not seen how close I was to the edge of my bed until it was too late. I fell onto the floor with a loud thud, my blanket tangled around my ankles. On the bed above me, I could hear someone gasping.

"What the hell, Ellie?" Elena hollered.

Her head appeared over the edge of the bed, a disgruntled look on her face. Her brown hair was wild and matted. "Why did you attack me like that?" she snapped.

I pulled my feet from the confines of my blanket and snorted in laughter. I should have known it was Elena. Sneaking into my bed used to be one of her favorite past times.

"I'm so sorry, Lena! I had a crazy dream, and I think I was still half asleep," I explained through my laughter.

She reached over the bed and helped me back up. Grabbing the cover from the floor, I laid back down and tossed it over our legs. She snuggled close to me and put her head on my shoulder. I turned my head and looked at the clock on my bedside table. 3:25 AM; why the hell was I awake so early?

"You ok, Lena? It's been a while since I found you in bed with me," I whispered.

She sighed and burrowed her face deeper into my shoulder. "Yeah, just a weird dream. I came in here around one," she mumbled.

I rested my chin on her head and played with her hair.

"What was the dream about Lena?"

I found it odd that we both had been woken up by bizarre dreams. Something wet hit my skin, and I knew she was crying.

"It was about you," she sniffed.

My brows furrowed and I continued to play with her hair. I knew she needed a minute to collect herself.

"It was your birthday, and we were driving along Wickery Bridge, and suddenly I lost control of the car. It was like it deliberately steered us over the edge. I could hear you screaming for me to get out, but I couldn't find you. I swam out and caught my breath, but when I went back down no matter what I did, I couldn't find you," she sobbed.

I was shocked into silence. It was like she knew about my curse — but that was impossible.
"I couldn't find you, Ellie," she gasped.

I held her close and rocked her in my arms, just the way our mother used to anytime we cried.

"Shh, it's ok, Lena. I'm right here. You don't have to find me because I'll always find you, always, I promise."

I hated that this promise was one I would have to break. Someday soon a version of her dream would come true. That night, I rocked her until we both fell asleep.
Chapter 11

***A/N: Please let me know what you think. I hope the discussion Damon and Elara have at the end isn't confusing and too hard to believe. It just popped into my head and I went with it. Let me know if you have any questions. Just so you know, we will be getting to Elijah and Klaus - just not yet. I know, I know - we all love the originals, but we have to get through a few more plot points before then. So until then, as always, please review. This chapter has been edited by my Beta Casey.***

My screeching alarm clock woke me from a dreamless sleep — one I was extremely grateful for.

A tickling sensation on my cheek alerted me that Elena was still sleeping next to me. I brushed her hair off my face and wiggled my nose to rid it of the annoying itch. I gently pulled my arm from underneath her and slid from the bed silently. I couldn't help but smile as I looked down at her sleeping, hair a tangled mess and mouth ajar. She drooled onto the pillow, and I contemplated taking a picture to use as blackmail at a later time.

There was no denying that she was a Petrova. With that came acts of selfishness and an incredible ability to pit brothers against one another. On the other hand, she was still my sister and had the potential to be an astounding person. She just needed a little help, that's all.

I removed the hair that had started to cover her face as she tossed and turned. There was something more than last night's dream bothering her, and I was going to find out exactly what that was. I sighed as her face scrunched with sadness and shook my head at the misfortune of what life had brought us. Sleeping in front of me was a beautiful young woman whose life was about to change drastically. She would be thrust into the supernatural, no matter how much I wished to prevent it. Even if I cruelly asked Stefan to leave, she would still be entangled in the supernatural world.

As I watched her, a feeling of resolve settled within me — I would try to protect her from what was coming. There was only so much I would be able to do, but I would still try. I almost laughed out loud when I realized she had gotten to me, the little Petrova brat! Admittedly, she had always had me wrapped around her finger, but now, I was simply no longer fighting it. She was my sister in this life, after all.

I grabbed some clothes from my closet and headed into the bathroom for a shower. When I was finishing up, I heard someone close the door to my room, and I peeked my head out of the bathroom. The steam followed me as I exited, and I tightened my hold on the towel that was
wrapped around my body. My wet hair stuck to the side of my face as I peered around my empty room. Elena must have woken up, I'm sure that was all I heard.

I locked my bedroom door and pulled the towel from my body. I was just putting on my black underwear when I noticed someone on my bed. I screamed and grabbed the towel, covering myself in panic. I growled loudly when I saw it was just Rebekah, smiling at me mischievously.

"Damn you, Rebekah Mikaelson," I panted, "Damn you to the pits of hell!"

I controlled my breathing and reached for my bra, which I had dropped in my rushed attempt to cover myself. Rebekah was perched on the end of my bed, her legs crossed and curly blonde hair bouncing slightly as she threw her head back in laughter.

"I can't say I'm sorry El, that was hilarious. Besides, it's not like you have something I've never seen before," she giggled.

I hid in my closet and quickly threw on some jeans and one of my favorite band tees, the fantastic, amazing Linkin Park. I sat down at my vanity a moment later, looking at myself in the mirror. I brushed my fingers across the dark circles that had formed under my dull green eyes. The night before had taken the brightness from not only my eyes but my skin as well. I looked paler than typical, dry, and dehydrated.

I ran my hairbrush quickly through my knotted hair, wincing when I met a particularly rough patch. I grabbed a black hair tie and threw my hair up into a messy bun, too exhausted to care what I looked like.

"You look as bad as I do," Rebekah said.

I sent her an artfully evil glare, one her Hybrid brother would be proud of, and stood, grabbing my jacket.

"I feel like death Beka. You should pity anyone who stands in my way today. I think I could even take on an Original if I had too," I said, my voice dry.

As she stood, I couldn't help but notice how her gray skin matched by carpet almost exact. My stomach rolled, and I knew I'd never been able to get that image from my head.
"Well, someone is in a mood today," she said, looking into my eyes with worry.

I brushed past her and grabbed my dirty clothes from the floor, "I had a strange dream last night and then woke up to Elena in bed with me. Something similar happened to her, she had a nightmare of my death...on my birthday…"

I was unable to finish my sentence. Rebekah froze, her face a picture of pure shock,

"She saw your death? But how is that possible? You haven't told her, and if someone else had she would have freaked and blown up!"

I nodded in agreement. If Elena had found out, I would have had an outraged sister on my hands. There was no way she could hide knowing about my curse from me.

"I agree, and that proves that something else is going on. I don't think she had a premonition but the idea that she saw my death happening on my birthday—" I paused for a moment as I tossed my clothes into the hamper. "that is too close for comfort. Something is going on, and I need to find out what before she starts asking questions."

I crossed arms and looked down at the floor.

"I don't want anyone else knowing what is going to happen. I don't want them being forced to live with that knowledge,"

Rebekah tapped her foot on the floor her face scrunched up in thought, "Oh my God! The Salvatore, they know about your curse!" she exclaimed, snapping her fingers. "What if they put the thought in her mind? You know that's something vampires can do."

I found it odd she could still snap her fingers, even though she was all but transparent. I thought over her idea, and the more I did, the more it made sense. It would be the perfect way for them to tell her without breaking the promise they had made to me. My lousy mood worsened at their potential betrayal.

"You're right, that is something they would do, especially Damon. The dream I had was more of a
memory — one starring him of course," I hit my forehead with my hand repeatedly, "Stupid, stupid. How did I not even consider that?" I said in exasperation.

Rebekah picked at her white flapper dress, lost in thought.

"Well, I say you go to their house and find out. If they did this, you can't let them get away with it," she said.

I looked at my adopted sister, smiling at the determination in her expression. She surprised me, even after all these years she was still so strong.

"That's exactly what I plan to do. I'm gonna get some answers. I don't have time for all this extra drama," I growled, "I swear if it was one of the Salvatores, I will not be very kind."

I grabbed my car keys and headed towards Elena's room. Her room was dark and empty,

Great, where had she disappeared too?

I walked downstairs and found the rest of the house empty as well. I took my bag from the table beside the door and left the empty house behind.

I drove to the Grill after receiving no answer when I called Elena and Jeremy. The Salvatores and any of their little tricks were just going to have to wait until I knew what had Elena so on edge.

I pulled into the Grill and hopped out of the car. Heading inside, I was greeted with the familiar smell I had come to associate with Mystic grill — food, alcohol, and tobacco. They were fairly busy, even though it was still early in the day, but this was a small town. For the younger crowds, it was pretty much the only place to hang out on a Saturday.

I looked around and noticed Damon wasn't at the bar. He must still be missing his ring, something I knew would have him in a violent rage. At least I had a pretty good idea where I could find him. My eyebrow rose when I noticed Elena and Stefan speaking earnestly in a booth towards the back. Elena looked about as bad as I did, her face stressed and pale. I gave Stefan a once over and could see the fear he was trying very hard to hide. After growing up with him, it was easy to catch all the telltale signs that he was barely hanging on — whatever it was that he was discussing with Elena was a big deal. There was only one thing that could be causing this much stress on both sides —
she had found out.

I had to admit I was a bit relieved. I had begun to fear it had something to do with Katherine secretly lurking here in Mystic Falls. I casually put my hands in my jacket pockets and strolled towards their table. When I was close enough to hear a bit of their conversation, I lowered myself to the floor and started messing with the shoestrings of my pink converse.

"You said you would explain everything — that's why I asked you to meet me here," Elena asked harshly, "When you google vampire you get a world of fiction. What's the reality?"

So, they hadn't gotten very far into everything... yet. I stood up and looked around; neither of them were being very careful, and I was afraid the wrong person would hear something they shouldn't. When I was satisfied that no one was listening, I quickly sat down next to Stefan with a fake smile plastered on my face. Time to get this over with — it would do no one any good if she tried to hide the world I already knew about from me.

"Hey, Lena, everything ok? You both seem stressed," I said, throwing my arm over Stefan's shoulder.

He gave me an 'Are you serious' expression, which I, of course, ignored. Elena looked at Stefan in fear and tried to smile at me, but her nervousness shone through her doe eyes.

"Elara, this is actually a private conversation... could you wait at another table for me?"

I pulled my arm away from Stefan and kept my eyes on hers. I tilted my head to the side and gave her a sarcastic half-smile.

"Oh, Lena. No, this isn't a private conversation, because I could hear everything you were saying as I walked up," I said, turning towards Stefan. "You should use those enhanced senses to make sure no one is listening if you plan on having such an important conversation in a public place."

Elena's eyes widened in fear as her cheeks inflamed. She pulled her brown hair from her eyes and tried to act casual, "Ellie, that was a joke between us. You can't honestly believe any of it," she laughed sarcastically.

I leaned back in my seat and smiled at her. She had a sheen of sweat covering her forehead — she
was anxious. Stefan kept his face down, but I could see him fighting a growing smirk.

I leaned my head against his shoulder and whispered low enough for only him to hear, "I'm going to tell her the basics later today, say anything else, and I'll make sure I show you how good I am at giving a witchy migraine."

A thick promise of pain was layered in my voice; I would deal with his possible betrayal later. He stiffened beside me and gave me a questioning look. I squinted my eyes at him and shook my head. I turned back to Elena, who was watching us with annoyance and concern.

"Elena, I know about Stefan and Damon. I've known since day one," I said.

Her brown eyes filled with anger, and I watched several expressions fight for dominance on her face. Her jaw was tight, and she was opening her mouth to speak when I held up my hands and stopped her,

"Listen, I told Stefan to tell you. I never planned on keeping you in the dark, and you should know on my end that there is more to this than just their secret," my voice was firm as I spoke. "but I can't discuss it here, and I'd rather do it with Jer present as well,"

Stefan turned towards me in surprise. I frowned at him until I realized he thought I meant to tell her about the curse. I bit my lip and ignored him for now.

"So, I'll let you finish your conversation," I said motioning for the nearby waitress. "But when you're done, I want you to call me, and we will go home for our own."

A bleach blonde waitress sauntered up, staring at Stefan in admiration. "What can I get you?" she asked sweetly, still keeping her eyes on him.

I gave her an annoyed expression and turned towards Stefan smiling sweetly. "Could you get me a shot of Vodka, please?" I said, sticking my bottom lip out. I used my best sisterly puppy dog eyes. "I'm gonna need it today," I said.

He sighed loudly and avoided Elena, who was staring at us with her mouth hanging open.
He looked at the waitress with a smile and spoke slowly and softly. "You're going to get my friend here two shots of Vodka, no questions asked," he said.

The woman blinked once and repeated what he had told her in a monotone voice. She walked away, and I watched as she poured my shots. I bounced lightly in my seat and smiled at him brightly. Compulsion was one skill I'd love to have.

"What the hell was that?" Elena scoffed.

I looked at her and shrugged. "It's called compulsion, Lena. It's a very handy little skill that all vampires possess. Stefan will explain more."

The waitress brought over my shots, handing them to me with a blank expression. I looked down at them lovingly and downed the first with only a slight grimace. Before I could pick up the second, it was gone. I looked at Stefan and scrunched up my nose at him.

"That was evil!" I gasped.

He sat down the empty shot glass and smirked, "One is plenty for you. It's early, Elandra."

It took a second for my brain to realize what he had just said. I had started to get used to them using my old name, but my eyes widened when I realized he had used it in front of Elena. I ground my teeth together, and his face paled when he realized his mistake.

"Elandra? Who's that?" Elena asked.

I looked down at the table and inspected the worn wood like it was the most exquisite table in the world.

"Elara...?"

Elena's voice rose an octave as she spoke. Stefan kicked my shin, jerking my head upward and forcing me to look at her.
"Nothing," I said dismissively, "something we can talk about later."

I hoped this would deter her from thinking about it right now. I looked at Stefan with a blank face.

"You're paying," I said with a matter of fact tone. I rose from the booth and looked at my sister "Call me when you're done, Lena."

I walked towards the exit as fast as I could. Damn those loud-mouthed Salvatores! I got in my car and sat back for a minute, contemplating what had just happened. With a small sigh, I started the engine and drove towards the Boarding House — I might as well get this conversation over with too.

When I arrived at the Boarding House, I immediately knew something wasn't right. I could sense it. I had always had a second sense about these things — one the perks of being a witch for so long.

I got out of the car and looked around. The atmosphere was eerie and stiff, like something out of a horror movie. What had Damon gotten himself into now? I rubbed my forehead and closed my eyes tightly. I should just force him to listen to me about Katherine — at least then he would consider leaving. My eyes opened slowly as the thought crossed my mind. Was that what I wanted, really?

I pulled off my jacket and tossed it through my open window and into the back seat of the car. While I walked up to the front porch, I pulled my shirt down and tightened my hair. Fidgeting had always been one of my tells, but it was something I couldn't seem to stop doing when I was nervous. Even though I knew I could protect myself, I still felt utterly terrified of what I might find inside. I didn't want to see Damon as the monster he claimed to be. I had already seen him attempt to hurt Caroline; I wasn't sure how much more I could see without hating him, and I was more afraid of hating him then of what he had become. I sometimes feared that accepting what he was and that he sometimes killed people made me a horrible person, but truth be told, I'm a firm believer that vampires shouldn't fight their true nature. They were natural born killers, and as long as they killed for food and not fun, I was perfectly fine with it.

When I reached the door, my hand hovered over the knob as I debated whether I should knock or just go in. Damon probably already knew I was here anyway, and without his ring, he couldn't answer. I shook my head and mentally slapped myself, then grabbed the knob and pushed the door open. I walked through the entryway and looked around, but didn't find Damon until I walked into the living room. He stood in the adjacent dining room with his back to me. His cell was against his ear, and he was jabbering, his voice firm and angry.
"Where are you, Stefan? I'm trapped at the house — I'm getting really bored and really impatient, and I don't do bored and impatient," he growled. "Bring me my ring," he walked back into the living room, his phone held tightly in his hand.

"Damn it!" he spat.

He walked over to the bar and filled a glass with bourbon, downing the amber liquid in one swift motion. I toed the rug with my shoe and was just about to speak when I noticed someone on the couch. I could smell something coppery in the air and my stomach twisted. I rushed over and bent down beside the couch — it was Vicki Donovan.

She was lying still, barely breathing, and smelling of blood and gasoline. I scrunched up my nose and removed the hand towel that was being used to cover her neck. The blood was starting to dry in places, so her skin pulled when I moved it away. I winced on her behalf, but she didn't make a sound. Honestly, she looked too weak to care.

"What is this, Damon? Why are you playing with her?" I said, placing the towel back on her neck and applying pressure. "She looks like death! What were you thinking?!!"

I yelled loudly, fury in my voice. He placed his glass on the bar and calmly walked over to us.

"Aw, don't get blood on the couch!" he said exasperatedly.

I looked at him in horror. He took the towel and moved it away; this time, Vicki tried to protest.

"Please?" Damon asked with false politeness. "I got you good, didn't I?" he said, eying the deep wound on the side of her neck.

My mouth was still agape as he sighed deeply and stared down at her in boredom. Would he seriously go this far just to have something to occupy his time? This was exactly what I was afraid of. I've been around many vampires in my time, but never long enough to deal with acts like this. I had witnessed them feed and taunt, but never had I seen one play with their food — not like this.

"What the hell, Damon?" I asked, throwing my hand in the air, still in shock. "Why did you do this
to her?” I questioned.

He looked at me, his face empty of emotion. Even his crystal eyes were vacant, almost like he had flipped the switch. If I hadn’t known him for as long as I had, that would be precisely what I thought. Luckily, I knew that he was pushing everything down, but it was still there — he just wanted people to believe he was an unfeeling monster. No, I could fight for his humanity, not only for his sake but for Stefan’s as well. I wasn’t able to save them the first time, but I could now—I had to at least try.

"What? I had to feed, and for some reason, this girl just didn't seem to want to die. So, I brought her here,” he shrugged. "I'm bored, Ellie," he finished, his voice lacking any emotion.

I sat back on the table behind me and lifted my head to the sky as if asking for divine intervention. Honestly, at this point, I sort of was asking for divine intervention.

"Well, you're not gonna be any fun today," he whispered to Vicki.

I lowered my head and watched him closely as he stood up and walked to the side of the couch where her head rested. I tilted my head to the side, shaking it in disappointment. I knew trying to intervene wouldn't make a bit of difference. If he wanted a plaything, he would have one.

"I'm so gonna regret this," he sighed and bit into his wrist.

There was a ripping sound when his teeth met his flesh, and I shivered. He bent down and placed his now bleeding wrist to Vicki’s mouth. I looked away in slight disgust as she struggled.

"Drink up. Drink up. Don't drip," Damon said gently, running his other hand over the side of her face in an almost loving manner.

After a few seconds, she finally gave in and drank from him deeply.

"There you go, good girl, that's it," he praised softly.

I felt sickened, and I was sure that's exactly what he wanted. Instead of running from the room, I
decided to play along. At least then I could keep an eye on them.

I remained on the table with my arms crossed and watched as her wound healed almost instantly. When her eyelids fluttered, I stood and walked over to the bar. I grabbed a glass and filled it to the brim with Damon's Bourbon. I heard him compel Vicki to go upstairs and take a shower, but I kept my gaze on the glass in my hand. I listened to her footsteps recede as she headed upstairs. I took a drink and enjoyed the burn as it slid down my throat. Sometimes I still couldn't believe that this was what my life had become.

I sensed Damon behind me but ignored him.

"You gonna stick around for the party, love?" He whispered in my ear, his breath was warm and smelt of blood. The coppery scent made my stomach swirl.

I turned around and meet his heated gaze. He was testing me, and I knew it.

"Yeah, I think I will. I have nothing else to do today. It'll give me the chance to make sure you don't fuck this up even more than you already have," I said, sitting my glass down without breaking eye contact. "Oh, and don't call me love," I leaned into him and ran my nose across his jaw. "You have no right."

I pushed past him with a rough shove and sat down in an armchair by the couch. I crossed my legs and watched him make himself another drink, then pulled out my phone and sent a quick text to Stefan.

"You need to bring Damon his ring NOW! Things are getting out of hand. You should have never tried to interfere with his plans, it only made things worse."

Damon sat on the arm of my chair and leaned over me. "Who are you texting El, Boyfriend?" he asked, putting his hand behind my head. "Lover? Or...ohhhh girlfriend?" he abashedly said.

I slapped him on the chest as hard as I could. He fake pouted, and I narrowed my eyes at him. "Your brother, actually. I told him he needs to return what belongs to you. I also told him how stupid he was to try and get in the way of whatever your planning. What is that, by the way?" I asked, raising my brow.
He patted my head as if I were a small child, and pulled me out of the seat before taking my place. I scoffed loudly and started to walk away before he pulled me onto his lap.

“What makes you think I’m planning something, Elandra?” he asked.

I laughed sarcastically and tried to pull myself away from him.

“Because, I know you, Damon — probably even better than Stefan does,”

I finally got out of his tight grasp, then walked behind his chair and put my hands on his shoulders. I rubbed his muscles with a firm touch, smiling at the low groan that escaped his lips.

“I was only asking out of courtesy Damon, or did you forget that I was very close with Emily Bennett?”

Before I could even blink, he was out of the chair and beside me. “What do you know about any of this, El? You weren't around when it happened.”

Damon looked at me in confusion. I had gotten exactly what I wanted by bringing up Emily — Damon did have a shred of emotion left.

“Just because you and I were no longer speaking when you made your deal with Em, doesn't mean I never knew about it,” I rolled my eyes and stepped away from him. “Emily and I burned together, after all. We were pretty close,”

I cleared my throat and decided to just do it — to tell him. He needed to know.

“I never wanted to tell you this Damon, but I knew when you returned,”

I closed my eyes at the sound of his gasp. I didn't want to open this old wound, but it was necessary.

“I knew that you were back in town and I knew that you fell for Katherine. I knew that she had you
under her spell. I just didn't know that you had fallen so hard for her. It wasn't until someone told me that you loved her, that I finally realized the truth. You had chosen her,

I sat down, wringing my hands, and looked up at him. His eyes were squeezed shut, his face pained. I looked away and frowned. After he returned on leave, I'd expected him to come to find me. When Katherine visited and told me he was back and had been spending his time with her, I knew he had fallen for her. She had captured his attention, and I had been forgotten. It's a hard pill to swallow, knowing you weren't good enough for someone you loved.

"How...did..." the anger in his eyes was hard as steel. "...was it Stefan?"

I shook my head and let out an irritated tisk. Not everything was Stefan's fault.

"No, it wasn't Stef — it was Katherine, actually. She told me you were home on leave. She and Emily visited me a lot. I trained with Em, and Katherine was never far behind," I said, looking down at my hands.

He had started pacing while I spoke, and I could see the guilt in his eyes. I wasn't bringing it up to hurt him, but he needed to know everything. I had mentioned to him several times now that I had spoken to Katherine in another life, and if I had, then it should be evident to him that Katherine wasn't in the tomb. He had either heard me and refused to believe it, or had selective hearing.

"Katherine told you about us, and you never showed up and confronted me?" he asked in disbelief.

His face was a mixture of anger and something else, something I wasn't able to place. It was almost as if he felt betrayed that I never tried to regain his attention.

"No, but she loved mentioning that you and Stefan fought over her. She never told me that you were sleeping with her, but it wasn't hard to guess at, Damon. Besides, I figured if you didn't want me to know you were home and hid away from me when I was around, then why bother with you at all?"

I sighed and stood from the seat. I walked over to him with my hands on the back of my neck — this whole conversation was tiring. I could feel the stress covering me like a lead blanket. Standing in front of him, I could see how hard this conversation was on him too. Yes, he was the one who cheated on me and had thought it was something that had been lost to time, but it wasn't hard to see it was one of his biggest regrets. I guessed he hoped I'd imagined their relationship had started after I died, that he had returned to find me dead and gone, only moving on after grieving the
appropriate amount of time. When I didn't speak for a moment, he looked at me, running his hand through his hair. Not knowing what more to say at that moment, I let out an audible breath and let a half-hearted smile ease his worries.

"Listen, Damon, it was a long time ago. I got over it. I was told everything I hadn't already known from an old friend in my next life. I also heard it from Katherine just a century after that," I said, hoping he would bring up the fact that I was trying to ease him into the idea that she was living her life, and not stuck in a tomb.

When he didn't mention it and just walked away towards the curtain covered window, I let out a loud growl of annoyance. He didn't turn around or even acknowledge my outburst, possibly thinking it had to do with our past. In anger, I lifted my arm and opened my palm, and with one swift motion, I focused on Damon and pulled him towards me. A loud shocked gasp filled the silence as his whole body lifted into the air and came flying in my direction. I twirled my index finger, and his body twisted around and faced me. Without caring how much it would hurt, I closed my hand into a fist and dropped him. He landed directly in front of me, I smiled down at his crumpled form.

"Now that I have your attention, you are going to listen to me," I sternly said.

He pushed himself onto his hands and knees and lifted his angry oceanic eyes to mine. "Damon Salvatore, I know how much she means to you, but you have to know she isn't where you think she is. She never was. I - Have - Seen - Her!" I said enunciating the last part of the sentence.

He was breathing heavily, his eyes clouded. I bent down to his level and gently laid my palm on his cheek. I ran my fingers across his tense brow and bit my lip. I was past everything that happened between us, it was long since forgotten. I chose to only remember the good and to be honest, I didn't blame him. He was a weak human man. How could I expect him to win against a beautiful vampire Goddess? She used all of his insecurities to make him believe she loved him and wanted him for eternity.

"Damon, you have two choices. One, you can remember that I would never lie to you. Or two, you can continue to try and find a way to open the tomb and see for yourself. Either way, I will be there to help you. No matter what, you are still my friend," I whispered with a small sigh.

I stood, pulling him to his feet and leading him over to the couch he had placed Vicki on. We sat in silence, the only sound between us my slow breathing. He had long since sat still enough to remind me of a statue, not a single breath or movement to make him appear even slightly human. I watched him with concern for his mental wellbeing. I wasn't sure what I could do or say to make any of it better. His body was slouched forward his head in his hands, elbows pressing into his knees. Tension filled his whole body, I wanted to touch him, to give him at least a small reminder that he
wasn't alone. I was buried so deep in my own thoughts that his sudden intake of breath caused me to jump so high the couch rattled beneath me.

"I'm so sorry for the way our relationship ended. If I had been around and not pushed your safety onto Stefan, then I would have been there to protect you. Instead, I was in Katherine's bed as you burned to death," he said, his breath hitching.

I licked my dry lips, unsure of what I was supposed to say to that. "No matter what, I would have died Damon, I'm cursed,"

He lifted his head and glared at me. "I blamed Stefan for so long, even though I should have been the one there. He knew everything, yet he kept it from you, even after I tried to get between him and Elena. He truly is the better man," he whispered, so low I could not be sure that's exactly what he said.

He gripped his hair tightly in frustration as he stood from the couch and paced in front of me.

"I have to know for sure. I have to see it for myself. After everything, loving her cost me, I can't believe she would do that," he mumbled, in an almost crazed fashion.

He walked over to the bar and grabbed the glass container of bourbon, lifting it to his lips. He started chugging it like a dying man finding an oasis in the desert. I shook my head in sympathy.

"Ok, Damon, ok. We will open the tomb," I said slowly.

As much as I hated the idea of how broken he would be once we opened the tomb, I would help him. Until then, we both needed a distraction. Making a quick decision, I walked over to the stereo and turned it on. Loud music filled the room, and I made my way to the bar. He looked at me in confusion his brows raised in question.

I pried the bourbon from his tight grasp and filled a glass, raising it in the air with a sly grin. "We're stuck here, for now. So we might as well have some fun!" I said, lifting the glass to my lips.

He softly chuckled with a small smile on his lips, but it wasn't enough to reach his eyes.
"All is forgiven, Damon. But if you want to, you can make it up to me by showing me a good time. I've heard your good at that, Mr. Salvatore," I playfully said.

He grabbed the small silver stereo remote and switched the song to something with an excellent beat. "That I am Ms. Miller," he said with a tired smirk.

I sat my empty glass down and started dancing a circle around him and was quickly joined by Vicki. I hadn't even noticed her return. I looked down to find that she was only wearing a bra and panties. I turned towards Damon, who was eyeing me expectantly. I almost laughed at the challenge and shook my head with a shrug. I connected hands with her, and we both lifted ourselves onto the table in front of the couch. I grabbed the bottle of Vodka she was holding and took a swig. When in Rome, I guess.
Chapter 12

The music was played loudly through the intercoms of every room in the Manor. I absentmindedly wondered how the loud music didn't hurt Damon's heightened hearing but shrugged it off.

Vicki's hair bounced as she swayed dangerously close to the edge of the table I had just vacated. I watched her from my position on the couch, needing to cool off for a moment. I, after all, didn't have Damon's blood giving me an extra boost of energy.

It had been two hours, Stefan was still MIA, and I was beginning to lose my patience — he should know better than to goad Damon like this.

I made my way to the window and slowly pulled the heavy drapes back just enough to peek outside. The sky was still blue, the sun still shining. I glanced at the tree line, hoping to see Stefan, but saw nothing. I bit the inside of my cheek and grumbled in frustration. I turned around and put my hands on my hips as I watched Damon dance with Vicki, his body pressed against hers, and shook my head. This was not my idea of fun.

"Oh man, what did you give me?" Vicki murmured, her face inches from Damon's.

His answering smile was vicious and calculating. "Some blood. You loved it," he said.

I scoffed lightly and walked over to the bookshelves on the right side of the room. I ran my fingers across the spines of the first few books. I was reading the titles when Vicki spoke next.

"I did? Wait. I'm confused," She asked, stepping back one step, "How did we get here?"

I looked over my shoulder and watched a shocked and confused expression flitter across her face as she moved her head from left to right, taking in her surroundings. I pitied her and hoped Damon kept his cool. The books in front of me caught my attention again as Damon chuckled darkly.

"We met in the woods. You were drunk. I attacked you. Then I killed all your friends and brought you here, and gave you some blood. You loved it," Damon said, pulling her closer. "And now we are going to play until the sun goes down,"

I sneered in his direction and took a black leather-bound book from the shelf and glanced at the cover; Dracula, how perfect. I giggled and shook my head at the image of one of the Salvatore brothers buying this specific book. The absurdity of the situation had to have been very amusing. I made my way back to the couch and sat down. I lifted my legs up and crossed them underneath me, snuggling down with the book in my lap.

"Find something to pique your interest, El?" Damon called from across the room.

I peeked over the top of the book and eyed him warily. He was still pressed against Vickie, his hands on her hips.

"It's better than watching you fondle a zombified version of Vickie. Does it even bother you that she isn't really aware of what's going on?" I asked, with real interest. "The idea of messing around with someone you've tricked into wanting you turns my stomach."

He smirked before taking Vicki's wrist in his mouth and biting sharply. I scrunched up my face and grimaced as she took his wrist into her own, biting down and then drinking heavily.
"That answer your question? Believe me El, she knows exactly what she is doing,"

His lips were stained crimson from her blood. I ignored him and looked back down at my book, hoping it gave me the escape I needed. The music faded into the background, and I barely noticed what was happening around me as I sunk myself deeper and deeper into the pages of the book. I didn't look up again until I heard a loud thump as something fell to the ground. I closed the book and found Vicki on the floor a few feet away from me. Damon stood beside her, his expression was bored and carefree. I flew from the couch and looked down at her body, noticing the unhealthy angle of her neck.

"Dammit, Damon! You knew what she meant to Mattie and Jer," I said in exasperation, kneeling down beside her.

I knew that she wouldn't be dead for long but waking up as a vampire wasn't much better, not for her, at least. She wasn't the kind of person that could survive immortality. She was an addict for a reason — she had a rough life, and I was damn sure she didn't want an eternity of it. I leaned back onto my feet with a sigh and looked up at Damon, who was leaning comfortably against the bar looking at the clock on the table beside me. He looked completely at ease, and it irritated me to no end. How could he be so cavalier about ending someone's life? I stood and pulled my shirt down, this whole ordeal was becoming more than I could calmly handle. I was about to blow up on someone, and the closest person was a vampire hell-bent on destroying his brother and, in turn, my family. I stomped over to the cocky vampire in question, and with one swift motion, slapped him firmly across the face.

"This is your mess Damon, and you can deal with it on your own," I spat, my shaking hands balled up into fists. "But so help me, if someone I care about gets hurt in the process, I will make you pay!"

I turned on my heel and walked swiftly to my car. I'd officially had all I could take of Damon Salvatore.

I drove back home with one thought on my mind. What do I tell Jeremy? Deep down, I knew Vicki wouldn't make it, and it would break Jeremy's heart. I slapped the car door shut as hard as I could. The car creaked and groaned with my effort, and a significant dent was clearly visible. I swore under my breath; how was I going to explain that to Jenna?

I placed my hand on my forehead in frustration. I couldn't help but think how much easier things would be when I started over. I grimaced at my thoughts and felt terrible. I headed into the house, pulling out my cell and dialing Elena's number. Where the hell were they, anyhow? As I was walking up the stairs, I reached her voicemail once again.

"Listen, Lena, I don't know what you and Stefan are planning, and frankly I don't want to. But you should both know that whatever it is won't end well — for anyone. Call me back," I said in one breath. "please."

This day just kept getting worse and worse, and I had yet to live through the hardest part — my conversation with Elena and Jeremy. I made my way to my room and threw open my closet door. I grabbed a change of clothes, something I wouldn't mind being ruined. Once I was redressed, I pulled on my black biker boots and refastened my hair into a braid; I had a feeling things were about to get dirty.

I checked my hidden black backpack of supplies, the one that I hoped I would never need. I loaded the bag with a few extra items, a pocket knife, a few tangles of nylon rope, and a couple of stakes coated in vervain — these I really hoped I didn’t need to use. When I had first found out that the
Salvatores had returned to Mystic Falls, I had started putting together supplies, things I thought might come in handy: wooden stakes, vervain, baggies of human and animal blood. Anything that I thought might help when shit inevitably hit the fan. I ran the bag to the closet under the stairs and hid it away, still hoping that I wouldn't need to drag it out later.

Returning to my room, I sat down at my vanity and quickly reapplied some facial moisturizer as the doorbell rang. I closed my eyes and visualized the front porch, my brow furrowing when I sensed Vicki. I stood up and ran out my door and down the stairs just as Jeremy opened the front door. I flew in front of him and gently pushed him away from a slightly hungover looking Vicki.

"Hey. The sun is killing me. My eyes are on fire," she moaned, placing her fingers on the bridge of her nose.

Jeremy fought his way in front of me, and I struggled to stay between the newly minted Vamp and my very human brother.

"Where have you been?" he asked, his voice rushed.

I chewed my bottom lip between my teeth and looked at the two. What was I supposed to do? She probably had no clue what she had become.

"Hey Vicki, how are you feeling?" I finally asked, defeated.

She walked past us into the house and headed straight for the kitchen. "It's good. Everything is good," she said, waving her hand dismissively.

Jeremy and I followed her into the kitchen, and she took hold of the back of Jeremy's neck, pulling him into a swift kiss. I raised my hand ready to knock her through a wall if necessary. As their kiss deepened, I looked away, feeling awkward and intrusive. I cleared my throat and tapped my foot, thanking every God in the book when they finally pulled apart.

"Did something happen?" Jer asked when she pulled away from him, heading for the fridge.

She ignored his question as she pulled open the door, peering inside our fridge for something to help satisfy her ravenous hunger. I felt terrible that she wouldn't be able to find anything — at least not in our fridge.

"I'm hungry, what do you got to eat?" she asked, leaning into the fridge.

Jeremy looked at me, and I tried to keep my face from showing the regret I felt.

"You're high?" Jeremy said, inching closer to her. "Vicki, its the middle of the day,"

I pulled him away and shook my head. Where the hell was Elena and Stefan? I pulled out my phone and send a quick text to Matt. When this all went bad, I didn't want my family to be implicated in her disappearance. As she raided our fridge eating anything she could get her hands on, we patiently waited for Matt. About twenty minutes later he burst through our door, his face bunched up with worry. I greeted him in the living room and pulled him to the side.

"Something is wrong with her Matty," I said softly.

His blue eyes widened, and he rushed past me into the kitchen. I stayed back in the living room, giving them some space but keeping my ears open. I was pacing in front of the T.V. when they brought Vicki into the living room. She had her hands hovering near her ears, pain marring her features. Matt and Jeremy babbled over Vicki's moaning. I continued pacing back and forth, trying
to remain calm. It wasn't until Jeremy mentioned the police that things turned sideways.

“No!” Vicki screamed, shoving Jeremy away from her “Don’t call the cops, you can’t call the cops! Get away from me! DON’T TOUCH ME!”

Her screams were shrill, desperate, almost out of control. She grew violent, throwing silverware at Matt and Jeremy and knocking the dining room chairs into their path as they tried to restrain her. I was about to restrain Vicki with magic when thankfully Elena and Stefan arrived,

"What's going on?" Elena said, moving beside me and placing her hand on my shoulder.

I stepped away and leaned towards Stefan. "A gift from Damon," I whispered so only he would hear.

His head snapped towards me and then back to Vicki in a nanosecond. He slowly looked her over and closed his eyes in anger.

"I told you this wouldn't end well," I accused, again for his ears only.

Logically I knew it wasn't really his fault, but I still held a grudge. He knew what provoking Damon would do and yet here we were.

"She's really messed up," Matt worried.

He stood next to where Vicki had sat on the floor. Her body curled into itself. Elena walked towards her, hands outstretched.

"Elena, back up," Stefan said.

I took Elena's wrist and pulled her away as Stefan took her place in front of Vicki. "Vicki, look at me. Focus. You're gonna be fine. Everything's gonna be fine. Take her up to bed. Shut the blinds. She's gonna be ok," he said, directing his last few sentences to Jeremy and Matt.

They lifted her, taking most of her weight as they helped her up the stairs. When I knew they could no longer hear us, I lashed out, not caring who could see. I flung my hand outwards, using my magic to knock the lamps from the tables beside me. They landed on the floor with a crash, the glass flying across the room. I could feel the air sparking around me, but didn't care. I was so angry, at Damon for his stupid grudge against Stefan, at Stefan for antagonizing his brother, and at Katherine for creating their feud in the first place. A tiny intake of breath caught my attention, and I slowed my ragged breathing long enough to remember my surroundings. I clenched my fists and fought back the rush of magic that was crackling around me. Elena was standing behind Stefan, who had felt the need to shield her from me. As if I'd ever hurt her. The ridiculousness of his action snapped me out of it, and I ran a hand over my face.

"Ellie?" Elena whispered.

She was peering out from around Stefan's shoulder, her big brown eyes surprised and frightened. I cracked a half-smile and shrugged.

"Well, this was not how I wanted things to go. But it's too late now, I guess."

Stefan snorted and stepped away from Elena walking towards me. "You in control, Elandra?" he asked slowly.

I nodded and looked at the damage I had caused, with a flick of my wrist the broken lamps lifted
into the air, the glass reforming. Once the work was finished, they lowered back onto their respective tables. Elena was still standing on the other side of the room, completely shell-shocked. She shook herself out of it; literally, her brown hair flinging around her.

"Can someone please tell me what is going on," she squeaked.

I fiddled with my braid, trying to come up with a way to explain. "I'm a witch, Lena. I was born this way. There is a lot more to it, but for right now that's the easiest part to explain," I said.

Stefan stayed beside me, making sure I wasn't going to lash out again. I felt a bit put out by his behavior. He was acting like I was a danger to Elena. When I inched towards her, he flinched and started following behind me, right on my heels.

I swung around and used my magic to push him away a few feet. "Come on, Stefan. You and Vicki are the most dangerous people here. Back off," I spat.

His face fell, and I immediately felt like crap for reminding him of what he was. I started to apologize, but Elena's strangled groan interrupted me. "What?" she said.

Both Stefan and I turned towards her. "Vicki is in transition, Lena," I explained. Her face paled, her doe eyes frantically flitting to the stairs where our brother and Matt had disappeared. I put my hands up and tried to reassure her.

"They are ok. Stefan and I are both keeping an eye on the situation," I said.

She looked at me in confusion. "How can you be keeping an eye on them?" she asked.

I stood beside her and brushed her hair off her shoulder. "I can't hear them but if I focus I can sense where they are in the room and what they are doing," I said.

Stefan joined us and watched me intently. He was just as curious about what I could do as she was. I sighed and folded my arms. I had never tried to explain this to someone before.

"It's kinda like X-ray vision. If I focus on their auras, I can almost see them." I closed my eyes and inhaled. "Like right now, Jeremy is sitting on the edge of his bed, Vicki lying beside him,"

I focused on Matt's blue aura. It was almost the same color as his eyes. I could see him standing by Jeremy's door speaking to him. His lips moved, but no sound came. That was one thing I couldn't do, hearing distant speech wasn't in my repertoire.

"Matty is standing in the doorway speaking to Jer. I can't tell what he is saying," I finished, opening my eyes.

Stefan tilted his head slightly and listened. "He is worried. He's never seen her like this before," he said.

Elena looked between us and shook her head. "How is this possible? We were born minutes apart. We're twins! Am I a witch too?" she asked.

I exchanged a knowing look with Stefan and clamped my teeth together. She wasn't a witch, but a doppelganger and Stefan still hadn't told her.

"No, you're not a witch. I promise I will explain the rest later. Right now we have bigger problems," I said, looking to the ceiling. "What are we gonna do about Vicki?" I asked, directing the question to the only other vamp in the house.
"Right now she doesn't know what she is, but soon she'll have to decide whether to feed or not," he said.

Elena looked at him her face set in sadness. "The same choice you made?" she asked.

I looked away, unable to meet his gaze. The same choice he had taken away from Damon. Before Stefan could answer, a loud yell echoed down the stairs. Seconds later, Matt bounded down and to the front door. "She was fine, and then she just...freaked out and left," he said, huffing for breath and heading out the door.

I ran towards the closet and grabbed my recently packed bag. I pulled the strap over my shoulder and looked at Stefan.

"We can track her," I said.

He nodded and eyed my bag.

"I'll do what I have to, Stefan," I said.

I didn't want to use the vervain stakes that resided in the bag, but I would if I had to.

"Go," Elena said.

I pulled my eyes from Stefan's worried gaze and ran out the door. It was time to hunt.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

This chapter has been edited by my Beta Casey

My boots squished into the earth as I leaped from the last porch step and took off into a run. My mind was already becoming that of a hunter, something I was grateful to have experience in. I was taught to hunt by the best; Kol Mikaelson was a force to be reckoned with, and if you got on his wrong side, there was nowhere you could hide.

During one of my many short lives, Rebekah, Kol, and I had teamed up in an attempt to cure me. Of course, it didn't work, and when we realized nothing would stop what was coming, we decided to enjoy our time together.

I joined Kol in the hunt for a vampire who had betrayed him. It had been exhilarating, and I learned a lot. Kol had been a brilliant witch. I was never allowed to practice with him when he was human, I was separated and taught on my own. Esthar never allowed me to practice with the family.

Yet, I had still found time to spend with Kol even without practicing magic, and we got along very well. I loved his attitude and adventurous nature. When I had the opportunity to see him again, I was overjoyed. Although he was no longer able to practice, he was still able to teach and was just as talented in that.

I stood in the front yard, my senses heightened as I took everything in. I could smell Vicki in the air, her perfume and sweat mingling with the scent of the damp air around me. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. In my mind, I could see her stumbling down the stairs of our front porch, her shirt partially tucked into her jeans, her mascara smeared. She was wild and unfocused, reminiscent of a trapped animal. I zeroed in on her and watched as she looked left and right, her hair swinging around her, green eyes frantic. She took out her phone and dialed a number, speaking to someone I could not hear, before running down the street to her right. I started to follow her, my eyes still closed, until something hard took my wrist and stopped me. My eyes shot open, and I circled, wrapping myself around the back of whoever had tried to pin me, squeezing their neck, my ineffective teeth bared threateningly. My body and mind were both still feeding off Vicki's fear. I snarled menacingly, my magic swirling around me, waiting for my command. When I finally focused and came back to myself, I realized who and where I was. I looked down and saw Stefan in my arms, my teeth near his jugular. I could hear someone growling lowly and looked around us, trying to identify who was making the sound before I realized it was coming from deep within my own throat. I quickly dropped him and stepped away, wholly mortified.

"Wow, Stefan, I am so sorry. I was mirroring Vicki," I explained, toeing the ground.

The moon shined brightly above us, casting Stefan in an otherworldly glow his skin opaque, his eyes shining brightly with mirth. "It's ok, Elandra. I'm still getting used to the fact that you're a witch. You've just never pegged me as the magical type. You were always so demure. I should have known you were casting," he half-heartedly laughed.

I frowned at him with a huff and placed my hands on my hips, narrowing my eyes and motioning towards the direction Vicki had escaped towards. "Use your puppy nose and sniff her out, Bingo," I
said.

Stefan ignored my weak dig, but his nose twitched, and we both followed Vicki's trail. I reached in my pocket to pull out my keys when Stefan retook my wrist. I looked up into his green eyes and narrowed my own. "Listen, Mr grabby. If you like that hand of yours where it is, I would move it. Now,"

Stefan bit his lower lip and shook his head with a smile. "I'm sorry, El. I was just going to say we don't have time to drive. It's dark now, which means Damon is out. I can take you. It's faster," he said, motioning towards his back.

My mouth popped open, and I scoffed loudly. Caroline would have fainted in delight. "Like hell, you will, Edward. I am not riding you," I said, blushing after I realized that I was shouting.

I tightened my hair and tried to ignore my reddened face, positive he could smell it. "I can manage without you. I have an idea of where she went,"

I raised my hands, now sparkling in the night like blue-tinted fireflies. Stefan looked at my hands in astonishment and reached towards them. His hand hovered near my own, and he moved around them, feeling my magical signature. To him, it would feel like a mild electrical current.

"That's incredible. It feels like I'm standing near an electrical storm," he said, his eyes shining.

I smiled at his wonder and shook myself out of it. "Stefan, I understand my craft is different from what you have seen before, and I'll show you whatever you wish to see, but it'll have to be some other time, okay?"

His eyes focused, and he snapped out of it, quickly stepping away from my hands. I lowered them to my feet and whispered an incantation. A blue glow spread from my ankles to my knees and then disappeared with a bright flash of light.

"Okay, I'm ready,"

He eyed me distrustfully and reached for my hand. I brushed him aside and raised my eyebrows with a smile.

"She's at the cemetery," I said soberingly.

I looked ahead of me and put one foot forward, and with a flash, I was gone, moving at speed I had only seen vampires go before me. I mentally thanked Kol for the spell and hoped he could hear me in the in-between, where Niklaus had him trapped along with Rebekah. I just wish he could visit me as she did.

I mentally shook myself and focused on the image of the shocked vampire beside me. He made a funny picture. His spiky brown hair was blowing in the wind, his mouth hanging open as he stared at me, green eyes wide in shock. I pointed ahead of us and back at his eyes, hoping he understood. All I needed was for him to smash into a tree. The wind swept across my face as the world blurred around me. Houses, cars, and people becoming nothing more than flashes of distant light. It was beautiful and hypnotizing. This wouldn't be such an adverse side effect of vampirism.

We both slowed down as we neared the cemetery. I stopped in front of the gate abruptly and swept my right hand across my legs. With a swift incantation, the spell was gone, and I was back to regular human speed. I hoped we hadn't wasted too much time. I didn't want to be responsible for Vicki killing someone. If she was going to become a vampire, and chose not to use blood bags, I at least wanted to make sure she chose some terrible murderer to eat.
A burst of air beside me revealed Stefan's presence. "It's going to be ok, El,"

He ran his finger across my cheek gently. I took his hand in mine and shook my head, moving it from my face. Hinges groaned as I pushed the massive wrought iron gate open. I avoided Stefan's concerned expression as I stepped through the threshold of the cemetery.

"Let's go find her," I said calmly.

I could hear the leaves crunch beneath Stefan's feet as he followed directly behind me. The air around us was still, no sound came from surrounding nature, as if every nearby creature knew a stronger predator moved amongst them.

I could feel Vicki was here — her pain was palpable. She was scared, her memories were finally flooding back. I stopped a few feet from a crypt where I saw Vicki, sitting with her forehead against her knees. I turned around to face Stefan, who had dutifully stopped behind me. I placed my hand on his chest and pointed to her location through the trees.

"She needs you, Stefan. I don't think I will be able to do anything for her right now,"

If she needed to be hunted down and killed, or if she needed to be taught to hunt herself, that was something I could help with, but Stefan was better with the touchy-feely stuff.

"She needs a friend Stefan and her, and I never got along. I was friends with Matty," I explained with a shrug.

I nibbled on the inside of my cheek and pushed him forward. I watched as he slowly inched towards her through the trees. He was perfect for the job, even from this distance he looked kind and gentle. No one would know that underneath his handsome exterior, he could be a ripper — a stone-cold killer. Vampirism could really be a curse if not handled correctly. The person had to accept who and what they were, or it would go horribly wrong. Maybe not right away, but eventually, they would break.

I watched closely for any signs that she would attack and was satisfied until I heard a sudden ruffle of leaves. I looked around. That sound hadn't come from Vicki or Stefan; he was still talking with her, and she was still crying uncontrollably. I looked around quickly, someone was here, someone who shouldn't be. I walked towards Stefan, who was busy with Vicki and hadn't heard a thing.

"Will you take me home?" Vicki asked, her voice thick with tears.

I looked down at her, her face was smeared with dirt and tears, and her hair in disarray. Stefan sat next to her, his face a mask of pain. He was always so emphatic and kind; her pain was becoming his own.

"Ok," he said with a nod.

I looked around us and tried to figure out what had changed. I knew someone was with us, but who — and why? I could feel a pending disaster. My breathing became ragged, and I couldn't focus. Pictures were forming in my mind, and I was having trouble grasping what they meant. Stefan moved to stand, and suddenly, I knew what I had to do. I moved my hand towards him and pinned him to Vicki's side with my magic. He looked up at me in shock, and my eyes widened in panic. This was going to hurt.

"I'm so sorry, Stefan," I said.

I heard the rustling before the gunshot but kept my eyes on Stefan and my hand outstretched.
Before the shot went off, I looked into his stunned eyes and then to Vicki.

"Don't let her feed," I said, my voice monotone.

The sight had taken over, and I was no longer myself. It was the worst part of being an original witch. I hated having the smattering of visions. It was like seeing through a view-master toy. I could only see pictures and only for a moment before the next one sped by. The loud gunshot echoed around us, and I felt a familiar white-hot pain rip through my chest, right near my heart. I tried to gasp for air but couldn't. I peeled my eyes from Stefan's and looked down at the blossoming burst of color on my shirt. The red was staining the black quickly. I lowered my hand and released Stefan from my spell just as another gunshot echoed. I turned my head to see the shot hit Stefan in the shoulder.

I fell to my knees and looked at Vicki, who was looking at me in agonizing hunger. I wanted to laugh. Was this going to be how I died this go around? Death by baby vamp? With intense strength, I forced myself to look away from her and find Stefan. A few feet from me, he was lying on the ground. The man who shot us lowered himself beside Stefan. He had a wooden stake in his hand and placed it directly above his heart. Vicki was shouting, but I couldn't hear a word. I pushed myself to my feet, and with all the strength I had left, I wielded my magic and flung it at the man. The stake in his hand lit on fire with one bright burst of light. He screamed and dropped it to the ground. He looked at me in shock, and I waved lightly as I fell to the ground. He took another from his jacket pocket and positioned it above Stefan's heart again. I was done. There was nothing more I could do to help. Vicki moved to take the man's hand, but there was no need. With a flash of black, someone was on the man's neck feeding on him roughly. I smiled and closed my eyes. I was fading, I knew what it felt like. Death and I were good friends. Heck, I've died more than the Winchesters. Loud panicked voices filled my senses, but I couldn't make out who they belonged to.

"Elandra! No, No, baby, please! I can't do this without you, not again."

I wanted nothing more than to reach out to that voice, but I couldn't move. My arms were dead weight, lying somewhere beside me. My entire body felt like lead. I felt something wet against my lips and moaned softly. Was I already being reborn? That was quick.

"Drink baby, please."

I knew that voice, didn't I?

"You can't leave me. Not yet. I just got you back," the voice sternly said.

I kept my mouth closed, refusing to allow the rebirth. I was too tired. I shouldn't feel this tired. I hadn't even been allowed to see Niklaus in my last life. They dangled the idea in front of me and then killed me, and they had tortured me with the sight of Damon. I guess that was their gift to me. I felt angry and cheated.

"Please, Elandra. Baby, please drink," the voice pled.

That voice, I knew it.

Damon.

Damon was the only person who ever called me baby. I could live for Damon. Slowly I opened my mouth and drank the bitter liquid, coughing when my throat refused to swallow. I felt a tug at my chest as something was ripped from me and screamed as the pain rippled through me.

"What the hell!" I shouted, sitting up quickly.
Colors morphed into images, and I saw I was still in the cemetery where I had been shot. Where Stefan had been shot. I turned my head and saw Stefan lying on the ground where I had last seen him. He appeared to still have the bullet in his shoulder, and he had lost a decent amount of blood. I looked down at myself and saw my shirt was ripped open and blood was smeared all over my chest, stomach, and arms. I looked around me until I found Damon standing behind me. His face was morphed into a painful image of grief. His eyes were twin pools of sorrow, his hands covered in blood, a bullet in his right palm. I stood slowly and allowed him to help me when he rushed forward.

"Easy Elandra," he whispered, looking me over.

I laid my head on his shoulder and hummed lowly. "I feel weak," I lifted my head and looked into his oceanic eyes.

"My magic is spent," I said.

He placed his thumb and forefinger on my chin and lifted my head. "You just need rest. I fed you my blood, so you need to be careful, but you almost died, El," he said his voice breaking.

I ran my fingers across his cheek and pushed away from him.

"I'm ok, Damon, but you won't always be able to save me," I said quietly.

I rubbed his shoulder and slowly walked to Stefan, who was groaning on the ground where Damon had left him. I lowered myself to my knees and leaned over him.

"Oh, Stefan. I'm so sorry," I said.

I looked over at Damon and pointed at my bag. He picked it up and gently tossed it to me. I pulled out a black water bottle and handed it over to him, shaking it gently. Noticing the light swish, he eyed it warily.

"I don't drink human blood," he said, laying his head on the ground.

Damon stood above us, his eyes cold and hard. "Did you seriously drain yourself just in case Stefan ever needed a blood boost?" he asked between gritted teeth.

I sighed. My head throbbed painfully, and I stuck my fingers into the bullet hole on Stefan's shoulder, earning a pained hiss. "No, I did not. That is animal blood," I said, digging around for the bullet.

They both looked at me in shock, and I shrugged. "This would be so much easier with magic." I felt something and ran my fingers around the edges, getting a good grasp, and pulled up, yanking the bullet from his wound.

He lifted his head, squeezing his eyes shut in pain. I stood and walked away to allow Stefan a moment to drink his blood in peace without human blood in his grasp.

"Where did you get the animal blood, El?" Damon asked.

I watched closely as Stefan gasped, fighting through the final spasms of pain. I wiped the blood from my hands and onto my jeans and looked at Damon. "I'm resourceful, and I knew he would need it eventually. I am not planning on dealing with Ripper Stefan in this lifetime," I whispered.

His eyes shot up into his browline. I walked back over to Stefan, who had the bullet in his hand.
"It's wood. They know," he said gravely.

Damon leaned against a tree behind me and folded his arms against his chest. "Well, if anybody is going to kill you, it's going to be me," he said, wiping the remainder of the blood from his face.

Damon pushed himself from the tree with his foot and moved to Stefan, who was still lying flat on the ground. I stood next to him, ready to stand in between them if necessary, despite my powers weakened right now.

"My ring?" he asked his outstretched hand palm up.

Stefan looked up at him, his face still pained, and lifted his lower body enough to get into his pocket. He pulled out Damon's ring and handed it over. Damon snatched it quickly and placed it on his middle finger with a crooked smile on his face. He looked down at its placement as if seeing it for the first time. I rolled my eyes and looked away just as Stefan did the same.

"NOOOOO!" he yelled, rolling over and reaching towards Vicki.

I looked over at her and sadly shook my head. She made the exact picture I had seen in my mind. She was using both her arms to hold her upper body weight as she leaned over the man, her hair hid her face as she drank heavily from his neck.

"Noooo Vicki," Stefan said, his voice full of regret. He looked over at me and laid his forehead down on the grass. "I'm so sorry. I failed you all," he said.

I walked over to him and sat down, running my fingers through his hair. "No, you didn't. Vicki is a vampire. Nothing can change that now," I said.

When Vicki heard her name, she slowly looked up. Her mouth and chin were covered in dark red blood. Her face was shocked and pale, she had blood caked in the ends of her hair. She ran the side of her hand over her mouth, her body swaying.

"I'm sorry," she gasped, her hands shaking.

She stumbled to her feet and ran in the opposite direction, startled sobs wracking her body. Stefan rolled back over and looked up at me, his green eyes glassy.

"Oops," Damon cockily said, looking the very picture of ease.

He had known precisely what spilling that much blood would do to someone on the brink of the change, and he couldn't care less what he had done to the poor girl. I looked at him, not hiding any of the anger I felt and stood, slapping him in the face.

"Damon Salvatore, I am ashamed of you. You should be ashamed of yourself. Whatever happens to that girl is on you. This game you are playing with Stefan has come to my doorstep, and I swear to god if it gets my sister killed, I will hunt you down and put a stake through your heart myself,"

My voice was full of anger, and I stood foot to foot with him staring up into his eyes. His face was angry and wrathful, but I wasn't scared of him. I had met worse, and the man before me had been one I loved and wanted to spend my life with.

"No matter what you mean to me. Even if I have to wait centuries to find out the outcome. Elena is my sister, my family — and you better damn well remember that."

I helped Stefan to his feet and looked into his eyes as well. "Everything I said to him goes for you
as well. You knew what would happen when you took his ring and started this whole thing,

I walked away from them both and stepped on something hard. I looked down and noticed a gold watch below my feet. It looked familiar, but my mind was too fogged to place it. I leaned down and picked it up, flipping it over in the palm of my hand. It was cold against my skin, and even with my weakened magic, I knew it was more than what it seemed. I pushed it into Damon's chest with a sigh.

"Something tells me this will come in handy eventually," I said.

He took it and looked it over as I walked away from them. I waited at the gate, holding my torn shirt closed against the wind. Finally, Stefan stepped beside me, my bag in one hand and the black water bottle in the other.

"Thank you for this," he said, shaking the empty bottle.

I nodded, my eyes drooping slightly. Noticing, he bent down and put both hands on either side of my face.

"You ok? Damon's blood should have worked better than this," he said worriedly. I leaned into his embrace, too tired to care, and sighed. "I'm ok. His blood worked on my wounds, but my magic is half my life force, and I'm weakened on that front as well," I explained.

Damon walked up from behind Stefan, his face brooding.

"Is there any way I can help?" he asked.

I looked over his shoulder at Damon and watched his expression as he eyed his brother thoughtfully. "I either need to be with my own kind, or I need sleep. I think the easiest to accomplish would be the latter," I said with a half-smile.

Stefan released me and stood up straight. "Ok, let's get you home,"

I stood shakily, using Stefan's muscular forearms to brace myself, and then held my shirt to me. Damon noticed my plight and grumbled lightly. "Here," he said, taking off his black leather jacket and handing it over.

I smiled and took it from him, pulling it on and holding out my hands. "I've wanted to wear this since the first day I saw you wear it!" I excitedly said, unable to care or hold back at that moment.

Stefan coughed lightly and put his hands on the back of his neck, looking away. Damon chuckled, and I frowned before looking down and noticing my shirt had fallen open, revealing my black lace bra again. I closed the jacket around me and laughed.

"Sorry," I said.

Damon stood next to me and put his arm around my waist. "That's ok, El. I didn't mind one little bit," he said, leaning into my ear.

I bit my lower lip and slowly pulled away, swatting his arm.

"Let's get you home, Elandra," Stefan said, pulling me away from Damon.

I looked up at him and worried my hands. "I'm going to need help this time, Stefan," I groaned. Stefan smiled brightly and laughed. "That's ok. I got you," he said, placing his hand behind my
In a flash, Damon had him pinned to the gate his hand around his throat. "Don't think I won't kill you, brother," he snarled.

I rushed up behind them and took Damon's arm, pulling him off Stefan. "What the hell was that?" I barked.

"Do you honestly think I would let him carry you anywhere dressed like that?" he asked his face inches from my own. "You're half-naked and weak. There's no way he is taking you away. You'll be unprotected. And don't think I haven't noticed how touchy you two have been with one another," he spat.

He pulled me closer, lifting me into his arms and wrapping the jacket around me tightly. He looked over at Stefan with a smirk. "I'm taking my Elandra home. I'm sure I'll see you there," he said before speeding us away.

The world flashed by us quickly, and I buried my face into his chest and closed my eyes. What the hell had happened back there? My body and mind were too weak to process anything. This was no time to try and register the details, so I decided to go with it until sleep could bring back cognitive Elara. The wind around us slowed, and the loud whooshing sound left only ringing behind as we stopped in front of my house. Elena was sitting on the porch swing, her feet underneath her. I watched her swing back and forth for a minute before I pushed myself forward and slid out of Damon's arms. I shakily stood almost feeling as if I were on the swing with Elena for a moment. Damon held my elbow to steady me, and I squeezed his other hand in thanks. The wind changed, and Stefan was behind me, his hand on my shoulder.

"You ok, Elara?" he asked.

Elara?

He rarely called me that.

"Yeah, I'm ok, just woozy. Lena needs me. She is worried sick," I said, heading for the porch.

Damon huffed and followed Stefan, who was only a hand's reach behind me. Elena had her hand on her forehead, her face stained with tears. She obviously had been sitting there worried for a while. Her head turned as we approached, and she noticed Stefan's blood-stained shirt. She jumped from her seat and ran to Stefan, gasping.

"You're bleeding, Stefan,"

She ran her hands over his chest, checking him for injuries. I stood back beside Damon and watched them, almost envious of their relationship. I sometimes missed having someone to love.

"No, it's ok. It's ok, I'm ok," Stefan reassured her.

Elena took his arm and pulled him into an embrace, holding him tightly against her. "I couldn't stop her. I tried," Stefan whispered.

Elena pulled away and looked up at him aghast. "What does that mean?" she asked.

Stefan looked down his hands still in hers. "She fed, and then I lost her," he said.

Elena's mouth fell open, and she gasped in fear. "Oh, my god," she said, turning away from him.
I knew what that look meant, she was already formulating her own plans, plans that would end up putting her in the path of danger. I put my hands on my face and silently moaned. Damon rubbed my shoulders, and for once, I didn't worry about what it meant, I just let it happen. I was so tired.

"It's ok, I'll handle it. I'll find Vicki, and I will show her that she can live like I do. I will make sure that she does not hurt anybody, Elena. I promise you," Stefan said.

Elena turned back towards him and almost laughed her nerves on edge. She pulled her hair away from her face. "What do I tell Jeremy and Matt?" she asked.

Matt?

Oh, Matt, he was going to lose the last bit of his family.

I stepped away from Damon and walked up to Elena. I pulled her away from Stefan and into my arms. "It's ok, Lena. We will protect them," I promised.

She hugged me tightly, and I looked over her shoulder at the brothers who had started it all. I knew what Elena wanted to say to Stefan, and I hated it. For them both. They really did need each other, and regardless of his part in everything, she would be safer with him in her life. Niklaus would be here soon, and she would be in even more danger then they knew. I could only do so much when he showed up. I wouldn't have much time, and with our past, I would be less of an asset and more of a liability. At least when he showed up, she would have someone to protect her. I looked away from Stefan's eyes and met Damons. I tried to express what needed to be said, and when he closed his eyes and backed away, I was sure he got it. I looked back at Stefan and gave him a pained smile.

"I will always be here for you," I whispered so only he could hear.

I leaned down to Elena's ear and told her that I would be waiting in my room when she needed me.

"Thank you, Ellie," she gasped, tears in her eyes.

I glanced one last time at Stefan and stepped inside, allowing my sister to break his heart.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Let me know what ya think!

I stood outside Elena's room with a cup of coffee in my hands. I had just finished adjusting Emily Bennett's amulet, hiding it under my pink t-shirt when Jeremy exited his bedroom in a rush of mint. His face was firm and resolute as he noticed me.

"Listen, don't even say a word," he demanded.

I lifted my one free hand in the air and leaned against Elena's door. "Hey, I'm the Mystic Falls mime," I said playfully.

He raised his eyebrow and chuckled. "Really? That's what ya got?" he said.

I leaned my head against the door and sighed. "Give me another shot. Just let me get a hit of caffeine," I said, taking a sip of Elena's coffee.

He smiled and moved his hand in a circle as the go-ahead. I remained silent and just stared at him, my eyes innocent. When he finally realized I wasn't going to speak, he rolled his eyes as hard as he could.

"That was lame."

I smiled brightly and took another sip of Elena's coffee. At this rate, she wouldn't get any.

"What? I just wanted to demonstrate how un-naggy I was going to be. You know what your doing and me nipping at you isn't going to change your mind," I said, tilting my head and narrowing my eyes at him. "Just be safe," I said in my best mom voice.

He grinned at me and leaned his forehead against mine. "Thank you, Ellie," he said.
I pressed my head against his and sighed. "Of course, baby brother. Anytime."

He pulled away and rushed down the stairs two at a time. I shook my head and opened Elena's door, stepping inside. She was standing by the door, her back pressed against the wall.

"You hear that?" I asked,

She seized the coffee and took a large sip, making me wince.

"Yeah. I caught him in the bathroom. It didn't go that well for me," Elena said.

I sat down at her vanity and brushed imaginary lint from my black jeans to avoid looking her in the eye.

"He's just worried, Lena. We need to tell him the truth. He will find out eventually," I said heavily "especially with what I have to tell you,"

My heart hurt at the idea of the complete truth, but I knew it was time. Elena looked at me in shock and anger.

"We can't tell him about vampires, Elara. He could get himself killed," she said, throwing her hands in the air. "It's too dangerous,"

She walked to her closet and started to get dressed in a huff. I rose to my feet, staring at her in shock.

"Too dangerous, Really? So you don't think it's too dangerous for him to not know how to defend himself against them? Or that they are real at all? You want him defenseless then?"

"Do you not even care that what I have to tell him about myself will reveal everything supernatural anyway? I don't want him to hate me for lying, Elena," I walked away from her, slamming the door shut behind me. She could be completely ridiculous sometimes.
Well, the truth of the matter was, she couldn't stop me from telling Jer the truth all on my own. I ran downstairs and grabbed my bag from the table by the door. I hugged Jenna goodbye and headed outside. I would tell Jeremy tonight, no matter what. I took my keys from my pocket and opened my door just as Elena bounded down the steps. She huffed lightly and crossed her arms, covering her black jacket. Her silver necklace gleamed in the light of the sun.

"I'm sorry, El. You are right, but I just don't feel like now is the right time to tell Jeremy anything. Anything. I think you and I should talk," she said, her voice pinched.

I narrowed my eyes at her. "What do you mean by anything?" I asked, trying to not jump to conclusions.

"I mean, I don't think he needs to know about you either. It's just too much for him right now, Elara, and really there is no reason he needs to know your a witch...or whatever,"

My mouth dropped open, and I turned my head away from her. "You can't be serious. He has every reason to know, and you will be eating those words when I'm finished with you, Elena," I said, I opened the car door with more force than necessary. I got in and started the car before turning and beckoning her to get in.

"Well, you wanted to talk, didn't you?" I said tightly.

My voice was sharp and tight to accompany the firm expression on my face. Elena moved quickly, sliding into the passenger seat swiftly. I slipped on my sunglasses and pulled out of the drive.

"Let's go to Stefan's, I need to check on Vicki anyways," Elena said.

I scoffed and shook my head. "Yeah, sure," I said.

We drove to the Salvatore's in silence, neither one of us ready to speak to the other. I wasn't sure what to say to her. I had never expected her to ask me to leave Jeremy out of my revelation, and quite frankly, the idea made me angry and sick. This was one of the most Petrova things she had ever done. She acted like it was for Jeremy's best interest, but it wasn't. It was all for her. She
wanted him in the dark so he wouldn't object to the things she did. At least amid my anger, that's the way it felt to me.

I pulled into the drive of the Salvatore Boarding House and followed behind Elena to the front door. As I always have with Elena, I felt like second fiddle as she remained three steps in front of me. I silently stood back as she knocked on the door. A few seconds after her knuckles had hit the wood, Damon yanked open the door. He leaned against the edge of the doorframe and smirked. His black shirt stood out against his pale skin, and short sleeves showcased his muscular, toned arms. I couldn't help but smile at his expression.

"Always so cocky, Mr. Salvatore," I said playfully.

I shook my head and stepped inside, then looked back to find Elena still outside. She took a deep breath and looked right at Damon. Her body rigid, frozen like a deer freezes in front of a predator.

"Is Stefan here?" she asked.

Damon's eyes looked her up and down. "Yep," he said, one arm still on the door frame.

I elbowed him in the ribs and frowned. "Stop ogling my sister, creep,"

He looked at me and smiled. God, I loved his smile — I silently cursed him for making my stomach flutter and flip flop the way it always did around him.

Elena ignored me and continued on. "Where is he?"

Damon pulled his arm from the door and stood up straight. He smirked and rolled his eyes at her. "And good morning to you, Little Miss, I'm on a mission,"

Elena crossed her arms and tilted her head at him. "How can you be so arrogant and glib after everything you've done?" she asked, her eyes incredulous.

"Elena," I said in a sigh.
Damon leaned back against the door on one arm and looked at her as if she were an annoying fluffy kitten. "How can you be so brave and stupid to call a vampire arrogant and glib," he asked.

I looked between them and bit my tongue. Elena scoffed and rolled her eyes. "If you wanted me dead, I would be dead," she said.

He raised his brows and nodded. "Yes, you would," he said.

Elena leaned forward and smiled, causing me to lean back in turn. "But, I'm not."

Damon smirked. "Yet."

I sighed and turned around, walking away from their petty flirtations. I already knew where Stefan would be. I headed upstairs towards his room and found him on the stairs. I quietly walked towards him and smiled when he turned around. He gave me a weak half-smile in return, and I tried to keep the look of pity from my face.

"Should I start the conversation off with a 'Hey Slugger?' Or is that too much?" I asked.

He looked rough — well, as rough as Stefan ever looks. His dress shirt was wrinkled, and his hair more ruffled than usual. He was in mourning for his relationship. I pitied him, instead of reading Shakespeare and Austen, he had to help Vicki, a compulsive liar, and drug user.

"Yeah, I think I can do without the 'how are you holding up,' talk," he said, brushing his hand over the back of his hair.

I placed my hand on his shoulder and gave it a squeeze. "Ok, well, if you need a junk food and terrible movie night, call me. We've known each other for a very long time, Stef. I want to be there for you, regardless of who my sister is in this time," I said. I leaned in and gave him a hug, whispering in his ear. "You were my brother, Stefan. I may have never said it, but you were. I love you,"
He choked on a silent sob, and I held him close until a voice from the hallway below interrupted us.

"Stefan?" Elena said.

I stepped back and looked away as Stefan rubbed his tired eyes. He took my face in his hands and kissed my nose gently. "I love you too, Elandra. You will always be my sister," he said, his voice rough.

The sun coming through the window reflected off the glass and made his face shine. His loving smile was blinding. Something inside me clicked together, and I felt tears on my face. He used his thumbs to wipe them away, and I giggled. I always wanted to tell him what he meant to me as Elandra and doing so now allowed a piece of me to snap into place.

"Go on, Stef, she's waiting for you,"

I hugged him one last time and then slipped away as he leaned over the banister and talked to Elena. I walked down the adjacent hallway, sending a quick text to Tyler and Elena, and slipped past them as they discussed Vicki. Elena was too wrapped up right now for a discussion of my kind, and I just needed some normalcy. I stepped outside and leaned into the car. I inserted the keys into the ignition before taking my bag from the back seat.

"You really look good, El," Damon said from behind me.

I stepped out of the car and shook my head. "Sure, but not nearly as good as Katherine's doppelganger, huh," I said, arching an eyebrow.

Damon stepped closer and opened his mouth just as Tyler's loud truck started pulling into the driveway. He stopped behind my car and leaned out of his window, whistling loudly, he flipped his sunglasses onto his head. "Look at that!"

I stepped away from Damon and did a quick spin, my hands up in the air, bag dangling from one finger.

"Well, well, well, Miss Elara Gilbert. Need a lift?" he asked suggestively.
I laughed at his gall and tossed my bag over my shoulder, saluting Damon. "Later, Salvatore," I said.

I ran over to the passenger side of Tyler's truck and jumped in. Damon watched me from beside my car, his eyes hard. He stepped to my window and looked up at me, his black hair fluttering in the gentle breeze. "What are you doing with him, El," he asked.

I frowned at him and leaned out, my voice hard as steel as it challenged him.

"I'm going to school with my friend. You have fun with my sister," I pulled away from him and twirled my forefinger at Tyler. "Let's go."

He nodded and flipped his sunglasses onto his head. "As you wish, milady," he said.

We pulled out of the drive, and I lifted my leg, sitting it in the window. My fiery hair blew around me, and I enjoyed the peace that came with being around Tyler. Yes, he was supernatural, but as of right now, he didn't know that. Right now, he was normal, and I craved that. He flipped on his radio and blasted some rock music as we sped through the streets of Mystic Falls. I bobbed my head in time to the beat and laughed at as Tyler used his invisible drumsticks. He slowed his car for me, handing me a coin as we passed over Wickery Bridge. I tossed the coin out the window and smiled into the sunlight, it was utterly ordinary. It was pure bliss. As we approached the school, he lowered the music, and we both started to sober up.

"So, I heard they are putting together a search party for Vic," he said, as he pulled into the parking lot.

I looked right ahead of me and pushed down the word vomit that wanted to erupt and tell him everything, including what he is, and carefully looked at him.

"Yeah, Jeremy is skipping today to join,"

Tyler's face scrunched up, and I quickly hopped out of the truck. I joined him on the other side and gave him a swift peck on the cheek.
"Thanks for the ride, Ty,"

He gave me a crooked smile as I waved goodbye and went in search of Caroline. It felt like I hadn't seen her in forever. I made my way inside, jumping away from fake spider webs and skeletons that lined every part of the hallway around me.

Really? Where did the school find the funding for decorations like this?

I slipped past a skeleton on a gurney and found Caroline and Bonnie. I jumped up and down, waving as I approached. Bonnie saw me and smiled brightly, Caroline, on the other hand, sniffed and turned away, typical spurned Caroline behavior. I slid in beside her and took a deep breath. I had decided I was sick of secrets amongst my friends.

"Listen, Caroline. I'm so sorry about not talking to you for the last few days. But it's because I've been keeping something from you, from everyone. And I'm tired of the secrets," I said.

That caught her attention quickly, and she spun around to face me, her blonde hair slapping me in the face. She placed her hands on her hips as I sniffled, trying not to sneeze.

"What secrets?" she huffed. "How could you keep secrets from me? I'm supposed to be your best friend!" she said, dangling the vervain bracelet I had given her in my face. "Did this seriously mean nothing to you?" she asked in a rush of irritated breath.

I leaned my head on Caroline's shoulder. I lifted my own wrist into the air showing her my identical (minus the vervain) bracelet. "Of course, it meant something to me, Care Bear. You are my best friend, and that is why I want to tell you everything,"

Bonnie watched me worriedly, and I gave her a knowing gaze. She frantically looked at me, and I shook my head, easing her worry. I had no intention of revealing her secrets.

"Caroline, I am planning on telling Jer and Lena tonight and would like you and Bonnie to come over too. My house at 9?" I asked.

She looked me over and must have decided she could wait because she nodded and looked at Bonnie next. "You coming over for the big reveal, Bon?" she asked, raising her hands and performing bunny ear quotations.
I rolled my eyes dramatically.

"Of course, I've gotta know this secret," Bonnie said.

I leaned my shoulder against the locker and nodded my chin at the black bag Caroline was carrying.

"What's in the bag?" I asked.

Bonnie took the bag from her hand and looked at me nervously. "It's my costume, for tonight,"

I clapped my hands together and leaned over the bag excitedly. Caroline took my arm and pulled me into a hug. "See, at least someone is excited for tonight. I knew you were my best friend for a reason," she said, wrapping her arms around my neck.

I looked at Bonnie as she pulled her costume from the bag, the brownish-gold, and black dress catching my attention. I stepped beside her and took the dress from her hands.

"Seriously?" she said, lifting the hat to my face.

I looked at the pointed monstrosity with glee, my eyes tearing up with laughter.

"You're a witch, Bonnie," I said, straight-faced.

Bonnie narrowed her green eyes at me and looked at Caroline, who had her back against the lockers. "Come on. Can someone other than Ellie and me be excited for Halloween?" Caroline turned her head towards Bonnie, her eyes were pouty. "I just wanna have fun, ya know, just some silly, fluffy, Damon-free fun," she said.

Bonnie fidgeted with the witches hat her mouth cast in a frown. I felt a warm weight on my chest and knew it was Emily trying to tell me something. I looked down at the dress in my hand and noticed the brownish-gold coloring matched the amulet perfectly. It would give me just the in
needed to pass it on to her, and Caroline would never remember having it, not since I clouded her mind.

"Hey, Bonnie, I have the perfect necklace for you to wear with this dress. I was actually going to donate it sometime today. It's just not something I wear very often, but it would look great on you," I said, pulling the necklace out from under my shirt.

Bonnie looked at me strangely as I unfasted the clasp and handed it over. She dangled it in front of her and eyed it speculatively; the amber color stood out beautifully against her skin. I could feel Emily calling out to her and wondered how she couldn't.

"Oh that's pretty Bonnie, El's right, it'll look perfect!" Caroline said, smiling at me. "Ok, you next Ellie bean. Your costume is in there too,"

Bonnie smiled evilly and handed the bag over to me, one eyebrow raised in triumph. I huffed dramatically and reached inside, pulling out a black garment bag. I looked a Caroline suspiciously and unzipped it quickly. I gasped when I saw a knee-length blood-red tutu dress, spiky red and black devil horns, and a bright red pitchfork. I started laughing brightly and looked at Caroline with glee.

"This is perfect, Care, absolutely perfect," I said.

Bonnie laughed beside me and touched the soft fabric of the dress, running her fingers across the sparkling bodice.

"It really is, Caroline. Our Elara is the perfect fiery little devil," she said, pulling me into a one-armed hug.

Caroline giggled, and they helped me put everything back into the bag and zip it up.

"Hey, have you seen, Elena? Do we know what she's wearing?" Caroline asked her face serious.

Bonnie shrugged and folded her costume over her arm. "I was with Grams all weekend. I haven't talked to her. Maybe she's with Stefan," she said. I avoided their eyes and followed Bonnie's shrug. I pulled Caroline away before she could mope.
After school, I avoided every Vampire I knew. I wanted to go to the Halloween party with Caroline and have regular everyday fun. I stepped into the house and heard people in the kitchen. When I made my way inside, I saw Elena watching Jeremy on the phone, a worried expression on her face. She saw me watching her and came over to me.

"Where have you been, Elara?" she asked her eyes running over my face. I shook my head and looked at her incredulously.

"School, Elena. I figured you had things covered. There was no need for every Gilbert to be absent," I said, walking away.

I could sense her eyes on my back, but I didn't care. I needed an average day, sue me. I took water from the fridge and looked at both my siblings. My average day was about to end.

"Jer, Lena. I need you both home at 9 tonight. I have Caroline and Bonnie coming too," Jeremy looked at me in confusion, his cup stopped halfway to his mouth. His expression morphed into concern in an instant, and he put his mug on the table beside him, stepping next to me.

"What's going on, El?" he roughly asked.

Elena shook her head, her eyes wide. I ignored her — my mind was already made. I looked at Jeremy earnestly and took a deep breath.

"I have a secret Jer, a big one. I've been keeping it from you all for years, and I can't take it anymore. I have to tell you, and I want to do it all at once,"

He brushed the hair from my face, his jaw set in determination. "I'll be here, Elara," he said.

I exhaled and smiled at him. "Thank you," I turned to Elena and saluted her with my water. "Now, I say we hang out tonight, like family. We could go to the, uh, Halloween thing at school,"
Jeremy took a drink and shrugged lightly. "Cool. Sounds fun," he said, none too convincingly, turning toward the living room.

Elena moved towards him, and he stopped trying to leave as she spoke.

"Look, Jeremy, I know your upset about Vicki. I heard she called Matt. But you can't be with her. She needs to get better,"

I remained off to the side, sipping my water aimlessly as I watched her continue to push him away. When the argument got further heated, I decided to leave them to it and went upstairs to change into my costume. I finished sliding on my black leather boots and checked my horns to make sure they were entirely in place before I decided I was good to go.

"You look good,"

Rebekah sat on top of my bedspread, twirling a blonde curl around her index finger. I gave her a mischievous cackle and a thumbs up before grabbing my car keys and heading downstairs. I excitedly hopped into my car and drove to the school.

The party was in full swing by the time I arrived. Everyone was decked out in either full gore or slutty costumes, with a few managing to straddle in between the two. I never quite understood the appeal of dressing as something like a sexy Freddy Krueger. Still, a few attendees managed to make that costume work.

I carefully slid out of my car, afraid to rip my fragile dress. I was pleasantly surprised when I turned more than a few heads with Caroline's costume choice.

"Whoa, look at you!"

I turned around to find Tyler, bare-chested and donning a red cape. My head fell back as I laughed. Raising my hands out beside me, I gave him a quick spin. Tyler clapped, whistling in appreciation. With a slight blush, I motioned to his minimalistic version of a costume.
"Check you out. Someone has been working out. Nice," I said, waving my hands over my chest.

He grinned, flexing his arms, and offered me a cup with something smokey and green. I took it gratefully and drank the odd tasting beverage with a bright smile. It tasted of apples, cinnamon, and something tangy and possibly alcoholic.

"You really do look great, El," he said over the music.

I followed him towards the school and smiled.

"Thank you. It's all Carolines doing," I said with a small sway to my hips.

He watched me with a small grin, and I bowed, tossing my hair over one shoulder. Looking over at the entrance of the school, I saw nurse Elena and Jeremy heading inside.

"Hey, I see Elena. Thanks for the drink, Ty," I said.

I waved goodbye, then slowly walked over to the entrance and waved at Caroline and Bonnie on the way, running my hand down the dress and winking, they both gave me a thumbs up. Inside I passed by walls covered in sliced up sheets and spider webs. The music blared at top volume, and everyone seemed to be having a blast. Ahead I could see Matt and Elena talking, both in last year's costumes. A cute Doctor and his nurse. They really did make such an adorable couple, but she was happier with Stefan. Before I had made it halfway there, Elena's breathing had changed, and her body profoundly bowed in stress. I rushed forward, grabbing her wrist.

"Elena, what's wrong?" I asked

She turned to me, her eyes panicked. "Vicki is here...with Jeremy," she gasped.

I dropped her hand and spun around, looking everywhere for them. Oh god, how could Stefan let her out of his sight? I had trusted him. My breathing became erratic, and my heartbeat like it was going to pound its way out of my chest.

"We've gotta find him," I said urgently
"Guys, what's the matter?" Matt asked.

I looked at him and took his face in my hands. "Go home," I said, backing away into the crowd with Elena.

I pushed through the warm bodies, Elena's hand in mine, and tried to remember to breathe. He would be ok.

"She's dressed as a Vampire," Elena said.

I stopped in my tracks and scoffed, raising my hands to my face.

Of course, she is.

Shaking it off, I pushed us into a less crowded part of the room, lifting the large white sheet. Elena shook her head, removing the stethoscope from her costume. Just as I was about to text Stefan, he came bursting into the room with Vicki in a skimpy purple vampire costume.

"Thank God," Elena said.

Stefan pulled Vicki closer to us and looked us both over swiftly. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"I lost track of Jeremy. I was worried," Elena said, stepping closer to him and watching Vicki from the corner of her eye.

Matt walked into the room next, and I closed my eyes. My senses were on overload, and the shit was about to hit the fan. I stood close to Matt and kept my eyes on everyone in the room.

"Hey, Matty. Everything is fine. Just some Jeremy drama," I said, taking his arm.

He pushed me off him and stepped into Stefan's face. Vicki, clearly noticing the sudden change in
the air, swiftly took advantage of it, pushing Stefan away and stepping behind her clearly confused and frightened brother.

"I told you to quit bothering me," she spat, looking at him in anger.

The warm room took a sudden sharp turn to cold as Vicki glared at Stefan in anger. Stefan's posture stiffened, and he took a step beside Elena, looking over at Vicki in shocked understanding. Elena raised her hand.

"No, Vicki, don't do this," she said.

I stepped closer to Matt and tried to keep him calm, but he pushed me off again.

"Matt, he won't leave me alone," Vicki said tearily.

She played the victim well, having had years of practice. Matt got in Stefan's face. "You need to back off, man," Matt said, his eyes a mixture of anger and worry.

I moved in front of him and pushed him away from Stefan. "Matty, it's ok, it's ok," I said quickly.

He looked down at me in disappointment, disturbed by the fact that I was siding with Stefan. He shook his head. "No, it's not ok," he said.

Elena glanced over Matt's shoulder and pushed past me. "Elara, she's gone," Elena frantically said, heading in the direction she had went.

Stefan tried to follow her, but Matt grabbed him and held him back. Stefan twisted himself around and pushed Matt against the wall.

"I'm trying to help her," he growled.

Stefan's face was just inches away from Matt's as I took his shoulder and pulled him back, standing between the two men.
"He's right, Matt, he is only trying to help," I insisted.

Stefan took my hand and led me in the direction Elena and Vicki had fled. We rushed through the school, the bright, flashing lights were disorienting, and I blinked rapidly, clearing the spots from my vision. I pushed through the crowd ahead of Stefan, somehow losing him somewhere amongst the large groups of people. My breathing became heavy, and my pulse quickened, the walls closing in around me. I slowed my walking and took a few deep breaths to focus, and pushed through. A few feet away, I saw a door that led outside and ran forward, pushing it open. As soon as I stepped foot outside, the cool air slapped me in the face and I strained to focus. I made my way toward the back of the school and caught sight of Elena. I watched in horror as she dug through a pile of rubbish, grabbing a piece of plywood. She lifted it in the air and ran towards Vicki, who I only just noticed was holding Jeremy by the throat a few feet away.

"Vicki, Nooo!" she screamed.

Vicki dropped Jeremy to the ground, her teeth bared, face covered in dark black veins, and started to run towards Elena. Elena swung the wood, using as she would a baseball bat, but Vicki was quicker, she picked Elena up by her throat, and tossed her. Elena soared through the air, feet kicking against nothing. She landed hard on the pile of rubbish and wood, her head lolling to the side.

"Elena!" I screamed.

I charged towards Vicki, my hands already glowing. I flung them forward, my magic knocking her back a few feet. She landed on her knees, an angry growl rising from her throat. I skidded to a halt next to Elena, falling down beside her, my hands hovering above her bleeding side, just as Stefan showed up. Vicki stood to her feet and speed toward him. They collided with one another, and Stefan reared back, hitting Vicki into the front of a nearby school bus. The bus groaned as Vicki slid down the side, her face scrunched up in anger and pain. Stefan stood in front of her, his hands bunched up at his sides in preparation for another attack. Jeremy slowly walked from around the other side of the bus, his face shocked and tear-stained.

"Vicki?" he asked.

Placing her hands on the pavement, Vicki heaved herself up from the ground. Her dark eyes narrowed in on Stefan. Stepping closer to Vicki Stefan tried to take her arm, but she quickly pushed him off and disappeared, leaving nothing behind but a burst of wind. Breathing heavily, we all frantically looked around. I quickly helped Elena to her feet and herded her toward Jeremy. She was beaten up and bloody, and when she moved, she winced in pain. Stefan looked at me in fear.
He knew as well as I did that Vicki wasn't gone.

"Get them inside," he commanded.

I pushed them ahead of me towards the door and kept my eyes on our surroundings.

"Let's go, come on, Jeremy," Elena said, pulling him with her.

Elena made it inside just as Vicki grabbed me by my hair, yanking me to the ground. I screamed in pain as my head collided with the concrete. My vision blurred as I tried to lift myself up, holding my weight using my elbows, but I was too dizzy and slipped, my head hitting the pavement again. I winced, darkness surrounding my vision. I watched helplessly as Vicki grabbed Elena and Jeremy next. Roughly tossing Jeremy behind her, she took Elena by the neck, digging her fangs in with zero remorse. Elena screamed, her voice raw with fear. I shakily stood, my head pulsing with pain, and lifted my hand, flinging Vicki from Elena with everything I had. She went flying backward, her hair whipping around her. My legs shook as I watched Stefan pick up a jagged piece of plywood and vamp speed toward where he knew Vicki would land. Lifting the wood, he caught her; piercing her heart. Vicki stood motionless, her hand shaking near the bloody end of the wood that protruded through her chest. She looked at us, her face full of pain and fear. Her skin began to turn grey, and blood-red tears fell from her eyes.

"I'm so sorry, Vicki," I said shakily.

I watched as she collapsed in a heap on the ground in front of us. Jeremy wailed for her from where he had watched the whole thing. I slowly wobbled over to Elena and pulled her hair out of the quickly drying wound on her neck. She flinched as her hair reopened the bite, and her eyes began to water.

"Are you ok, Lena? Did I hurt you?" I asked.

Elena looked at me in surprise for a moment before shaking it off.

"No, you saved me. Thank you, El," she said, looking at Jeremy, who stood, staring at Vicki's gray corpse.

"Get him out of here, Stefan," she said quietly.
Stefan wrapped his arm around Jeremy's shoulder and led him away. He pulled his cell from his pocket and dialed a number. Elena lowered herself down next to Vicki's body, holding her stomach. Her whole body shook, releasing the pent-up adrenaline. She gasped for air, sobs trying to escape her. I ran my hand down her hair and attempted to offer her comfort. Other than our parent's death, this was the first violent experience she had ever witnessed. I bent down beside her and held her while she cried for Vicki, for Matt, for Jeremy, and for her lost innocence. We heard a sound coming from the other side of the bus and tensed. Elena's crying slowed when Damon came around the corner.

"You should go. I got this," Damon said, almost apologetically.

I shook my head and helped Elena stand.

"You did this," Elena spat, her tone laced with venom and expression full of hate. "This is your fault,"

I felt so bad for her. She was so young and saw the world with pretty rose-colored glasses.

"Elena, let's go. You need to be healed," I insisted.

She pushed me away and looked at me with the same disgusted expression. "How can you be so calm?" she asked.

I closed my eyes and exhaled. "This is so very far from the worst thing I have ever seen, Elena. I am angry, and I feel sorry for her and the ones who loved her, but that's all I can muster," I said truthfully.

Damon looked at me with something akin to interest and shrugged.

"You confuse me for someone with remorse," he said, looking down at Vicki with expressionless eyes.

Elena took a deep breath and shoved Damon as hard as she could, grunting with the effort. She lifted her hand to slap him, and Damon caught it, grasping it roughly, his eyes never leaving her
face. Elena breathed deep in discomfort.

"Damon, you are hurting her. You've made your point," I said.

"None of this matters to me, none of it," he said, looking at us both.

I nodded and looked into his hard eyes. "As I said. You've made your point...to us both," I said, voice strained.

He dropped her wrist roughly, and Elena held it against her chest, trying to keep her tears at bay.

"People die around you. How could it not matter? It matters, and you know it," she said, raising her hand back and connecting with the side of his face.

I covered my mouth and jumped in front of her quickly. Damon turned his head and looked at me. I breathed deeply, my hair blowing out in front of me with every breath. I could feel the blood pooling on the back of my head from where Vicki had tossed me to the ground, but I didn't care. Elena was trying to get herself killed tonight, long before even I was due to die. Damon jerked forward a bit, and I could feel Elena move behind me. Damon smirked.

"Mmm," He looked at me again and nodded quickly. "She needs to leave. Your wounds are bleeding, and she needs to leave," he said, tilting his head with a sneer.

I could feel Elena back up slowly behind me, but I continued to face forward, my eyes on Damon.

"Come on, Elara," she begged.

I turned to face her, my eyes scanning her critically. A large wound was present on her shoulder, neck, and side. She needed to see Stefan.

"Find Stefan, ok? I will see you at home."

Elena looked at me in fear.
"I'll be ok, Elena," I said. "I'll see you at home."

Nodding, she backed away slowly. I watched her until I could no longer see her white costume in the darkness. I turned around and looked at Damon warily.

"What the hell was that?" I asked him, placing my hand on the back of my head with a deep groan.

With a mild sigh of annoyance, he bit into his wrist and held it out for me to take. I rolled my eyes and drank from him until I couldn't feel the ache in my head.

"Better?" he asked.

I bent down next to Vicki and looked her over. With a flick of my wrist, she was covered in a white tarp from the dumpster next to us.

"Handy," he sarcastically said.

"What was that about, Damon? The whole 'none of this matters' junk," I asked, waving my hand in the air.

He bent down and pulled the tarp-covered Vicki over his shoulder. "I needed her to know that she may have my brother wrapped around her finger, but not me. I came here for one reason — Katherine. You need to remember that too. I'm not the same as I was before,"

I placed a hand on my hip and smiled. "I know who you are and no amount of hurtful words, sneers, or this," I motioned to Vicki. "Will make me forget. It will only hurt me," leaned in and touched his face for a mere second before pulling away. "Thanks for healing me,"

I waved goodbye and left the same way Elena had. Before I headed home, I decided to quickly check in with Bonnie and Caroline, telling them I would need to change our visit to the next day. Finally, I got into my car and slowly drove home, afraid of what I was going to find. Something was telling me it wasn't going to be good, and I always trusted my instincts. When I arrived home, Elena and Stefan were on the porch. I got out of my car and carefully walked to the steps.
"How's Jeremy?" I asked.

Stefan turned away from me, his eyes filled with pain and doubt. Elena approached me swiftly.

"Listen, Elara, it had to be this way. I couldn't watch him go through this again," she said.

I looked up at her for second unsure of what she meant, until Damon stepped outside.

"It's done," he said.

I looked at him and then back at Elena. "You didn't. Tell me you didn't," I said, pushing her away from me.

I didn't want to touch her.

"He's just a kid, Elara. He needs to be normal and happy," she said.

I backed further away and scoffed loudly at her, completely blown away by how she was justifying her actions. The fact was: she had Damon compel away Jeremy’s memories. She could say it was for his sake all she wanted, but I was sure he would see it the same way I did. It was all for her so that she could feel better. I was positive he would prefer the truth and any the pain that might come with it, over lies and lost memories.

"He won't forgive you for this, Elena. I won't forgive you for this. Any of you," I said, looking at each of them.

Stefan tried to approach me, and I pushed him back with my magic.

Damon stood next to Elena, his eyes empty. How fitting. I smiled at him and shrugged. "I guess you were right," I said.

I snapped my fingers, and a small travel bag appeared in my hand with a change of clothes and my school supplies.
"I'll be at Caroline's. Don't worry, I'll call Jenna."

I stepped off the porch and ignored Elena's heavy crying. "Please, Ellie."

I turned around and looked her dead in the eyes, no emotion on my face. "You have no right to call me that! As of right now, I want nothing to do with you, Elena," I tossed my bag in the car and turned back to her with a hateful sneer on my face. "Oh, and by the way, I wanted to tell you and Jeremy I'm dying, but it seems you've taken that option from me now. Goodbye, Elena," I sneered, slipping into my car.

I looked straight ahead and pulled away, leaving her behind to be coddled by the Salvatores.
I pulled into Caroline's driveway, my eyes swimming with tears. I could barely breathe, every intake of breath came with a strangled moan of pain. I gripped the steering wheel forcefully, my knuckles turning a pinkish white. Slowly, I let go and lifted my hand, striking the wheel over and over, screaming until my throat felt like it was blistering. I'm not sure how long I sat there before I heard the door open beside me, but suddenly I was no longer alone. I leaned into Caroline's embrace, her hair sticking to my wet face.

"Oh, sweety, what happened? Elena called to make sure you were here, and I looked outside to find you like this,"

She held me tightly to her chest, whispering soothingly. I shook my head wildly, gasping out a wet cry, soaking her shirt with my tears. I clenched my fist tightly, trying to control the torrent of tears that refused to stop. Caroline reached behind my seat and pulled my bag past us, sitting it on the ground outside before gently wrapping her arms around my chest.

"Ok, let's get inside. We don't wanna freak out my mom..."

I let her pull me from the car, keeping my face on her shoulder, needing her comfort like I needed air. Everything was catching up with me — Vicki, Damon, and Jeremy. It was all too much. I kept my arms wrapped around Caroline's waist as she led me inside her dark house.

"Moms in her room for the night, so try to stay quiet. Bonnie is in my room though, she decided to spend the night," she whispered. "lucky right?"

I didn't have the strength to make a sound. Usually, I would have scoffed at the serendipitous turn of events. Still, all I could think about were my last words to Elena. They had been cruel. Caroline opened the door to her room, and Bonnie rushed to our side, her arms outstretched.

"Oh my god! What happened to her?"
She pulled my hair out of my face and ran her thumbs over my puffy eyes. I sniffled pitifully and tried to keep the waterworks at bay.

"She did it. She took them from him. She didn't even ask for his permission," I said, my voice raw.

I looked at both of them and slowly walked to Caroline's bed, very reminiscent of a zombie. I plopped down and raised my hand, closing my fingers against my palm. The door swung closed swiftly, Caroline's hair floated around her in the breeze it left behind. She squealed loudly, her face coloring pink. I turned my head and watched her closely, this would determine the rest of our friendship, it would make or break us. I could have handled things better, but to be honest, I had no strength left in me to coddle anyone else.

Caroline backed away from me slowly, her pink cotton nightgown bunching up around her thighs. She hit the wall and her hair frizzed out around her, almost looking as panicked as she did. She looked between me and Bonnie, who stood off to the side of the room, her hands firmly at her side, gripping her blue shorts tightly and pointed her manicured finger at me. "You did that with your hand," she stated firmly.

I blinked twice, giving her a minute to think and nodded. "Wanna see something else?" I asked, twirling my finger around and around like Matilda, with a smile.

Caroline placed her palms on the wall behind her and pushed herself forward, stepping closer to me. "You can do more?" she hesitantly asked.

I stayed seated, treating her like a skittish mare, I didn't want to startle her.

"Yes, I can. I'm a witch, Caroline. One of the first witches ever created," I said calmly.

Bonnie stepped closer to me and sat down on the bed near my knees. "One of the first? How is that possible" she asked in confusion, her face incredulous.

I patted the spot on the other side of me, and Caroline slowly sat down. I leaned my head against her shoulder and smiled so brightly my cheeks hurt when she placed her cheek on my head. So far, so good.
"Well, to be completely cliche. It all started with a love story," I said with a long-suffering sigh.

The next two hours were spent filling Caroline and Bonnie in on my entire story. Well, minus the Original Vampires, Niklaus's curse, and Katherine — some things were better left till later. When all was finally said I threw myself backward and landed with a loud 'humph' of breath. Both girls remained seated where I had left them. I looked at Caroline's popcorn plastered ceiling and let my mind wander, tracing shapes while they processed all the information I had given them. Hell, it's a lot to take in. Caroline placed a hand on my knee, and I tried not to go stiff with the stress of the moment.

"So, Damon and Stefan are Vampires?" she laid down next to me and started picking at a loose thread on the quilt. "And you were once engaged to a human Damon?"

I turned my head and brushed my hair out of the way so I could look at her. "Yes, and Yes. Also, Stefan doesn't drink from humans, and Damon is an ass, yes, but deep down, he is still a good man,"

I wasn't sure if I really believed that Damon was still a good man, but I wanted to. Caroline's blue eyes filled with tears, and she sniffed loudly.

"I am so sorry, Ellie!" she cried, cuddling up close to me, "I totally broke girl code!"

I shook my head lightly and kept still. What was happening? How was she not scared? Then it hit me. Damon had yet not fixed his little compulsion trick. Dammit. I hugged her and kissed her head, laughing. "Caroline, that was centuries ago. It's ok, I forgive you," I laughed.

Bonnie laid on my other side and looked at me. Her face was severe. "Damon needs my necklace. He tried to take it tonight," she quietly said.

I leaned my head to her shoulder. "I know. You need to speak to Emily. She can tell you why," I said.

Bonnie's eyes widened, and she nodded slowly. "I can't believe Elena did that to you and Jeremy, but she really was only doing what she thought was best, El," Bonnie whispered.

I turned my head from her and rolled over. I didn't want to hear anyone defend her right now. "I
don't want to talk about Elena, ok? Please," I told them both.

There was silence, and I let out a sigh of peace. "Watch this, Care Bear;"

I lifted my hand and placed my thumb and finger together, with a quick snap, her room fell into darkness, except for the faux stars that covered her ceiling. We all looked up at the colorful lights that fluttered across her ceiling just as the stars did the night sky.

"How?" she gasped in awe.

I looked at her face and watched the awestruck expression shine in her blue eyes. I wanted to capture this moment and preserve it in my memories. I would need it when I could no longer have her. She watched the stars twinkle, her pale skin blue in the starlight. These were the moments that made it so impossible to let go, to allow the curse to take effect. As they watched the stars, I watched Caroline. During my multitude of centuries, I had found many friends, but Caroline was different. She was faithful and loved me, no matter what. She had found me when I had locked myself away, trying to just get by until the end, and she had forced me to live. She had saved me when no one else could. I would miss her, and the idea of never seeing her again was like losing a part of me. I felt something slide into my hand and looked down to find Bonnie's hand in mine. I looked into her green eyes and felt tears spill down my face.

"Magic," Bonnie said.

I laid my head on Caroline's shoulder as a shooting star passed across her ceiling and closed my eyes.

"Magic," I whispered.

We all watched the stars in comfortable silence for a while, which naturally, Caroline was the first to break.

"What does it feel like, having this sort of power?"

Caroline turned her head and looked into my eyes. Her face was blazing with curiosity. "Do you feel all-powerful and badass all the time, like, untouchable?" she whispered reverently.
I took her hand in mine and ran my finger across her silver bracelet, the heart clinking against my fingernail.

"There's something you need to understand, Care," I said, leaning onto my elbow and looking down at her face. "There is always a price for using magic, and it isn't a cure-all for everything. There are many things even I can't do, and there is no other witch like me,"

I looked over my shoulder at Bonnie. She needed to remember this, new witches always tried to test the boundaries of magic, and it always ends up biting them in the ass. Even I had gone through a 'magic is might' phase, and I nearly killed myself when I burnt through too much of my power at once. I had tried dipping into magic that was too dark. I wasn't the same type of witch as Bonnie, so I didn't always have the same limitations, but when it comes to magic, some things are ever the same. One of those things is:

You don't mess with the powers of the dark.

"There are consequences when a witch tries to delve into things she shouldn't, Mother Nature can be a cruel bitch, and her creations were meant to keep balance. So, when a witch decides to break the rules, she is punished. Harshly," I added, making a fist and placing it in my other palm for emphasis.

I laid back down between them and looked at them both. Bonnie had a thoughtful expression on her face, but I could also see the fear in the way the corner of her eyes crinkled. Caroline leaned into me and placed her chin on my collarbone. "Well, I recommended none of us to piss off Mother Nature, she already curses us once a month, and I for one don't intend to get on her bad side," she said.

I laid my hand on my forehead and giggled madly. "You are insane," I said in between gasps.

I spent the next few days at Caroline's house. I told Jenna I needed some time away, and she seemed to understand. I decided not to speak to Elena or Jeremy. I didn't want to see her, to hear her try and justify what she had done, and I was afraid of precisely what Jeremy had been compelled to believe. I knew that eventually, I would need to come to terms with what had happened and move on, but that wasn't right now. Finally, Bonnie and Caroline put a stop to my hiding out, and I was forced to concede. So, I decided to start with Caroline's compulsion.

"What are you talking about?" she asked her teeth clenched together.
I grasped her wrist and pushed her out of her bathroom, smiling serenely. "Give me a minute first, Care. I sorta have been...drugging you," I said.

Her face turned cherry red, and I raised my hands in the air when she took a deep breath to start yelling at me. "In the best way possible, I promise. It's only vervain," I said, opening her water filter system and showing her the clumps of wet vervain.

Caroline paused, the color of her face receding. "That's the stuff that is supposed to protect us, right?" she asked.

I nodded quickly, and she sighed in resignation.

Bonnie slid into the bathroom and scrunched up her nose in distaste, but I could see she was intrigued all the same. "Clever," she said.

I smirked and shrugged. "I thought so. No coffee anymore either, at least not at home. We have to wean you off the vervain so Damon can fix his fuck up," I said, dropping the vervain into a small jar on the counter.

I spread it out so it could dry evenly and froze when I looked up to find two sets of eyes watching me. "What? Something is telling me we may have a shortage soon," I said, rubbing my temple.

Bonnie's eyes narrowed, and she touched Emily's amulet.

Caroline slid into the bathroom and huffed deeply. "Ok, can I take care of my business now?"

I smiled sweetly and slipped out of the bathroom. "Let the water run for a few minutes before hopping in," I called out as Caroline closed the door.

I turned to Bonnie and noticed she was still holding Emily's amulet.

"Can you hand me my purse?" I asked her.
She reached behind Caroline's door and handed it to me. I took out my phone and was about to make a call when I saw the date. "Damn," I said with a deep sigh.

Bonnie looked over my shoulder and frowned. "What?" she asked, confused.

I looked at her and pouted. "It looks like my next stop is the Salvatores," I looked at the date one last time and placed my phone on my forehead. "Ugh, I might as well give him his gift a day early. It gives me an excuse to make up with him...sorta," I said, placing my phone into my bag and pulling the strap over my head.

Bonnie narrowed her eyes at me and cocked an eyebrow. "What?" she asked in irritation.

I ran for the door and looked over my shoulder. "Stefan's birthday present. I'll catch up with you guys later," I said.

I hopped into my car and drove to the Boarding House. I slid into their drive, humming along to a Bon Jovi song with a smile on my face. Snapping my finger, a jet black gift bag and card landed in the seat next to me. He was lucky I had already ordered him a gift before he helped pull the stunt with Jeremy. I lifted the gift bag into my lap and fluffed the graveyard-patterned Over The Hill tissue paper. I popped open the glove box and grabbed a pen, writing on the card's envelope in large cursive letters,

'Do Not Open Until Your Birthday!'

I signed my name on the tombstone-shaped joke card in the same loopy, whimsical script, then slid the envelope inside the bag to where only a corner stuck out. I trotted up the drive and stepped inside without knocking, swinging the gift bag in my hand playfully as I made my way towards Stefan's room. I didn't really care to see Damon, and I secretly hoped he was not home.

Outside Stefan's door, I heard movement from inside the room and stopped in my tracks. Voices. Who was the birthday boy playing with in his room?

"Boo." one of the voices said.
Was that Damon?

I grabbed the doorknob and pulled open the door slowly. Before I even had the door open halfway, I heard his next words.

"Hello, Lexi."

Lexi!

I swung the door open with force and squealed loudly. "Lexi?" I said, running inside.

Lexi flung herself from the bed, her long blonde braid flying out behind her. Her eyes were round, her silver hooped earrings swinging wildly.

"Elanor?" she said, walking towards me.

I nodded with glee; it had been so long. I had seen her with Stefan once in New York but hadn't approached them. I didn't want Stefan to recognize me. Luckily though, a century ago, in my previous life, I had been going on my final year and had run into Lexi in Vancouver. She had made the end of my life one of fun. We ended up in Italy, and before I left, I had decided to tell her everything. Lexie was trustworthy. She had been quite shaken when I explained my curse and history with Damon and Stefan, but then she had decided it was fate that I had known her best friend.

"Your hair is so much longer," she pulled my hair out towards her. "Still bright red, though. So, I see you couldn't run forever," she said, smugly.

I pulled her into a hug and shook my head. "No, they found me. It seems the past has finally caught up with me. Just as you predicted." I stepped away and looked at her closely, my face serious. "You haven't aged a day," I said.

Lexi laughed brightly, her face red. I walked away from her and dropped Stefan's gift on his bed. The black bag blending in with his headboard. I sighed and picked it up, moving it to his bedside table.
"Vampires and the color black." I shook my head with mock irritation. "Of course, I can't say much, it is my favorite color. Always has been," I said, turning around.

Damon was lying on the other side of the bed, watching me closely. His gaze moved up my body, stopping at my eyes, and then moving to the gift bag I had left on the table. I looked away from him, and he sat up quickly.

"So, I take it, you two know each other?" he snarkily asked.

I smiled at Lexi and snapped my fingers, starting Stefan's CD player. Lexie spun into to me, wrapping a leg around my waist, dancing dirtily. She dropped her leg, and I bent over giggling madly, before matching her move for move.

"Yeah, I know, Ella. We met in Vancouver about a century back. We spent a year traveling together, drinking and dancing. One of the best years of my life," Lexi said.

Damon stood from the bed and pointed at me. "You spent a year partying with...Ella here?" Damon asked his eyes narrowed, he spat out the foreign name with contempt.

I shut off the music and leaned against Lexi. "Oh, get that judgy look off your face Damon. I was a year off from dying, and I had no family. So, when Lexi came along and offered me exactly what I needed, I took her up on it." I wrapped an arm around Lexi and smiled up at her. "She offered me fun, something I didn't get very often." I said and glared at Damon when he scoffed and rolled his eyes."Fun Damon, ever heard of it? Or are you too busy with revenge?" I asked, my voice stiff.

Damon leaned in and smiled down at Lexi. "Maybe not Lexi's version. Teach me to have fun, Lexi," he said with a smirk.

I jerked back as Lexi flew forward, pinning Damon to the bed, her hand on his throat. "I'm older, and that means stronger," Lexie spoke close to his face. Her breath fanning his hair.

"Sorry," Damon rasped. He laid still his face scrunched up with pain.

"Don't ruin my time with Stefan and Ella, cause I'll hurt you," she leaned down to his ear, and I shuddered on his behalf, she was terrifying in her own right. "And you know I can do it," she whispered, yanking her hand from his throat and stepping away from him.
"Yeah," he groaned.

She stood next to me and brushed my hair from my shoulder with a smile. "Sorry, I know what he meant to you," she said.

I watched Damon as he rubbed his neck, he looked at me, and I closed my eyes, tilting my head down, shaking it gently.

"Things change. People change," I whispered.

I turned around and hugged Lexi one last time. "I have to go deal with some of my own petty family drama. Try not to get in between the drama here, it's thick,"

Damon stood and started towards me, but I was already out the door. I had no time or energy for him.

I stared at my own front door and sighed in irritation. I shouldn't feel so scared of going into my own home, it was utterly insane. I took a deep breath and opened the door. Elena and Jenna were both sitting on the couch facing the kitchen, where Jeremy sat at the dining room table with a few books in front of him and a blue pen in hand. I dropped my bag by the door, placing my keys in the designated bowl, and stood by the couch. They all turned to look at me for a second before turning back to their conversation.

"I gotta finish this. I'm way behind, and I have a quiz tomorrow, so…" Jeremy said, looking down at the several different books in front of him.

I sat down on the couch beside Jenna and stared Jeremy down in suspicion. My eyes narrowed, and a slack-jawed expression took over my face.

Elena leaned closer to us. "What do you think? Alien?" she said.

Jenna's eyes moved between Elena and me then zeroed in on Jeremy. "Some sort of Replicant,"
Jenna guessed.

Jeremy lifted his head and rolled his eyes, his face a picture-perfect blend of annoyance and amusement. "He can hear you," he grumbled with a flash of a sarcastic half-smile.

Elena looked at him worriedly and met my eyes from behind Jenna's back. I bit my lower lip and looked away, back at our heavily studying brother. What had she done to him? What had Damon done to him was the more accurate question.

His eyes moved quickly from page to page, scanning the information before writing something new down in his notebook, flipping through the pages rapidly. He was focused and motivated. A completely different person than he had been only a few short days ago. I gave Elena one last look and stood up, taking my bag upstairs to my room.

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The next night I was pulled from my plans of hot cocoa and a good book by a text from Caroline. Apparently, she had planned an impromptu party at the Grill that evening. There was no way I could refuse, especially since it was also officially Stefan's birthday party.

I stepped into the crowded restaurant, observing patrons dancing in the middle of the room with drinks sloshing around in their hands. The music played at top volume, the bass reverberating in my chest. I braced myself for a night of karaoke, pool, and avoiding Elena. At least I'd have Caroline to keep me occupied enough.

My eyes scanned the layout looking for Caroline, finding her on the other side of the room, next to a set of pool tables. She wore a beautiful purple silk dress, a bright satisfied smile on her face. She looked proud and content, making her positively glow from the inside out. I felt my lips slide across my teeth as a smile split my face. That was my girl — she was going to set the world on fire.

I fixed my plaited ponytail and looked down at my outfit. I had wanted to wear something pretty but simple, so I threw on a black knee-length cocktail dress and gold kitten heels. I'd swiped on a little gold eye shadow and some of Elena's red lip stain (that I'd stolen from her vanity a few months back) and finished with a pair of dainty gold hoop earrings. I felt pretty and figured this was a Caroline approved look.
I started towards her, confused when she changed her direction and made her way to the bar. Something had caught her attention. I stood on my tiptoes, straining to see where she was going. Even with a slight heel, I was still too short to see over the heads of the people crowded around me. Just barely through a crack in the crowd, I caught a glimpse of tousled jet black hair, and my teeth bared instinctively. Wow, when had that become my response to him? Dammit, Damon.

I pushed through the crowd, slapping at someone who grabbed my ass and then stepped next to Caroline. I huffed in anger and exhaustion — I could feel sweat beading on the back of my neck and prayed my makeup stayed in place. I brushed the tip of my ponytail from my damp neck and narrowed my eyes at the vampire.

"Damon, I'd hate to believe that you had anything to do with this little shindig," I said smoothly,

I took his glass of bourbon from his hand and downed it in one quick gulp. I squeezed my eyes closed and pursed my red-tinted lips. I felt his fingers on my throat and opened my eyes just a slit.

"Of course not, baby. But, I did hear something... funny,"

He emphasized the last word with a sarcastic laugh. I leaned into him, and nonchalantly pushed Caroline behind me. She stumbled slightly, but I ignored this.

"Oh, you did, did you?" I said, my voice sultry and low. "What was that, Mr. Salvatore?"

I caressed his last name with my tongue. Damon continued to trail his fingers down my throat. He wrapped his fingers around the back of my neck slowly, and pulled me towards him, squeezing gently.

"You gave Bonnie my crystal, Elandra. I want it back," he growled, squeezing my neck a little tighter. "Tonight,"

I could smell the bourbon on his breath. I leaned into him and laughed lightly in his ear, my voice rough from his grasp.

"Emily won't let you have her crystal, Damon. You should know that babe,"
I emphasized the pet name, knowing it would irritate him. I brought my magic forth, focusing it in my fingertips. Small flickers of blue light, almost like metallic nail polish, sparkled as I ran my fingers across his face, zapping him with the electricity. He winced, air whistling through his clenched teeth.

"Don't presume you have any effect over me," I continued, "I don't fear you. I have nothing to fear. I'm already dead, remember?"

I ripped his hand from my neck in one quick motion.

To anyone around us, it would have looked like we had been two lovers in an embrace. I inched backward away from him and took Caroline by the wrist, pulling her to the other end of the bar. I grabbed a drink and tried to shake off the whole encounter. I would be lying if I said being so close to him hadn't left me feeling uneasy and more then a bit flustered, even with the neck grabbing. I tended to like things rough anyways. Caroline watched me closely, seeming a bit dazed herself.

"The party is amazing, Caroline, really," I said.

Caroline pouted slightly, her eyes glazed over. I held her head close to my face and looked into her eyes. Her vervain should not have worn off yet, should it? I pulled her bracelet from my purse and took her wrist, clasping it on quickly. I knew I shouldn't have taken it off her. Still, I thought it would make the detox quicker if she wasn't continually leaning down and inhaling vervain several times a day. I couldn't trust Damon as far as I could throw him. I knew he had something to do with this damn party.

Caroline looked down at her bracelet with a sigh. "Thank you," she said.

"Keep it on until I can get your compulsion reversed and vervain you up, girl,"

She smiled at me, her eyes seeming to clear. "Sure thing," she agreed.

I handed her another drink and patted her on the arm. I looked around us and found Lexi and Stefan dancing awkwardly.

"I'm going to say hi to Stefan and his friend," I said.
Caroline nodded, drinking deeply. I watched her closely, making sure it was safe for me to leave her.

"You're a wonderful person, Caroline, and I love you," I said, kissing her on the head.

She sat down her drink and looked up at me. "How do you do that? You always know what to say. Is that a witchy thing?" she asked.

I smiled at her, biting my lip and shaking my head. "No, it's a best friend thing. I have 'Care-dar.' I just know what you need to hear,"

I kissed her head again. I knew she would be ok, she just needed to let go a bit — Caroline had a tendency to be a tad uptight. I saw Matt at a table nearby and caught his attention, motioning to my eyes and back to Caroline. He gave me an enthusiastic nod, and I smirked.

Hmm, Caroline and Matt? I liked it.

I slid onto the dance floor and giggled at Stefan's weak dance moves. He was a lot like Caroline — way too uptight.

"I'm going to need to see some more footwork," Lexi said with a grin.

"Yeah, I'm not really interested in making a fool out of myself," Stefan laughed, dancing in a circle around Lexi.

Lexi turned around and danced into his chest, snapping her fingers and laughing at his unease. "Come on. You're not that bad," she said.

I danced up next to them and twirled around Lexi. "Hey, Sexy Lexi. Are you torturing our Stefan here?" I admonished.

She tossed her hair back and laughed. "He needs to be tortured a bit. Someone's gotta take that
stick out of his ass," she hollered, trying to speak over the music.

Stefan blushed and bumped her with his hip, placing his hands on her shoulders. "Ok, just do me a favor. Tell me if you see Damon with his camera phone," he said.

I took one of his hands and one of Lexi's and pulled them further onto the dance floor. "Don't worry. I'm sure we can find plenty of our own blackmail material," I giggled.

I spun Lexi into his chest and then began twirling in front of them, my hips moving with the beat, my hands in the air. The lights above us pulsed purple, green, and red, making it seem like we were in a club in the city instead of a small-town bar. The atmosphere was warm and inviting, it was perfect for forgetting your troubles, so that's what I did. I danced with Stefan and Lexi, choosing to believe that we were all ordinary people having fun on our friend's birthday. I continued to dance, smiling at Lexi conspiratorially every time we saw the light in Stefan's eyes shine. He was finally having some fun.

I closed my eyes and let my body take over until I felt a familiar pounding in my head. Sweat beaded on my forehead, and the air changed from warm to hot — too hot. I could feel the blood pulsing in my veins, much too quickly. Images flashed in front of my darkened eyelids, blood, and screaming faces, something was happening.

I stumbled, my ankles protesting as my feet slid the wrong way in my heels. I opened my eyes and tried to focus. The world was much too bright now, and it appeared blurry like everything was covered in cellophane. I could still see the frightened faces as if they were printed on my retinas. I looked around me and saw Stefan and Lexi dancing, oblivious to the world. I made my way up the steps and past the pool tables into the back of the bar.

I slipped into the bathroom, breathing heavily and felt something drip onto my bottom lip. I lifted my hand, running it over my mouth and upper lip, glancing down I saw thick red blood gushing from my nose. I quickly leaned against the first sink I came across. I grasped the handle, turning the cold water on full blast. I placed my hands under the water and scrubbed roughly, watching the red fall down the drain. I sniffled and tried to keep the tears at bay. I took a paper towel and wet it, cleaning the blood from my face. I was so sick of feeling this way. It was so unfair. This was the price I had spoken to Caroline of. Magic could be as much a curse as a gift. I never asked to see these things.

I looked at myself in the mirror, my face was sickly pale, and my hair appeared almost brittle, the magic in my veins was weakened because my body was too tired. That vision had cost me. I lifted my purse from my hip and grabbed my blush, lathering some on my cheekbones. It would at least help a little. I reapplied my lip stain next and then tried to fix my disheveled hair, all the while taking deep, steadying breaths.
"Ok, ok, Elara. You're ok, everything's ok," I repeated.

Something had obviously happened, and I needed to figure out what. I refused to ruin Stefan's birthday, so I would have to do it alone. I shook myself mentally and tried to remember the images I had seen. I remembered a couple kissing, then something terrible had happened, something bloody; the man had been attacked.

I leaned over the sink breathing heavily. I felt sickness rising in my throat. No, I wouldn't be weak. I refused. I pushed away from the cold marble sink and gripped my hands together in front of me. I was fine. I shook my hands out beside me and let out a deep sigh that sounded more like an angry shout and left the bathroom. My head still felt fuzzy, but I could manage.

I flattened my dress and tried not to wince at the volume of the music. When I rounded the corner, I could hear Stefan and Lexi shouting in excitement; they were playing pool and laughing. Stefan leaned across the table, smacking Lexi's hand in a high five. Lexi pulled away and shook a fist hand in the air in triumph. I smiled fondly and stumbled down the steps towards the bar, my body still fighting small tremors. I hoped they were not as noticeable to others as they were to me. I heard a chuckle and looked over my shoulder, Damon was watching Elena with a smirk plastered on his arrogant face. Elena was posed next to a pillar across from the pool tables, the very definition of despondent, watching Stefan like a lovesick puppy. I ground my teeth together and changed direction.

Damon circled her like a vulture, a Cheshire grin on his face, chuckling lightly, "Stefan smiles — alert the media,"

I called on every bit of my mental and physical strength and clicked my tongue in disapproval, stepping up beside him. "Now, now, Damon. Your petty little pokes at Stefan and Elena's relationship are getting tiresome," I said, throwing an arm on Elena's shoulder. "So, shoo," I said, flicking my fingers.

I kept my eyes on him and tried to steady the tremors that coursed through me. Instead of acknowledging me, he kept his face trained on Elena.

"You haven't given him a lot of reasons to be happy lately," Elena snapped.

Damon pursed his lips and sighed. "Oh, you're right. Poor Stefan. Persecuted throughout eternity by his depraved brother," Damon said, shaking his head and smacking his tongue against the top of
his mouth.

I moved my arm from Elena as another tremor shook through me. I braced myself against the pillar in front of Elena and arched my back. Damon's eyes narrowed as they crossed over me. I kept my face forward and was proud when only my hands shook, something I hoped he hadn't noticed. He turned his head and zeroed back in on my sister.

"Does it get tiring being so righteous?" he asked her.

I giggled without meaning to and covered my mouth. Damon was right, though, she could be a righteous little nitwit sometimes.

"Humph, it flares up in the presence of psychopaths," she said, taking my stiff hand and pulling me away slowly.

I was starting to feel pliable, really, I was too tired and weak to care.

"Ouch. Well, consider this psychopath's feelings hurt," Damon snarkily said from behind us, his hand on his heart.

I turned my head and rolled my eyes in his direction, he narrowed his and looked me over again from top to bottom, his nose twitching. Elena pulled me behind her swiftly, I stumbled and took her shoulder to stay upright.

When did she get so strong?

I leaned in and casually sniffed the air around her, well she didn't smell like vanilla and honeysuckle, so she wasn't Katherine.

Elena stopped suddenly, forcing me to press my hands against her upper back to keep from colliding with her, and placed a hand on her hip, tilting her head questioningly. "What did you do to our brother?" she asked.

Damon rolled his eyes to the ceiling and then back to her. "I'm gonna need a less vague question,"
he said.

I huffed and stepped beside Elena, my feet, and head aching. "She means when she stupidly asked you to invade his mind and take away his memories, what else did you do?"

Elena looked at me in annoyance and pushed her hair behind her ear. "When you did what you did to Jeremy's memory of Vicki," Elena mumbled, and Damon looked around us, stepping closer. "What else did you do to him?"

Damon looked down at Elena and shrugged lightly. "You asked me to take away his memory of fangs and roar. You wanted me to take away all the bad stuff," he reminded her.

I scoffed loudly and looked at him in shock.

"But he's acting differently," Elena said, "He seems ok with everything, a little too ok if you ask me."

I stepped into her eye line and looked at her. "Of course he does, Elena. Damon took away all the bad. This means all the pain Jeremy has felt since mom and dad is just...gone," I said, turning my head to Damon. "That was a really sweet and terrible thing to do, Damon. Terrible more than sweet," I said, my eyes stinging. "Yes, Jeremy is fine now, but he isn't healed, all this is just a band-aid. If, god forbid, something happens, what he felt like before is going to snap back and hit him harder then ever."

Elena rubbed my arm, and I jerked away from her. "Don't, Lena. I still haven't forgiven you, I'm just civil. For Jeremy's sake," I whispered.

Elena's face fell, but she must have decided not to let my attitude get to her because she ignored me and turned back to Damon.

"Are you sure you didn't do anything else?" she asked.

I shook my head and crossed my arms.
"Elandra is right. I took away his suffering," he said.

Elena nodded and tried to retake my hand, but I gently pushed her away.

"Elena, go get a drink. I need to speak with Damon," I said tiredly, "and I'm exhausted, so I'm probably going to go home when I'm done,"

Elena looked at me closely and placed a palm on my forehead. "Oh my God, Elara!" she said, her eyes wide.

I pulled her hand from my forehead and smiled reassuringly. "It's ok. Really, it's normal. I'm just tired," I said, pushing her towards the bar.

She shook her head. "That's not normal, Elara..." she started.

I smacked her butt gently, "Go!" I said with force.

She looked at Damon and narrowed her eyes, running them to my head and back to him. I laughed lowly and watched her walk to the bar. Turning around, I took Damon's hand and pulled him away to the hallway leading to the restrooms. I reached into my bag and took out my cell, sending a text to Caroline and slid it back inside.

"Why did you pull me away? And why was your sister so concerned?" he asked, touching my head before I could stop him.

His mouth fell open, and he pushed me against the wall, lifting my chin, he met my gaze. "You feel like a corpse, Elandra! I knew something was wrong when I smelled blood,"

He leaned down and listened to the steady beating of my heart for a moment before standing up straight again.

"What the hell happened?" he growled.
I closed my eyes and counted to three. Damon smelled different than usual. Why did he smell so
different? I opened my eyes and looked at him.

"You smell like roses, Damon. Why?" I asked, stepping away.

He kept his face neutral, but I could still see the stress in the way he held himself, stiff and
defensive. "You answer my question first, El," he said, leaning into me.

I pulled away and stumbled backward, my hands flailing out in front of me. However, before I
could even register the sensation of falling, I was still again, the feel of leather against my cheek. I
took a deep breath and could smell roses again.

"Elara?" Caroline's voice called from behind me.

I pushed Damon away from me, immediately missing his warmth, and turned around. "Care. Hey,
um, I...it's just...I almost fell," I inarticulately mumbled.

Caroline raised a brow and frowned. "Ok, what did you need?" she asked.

I wobbled as I walked towards her, and Damon was at my side in an instant. I kept my gaze on my
feet and slowly kicked off my heels.

"That's better," I sighed.

I took Caroline's wrist, removing her bracelet. "Ok, now you're going to fix your compulsion,
Damon. I want her free of everything you've done," I demanded.

Damon grumbled and yanked Caroline towards him. He wrapped his hands around her neck and
held her still. I watched it in amazement. Compulsion was so cool, yet completely terrible.

Looking deep into her eyes, he spoke seductively. "You will forget every command I have ever
given you. You will return to exactly the way you were before we met," he said.
Caroline blinked a few times, and he let her go pushing her away. I took her wrist and quickly snapped on her bracelet. I patted her on the shoulder and sighed. She looked slightly dazed, her eyes glazed over as she, once again, viewed the world without the filter of Damon's compulsion.

"There, that's better. Now, go to the bar and take this," I said, handing her a clear gel capsule.

Damon leaned down and sniffed the pill before pulling away and letting out something between a sigh and a laugh.

"What is that?" Caroline asked, taking the pill.

I patted her shoulder and started pushing her towards the bar as I had Elena. I was feeling very pushy tonight. "Vervain. I'll explain later. Now go take it," I said.

Caroline smacked my hands off her shoulders and tossed her hair with a huff. "Fine, you pushy, hag," she huffed.

I smiled at her as she sashayed to the bar. My knees began to buckle, and I threw my hand out to catch myself on the wall. Damon grabbed my hand and helped me to the couch hidden in a darkened alcove in the corner of the room.

"What's going on, El?" he asked.

His face was full of concern and fear, so similar to the way he had once looked at me. I could always lose myself in those eyes. He had been so kind and funny. I never wanted to truly accept that I had lost that side of him forever because if I did, it would mean I had lost a piece of me. As I saw all he had once felt for me and still did, buried in his deep blue eyes, I started to forget that I was mad at him and that he could be an arrogant asshole who liked to flirt with my sister. In my weakened state, all I could see was the man I had loved.

"I had a vision. It weakened me. Someone was attacked by a vampire. I don't receive visions like that unless something bad is about to happen," I said. I was scared and just wanted to feel safe again, and, at this moment, Damon could give me that.

I touched his face gently, my fingers caressing his cheek. His breathing quickened, and he closed his eyes, leaning into my touch and kissing the palm of my hand. My breath caught in my throat as
he nuzzled into my palm, and I found myself leaning closer, my heart pounding in my chest. My nose brushed his, and I could feel his breath as it swept across my face, bourbon, and mint. I licked my lips and ran my fingers through his soft hair, eliciting a moan from him. The sound vibrated through his chest, where my other hand lay, tucked gently under his shirt, covering where his heart had once beat for me. I smiled against the edge of his lips and tugged on the hair at the nape of his neck. I ran my tongue across the seam of his lips, and he gasped, giving me the opening I desired. My tongue found solace in his warm mouth as I kissed him deeply, tasting the bourbon I had previously smelled. He pulled me tightly against his chest, but it suddenly wasn't enough; I needed to be closer. I lifted my leg and slid over his lap to sit astride him. He moaned into my mouth, and I pulled away long enough to send him a sly smirk, rolling my hips against his. His head fell back as he groaned and bucked upwards with me. I leaned down and kissed his neck, nibbling roughly at his pulse point.

He growled fiercely. "Don't do that, baby," he begged.

I sat up and looked at him, his face was desperate and hungry. I met his eyes and bit my lower lip as I brushed my nose against the edge of his jaw, trailing down to find his pulse point again. I bared my teeth and bit him roughly, my own animalistic desires coming to the service. He growled again, this time his arms wrapping around me, nails digging into my flesh. I ran my tongue across the red indentations I had created and left a wet trail of saliva as I ran my tongue back up his neck. He turned his head away from me quickly, his breathing labored. I reached out and took his chin in my fingers, pulling his head towards my face. The sclera of his eyes appeared to almost bleed, like the blood that he was forced to feed on swam through his eyes. Stunning black veins snaked underneath his skin. He was a frightening yet beautiful image. I ran the pads of my fingers across the black veins, his skin was soft and warm, I watched in fascination as they appeared to move. I had seen vampires change before, but never this close, and never in this intimate of a setting. I kissed the veins that had grown on his skin like ivy, a sharp intake of breath was the only sign of life from him. He was still as a statue beneath me. I laid my head on his chest and felt him breathing deeply. The smell of rose-filled my senses.

Rose.

Like Caroline's bracelet.

Like...vervain.

I inhaled again, and it was there, the exact smell of vervain. My body and mind stiffened. What was he up to? In my befuddled state, I had missed that, and then I had succumbed to my basic instincts.
Oh, God! I had just made out with Damon.

I sat up slowly and looked at him, his features were back to normal, but his eyes were guarded. Had he felt the change in my demeanor?

"Vervain?" I simply asked.

He looked away from me and, very carefully, sat me beside him. "That doesn't concern you, Elandra. I'm going to do what I have to. Even if that casts me as the bad guy," he said, his face hard.

He ran a hand over my braided hair and felt my forehead. "You need to go home now. You don't need to be here," he said.

I stood up and placed a hand on his chest. "Whatever your planning. Please, don't. I'll help you, Damon. I'll help you open the tomb. Just...no more death. Please," I begged.

I hated how weak I felt, but I didn't want to lose anyone else, and I felt like that was precisely what was going to happen. Damon turned away from me, his shoulders rigid.

"That's all I bring...death. I can't give you what you want, El," he whispered. "The only thing I can do for you is protect you, save you,"

He was gone with a quick burst of air. I sat back down on the couch and took a deep breath. Well, that just made things more complicated.

After I composed myself, I stepped out of my little hiding spot and quickly found Lexi at the bar. Her head moved up and down as she checked me out.

She looked at the bartender and sighed. "Make that four," she said.

The bartender leaned in and chuckled. "You know I need to see some ID," he said.
Lexi's face became a blank slate. "No, you don't," she said plainly.

The bartender's head jerked slightly, and he took a short breath. "That'll be, uh..." he stuttered.

Lexi tilted her head, leaning back. "Free."

The bartender blinked and smiled brightly. "On the house," he said.

Lexi laughed happily and bounced in her seat. "Thanks," she said.

I sat down next to her while the freshly compelled bartender poured our shots and smiled. "That is such a cool trick," I said.

Lexi took my hand and gave it a squeeze. "You know if I could, I'd offer you the whole shebang, right?" she said.

I closed my eyes and tried not to cry. "Yeah, Lex. I do," I said.

Lexi let go of me and took three of the shots in her cupped hands, leaving the other for me, and stood up, motioning for me to follow with her head. I obeyed like a well-trained dog. Ignoring my protesting body, which was telling me I needed sleep to recuperate my magic. Lexi stopped suddenly, and I tried not to fall on my ass behind her.

"Ah, the famous Elena," she said.

I looked over her shoulder to find my sister sipping on a drink. I wiggled my nose, the protective sister side of me wanting to inspect her glass. How was she getting home?

Elena straightened her posture and looked at Lexi with suspicion. "Towel girl," she said.
I blinked rapidly and wanted to scoff. Towel girl? There was totally a story there.

Lexi shrugged and handed Elena a shot. "I've been called worse," she said, sitting down, what I presume would be Stefan's shot, at the table beside us, and took her own in hand.

I stood next to her and casually inspected Elena's drink. Coke, ok. Good girl.

Elena looked at Lexi with shock and curiosity in her big brown eyes. "I didn't know you guys could drink," she said.

I pushed my braid off my shoulder and nodded.

"Oh, yeah. It helps curb the cravings, but makes for a lot of lushy vamps," Lexi said, bumping hips with me.

I winked at her, several memories of her drunk and passing out in our hotel room coming to mind. She clinked shot glasses with me, and we both downed ours at the same time.

Elena looked between us and pointed her finger at me and then Lexi. "How do you two know each other?" she asked.

I leaned in closer so I could speak in her ear. "I know Stefan told you everything about me, and my curse so that I didn't have to explain." I stepped back and walked around the table. Sitting down, I looked into her eyes with regret. I hoped she would know that, despite my anger, I regretted how I had revealed everything. Elena leaned forward and laid a hand on my cheek, and I sighed in relief. "I met Lexi a century ago, in another life," I said, moving away from my sister.

Lexi, hearing every word, nodded, smiling at me brightly. "We're good friends, Ella and I," she said.

Elena's face darkened, and she lowered her eyes. "Her name is Elara," she said.

Lexi sat down beside me and watched Elena closely. She looked at me, moving my hair from my ear. She winked at Elena as she angled herself closer to me. "This the family drama you
mentioned?" she whispered in my ear.

I shook my head 'yes,' and she stuck out her bottom lip as a symbol of sympathy.

"You know, I've never seen Stefan drunk," Elena said, changing the subject.

Lexi smiled and looked down at the table, an expression of love on her face. "He's uptight," she said.

Elena laughed and nodded quickly, her hair falling into her face. "But not with you," she said.

I put my elbow on the table and rested my head on my hand.

Lexi lifted her head and looked at Elena with rounded eyes. "Well, that's the benefit of knowing someone for over 100 years," she smiled in thought for a moment. "You can just be yourself," she said.

Elena's eyes clouded over, and she moved her hair behind her ear. "Yeah, he can't be himself around me," she said despondently, looking away.

Lexie placed a hand on hers and rubbed the circle on her skin. "Well, not yet. The first step was him telling you. The rest comes with time," Lexie said in a whisper.

Elena's eyes teared up, and she looked at Lexi, hope flickering in her eyes. "You seem so sure," she said.

I brushed the hair from her face, wiping the tears from her eyes. "Because she is, Lena," I said.

Lexi looked at me as we both got lost in the same memory. Lexi had told me her love story before, it was beautiful and had given me so much hope. She had said to me that whoever I was waiting for would come back to me.

"The love of my life was human. He went through what I imagine you're going through...denial,
anger, et cetera.” Lexi took a deep breath and took my hand. "But at the end of the day, love really
did conquer all,” she said, grinning at Elena.

She gave my hand a squeeze and looked at me again, this time she didn't smile or laugh, which was
very un-Lexi like. "We all need to remember what love can do for a person. If they just let it,” she
said.

She looked away and back to Elena. "Are you gonna drink that?” she asked, looking at Elena's
shot.

Elena lifted her shot and scrunched up her face, shaking her head. "Uh, no go for it,"

She handed the drink to Lexi, who downed it immediately. Elena looked at her with a newfound
respect and then down at her hands.

"I'm scared."

Lexi shook her head a bit and leaned in. "But you're here...because you're crazy about him. I get it,
ok. I mean, what's not to love." Lexie turned her head and looked at Stefan, who was leaning over
the pool table, lining up a shot, his eyes steady and focused. "Take it from someone who has been
around a long time. When it's real, you can't walk away,"

Lexi took another shot, the one I had assumed was for Stefan. Downing it quickly, she scrunched
up her face and shook her head. Elena laughed, watching her in amusement, the stress melting from
her features as she thought over what Lexi had said.

"Whew!” Lexi hollered as the liquor went to work.

She stood from the table and placed both hands on my shoulders.

Elena sat back in her seat and smiled up at the beautiful vampire. "It was really nice meeting you,"
she said.

Lexi feigned, blushing, fanning her face with her hands. "I know," she said, pulling me from my
"Let's go get some more shots," she said.

I hung my tongue out of the corner of my mouth and cocked my head at Elena. Lexi yanked my braid, and Elena laughed at my plight.

"Come on, your keeping me from Tequila," she said.

I followed her to the bar and stood to the side as Lexi order a few shots and then started to make her way to the other side of the bar. I didn't realize who she had sat down next to until I heard her speak. Looking down, I noticed crystal blue eyes staring at me in anger.

"The shots are a bribe. I need to know, what are you really doing in Mystic Falls?" she asked Damon.

I walked up beside her and took her arm. "Lexi, this isn't necessary," I tried.

She brushed me off quickly, and I stumbled again, my equilibrium for shit.

Damon stood, taking my arm and sitting me on the stool he had vacated. "You're supposed to be at home," he whispered in my ear as he pulled away.

"Keep your hands to yourself, Lexi, or we might have trouble," he said, his voice stiff.

I chuckled and pushed him away from her. "Damon, you know she didn't do anything. I am clumsy tonight, my magic is weak," I said in a whisper.

Lexie leaned across Damon and frowned at me in annoyance. "Why didn't you say anything? I have a medicinal baggy in my purse. A witch in New Orleans had this weird bark that she gave me for helping her out, said it was worth a fortune to the right witch. Apparently, if you suck on it, it helps restore your magic when you're exhausted, and it can be reused."

Lexi reached into her purse and pulled out a small silver bag. Inside she had small vials of blood, a container of Witch Hazel, that I tried to not jump in fear from. To my breed of Witch, it is poison. It burns like acid and renders us immobile, aside from all our senses, which remain active. It is the
The worst form of torture. Luckily, since my mother's death, I am the last of my kind, and not many people know of that particular weakness.

She had a few other things I didn't recognize, but the last item she pulled from the bag was wrapped in clear plastic. It was a Blackwood branch. The Blackwood tree was one of the most potent trees in Witchcraft. I took the small twig from her and peeled it from the plastic, placing it between my lips with a sigh. The bitter taste immediately made me feel better, my magic recognizing that relief was in sight.

"Now, back to business," Lexi said.

I nibbled on the branch nervously as Damon leaned against the bar, observing me. "Ok, I have a diabolical master plan," Damon said, his expression one of pure boredom.

Lexi nodded, her lips pursed. "What is it?" she asked.

Damon sneered at her in exasperation. "If I told you it wouldn't be very diabolical, now would it?" he said.

I motioned for the bartender, he was new and obviously covering for the one who had been serving us before. I grimaced, great, and I can't compel him.

"What can I get you, love?" he asked.

I narrowed my eyes at him and bit my tongue. It's a common pet name, Elara. You can't yell at someone every time they use it.

"Vodka?" I asked, biting my lip.

He winked at me conspiratorily and grabbed a glass filling it with Vodka. I smiled brightly and winked at Lexi, who had been watching the whole encounter, with a grin.

"Here ya go," he said, handing me the drink and a napkin. "If you need anything else, I'll be here," he said, smiling and walking back to the other end of the bar.
I took a sip of my drink, keeping the Blackwood on the other end of my mouth like a toothpick, and looked down at the napkin.

It had a message scribbled on the corner,

Call me, Brad. and at the bottom in a messy scrawl, a phone number.

I handed it to Lexi with a small laugh. "Huh, Brad," I said.

Lexi waved the napkin in the air with a whoop, and I covered my face with both hands. Damon took it from her and looked down at it and then back down the bar, where Brad was sending me quick smiles.

"Yeah, I don't fucking think so. How old is he?" Damon said, crushing the napkin in his hand and placing it in his pocket.

Lexi laughed loudly and shook her head. "The more important question is: how old is Ella?" she said.

I choked on my drink and spluttered my face red. "Ugh...well...uh.. a..a...thousandish," I said quietly.

Lexi's jaw dropped, and despite Damon knowing the roundabout time frame, he started coughing, his bourbon obviously going down the wrong pipe.

Lexi started giggling madly, her bright face red. "Wow, I feel so much better about my age," she wiped her eyes and pushed my shoulder gently. "Now stop distracting me," she said, turning back towards Damon.

I sipped my drink as they talked, and I watched Damon dance around her questions. Then he tilted his head towards the entrance, and I could see a gleam in the corner of his eye, just as I felt something fall into my drink. I looked down to see a drop of red floating towards the bottom of my
cup, the color spreading out through the clear liquid. I scooted next to Lexi and looked around us. Everyone was still drinking and having a good time, but, by the entrance, Sheriff Forbes was turning a woman away from the building, the same woman from my vision. I started breathing heavily, and Lexi turned to me.

"You ok, Ella?" she worriedly asked.

The Sheriff and her men were steadily getting closer, and I was starting to understand what they were here for.

"Lexi," I said, as Sheriff Forbes shot her in the hip with a syringe.

"Sheriff, what?"

I tried desperately to get ahold of Lexi, who was gasping for air.

"What are you doing?" Damon snapped.

The Sheriff looked at him steadily. "Thank you for the vervain. Now, if you'll excuse me," she said.

Her men lifted Lexi by the shoulders and began to carry her from the Grill. I tried to follow, but Damon held me by the wrist. "No, El," he said.

I ripped my wrist from his hand and pulled away from him. "I asked you…I begged. I've never once asked you for anything, Damon," My voice was gruff. "She's my friend, Stefan's friend," I said.

I looked around the room, spotting Stefan and Elena leaving and gave Damon one last glare before following after them. I saw them get turned away at the front door and stopped, turning around and running ahead to the back. I slipped through the door and heard gunshots. I took the branch from my mouth and slipped it into my purse. I ran towards the noise and saw the Sheriff shooting Lexi in the chest. Lexi smiled after every gunshot, and I almost laughed. Thank goodness — she was ok.
Of course, she was. She was old and strong. I heard movement behind me and saw Stefan and Elena heading up the ally. I stepped out towards Lexi to see if I could help, and the Sheriff saw me out of the corner of her eye.

"No, go back!" she yelled.

I put my hands in the air and was just about to knock her out when Damon approached Lexi with a stake.

"NO!" I shouted.

But, I was too late, he shoved the stake in her chest. I fell to my knees, the hard pavement a welcome pain compared to what was playing out in front of me.

"Why?" Lexi gasped her voice weak and pitiful.

Damon looked at her for a split second, no remorse on his face, "It's all part of the plan," he said, before twisting the stake, a sickening crunch floating through the air.

Lexi's skin began to grey as she gasped, taking her final breaths in this world. I could feel her fear and pain, having died so many times before, but she wouldn't come back. I sat on my knees, no tears coming. Not even anger was there to keep me warm.

When Lexi fell to the ground, Damon rushed to the Sheriff, his face innocent and sweet. "You ok?" he asked.

She placed her gun back in its holster and nodded. "Yes, thank you. Place it in the trunk quickly. I need to talk to her. I think she's in shock," she said, pointing to me.

Hearing her mention me snapped me out of my stupor. Shock? I wasn't in shock.

I was…what, was I? Angry? Sad? Both?
I wasn't sure.

I stood up and brushed off my bleeding legs with a wince. "No, I'm ok. I already knew about all this, Sheriff. Runs in the family remember. They were on the council," I whispered, quickly remembering the journals I had found of dads. "I was only worried about Damon. We are friends, and I guess reading about vampires and facing them are two entirely different things," I said, smiling.

Liz patted me on the back with an understanding sigh."You did well. Just please remember. You can't talk about this with anyone," she said.

I knew she meant Caroline and nodded my head fiercely. "Of course, Sheriff. I would never," I said.

Damon watched me from where he had dumped Lexi's body, and I avoided his eyes.

"Go home and get some rest," she said.

I gave her a quick side hug and ran back to the Grill. I looked around and couldn't find Elena or Stefan anywhere. As I was going to my car, my phone started to ring. I pulled it from my purse and saw Elena had sent me a text.

"I didn't know who else to call, Elara. Stefan said he is going to kill him. You have to do something." I hung up the phone without responding to her plea and tossed it in the passenger seat — pulling out of the Grill as fast as I could.

I jumped out of the car at the Boarding house, the front door was wide open, and I could hear fighting going on upstairs. I ran through the open door and took the stairs two at a time. My head spinning. I pushed my way into Damon's room and saw Stefan had him pinned to the wall, a stake in hand.

"Stefan no, don't. You're better than this!" I shouted.

He didn't acknowledge me, but his shoulders stiffened as he shoved the stake right below Damon's heart.
I gasped and ran forward, keeping a safe distance. "Stefan," I sobbed my hands in my hair.

"You missed," Damon grasped his brother's shoulders, eyes wide as he gasped.

Blood poured from the wound as Stefan continued to shove the stake deeper into Damon's chest. "No. You saved my life. I'm sparing yours. We're even," he said, twisting the stake as Damon had done to Lexi.

Stefan removed the stake and shoved it back in, this time with more force. "And now we're done," he finished.

Damon grunted in pain, the grip he had on Stefan's shoulders faltered, and he slipped down the wall as Stefan let go of the stake and stepped away from him. He walked towards me, and I flinched involuntarily, afraid that if I said the wrong thing, I would make him feel worse. He froze mid-step and stuck his hands out in front of him, noticing that they were covered in his brother's blood.

He scrunched up his face in discomfort and lowered them to his sides. "I'm not going to hurt you, El,' he said.

I tilted my head and tried to understand what he meant. "Of course your not," I slowly said.

Stefan cocked his head and blinked a few times. "Ok, so your not afraid of me?" he asked. I shook my head and looked around him at Damon, who was trying to get the stake from his chest. One part of me wanted to help, and the other wanted to pop some popcorn and watch a replay of what had just happened.

"I was only worried I would say something wrong and make this whole night worse. I...I'm going to miss her too, so please remember you not alone," I said, the tears finally coming.

Stefan's face fell, and he approached me at light speed, pulling me into a hug. Blood be damned. I cried on his shoulder, and he lifted me into his arms and sped me away, away from Damon and everything that had happened that night.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

A/N: I kinda lost my inspiration at times throughout this chapter, so I really hope it turned out ok. PLEASE, let me know what ya think. As always, I would love to hear your opinions good or bad.

My head lulled to the side as the teacher drawled on in front of the class her voice being drowned out by the pounding of blood in my ears as I yawned. "Today we're going to talk about shadow reckoning," I finally heard her say.

I rubbed my face and looked around me, finding Bonnie to my left in a similar comatose state. She was yawning and leaning back against her seat in an effort to stay awake, before finally giving up and laying her head on her arms. I tried to catch her attention, but couldn't find the will to move my hands. I was just too tired. I kept my eyes on her, it was odd but I couldn't look away. I was unsure why, until I saw her sit up and look over her shoulder, staring at something in the hallway, just beyond the open door. She looked back at the teacher briefly before she stood and started to move out of the room. I turned and looked around me, unnerved to find no one had even noticed Bonnie stand to leave. I felt a tug in my chest, and before I knew it, I was standing to follow her against my own volition. I tried to stop my feet but I couldn't, I was a passenger in my own body. I walked out of the oblivious class, no one seeming to care that two students had decided to leave. Bon stood just outside of the doorway, her back to me, she was staring off to her right and from the rigid set of her shoulders, I knew something was wrong. I tried to move my mouth, to ask her if she was ok, but it was like my jaw was wired shut. So, I just stood behind her waiting. Out of the corner of my eyes, I saw something move to our left and my body turned at the same time Bonnie's did. Breathing heavily, she slowly started to head in the direction we had seen the flicker. This was exactly what scary movies taught us not to do, but I wasn't in any position to try and tell her that. My body obediently followed behind her, and I noticed quickly that her shoes clicked against the tiles as she walked. I listened closely and heard nothing from my own, it was like I was a ghost. I tried to catch my reflection in the glass of the classroom doors next to me but could see nothing in my periphery, and my body was still not in my own control.

As we approached the side door that led to the back parking lot, I felt a familiar presence, and saw Bonnie tense in front of me, her ragged breathing becoming erratic. She froze, and my body avoided colliding with her by circling around and coming to stand on her other side, right next to Emily Bennett. The tension from my body started melting immediately, it was like someone had dropped an egg on the top of my head. I could feel it trail from my scalp down to my feet. I sighed and squeezed my hands tightly, enjoying the feel of my body once again reacting to my commands. I squinted my eyes at my dearly departed friend, and took her in again, from top to bottom, for the first time in over a hundred years. Standing against the wall between the door and the lockers, her hands clasped in front of her body, she waited for Bonnie to accept that she was there. I was unsurprised to find that she still wore the same light colored, checkered gown and bonnet, she had worn the day we had died. But somehow, even though I wasn't surprised that she still looked the same, my stomach rolled at the sight of her. Although her skin and hair were both uncharred and as beautiful as I remembered, I could still smell her burning flesh and I tried to push the thought from my mind. I cocked my head to the side and placed a hand on my hip.
“Was the puppet master routine really necessary, Em?” I asked in a huff.

Emily smiled briefly before turning her eyes towards Bonnie. Until that moment I hadn't realized she had still yet to acknowledge me. I stepped in front of her and tilted my head when her eyes never focused in on me. I stepped away when Emily quietly huffed and realized I was not meant to be seen or heard, I was only supposed to observe. Emily turned around and walked out the door. Bonnie followed silently behind her and I stayed directly beside Bonnie as Emily led us into the woods, the further we got the surer I was of exactly where Emily was leading us. As soon as I saw the piles of moss-covered stones, I stopped in my tracks. She had led us straight to the tomb. In all the years I had lived here as Elara, never once had I ventured here. I had avoided it completely, until now. Emily stood in front of the entrance and Bonnie watched her from the bright green of the treeline, her hands fisted at her side.

"Please help me," Emily said, tilting her head to look at us.

I shook my head and looked away. This was completely unnecessary. Emily should know me better than this. No idle threats or little reminders, of what was at stake, would stop me from helping Damon. If it came down to me helping, or something far worse happening than I would help him. If my sister was perpetually self-sacrificing than I was perpetually heroic. I always had to try and save everyone. It was as much my curse as the one that kept me forever seventeen.

"Who are you? Bonnie asked, breathing heavily.

I chuckled at her attempt to act oblivious. Everyone here knew that Bonnie was as gifted as any Bennett witch before her. I smiled at Emily and looked down at my feet. I knew Emily understood that I had caught on to the reason for my being here. My part in this was over. Message received. I understand what was at stake if the vampire's in the tomb were released, pulling me into Bonnie's dream was overkill. Then again, the Bennetts always did have flare. They liked to make statements.

"I'm Emily. You know that" Em said with a sly smile.

Bonnie clenched her fists and took a step back.

"We're family," Emily said.

Bonnie looked at the ruins in front of us in fear. "Where am I?" she asked.

Emily tilted her head up, motioning towards the crypt. A jolt of fear, panic, and hunger flickered down my spine and I bit my tongue. The souls of all those trapped inside were crying out all at once, and Emily was being kind enough to let them filter there way into Bonnie's dream to find me. I narrowed my eyes at her and pushed them out of my mind with force. Yet, still feeling an echo of their presence imprinted on my subconscious, another reminder of what danger lay waiting in the tomb. Not cool Emily.

"This is where it started. And this is where it has to end," Emily said, turning towards Bonnie.

Bonnie shook her head in disbelief, her hair flying out around her, eyes glistening with frightened tears. "This isn't real," she said, running away from Emily and the ruins.

I followed behind her slowly, knowing she wouldn't be able to get away that easily. Emily stopped her less than a foot from where she had tried to run, appearing right in front of her, her dark brown eyes stern and annoyed. She didn't say a word as Bonnie jumped and spun on her heels, trying to run in the other direction, this time not even getting five steps before Emily appeared again.

"Help me," she sternly said, her eyes angry.
Bonnie's gasp was the last and first thing I heard as my head shot up and I felt my hair sticking to my face. I quickly moved it from the corners of my mouth and looked around me, I was in class again. The startled eyes of my nearby classmates looking at me in shock. I looked around the room and my eyes found Bonnie on the other end, she was breathing heavily, her hands firmly pressing against her desk. Our eyes met and she looked at me questioningly before saying something snarkily to a girl next to her. I steadied my breathing and wiped the rest of the drool from my face.

Great, that's super attractive.

I turned to try and catch Bonnie's attention again and noticed Emily sitting next to her. I sighed deeply and ground my teeth together.

Really? A dream within a dream.

She was really lucky I had liked Inception.

Of course, who doesn't like Leo?

Bonnie turned her head and screamed loudly, her voice ringing in my ears. The dream shifted again and I sat straight up, air escaping my lungs in a rush. I moved my hands and felt the cold earth beneath my fingers. Opening my eyes, I saw Bonnie slowly sitting up directly in front of me. She was in her pajamas, a pair of pink cotton pants and a white top. Her feet were bare and a tiny jacket was all that was protecting her upper body from the cold. I let out a steady breath and stood carefully, brushing off my mostly bare legs. I was only wearing blue silk shorts, a silk top, and socks. I never wore much to bed, my magic always left me feeling overheated most of the time. I looked behind Bonnie and noticed where we were. The cemetery. We had woken up directly in front of the Salvatore family crypt.

How nice...

Bonnie shakily stood and brushed her self off.

"It's ok, Bon, we're ok," I said rushing towards her.

I wrapped her jacket around her, zipping it up quickly. I wasn't sure how well her body dealt with the cold.

"What the hell happened?" she asked.

I looked around us, scanning the area for potential danger, and took her hand before starting towards the cemetery exit.

"That was Emily trying to contact us. She wants you to assist her with something, and the longer you ignore her the worse things will become," I explained.

Bonnie pulled her hand from mine and took her hair in her hands. "This is insane. You're telling me some dead relative is trying to get me to do something for her? And if I don't, she will keep mentally torturing me?" she asked, her hands still clenching her hair roughly.

I wrapped my hands around hers, slowly removing them from her hair, careful not to get her fingers caught in the tangled mess. I cupped her face and took deep deliberate breaths, nodding for her to follow my example. "Listen, Bonnie, I know you didn't ask for this and that it is a lot to take in all at once. But, you are a witch, and this is part of it," I let go of her face and stepped away, lighting my fingers up with tiny blue flames. "So, you can either accept this wondrous gift, or you can run from it, it is truly up to you, but I will warn you. You cannot run from a piece of yourself forever. It
will always find you," I said my voice ringing with a lifetime of experience.

She watched the tiny flames of my magical signature dance around my fingertips for a moment before sighing. "I just want to go home," she said.

I nodded and closed my hand, the color disappearing, and took her hand in mine again. She didn't flinch away from me and I took that as a good sign. I hoped that Emily linking us together like this would end up being a good thing. For us both. As we walked home I smiled down at her in thought.

"At least this isn't one of the nights I chose to sleep naked. Now that would have been a fun walk home," I said lightly.

Bonnie looked up at me in mild shock and then burst into a fit of stressed giggles. I hugged her close to me and warmed her with my magic.

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The large group of football players rushed past us and I pushed an oblivious Caroline and Elena out of the way. They both looked at me in shock and I sighed at their one-sided view of the world around them.

"Hello, focus, please. I really don't want to scoop your sticky remains from the bottom of my new leather boots," I said picking up one foot and showing off my new white leather Guess boots. They were heavenly. They had three belted straps spaced out evenly over the top with small silver balls covering the straps. It had been a nice surprise to come home to after the horrible dreamsaster with Bonnie.

"Sorry, Ellie, thank you for saving us. And again your boots are amazing!" Caroline gushed, placing a hand over her mouth and fake gasping.

I pushed her shoulder with my own and smiled brightly. Elena watched us with a smile on her face, moving her books from one side of her arms to the other. "So, what were you saying about Bonnie, Care?" she asked.

Caroline huffed and shrugged. "Just that she has totally been avoiding me the last few days. Every time I try to talk to her she blows me off," Caroline said in annoyance.

Elena frowned and shook her head. "Caroline, I don't think she is blowing you off, I just think she has been really busy and stressed out," Elena said.

Caroline crossed her arms with a huff. "Well, I am not talking to her until she finally decides to talk to me. Its a matter of principle," she said.

I blinked several times before deciding to just stay out of this one. Bonnie would deal with this when she saw fit. Her business was just that, hers.

"Well, I tried," Elena said, ever the peacekeeper. "I'm officially out of it," she finished, sighing and looking at me with an eye-roll.

I shrugged and ignored the hurt expression on her face at my abrupt brush off.
"Good. Your turn. Where's Stefan? Have you talked to him?" Care asked, her blonde curls bouncing as she turned her head to gaze at my sister.

Elena's expression was hard as she kept her eyes ahead of her. "He's avoiding me," she said, still not meeting Care's gaze.

I bit the inside of my cheek and tried to forget the last night I had seen Stefan. He and I had both been a wreck. I had cried on his shoulder for a good hour and had tried my best to convince him not to give up on Mystic Falls and Elena just because of what happened to Lexi. It hadn't worked. He had been adamant that he would end up getting Elena killed. He had promised he would still try and search for a way to help me, but that he would not have anything to do with Lena, for her own good. I wanted to tell him the truth of what was to come, but something told me it wasn't that time, and as always, I had to trust that instinct.

"Why?" Caroline asked in confusion.

Elena closed her eyes and took a deep breath. I stepped closer, my arm brushing hers, and I could feel her mood steady. "It's complicated," she said.

The bell rang and Elena pulled me forward. Caroline waved us away with a quick "Bye." as Matty exited the side doors. I saw her turn around and brush her hair away from her eyes with a sexy smile before Elena yanked me inside.

I might just become a Maroline fan. Hmm.....

Elena pulled me into History, leading me to a seat in the second row, something she knew I hated. I pulled off my bag, sliding it onto the back of my seat and lowering myself down, just as Bonnie rushed in, looking harried and worse for wear. Her head was lowered and she avoided eye contact with everyone, fidgeting and constantly looking over her shoulder. She had dark circles under her eyes and a sickly complexion. Emily was pushing her over the edge. I felt terrible for her. I sat my hands on my desk and closed my eyes, sending her a rush of calming vibes. I could see them wash over her as her shoulders slumped just a bit, making her posture appear less hunchback and more college student with a heavy book bag. I faced forward as the last of the students filed in followed closely by an attractive man, maybe in his early forties. He was tall and well built, obviously into athletics of some kind.

"Good Morning everyone," he said walking to the chalkboard and picking up a piece of chalk.

I raised an eyebrow and leaned forward suddenly very interested in the subject of the history I already knew by heart. There was something interesting about this one.

"Alrighty, let's see," he said writing a name on the board.

ALARIC SALTZMAN.

Such an odd name, I automatically liked him. He had used the word alrighty and had a weird, unique name. He was cool in Elandra's book.

The cruel things people could make up with a name like that. I cannot count how many times I had to pronounce my name for someone. E-Lan-druh. While I was watching the new sexy brunette History teacher write his cool name, Lena was mouthing something to Bonnie from across the room. I turned my head just long enough to see Bonnie shrug before tuning back into the interesting specimen in front of us. He was making my instincts dance exciting little flutters. There was seriously something up with him, nothing bad, but...something. Mr. Saltzman turned around
and clasped his hands together in front of him. His blue button up dress shirt revealing just a peek at his chest, much more than most teachers would dare reveal. A bright white-toothed smile appeared on his face. I'll admit my breath caught and I quietly cleared my throat. What a silly response.

"Alaric Saltzman. It's a mouthful, I know. Doesn't exactly roll off the tongue." he glanced around the room, including everyone in his welcome and I tried to keep my eyes on my hands. "Saltzman is of German origins. My family immigrated here in 1755 to Texas. I, however, was born and raised in Boston. Now, the name Alaric, belongs to a very dead Great-Grandfather I will never be able to thank enough." he smiled sarcastically and I couldn't help but nod and smile right along with him, I could feel his pain. My name had come from a grandmother. He grinned at me and looked at the chalkboard again. "You'll probably want to pronounce it Al-ar-ic, but is actually, Al-lar-ic, okay? So, you can call me Rick, and I'm your new History teacher."

After a thoroughly confusing History class, where I actually found myself interested in the History I had already lived, followed by a few normal uninteresting classes, I found myself outside sitting at a table eating lunch with Bonnie and Elena. Bonnie was filling my sister in on our weird, ancestor induced dreamsaster. Elena sat in front of a thoroughly freaked out Bonnie, who no matter what I said, had decided to keep trying to fight Emily off instead of listening to what she wanted her to do. Which was a really stupid idea.

"And you always see your ancestor Emily?" Elena asked, her hands folded in front of her bottle of water.

I poked my fingers through the holes of the green metal picnic table where we sat. I had tried several times to interrupt and put in my two cents, but apparently, the woman who had lived for over a thousand years didn't know what she was talking about. Bonnie nodded quickly, her face frightened and exhausted. Elena looked at me next and bit her lip.

"Why did Emily want you there?" she asked.

I leaned my head toward the sky and sighed. "Like I said before because she wants to remind me what at stake if we do not help her," I said.

Bonnie took my hand and gave it a squeeze. "What does she want with me?" she asked.

I shook my head sadly. I wanted to just spill the beans, but I couldn't, there were just certain things that needed to be handled a certain way. "Emily has to be the one to tell you. She is the person who has to tell you that story, not me. It's not mine to tell," I said.

Bonnie tossed my hand on the table with a huff. Elena jerked, touching my shoulder.

"So, I'm being haunted then, and all because of this stupid medallion you gave me," she said.

I reached my hand out and tried to touch her but she pulled away quickly.

"Bonnie, have you called your Grams? Maybe she can tell you something about it?" Elena offered.

Bonnie sighed and shook her head defeatedly. "I can't call her. She will tell me to embrace it. I don't want to embrace it. I want it to stop," she said.

I slammed my hands on the table and looked at Bonnie in anger. "Dammit, Bonnie Bennett. You are a fucking witch. You may not want to be, but you are. This is not something you can just brush under the rug, at least not right now. You need to pull your head outta your ass and deal with this," I said quietly my voice full of annoyance.
Elena gasped in shock and slapped me on the arm as hard as she could but I stood my ground, my eyes never leaving Bonnies. This was something she needed to hear before she got herself killed. Bonnie looked at me in both shock and anger before settling on acceptance.

"That may be how you feel, but this isn't what I want and I am going to do whatever it takes to get my life back," she said, her weak and tired face set firm.

I shook my head and stood from my seat, bending to lower myself next to her ear. "Bonnie, you're my friend and I love you, but this is a bad idea. When you come to your senses, call me," I said, standing up and walking away.

I walked out into the parking lot and completely avoided everyone else, not caring to interact in anyone else's storyline. I only made it to the back of the school before someone caught me, despite my 'talk to me and I'll kill you' posture.

"El! Hey!" Jeremy shouted.

I spun around on my heels and saw my brother rushing towards me, his bag slapping him on the back as he ran. His hair poofed out around him and all I could picture was sneaking up on him with a pair of scissors. He really needed a haircut. I waved him to me with a smile and laughed when he finally stood in front of me, his face beet red, bent over, one hand on his knee and breathing heavily.

"See, this is why smoking is bad, Jer," I said.

He lifted his hand from his knee long enough to flip me off and then resumed his knees hugging position. I patted him on the back and laughed at his predicament. I took his bag from his back and he lifted himself up.

"Thanks," he took the bag from my grasp and ran a hand through his hair. 'Have you met the new teacher?' he asked.

I tried to keep the blush from my cheeks as I continued in the direction I had been going before he had stopped me. "Oh, um, Alaric?" I asked, trying to appear nonchalant.

Jeremy pulled me to a stop and looked at my face thoroughly with a bright smile, a very bright smile. I looked away quickly and Jeremy jumped in the air, before letting me go. "Oh...oh...no way. You totally think he is hot. What is this? Like your first crush?" Jeremy asked his voice baby like.

He leaned in and patted my cheek. I covered my face in extreme embarrassment and pushed him away from me. He was completely insane. I had plenty of crushes and this was definitely not a crush. I was intrigued by the new guy. That was all.

"Dammit, Jeremy! You know that's not true. I do not have a crush, he is just...nice to look at," I said my face heating up.

Jeremy leaned onto my shoulder and started laughing loudly. The people around us started staring and my face heated up even more. I pushed him off me and noticed he actually had tears in his eyes.

"Oh, Ellie. You never act like this. I can't wait to tell Jenna and Elena," he said walking away backward.

I stepped towards him my face promising murder. He winked at me and started running in the opposite direction before I could even blink.
That ass!

I stood gobsmacked.

What had just happened?

He was right though. All my relationships had been very quick and private, and a cute face usually had little to no effect on me. I had seen many a cute man. There was something different about Alaric, though, and I think that was exactly what intrigued me. He was wrong about one thing though, I did not have a crush. I just thought my teacher was completely delicious and my instinct told me he had quite the story to tell. Something new, and I rarely saw anything new. I would figure him out and all the fluffy feelings would swiftly go away.

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Jenna had decided that none of us were up to cooking that night after I had tried to boil water for pasta and it had foamed over, spilling everywhere. After hopping around in front of the stove in a frightened panic, Jenna had declared it a Grill night, and I wasn't about to object. Elena and Bonnie were sequestered up in her room, and Bonnie still mad at me for my earlier display, had decided to ask Elena to speak to me about steering clear for a while.

"Listen, Ellie what you said was out of line. This whole lifestyle might be ok for you." she waved her hand out in front of me, gesturing toward my body as if my magic was apart of my physical appearance. "But she didn't choose this and doesn't want it. And for you to just tell her to accept it as if she should just deal with it, well, that was hateful and wrong," Elena stuttered out.

I ran my hand through my hair and nodded. "Ok, I was only trying to be the person who actually talked some sense into her. Playing this game, running like this, it's dangerous. Be careful," I said firmly, my eyes looking towards the ceiling where I knew Bonnie to be.

I didn't like this feeling, It was like I could feel Emily right below the surface, trying to claw her way out.

I followed Jenna out, waving a goodbye to Elena, and left them to whatever trouble they would find.

At the Grill, we waited for our waiter to find us a booth, and before I had even had a chance to scan the room, Jeremy tugged on my shoulder with a smirk.

"Oh, well would you look at that, Ellie?" he said turning his head towards a table in the center of the room.

Alaric Saltzman sat at the table entranced in a book. His hand on his head, eyes never straying from the words on the page. I quirked an eyebrow and admired him from afar. He still looked incredible in that tightly fitted blue dress shirt. Dammit, Elara!


I turned my head and smiled at her. "That is our sinful new History teacher. He seems really nice, but he is entirely too attractive don't ya think," I sighed.
Jenna scoffed lightly before laughing. "Well, look at you? You never crush on anyone. I have to meet him now!" she whispered.

Jeremy elbowed me with a triumphant laugh as the waiter led us to our table. We passed the new bane of my sensory existence and I grumbled when I smelled his enticing cologne. Great, he even smells nice. Stupid teenage hormones, the worst part of living over and over again. I sat down with a huff and Jenna laughed. Jeremy sat beside me and ordered both of us a Coke.

"What?" Jenna asked.

I shook my head and placed my elbow on the table, leaning my cheek onto my open palm. "He smells good too," I grumbled so only she could hear.

Jenna giggled madly and leaned in closely. "I know I smelt it too. Not fair is it," she agreed.

She sat back and looked over at our quiet History teacher with a thoughtful expression on her face. "I like a man who can dine alone. A quiet strength," she said.

I followed her gaze and watched him read for a second. "I like a man who can read a book in a crowded room without getting distracted. Shows me he really enjoys reading. I love nerds," I said with a smile.

Jeremy gagged and I kicked him in the shin, letting out a giggle when he groaned in pain. Jenna laughed at our little show and shrugged. "I have to agree. Smarts on a man is a very attractive quality," she said.

I reached over and gave her a high five. Jeremy leaned back up, after rubbing his leg, and looked at Jenna with a smile. "I thought you were still in the whole Logan-depression phase," he said.

I rolled my eyes deeply. "Logan Fell was an asshole," I said, taking a swig of my Coke.

Jenna tilted her glass to my own and we shared in a toast to her former lover's title. When our glasses clinked together Jenna glanced at Alaric again and shared a smirk with me. "I've sworn off men forever, but it doesn't mean we can't observe him from a safe distance," she said.

Jeremy looked over at his History teacher and sighed. "Poor guy doesn't even realize he's on the menu tonight," he said.

I snorted and giggled madly, leaning against my brother with my hands covering my newly red face. I had not blushed this often in ages. What was wrong with me?

"So, Jeremy, have you picked a topic for the paper your writing for Mr. Saltzman?" Jenna asked.

I sat up and picked at my food as Jenna and Jeremy discussed his topic for the paper Alaric had been so kind as to grant him. Without it, there could have been no way Jeremy would have been able to pass History.

"That's easy. You have all your dads stuff," Jenna said.

I dropped my fork, it clattered against my plate loudly. Jeremy looked at me quickly and I smiled weakly. "Sorry, it slipped," I mumbled.

He scoffed with a smile and looked back at Jenna, who was watching me closely, her eyes slightly guarded.
"What stuff?" Jer asked.

"How the Gilberts came over on the Mayflower, all the family lineage. Your dad loved that stuff. It's all boxed up in the closet," Jenna said and pointed at me. "Ellie looked at it all once," she included.

I swallowed hard, a thick lump in my throat. Jeremy turned towards me and frowned. "You did?" he asked.

I looked up at him and nodded. "Yeah, uh, I didn't figure you'd find it very interesting, but it should help you now. You'll find everything you...need," I said.

He would either start to remember or he would just figure it all out. Either way, Jeremy would know now, and I didn't plan on telling Elena a single thing. I would be getting Jeremy on vervain. Jeremy tilted his head and looked lost in thought as Jenna's attention was caught by something in the distance. Alaric. I looked down at the table and cursed my stupid reddening face.

"Mr. Saltzman," Jeremy exclaimed, giving him a fist bump.

Alaric smiled brightly, his eyes crinkling. "Jeremy what's up man?" he asked.

I kept my head down staring at my lobster like it was about to jump up and sing me a Disney song. Jeremy kicked me in the ankle and I gasped loudly, covering it up with a cough. "Mr. Saltzman, this is our Aunt Jenna," I said my voice pained.

I lifted my ankle and reached down, rubbing it under the table with a wince. Jeremy winked at me and watched Alaric shake Jenna's hand, his face even brighter than before, as was Jenna's. I dropped my ankle and sat up quickly, looking between the two.

Interesting.

Jeremy was watching them as well, his face unreadable.

"Jeremy was telling me about his paper. Thank you for giving him another chance," Jenna said, her eyes twinkling like bloody Dumbledore.

I bit my lip mid-smile, trying not to make it obvious that...well...they were being obvious. Jeremy looked at me, his eyes wide, and they darted back and forth towards the flirty duo. I moved my lips into a fake frown and over exaggerated a shrug, before slipping out of the booth.

"Excuse me, Aunt Jenna, Mr. Saltzman. I'll be right back," I said, motioning to the bar and my empty glass.

Jenna smiled at me nodded, motioning at her hair when Alaric looked away. I winked nonchalantly and she sighed in relief.

"Please, call me Rick," he winced lightly, gently grinding his teeth together. "Mr. Saltzman makes me feel old," he said.

I shook my head and kept my eyes on his face, despite the fact that I wanted to look him over and tell him how very not old he really looked.

"How about Alaric? I love unique names," I said.

Alaric nodded with a grin. "If you must. At least someone likes it," he said with a laugh.
I lifted myself on the heels of my feet and clapped my hands together once. "Ok, that's a deal. Well, I'll see ya later, Alaric," I said, spinning around and walking away, my hair bouncing around me.

"She sure is a different breed," I heard him say.

I smiled to myself as Jenna and Jeremy agreed with him, laughing joyfully. How very right they all were. As I approached the bar my steps started to slow. Dammit were there always vampires everywhere?

Damon and Stefan sat at the end having, what appeared to be a friendly conversation, which could only mean it wasn't.

I took an annoyed breath and turned the tip on my shoes in their direction, making my strides slow and steady. Maybe if I was lucky I could catch a bit of their discussion, and gage if an intervention was necessary before actually making my presence known.

"So, Stefan...you know, I've been thinking. I think we should start over, give this whole brother thing another chance. We used to do it oh-so-well, once upon a time," Stefan said, his voice playful.

I stopped in my tracks, my breath catching in my throat. What the hell were they doing? Damon turned his head and looked at him with a deep, silly, brooding expression, brows furrowed. "I don't, Damon. I can't trust you to be a nice guy. You kill everybody, and your so mean. Your so mean, and..." Damon's expression changed abruptly and he smirked with a shrug. "Your really hard to imitate, and then I have to go to that lesser place..." he said.

Stefan tried to keep his face steady but his eyebrows rows and fell as he tried to keep a straight face. I started silently laughing behind them, my chest shaking with the effort to not make a sound. What was this? It was so similar to...before.

"Uh huh. Can I get a coffee, please?" Stefan asked, his face still alight.

"And a Coke," I said from behind them.

Both boys turned to face me and I smiled brightly. "Loved the voice, Damon. It was a very pleasant reminder of a past life," I said sitting down in between them.

Damon watched me for a moment before looking down at his glass. "I live to please," he said.

Stefan leaned across me and looked at the bottle beside Damon. "What's with the bottle?" he asked.

Damon blew air through clenched teeth his face returning to a semi-cheerful smirk. "I'm on edge. Crash diet. "I'm trying to keep a low profile," he said.

Stefan frowned and shrugged as if he didn't have a care in the world. What was up?

"You could always just leave, find another town to turn into your own personal Gas 'n' Sip," Stefan said.

Damon looked at him closely, and poured himself another drink, looking around us before he poured another, pushing it towards me. I sighed deeply and glanced around, as I picked it up and drained it quickly. I looked up into his blue eyes and gave him a half smile as thanks. He frowned and looked at Stefan.

"I'll manage. You don't have to keep an eye on me," he said.
Stefan shrugged and looked at me briefly. "I'm not here to keep an eye on you," he said.

I narrowed my eyes at him and he avoided my gaze.

"So, why are you here," Damon asked rolling his oceanic eyes.

Stefan snagged the bottle of liquor from the bar in one swift motion and started off. "Why not?" he said.

Damon turned around on his stool, slightly disarmed by Stefan's change in attitude. "What is he doing, Ellie?" he asked.

I stood from my stool and crossed my arms, thrumming my fingers against my arm. "I don't know. But whatever it is, don't you think you probably deserve it?" I asked, following after Stefan.

As I passed the other end of the bar Jenna took my arm quickly, pulling me to the side. "Listen, Jeremy took off. And I need you to do the same, please," she said, eyeing Alaric, who sat at a stool a ways away.

I smiled excitedly and then pulled it back a bit. "Sure Aunt Jenna, You get him, girl," I whispered.

When Damon walked past I joined him, briefly turning around and giving Jenna a thumbs up. Damon eyed me weirdly and I just smiled knowingly.

"What was that?" he asked.

I watched Jenna join Alaric and sighed lightly. "My Aunt Jenna and the insanely gorgeous new History teacher are sorta on a date," I said.

Damon turned around slowly and looked at Alaric, his eyes hard. "Insanely hot?" he asked, scoffing.

I looked at Alaric and sighed again, this time dragging it out just to irritate Damon. "Yes. He is very fun to look at," I said my eyes raking him over.

Damon pulled me to the pool tables and took a handful of darts from Stefan. "Stop ogling your old History teacher and play some darts," he said handing me a few.

I took the darts and looked at him like he had grown an extra head. "What makes you think I can play darts? I died once because I tripped on my own feet and broke my neck!" I whisper yelled.

Stefan laughed loudly as he threw a dart, hitting the middle on the first try. "Just try it," he sighed.

I scrunched up my nose and huffed, turning towards the board that looked itty bitty and twenty miles away. I lined up my shot and tried not to watch Stefan, who was laughing silently and eyeing my shot with a wince, from the corner of my eye. I pulled back and let go, my dart flying beside the board and hitting the brick wall, falling towards the ground. I followed it with my head, watching it land on the floor.

"Whelp, that blew," I slowly said.

Stefan laughed loudly again, and I imagined making him eat the remainder of the darts that I held in my hands. I walked in front of him, slapping him hard in the stomach as I passed. He leaned over with a groan and I smiled. Damon watched me with an appreciative smirk and I rolled my eyes at him.
"Well, Stefan thinks he will beat me," Damon said.

I grinned at him and shrugged lightly.

Stefan took a swig from his beer and raised a hand in the air. "Yeah, because i'm better than you," Stefan said.

Damon paced in front of the board for a moment, a dart in one hand, before lifting it and pointing it at Stefan. "I'm onto you. Reverse Phycology. It's a little transparent, but I admire the effort. Getting little Ellie here to help, now that was where you really went wrong, thinking she is my weakness," he said.

I sat down my drink, my eyebrows furrowed and blinked several times. "What?" I asked.

Stefan stepped beside me and placed a hand on my shoulder. "Ellie being here is purely consequently, Damon. Do you honestly think she would pick sides?" he asked.

I pushed his hand from me and stood up.

"Would you prefer the brooding forehead?" Stefan asked.

I looked between the two and it finally clicked. This had all been a game. Stefan had been buttering him up for information. Most likely for Elena. I placed a hand on my head and shook it. I had gotten sucked in, yet again.

Dammit.

It had been so nice to see them treating each other like brothers again.

"Seriously, what game do you think you're playing?" Damon asked, his eyes hard.

I walked away from them and stood, back turned, as my eyes welled up in frustration.

"That's a funny question considering the fact that I've been asking you that for months. Frustrating isn't it.?" Stefan said with a very Damon-esque smirk.

Damon smiled and tossed a dart at the board. "Touche," he said.

I wiped the tears from my eyes and turned, walking away from the familiarity that now made me uncomfortable. The differences in their behavior were planer to see now that I no longer wore my rose-colored glasses, and it made me sick. I stepped outside and took a deep breath of the fresh night air. I let it soothe me. I wiped my face a few more time, bouncing on the heels of my feet.

"Wanna go play some ball?" Stefan said from behind me.

I jumped, slapping him on the chest with force. "Would you stupid fucking vampires stop sneaking up on me," I whispered with each slap.

He lifted his hands in the air and I laughed in annoyance. "Fine, I still can't go home yet. So I might as well." I leaned against the cold stone of the Grill and looked into Stefan's eyes. "You realize this is mean and will bite you in the ass, right?" I asked, unable to help myself.

Stefan looked away and ran a hand through his ruffled hair. "I will do whatever it takes to protect the people I have left," he said, voice firm.

I leaned my head against his shoulder and sighed. "I understand that. Just...dodon't forget he is your
brother," I said pulling away.

Damon met us outside with a bottle of Bourbon and a smirk. "Let's go," he said.

I shook my head and took the bottle from him, waving them forwards.

I sat in the grass, the cold ground seeping into my jeans, as the boys tossed a football back and forth. Stefan had driven us to Mystic Falls High, where he had insisted Damon and he play a little football, to bond. This was such a bad idea, and it was cruel. Damon's face had been almost hopeful a few times, and that had been enough for me to finally accept the truth, he was still in there.

My Damon.

All this death, mayhem and pain, was an act. He was pissed off and sad, and it was shit like this that didn't exactly help matters. What could I do though? If I pulled him to the side and warned him then things would only get worse. So I had to sit here, in the cold grass, and watch Stefan toy with his brother for information. Yes, to an extent, Damon deserved this. And no, I didn't trust him, nor did I forgave him, but now that I had seen the chink in his armor, I would save him. At least I would try. While I still drew breath I would try. Suddenly, there was a bit of a commotion on the field. The boys were standing apart, speaking lowly, eyes hard, then Damon vamp sped into Stefan's face speaking with spite. I stood quickly, dusting my jeans off, just as Damon walked away, turning around once, saying something while backing away with a smile. I ran onto the field and came up behind him. He spun around and vamp sped right in front of me, his eyes sad.

"What happened?" I asked.

Stefan sped towards us, face ashen. "How can you bring Katherine back?" he asked.

I closed my eyes and sighed. Seriously? Did none of them listen to my story at all? Did they not hear me mention knowing Katherine? Damon walked past us towards the parking lot and Stefan and I followed behind him.

"Before Katherine and the others were killed in the church, do you remember what it was like in this town?" Damon asked, turning towards Stefan, his hands in his jean pockets.

Stefan stopped and shrugged lightly. "I remember the fear and the hysteria. It's what got Elandra killed," he said looking at me. I nodded and shivered lightly.

Damon narrowed his eyes at Stefan and shrugged off his jacket. Townspeople were killing vampires and witches one by one." he stepped beside me and pulled his jacket over my shoulders, still looking at Stefan. "When they came for Katherine, I went straight to Emily, said I'd do anything. Name your price. Just protect her. She did," he said, his eyes never finding my own, yet his hands still on my shoulders. I stepped away from him, his century-old betrayal too fresh in this moment to allow for his touch.

"How?" Stefan asked.

He stepped closer to me and I smiled when he looked at me for reassurance. "Emily performed a
spell that locked every vampire who had been in the church at the time, in a tomb below it," I said.

Damon looked at me in shock and I rolled my eyes. "Although as both of you should know, I have mentioned Katherine many times before. But as I told Damon I will help him get in there, so he can see for himself," I said.

Stefan's eyes narrowed and he frowned at me. I shook my head and looked away.

"But I saw her go inside…" Stefan said.

I stepped in front of Stefan and looked in his eyes. "The tomb is under the church, the spell sealed everyone inside it," I explained.

Stefan froze and he looked at Damon in shock. "Are you telling me Katherine is alive?" he asked.

Damon shrugged and looked away. "Well, if that's what you wanna call it. She's been trapped in a mystical holding cell for the last century and a half, but your an expert on a starving vampire, so how do you think she is doing, Stef?"

I sighed and tapped my foot on the pavement. "Id say she is fine, seeing as she is well fed and doing her own thing, has been since that night," I mumbled.

They both ignored me and Damon continued his useless ramblings. "Did you know that witches can use celestial events to draw energy into their magic?"

Stefan looked at me and I nodded, looking at the sky. Damon watched me for a moment before continuing. "Me Either. But in order to give the crystal its power, Emily used the comet that was passing overhead. And, in order for the crystal to work again…" Damon said, trailing off.

Stefan looked at me again and I nodded. "The comet had to return," I said.

Damon folded his fist and clicked his tongue. "Downside? Longtime in between comets. And, a couple of hiccups along the way with the crystal, but the comet passed, and I got the crystal. And then Caroline got the crystal, and now Bonnie has the crystal, and here we are," he said.

I narrowed my eyes and watched him smile with fake ease. Stefan looked at me in confusion. "Why would Emily do this for him?" he asked.

I smiled weakly and looked at my feet. "Because she was a witch, and everyone suspected it. She knew they would come for her too. She wanted her lineage protected," I looked at Damon and ran a hand through his hair briefly. "And she knew, despite it all, despite Katherine, I trusted him," I said, pulling away quickly.

Damon's eyes widened and I looked back to Stefan and shrugged. Emily trusted my instincts, they are never wrong," I said.

Stefan looked at Damon and nodded. "I remember, you saved her children," he said.

Damon tore his eyes from me and shrugged. "It's the only thing keeping me from ripping that little Bonnie girls throat out to get my crystal back. Oh well, a deal's a deal. So…wanna throw some more? Damon asked with a smirk.

I rolled my eyes and rubbed my temples. My head was beginning to throb. I felt a chill sweep over me and the air stiffened. I could feel magic pulsing around us. I heard Stefan and Damon bickering, but it was as if they were miles away. Someone was using magic in town, powerful and
unintentional, and as far as I knew, the only witches in town were the Bennetts, and this wasn't Grams. I closed my eyes and pushed deeper, I felt the warmth within the user, but there was also doubt, so much doubt and fear. As I pushed further I could see more, it was definitely Bonnie and she was trying to contact Emily. I could feel blood dripping down my lip, but I ignored it in favor of trying to block Bonnie. I could feel her magical signature pushing through the veil and I knew Emily wasn't far. What was Bonnie thinking? I tried to push her back but she was too far, and I wasn't close enough, I tried to reach her mind instead but Emily was there, and she was blocking me. I tried one more time and felt a snap like a rubber band pushed too far. I felt myself fall backward and felt arms wrap around me.

"What the hell was that?" Damon fearfully asked.

My eyes shot open and I found fearful blue eyes scanning my face rapidly. His pale features were screwed up in a mixture between freight and amazement. I stood up and found Stefan stood beside him, his forehead wet, eyes wide. He handed me a handkerchief and I looked at it in mild shock for a moment (I mean who still carries those?) before taking it and wiping the rest of the blood from my face.

"What happened?" I asked.

Damon stepped in front of me and held my face in his hands.

"Your nose started bleeding and your eyes went white. Before we could do anything some weird magical force field popped up and knocked Stefan on his ass when he tried to touch you. We couldn't get near it without getting zapped," he moved my head up into the light of the street lamp above us.

"Your eyes are green again, but you looked dead El," he said his voice shaky.

I moved his hands from my face and nodded. "It's ok. I was in the inbetween following the signature of another witch. So the eye change can happen. She was calling out to a witch who is dead. It was Bonnie. I think she may be in trouble," I said, turning to Stefan.

He froze for a moment before snapping into action with a shake of his head. He vamp sped away, obviously heading to find Elena. I stuffed the handkerchief in my pocket and ran my hands through my hair, lifting it into a bun, and snapping it into place with the red elastic band I always keep on my wrist, a permanent foe bracelet. I turned on my heels and placed my hands on my hips.

"Soooooo..." I said my voice lilting.

He narrowed his eyes and leaned in with a smirk. "So? What?" he asked.

I rolled my eyes with a scoff. "Yeah, ok, Damon. So, are we just gonna head to the church now? Or act like we don't know where she is heading?" I said my hands waving around in the air.

Damon laughed lightly and took my hand. "As always you are one step ahead, My lady," he said.

I covered my heart and acted affronted by his statement, my eyes large. "But of course. I am the hero of this story," I said leaning into him and slapping him on the ass. "Getty up," I said.

He looked down at me and sighed. "You'll be the death of me, kid," he said.

I laid my head on his chest and wrapped my arms around him. "Kid? I am so far from a kid, Salvatore. Now let's go get your girl," I whispered.
Even if I knew the truth I didn't want to hurt him, so I would play along for now. "Yeah...my girl...lets go," he said, wrapping his arms around me.

I closed my eyes as the, newly familiar, feeling of flying rushed past me. Cold air spilling over my sensitive skin, the rush of adrenaline and the feel of falling in the pit of my stomach. It was an addictive thrill and it really gets the blood pumping. Damon stopped suddenly and if he hadn't been holding me against his leather-clad chest, I would have fallen backward immediately. He let me go and I looked around us. The atmosphere was so different from what I had seen in Bonnie's dream. The trees around us were dead and bare, the sky dreary and dark, it was perfect for a scary vampire and witch face off.

How very dramatic.

I stepped away from him and saw Bonnie round the corner, well...Emily. I could see it in her eyes. Bonnie never held herself the way, Emily had. It wasn't her posture, it was the confidence in her eyes. Emily was secure in her powers, in what she could do. She was a mature and powerful witch who believed in herself. Bonnie was not. This woman; her eyes were powerful, full of emotion, strength, and knowledge.

"Hello, Emily. You look different," Damon cockily said.

I rolled my eyes and sent him a glare that said 'shut up and stop antagonizing the powerful witch.'

Emily looked at him in annoyance and shook her head. "I won't let you do it," she said.

Damon leaned his head forward and glared at her in anger. "We had a deal!" he yelled.

I stepped closer to him and watched Emily closely. Her eyes clouded and she frowned. "Things are different now. I need to protect my family," she said, her voice thick with power.

Damon looked away in disbelief and I closed my fists in anger. She had no right to go back on her deal this way, especially since she knew when she made it Katherine never really loved him.

"I protected your family. You owe me," he snarled.

Emily lowered her head and nodded. "I know. I'm sorry," she said.

Damon growled and I stepped forwards, knowing he was about to make a mistake.

"You're about to be a lot more than that," he said, rushing forward at vamp speed.

"Damon NO!" I said, too late.

As soon as Damon was close enough Emily pushed her hand out and thrust it towards him, knocking him forcefully forward with her magic. Damon went crashing into a tree, one of the limbs impaling him in the side of his stomach. He groaned in pain, blood pooling around him. His face was pulled up in pain. He wasn't able to heal fast enough and could feel every second of the pain she had inflicted. He had been feeding on animals since he had killed, Lexi. Yes, he could be an evil jackass, but he was my evil jackass. He was family. Something in me snapped and every single instinct to protect took over. I was a Mikaelson for a reason, after all. I growled loudly my hands tingling, glowing brightly. I spun around and faced Emily down my teeth bared in anger.

"Emily!" I shouted, my voice a rumble of chaotic anger.

Emily stood a few feet away from me, her hands outstretched beside her, palms out. "Elandra, my
fight is not with you. I cannot let him hurt my family. Is Bonnie not your friend, your family, as well?"

I flicked a spell at her and watched her avoid it with precision. I wasn't trying to hurt her, I was just pissed off. She knew better than to injure Damon when I was right here to protect her. That was unnecessary and she knew that.

"Do not patronize me, Emily Bennett. I would not have allowed any harm to come to your family. But now you have pissed me off. You do not harm what is mine for no reason, Em, and you know that" I sneered, tossing another spell, one I didn't intend to allow her to miss. As I intended this one hit her square in the chest, throwing her back.

She landed on her back, her breath leaving her in a startled gasp. It wasn't enough to hurt Bonnie, but it was enough to get my point across. I stood, watching her lay where the spell had left her, breathing heavily and smirked. "Remember Emily, I don't play nice when you mess with my family. That's something you should understand." I stepped closer to her and bent down. "The Bennetts are under my protection now, as long as I'm living. Do what you must with the crystal. But Damon Salvatore is off limits, and you will not lay another finger on him," I said.

I stood up and snapped my fingers lifting her to her feet. I ran over to Damon; who Stefan was helping out of the tree. He fell to his knees, blood still pouring from his wound. "It hurts. This is why I drink from humans," he said.

I scoffed and pulled him to his feet handing him a wrist. "Well?" I asked with a shrug.

He looked at me, his eyes shining with doubt and pain, and shook his head quickly. "No, not now. I'll hurt you," he whispered.

"Ok," I said, pulling his arm over my shoulder.

"Stefan." Emily greeted with a nod of her head.

Stefan stepped forward and noticed the black scorch marks on the grass from our semi battle.

"Emily. I see you and Elandra have become reacquainted," he said looking at a nearby patch of black grass.

Emily smiled and winked at me. "She never did share her toys well," she said.

Damon scoffed and pulled his arms off my shoulder. "We're here for a reason Emily," he said.

"These people don't deserve this. They should never have to know such evil," she said.

I stood next to Stefan and looked at him. "To save Katherine she would have to unleash all of them," I explained when I saw his confused expression.

I had guessed he hadn't understood Katherine wasn't the only one who had been saved. Stefan's face fell into shock and disgust. "You saved everyone in the church?" he asked in fear.

Emily nodded. I placed a hand on his shoulder in comfort.

"With one comes all," Emily said.

Stefan stepped away from me and pushed Damon against a tree. "I knew I shouldn't have believed a single word that came outta your mouth. This isn't about love, is it? It's about revenge," Stefan
spat, his hands fisted in the neck of Damon's shirt.

Damon pushed him away and straightened his shirt. "The two aren't mutually exclusive," he said.

Stefan ran into him again pushing him back into the tree, away from Emily who had picked up a large stick and started to make a pentagram in the dirt. Stefan breathed heavily, his face centimeters from his brothers. "Damon, you can't do this," he said.

I watched Emily work, knowing full well that this entire debacle was unnecessary. This wasn't the only way to open the tomb. I stood just outside of the pentagram, my head tilted, and watched Emily finish. "This won't matter in the end, Em," I said.

She stood in the middle and looked at my face. "We shall see," she said.

Damon rushed forward and stood beside me his eyes deadly. "Don't do this," he hissed.

Emily looked at him one last time. "I can't free them. I won't," she lifted her hands in the air as she shouted. "Incendia." Fire circled the pentagram and Emily took the necklace from her neck, and as she did, her real features finally flicked into view, her dark eyes glaring at Damon. When she held the necklace in her cupped hands, she was once again Bonnie, she tossed it into the air with a jump, the crystal bursting into sparks.

I heard a commotion behind us and turned around to see Elena. How had she known where to go? "NO, please!" Damon shouted beside me, drawing my attention.

His eyes were full of pain, and such hate. I was scared for Bonnie. I wasn't sure how well my Bennett protection program was going to fare after this. I had an idea, but it was completely insane. I knew he would flip when Bonnie returned to her body, but I couldn't just let him kill her. Not after I had told Emily I would take over for Damon. The final spark of the, now destroyed, necklace fell to the earth and the magic of the circle ended, leaving Bonnie depopossessed and defenseless. She looked around her in horror and confusion her eyes wide. I ran forward just as Damon did using my magic to match his speed, and pushed Bonnie to the ground, spinning into his arms as she fell. I felt his fangs enter my neck and scrunched my eyes closed in pain. My head jerked as he fed on me roughly, weeks of no human feeding and anger making him vicious and ravenous. He hadn't even realized what had happened or that he wasn't actually feeding on Bonnie. Elena yelled loudly and I could feel Stefan pull Damon from me. I fell to the ground and looked up at the night sky, it was dark and black. Breathing heavily, I listened to the slow beating of my own heart.

"No...No...No," Bonnie said crawling next to me.

Stefan rushed over and looked at my savaged neck. "She's alive, but barely," he said biting into his wrist.

I opened my mouth and he helped me drink from him. Elena fell down beside me and cried into my hair. "What the hell, Ellie?" she asked.

Stefan rubbed the side of my neck and looked at Elena in relief. "Her neck is healing," he sighed.

He lifted me up and looked at me in anger. "Don't do that again," he said.

I wobbled lightly and smiled. "Well, the Bennetts are under my protection now, so I sorta had to," I said.

I looked over Stefan's shoulder and saw Damon standing behind him, my blood covering his
mouth, eyes dark and hard. His mask was gone and shock and disbelief replaced it. He looked so lost and alone. Bonnie pulled me away and took my arms, wrapping me in a hug. "You are the most incredible witch and friend. Thank you," she said.

I squeezed her tightly and kissed her head. "It's all in a day's work Bennett," I said.

Bonnie looked up at me and frowned. "I don't understand what happened…" she stuttered.

I looked at Elena and she nodded. She would handle the explanation better and they were so much closer. She took Bonnie by the wrist and pulled her towards the car. I gave her a reassuring smile when she looked back at me. I scanned my surroundings and found Stefan standing by a stone structure a ways away. Damon sat on a large rock, his hands on his knees, eyes lost in another world. I slowly stepped in front of him.

"I could have killed you," he whispered.

I touched his face and kept my eyes on him. "Yes. But, I couldn't let you hurt Bonnie," I said.

He looked at his hands. "Katherine never compelled me," he looked up and met my eyes. "I knew everything. Every step of the way. It was real for me," he said, his voice breaking, tears in his blue eye. I bent down and placed my hands on his knees. "I'll leave now," he rasped. I laid my head on his lap and just sat there in silence, even after Stefan left, even after I heard Damon cry. Tears that were for someone else. Someone who would never deserve them.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Review Please!!

Chapter 17

Elena stood in the bathroom her back to me, staring into Jeremy's room. I leaned my chin on her shoulder and looked in on him. He was sitting at his desk looking through his old sketch pad, a reminiscent grin on his face, his eyes held so many memories; happy ones. He took a pencil from his supplies and found an empty page. He tilted the yellowing pages toward him and began to sketch, his face focused and at ease. I could feel Elena take a deep calming breath beneath me, and I smiled. Watching Jeremy sketch again made us feel at home like things were normal and happy. I reached for Jeremy's door and quietly closed it. He didn't need to see us peeping on him. I wrapped my arms around Elena and hugged her briefly, before pulling away and flouncing out of the bathroom, my mood greatly improved. I bounded down the stairs, flinging my hair into a messy bun. Jenna was pulling her bag over her shoulder in a hurry her hair getting caught in the straps.

"Jeremy has his sketch pad out," I whispered excitedly as I hopped over the last step.

Jenna looked up from rescuing her hair and smiled brightly, her eyes shining. "You're kidding?" she said beaming.

I shook my head and grabbed my bag from behind the door. "Nope, she's not. But don't say a word. The moment we encourage him, he'll put it away," Elena said, coming down the stairs.

I looked over my shoulder and pointed at her. "Yep," I nodded in agreement. "For once I agree with her," I said gasping in fake shock and holding my heart.

Elena rolled her eyes and ignored Jenna's laughter. "Phycology major. Check that!" Jenna said check marking the air with her fingers, laughter still in her voice.

I grabbed my new jacket from the rack and slipped it on, smiling at the way it fit my shape perfectly. The silver studs on the shoulders and wrists, standing out beautifully against the black. After I finished zipping it up, I looked up to find Jenna smiling at me. "What?" I asked raising my hands in the air.

Jenna shrugged, the corners of her mouth pulling down. "Nothing. You've just developed a taste for leather jackets recently," she said smiling.

I narrowed my eyes at her and hoped she didn't notice the way they darted to, the thankfully, oblivious Elena and back. All I needed was her getting the wrong idea. I lifted two fingers and pointed to my eyes and back to Jenna. She huffed dramatically and turned to Elena who had her phone out, staring at it pitifully, her brows furrowed. She walked up beside her and looked down at her phone questioningly.

"You and Stefan? Update?" she asked.

Elena looked at me over Jenna's shoulder and I gave her a sad sorta smile. She started buttoning up
her jacket and looked at Jenna with an air of indifference. "He knows how I feel and where I stand and I know where he stands, but it doesn't matter. He's leaving, moving away," she said, finishing the last button and grabbing her bag.

I stepped up onto the last step and looked up the stairs. "We are leaving, Jer!" I hollered. Not waiting for an answer before hopping off the step and following Jenna and Elena outside.

I walked a few feet behind them, allowing Elena her space. This was harder for her than it was for me. I could depend on myself, and I had Rebekah, but Elena had lost our mother, the only woman she had ever depended on for relationship advice; not that she could have discussed this relationship with our mother. Lena and Jenna parted ways at her car and I slipped into the passenger seat.

"Not taking yours today?" she asked leaning down and looking at me with a quirked brow.

"Nah, don't feel like it. I'm leaving the driving to you today, sis," I said laying my head back with a smile.

Elena swiftly slid into the car and sighed. "You barely talk to me and now I've been reduced to chauffer. Great sister you are," she snipped.

I rolled my eyes and slipped in my headphones, slapping my hands together and snapping my fingers. "Onwards!" I obnoxiously shouted over my music.

Elena leaned over and took my phone, glancing at the title of the song that was playing, before putting my volume on full blast with a smile. I yanked my headphones from my ears with a yelp of startled pain, and jumped, hitting my head on the top of the car.

"Now we can go," she said pulling out of the driveway.

I rubbed my ears and squinted my eyes at her in surprise. That was sneaky.

"Five points to Elena," I said.

Lena turned her head and looked at me in confusion, her eyes scanning my face. She turned her gaze back to the road her knuckles white as she gripped the steering wheel with force. "Are you sure Ellie?" she whispered.

I watched the side of her face, the tension in her forehead, causing wrinkles. I laid the side of my face against the seat and sighed. "Expect a war, Lena. I won't go easy on you my dear twin," I said.

Her face smoothed a bit and she inhaled, holding it in for a brief moment. "I am sorry," she whispered, almost to low for me to hear.

When I chose to ignore her nearly silent apology she smiled and fist the air in triumph. "Team Elena for the win!" she shouted.

I giggled and rolled my eyes in exasperation. It had been years since we had played our little game. It wasn't something our parents had ever approved of, but it had always helped us solve even our worst fights. Our childhood therapist had called it a very unhealthy form of sibling rivalry. We chose to put pins in her seat as retribution. Well...that had been my idea; mine and my imaginary friend Bekas.

We had been 6, it was shortly after the whole fixing Lena's broken arm with magic and then breaking her nose incident. Even though Elena and I were not very close, we still fought and had
the little sibling games we shared together. Ours were just a little rougher than your average families. We would torture each other, the only rules being, it had to be a surprise attack and there could be no bodily harm nor anything cruel. So it would end up being things like nightly haircuts, hair dye in the condition, white-out on our less important homework, salt in the sugar container.

Little things; and in the end, whoever had the most points won. The person who was hit with the attack awards the points based on the level of cleverness and evil used in the attack. If the attacker thinks the points aren't fair they can go to a third party who is chosen at the time the game is started. Once the game is over the fight that had started it all was never allowed to be mentioned again. The battle was supposed to be punishment enough.

It was a silly childish game, but to be honest, I missed my sister and hoped that what Jeremy would do to her when he found out the truth, would be enough to help her really learn her lesson, not to mention, everything that was to come. Plus, I really didn't have much time to waste on fighting.

"Don't get too excited Lena, you're only five points ahead, and we both know who the real master of this game is," I said with a cruel smile.

Elena pulled into the school and grinned madly. "Not this time. We're older now." she took the keys from the ignition as I hopped out of the car. "Who is the third party? Same as always?" she asked as she exited the car.

I walked up beside her and placed my hands in my jacket pockets. "If he'll do it. He is the best," I said with a nod.

Elena and I started inside side by side. "Always fair," she agreed.

"Ok, we will ask him then. Truce until then?" I asked facing her as if we were about to duel.

She eyed me warily, scanning me quickly before slowly reaching out her hand. Bonnie and Caroline joined us but stood quietly when they noticed our position. "Truce until our third is called," Elena said seriously, eyes on my hand.

We joined hands and immediately Elena's shoulders loosened and she breathed out a sigh of relief.

"Truce," I giggled pulling away.

"Oh...God no!" Caroline called out her hands on her mouth.

Bonnie rubbed her face and rolled her eyes. "Seriously guys? The Gilbert Twin Wars? I thought those days were behind us?" she said in exasperation.

I put my arms around Elena and smiled brightly my eyes shining with evil. "It's time. The War has returned my fellow friends. Prepare yourselves," I said in my best movie trailer voice.

Tyler came up behind me and pulled me against his chest with a feral grin. "Did I just hear what I think I did?" His eyes lit up as he placed his chin on my shoulder.

Elena's nose twitched as she took in our position with distaste.

"Did Bon just say The Gilbert Twin Wars was back?" he asked.

I pulled away from him and matched his feral grin. "Yeah. You team Elara?" I asked with a wink.

He clapped me on the back and I winced only slightly.
Damn wolf strength.

"Aren't I always? Have been since we were six," he said with a grin.

I clapped my hands together and laughed, sticking my tongue out at Elena.

"Remember the rules, Ellie. Moral support, ideas, and supplies. That's all they can help with," she said, shaking her finger.

I sighed, my shoulders slumping. "I know that, Lena. I don't cheat. Set up and execution is Gilbert only ground," I said my voice sing-song towards the end.

Bonnie laid an arm on Elena's shoulder and winked at me. "Team Elena, as always. Sorry, El," she said.

I shook my head and grabbed Care. "That's ok. Sounds fair, to which I think you'll agree. It'll give everyone exactly the same advantages to use. If you catch my drift," I said with a wink.

Bonnie shook her head with a laugh. "Yep, my thoughts exactly," she said.

I turned to Caroline and narrowed my eyes. "Caroline?" I asked.

Care backed away slowly. "Last time I lost an inch of hair. I think I'll steer clear this time. I love you though," she said walking swiftly into class with Matty.

Tyler sighed and chuckled evilly. "That was her fault. I tried to tell her that the conditioner was contaminated," he said.

I bit my lip when everyone started laughing around me, Bonnie covering her bright face with her hand.

"She always did leave her condition on too long," I said with a giggle.

Ty pushed me and I gave him a quick wave as we all went our separate ways.

Elena and I walked outside after our classes ended. I was happy to see her look so much brighter than she had the last few days. This whole ordeal with Stefan was really hurting her. That's why when I saw him sitting on the table outside, waiting for her, I was more than a little irritated. I pushed past her, pulling away when she tried to take my arm and stepped right in from of him, my eyes hard.

"Stefan Salvatore, you seriously better have a really good excuse for being here. You're breaking my sister's heart pulling away from her like this. And to just show up again, that's cruel," I said in a whisper.

Stefan looked down at me, his eyes soft and smiled gently. "I see someone has forgiven her," he said.

I elbowed him in the stomach as I turned around, enjoying his light groan. "You're breaking my sister's heart pulling away from her like this. And to just show up again, that's cruel," I said in a whisper.

Stefan looked down at me, his eyes soft and smiled gently. "I see someone has forgiven her," he said.

I elbowed him in the stomach as I turned around, enjoying his light groan. "You've chosen for that to be none of your business, Stef, because, ya see, you're not just leaving her...brother," I said as I walked away.

I could hear his soft intake of breath but kept walking. I didn't need to turn around to know I had gotten my point across. Elena was waiting for me a few feet away, I took her hand in mine and gave her a hug.
"Call me if you need me," I whispered in her ear.

She pulled away with a nod and I watched her join a newly darkened Stefan.

I walked home quickly, using my magic to give myself an easy boost, using the woods as cover. By the time I had hit the front porch, my hair was windswept and clothes ruffled. I looked like I had stood in the back of a truck while it went 90 down an old country road. I pulled a few leaves from my hair and clothes before I slipped inside. Jeremy was laying on the couch, his sketchbook in his lap.

"Hey, Ellie. What do you think?" he asked lifting the pad into the air.

I stepped beside him and took the sketch from his hands. On the page he had drawn an image of a vampire, mouth opened wide, fangs bared. I could even see the hunger in his black eyes.

"Nice. Really creepy. What made you choose a vampire?" I asked nonchalantly, handing him the pad.

He looked back down at the drawing, a smile on his face. "I found this old journal in dad's stuff, Jonathan Gilbert from the 1800s. He's kinda a freak show." I sat down on the edge of the couch beside him and placed my elbow on my knee, resting my chin on my open palm.

"Yeah, I remember reading that. He wrote about demons right?" I asked, edging him on.

Jeremy nodded quickly, sitting up, his eyes wide with excitement.

"He was a writer...short stories fiction stuff," Jenna said, coming in from the kitchen with a smile.

She sat down on the back of the couch and leaned over to glance at Jeremy's drawing. "Wow, definitely creepy," she said.

"Oh. He writes fiction? I figured he was just a lunatic or drunk," Jer said leaning back against the couch pillow with a grin.

Jenna stood and took a book from the shelf behind her. "Well, he was a Gilbert, probably a little bit of both," she said, handing him the book with a smile.

Jeremy laughed lightly his eyes sparkling with mischief. I shook my head at them both. If they only knew. My phone rang, startling all three of us and I jumped, falling off the edge of the couch. Jeremy tried to reach out and stop me but he was too late. I landed with a huff on the floor, my ass stinging.

"Ow, my ass" I whined, my red hair falling out of its elastic prison.

I ran my hand through it, ruffling it a bit, and pulled the elastic band back around my wrist. Jeremy laughed loudly and Jenna swatted me on the arm, her eyes wide.

"Whoever this is better be dying. My ass really hurts now and it's all your fault," I said in greeting. Jeremy laid his head back still laughing and Jenna swatted me on the arm, her eyes wide.

"Well, your ass hasn't been my problem in a very long time, Elandra. But i'm sure I could find some way to help you out," Damon said, his voice doing little to hide the smirk I could practically see through the phone.
I smiled and took my bag from the floor, winking at Jeremy with a wave. As I stepped onto the porch I sighed. "What do you need Damon?" I asked, getting straight to the point.

"You can take this," he said, the voice coming from beside me.


Damon pulled himself away from the house and dusted off his button-up shirt. He noticed me looking him over and smirked. I looked away quickly and shrugged. "What? You know blue is one of my favorite colors on you, Damon," I said nonplussed.

He approached me slowly and looked down at my jacket and black skinny jeans. "Loving your new look. Especially the messy hair," he said, running his fingers through my hair.

I pulled away and took the golden compass from his hand. "This is the one I found in the woods, right? It's a Gilbert family heirloom. I was too distracted that night to recognize it, I just felt its power," I said flipping it over in my hand and opening it.

Damon eyed me warily and I frowned up at him. "I'm assuming you know what it does, and you're not here to return it to its rightful owners," I said, closing it with a snap.

Damon looked away, his eyes focusing on everything around us. "There's another vampire in town. Sheriff Forbes showed up asking for my help finding it earlier today. Of course, my ever heroic brother wants to make sure everyone we leave behind is safe. So I need your help finding it," he looked back down at me and opened the compass that was still resting in my palm. "Using this. Figured it was the quickest way," he said.

I looked down at the compass, its needle focusing solely on Damon. "I can see your problem," I smirked. "Sure, I'll help. You run along. I'll wander through town until I get a hit, then I'll call you," I said closing the compass and pulling my bag over my shoulder.

I reached inside it and pulled out the little black pouch I kept the Blackwood bark in, sliding it out and placing it in between my lips like a toothpick. I might just need the boost.

Damon took my wrist roughly. "You will not approach it," he firmly said eyes hard.

I took my wrist, pulling away from his grasp and narrowing my eyes. "And you won't treat me like an idiot. I'm not going to just jump into anything, but I will prepare for the worse," I said.

He leaned in and lifted my chin, looking into my eyes. "Be careful, Elandra," he said.

I brushed his cheek with my fingers and smiled. "I will be. Witches honor," I said lifting two fingers and placing them on either side of my nose with a giggle. "I've always wanted to do that," I said with a gleeful grin.

Damon's confused and exasperated expression made me smile as I hopped down the porch steps, opening the compass as I did. I stood at the end of the corner and shooed him away. When he finally left, the needle on the compass faced north and stayed there as I walked towards the center of town.

*************************************************

I stood in front of the warehouse, the cold screen of my phone pressed against my ear. "Just wait. I'll be there in a minute," Damon said.
I tapped the toe of my boot on the concrete as I waited. Damon popped up behind me and I huffed in irritation, at least this time I had prepared my senses for his sudden appearance.

"You sure?" he asked.

I handed him the compass and tilted my head. "Of course I am, Damon. When am I ever not?" I said.

Damon rolled his eyes and stepped into my personal space. I took a deliberate step back and twirled around him towards the door. "Let's go, Mr vampire. There's another one of you inside and we gotta kill him," I said with a giddy voice.

Damon vamp sped in front of me with a snarl. This would be so much easier if I could just compel you," he groaned. "You can't come inside. I don't know who is in there. It's dangerous," he said.

I crossed my arms and without even the tiniest movement forced him to the ground, pinning him in the sprawled eagle position. "I think I can handle myself," I said.

I kept my body still and lifted Damon with my magic, enjoying the way his arms and legs flailed out around him like a rag doll. I gently lowered him to his feet with a smile.


Damon yanked his shirt down and took the stairs leading to the door two at a time. He looked around us and quietly broke the handle, opening the door. I entered directly behind him and he held his hand out motioning for me to stay at a good distance. I rolled my eyes and kept them on him as we went deeper into the dark warehouse. A squeak of someone's shoe was the first thing I heard before the sounds of a gunshot. Damon fell to his knees in front of me as he was shot multiple times by someone in the shadows.

"I have a ton of these wooden bullets, so nothing funky," Logan Fell said.

Damon sat up and tried to remove the bullet from his arm. "You don't want to do this. Trust me," he said.

Logan shot him in the chest with a smile. That's what ya get," he said.

I stepped out of the shadows with an angry growl, red framing my vision, and flung him into the wall as hard as I could.

"Told ya," Damon gasped.

Logan groaned, standing and pointing the gun in my direction.

I lifted my fingers and smiled. "Go ahead. Try me," I said, beckoning him on.

Damon cursed but I ignored him, the red, and anger the only thing I could see. Logan took the shot and I lifted my palm out in front of me, stopping the bullet in its tracks. It shook in the air between Logan and myself, shaking in an effort to move towards its target. He took a shocked breath and I saw fear flash in his eyes as he watched the wood start disintegrate in midair as I slowly closed my hand.

"Just think of what I could do to a vampire, especially one who has shot someone I care about," I lowered my hand and stepped away from him standing beside Damon, who was removing a bullet from his leg.
Logan followed me and I narrowed his eyes. "Don't look at me like that you witchy bitch. He did this to me," he said.

Damon growled but I laughed and sat down, avoiding the blood.

"I killed you, I didn't make you," Damon said.

I reached over and tried to help remove the bullets but Damon caught my gaze and shook his head. I blinked a few times but moved away, crossing my arms. Dropping the bullet he had removed from his chest with a groan, Damon leaned against his knee and I watched, my teeth clenched. I would enjoy killing Logan.

"See, I know what you and your brother are. I've been watching the two of you, I knew you'd show up here, and I'm glad you did because I have some questions," he said patting Damon on the shoulder.

I sat straight and tapped my fingers on my knee with a firm warning in the way I narrowed my eyes in his direction. Logan stood, stepping away from us, his hands in the air.

"Whoa, you might want to watch yourself, little witch. You forget, I know your weaknesses and where to find them," he said with a smirk.

I stood in a rush of rustling fabric and flung him as hard as I could against the metal door behind him. The loud crunch of his bones meeting the hard surface a welcoming sound.

"And you forget who your threatening vampire," I snarled, the witch in me calling for his swift demise.

I felt Damon's hand on my leg and looked down. "We need to know who created him, El," he said.

I yanked my leg away and looked down at his bloodied shirt. "I swear to God, Damon…" I trailed off pointing at his shirt.

He smiled briefly as Logan pulled himself from the floor and hobbled his way towards us. I kept my back to him, my shoulders stiff. I could feel him staring at me but I knew if I looked at him, if I saw the way he kept staring at Damon like he was some superior God just because he had gotten the drop on him, then I would kill him where he stood. I focused instead on the feel of my nails digging into the palms of my hands, as I clenched them tightly. Logan began to speak about the night Damon had killed him and my ears perked up in concentration. I had an inkling of who had turned him, but I couldn't be sure, not yet.

"I'll answer your questions when you answer mine. Who turned you?" Damon asked.

I could hear Logan lower himself next to Damon, his shoes scuffing the floor as he shifted his weight from foot to foot. "How should I know? The last thing I remember is, I had just shot my ex's pretty little niece and I am about to stake your brother when you grabbed me. I turned slowly and sneered when Logan jumped slightly at the growl that emanated from deep within Damon's chest. "That's it! Until I wake up in the ground behind a used car dealership on highway 4. Somebody buried me," Logan snarled.

Damon pulled another bullet from his leg and leaned his head back, eyes scrunched up in pain. "Ow, it happens," he said breathing heavily and wobbling slightly, blinking a few times.

Logan bent down and leaned into Damon's face. I took a step closer and dug my nails deeper into my flesh to control myself.
"You bit me," he spat.

Damon looked at the wooden bullet in his hand, his teeth bared. "Damn it," he angrily said, tossing it to me.

I opened my bloodied palm and ignored the different expressions on each vampire. I looked at the bullet and held it tightly in my palm. It was dipped in vervain, which made this whole situation worse.

"It had to be you," Logan said eyes hard.

Logan leaned closer and Damon, who I could see was losing his patience, narrowed his eyes to slits and sneered. "You have to have vampire blood in your system when you die. I didn't do that. Some other vampire found you, gave you their blood," he spat.

Damon groaned heavily and fell back onto the ground. I lowered myself to my knees and sat beside him, leaning down and pulling him up. "We're not going to be able to play this game much longer Day," I faintly whispered in his ear.

I could hear him chuckle and see the small smile the briefly crossed his face. It had been a very long time since I had used that nickname. It was something my brothers had called him often, much to his displeasure.

"Who?" Logan growled.

Damon sat up further, wobbling from side to side and looked at Logan in annoyance. "That's what I wanna know," he said.

Logan waved the gun around in front of him, as he bounced lightly on his heels. "Dude, it's not like the welcome wagon was waiting with a bundt cake and a handbook. It was a learn as you go process. You know, one minute, i'm a small town on the rise news guy, and the next thing I know, I can't get into my own house, because my foot won't go through the door," Logan said.

I snickered lightly and Logan swung the gun in my direction. Damon's eyes flickered black and I covered my face and frowned. "That's terrible, Logan. You have to be invited in, ya know," I said matter of factly.

I patted Damon's arm as he continued to pry the rest of the bullets from the various parts of his chest and legs.

"I know. I live alone," Logan said.

Damon chuckled weakly and leaned onto my arm. "That sucks," he said.

I bit my lip as a small giggle escaped me again and I could feel Damon's chest shaking against my legs. Logan pointed the gun at us and Damon sat up quickly, his body shaking with the effort.

"So now, I'm at the Ramada, watching Pay-Per-View all day, and eating everything in site, including housekeeping," he said. I held onto Damon's shoulder and smiled at Logan with ease.

"It could be worse," I said.

"All I can think about is blood and killing people. I can't stop killing people. Logan moved closer to us and smelled the air, smiling at me. Damon shifted his weight and moved closer to me, his body pressing against mine, the blood from his shirt sticking to my skin.
Logan laughed menacingly. "And I like it. I'm conflicted," he said.

"Welcome to the club," Damon sarcastically said, shaking his head in annoyance.

I snorted lightly and Damon slapped my leg. I inhaled sharply and rubbed the stinging skin with a wince. Logan stood and looked down at us with amusement.

I tilted my head and looked up at him in confusion. "Wait a minute," I said.

Damon frowned and looked away from me and up towards Logan. "Cops only found one body," Damon finished.

Logan shrugged and sighed in exasperation. "I left one. I was tired. But I've been hiding the rest of the bodies. They're right back there," he said, using the gun to point towards an area behind his left shoulder with a grin.

I stood to my feet and walked behind Logan to find a small caged area, you could see the bloodied legs and arms of several bodies piled on top of each other. I covered my mouth and turned away, my eyes closed. I swallowed hard and recollected myself, trying to keep my emotions in check, this isn't over yet and if I lashed out now, I wouldn't be able to stop, not this time.

"You're kidding," Damon said, looking over Logan's shoulder.

I could hear the laugh in Logan's voice and slowly walked next to Damon, reminding myself of the reason we were here.

"They're just piling up!" he said.

I looked down at Damon and sighed sitting down next to him, and leaning my head on his shoulder. My phone buzzed lightly and everything happened so fast I barely had time to blink. Logan had jumped to his feet and vamp sped towards me. Before he could reach me though Damon reached up and grabbed his shoulders pinning him to the ground, teeth bared and growling deeply, his vampire features masking his face.

"Don't!" he warned.

I pushed myself away from them and stood to my feet. "Hey, it's ok. It's just Elena. She's wondering where I am, I can just tell her I'm running late," I said my hands raised.

Logan pulled away from Damon and ripped the phone from my hand, looking down at the screen. I sat down on my knees and took Damon's chin in my hand. "I can handle myself, Day. You have got to remember that," I said firmly.

He pulled away from me and kept his eyes on Logan, following his every move.

"Why aren't you at the school, Elara? Do you not plan on being human for college? You and Damon seem close," Logan smirked.

I plopped down next to Damon and laughed loudly. "I have no plans on becoming a vampire, Logan. Though, If I could I would take it, believe me," I sighed, leaning my head towards the ceiling. I heard the shuffling of his feet and slowly lowered my head, slumping it towards him, my eyes narrowed.

"Can witches not become vampires?" he asked in confusion, eyes curious. The corners of my mouth twitched and I suddenly felt bad for the guy. This wasn't his fault and he was dealing with it
the only way he knew how. I lowered my face into my hands with a groan and felt Damon moving
closer to me.

"No, it's not that I can't become a vampire. I'm cursed," When he opened his mouth I held up my
hands and placed one finger to my mouth mockingly. "Long story. So, when I said it could be
worse, believe me, it could be," I leaned forward and got as close to him as I dared, one arm on my
knee. "At least you get to live," I said.

Logan sat back and looked thoughtful. "Why am I so overly emotionally? All I can think about is
my ex-girlfriend. I wanna be with her, and bite her, and stuff," he said, face full of childish
confusion.

"The girl talk is all yours, Darling," I told Damon mockingly, patting his knee.

He sighed deeply and smirked. "Well, you probably love her. Anything you felt before will be
magnified now. Your gonna have to learn to control that," Damon said.

I nodded in agreement. If he thought he was going to get within an inch of my Aunt Jenna he was
sorely mistaken.

"What about walking in the sun? I'm a morning person." he cocked his head and I could feel
Damon move his hand across his Daylight ring. "You can walk in the sun which, by the way, is
pretty cool. The council will never suspect you. That's not in the journals," Logan said with a
smirk.

"The journals?" Damon asked.

I tilted my head and looked at Damon. "The founding fathers, they passed down journals to their
children," I said with a crooked smile.

Damon narrowed his eyes and smirked. "Did they now?" he asked.

I bit my lip and looked away.

"Come on man. Ya gotta tell me. How can you walk around in the sun?" Logan asked.

I could feel the tension in the room rising and stood to my feet.

"Who turned you?" Damon asked with a smirk. I paced in a small circle as they argued back and
forth for a few minutes before Logan finally stood, his gun pointing at Damon again. "You know,
I've been really nice so far but I will kill you," he said.

I stepped beside Damon as he stood, taking my arm and pulling me behind him. "Then you'll never
know. You're not answering my question," he said.

I tried to pull my arm from his grasp but winced when my effort was matched with pain. He jerked
my arm and I stilled.

"You first!" Logan shouted pointing the gun in my direction.

Damon's posture stiffened and he backed me further behind him.

"Damon. I'm ok…" I whispered.

"It seems we're at a bit of an impasse then, doesn't it," Damon said, ignoring me.
Logan shifted and ground his teeth together. "I have things to do, people to kill. Guess I'll be needing a little head start," he said firing the gun.

Damon let go of my arm as he groaned in pain and fell to the floor, several new wounds littering his chest and side. I looked up, glancing around for Logan, my breathing heavy. When I knew he was no longer here, I dropped to the floor next to Damon and slapped him on his uninjured shoulder.

"You stupid vampire!" I shouted.

His head fell back and he groaned again, breathing heavily. "I could have killed him, Day. Then you wouldn't be lying here in pain and covered in bullet holes," I said, lifting my hand above him and slowly closing my palm.

The wooden bullets began pulling themselves from his wounds, he yelled in pain as the extraction blazed through him, but I continued on, sniffing past the tears that were trying to escape. Once the last bullet flew into the air, I flung them across the room and yanked my sleeve up.

"Here. Drink," I said lying my wrist on his mouth.

He sat up and pushed me away his eyes dark. "No. Don't you think I've ripped into you enough," he spat standing up.

I shook my head and helped him steady himself. "And now you're going to start acting self-righteous about it? Ok, Stefan. I think the blood loss has gone to your head," I said, bending over and pulling my pocket knife from my boot.

I stood and quickly slid open the blade, slicing my wrist in one swift motion. Damon's eyes zeroed in on the blade and pushed me away. "What the hell, Elandra?" he yelled.

I raised my wrist and walked over to him offering it up to him with a shrug. "You lost too much blood Damon. Just take some, heal me, and let's go," I said.

I pressed my wrist against his lips and he took hold of me, drinking deeply. I held myself still until he pulled away, lifting his own wrist to his lips and biting down. I pulled my arm back and cradled it against me as I drank from his wrist until the long red slash I had made was gone. I stepped away from him and wiped my mouth. "Now, let's go kill that bastard," I said. Damon smirked evilly and took me in his arms.

"Agreed," he said, speeding us away.

"What were you thinking, Elara? He could have gotten you killed?" Elena hollered from the other end of the phone.

I squinted my eyes and pulled the phone away from my ear rolling my eyes in Damon's direction. He stood in front of his bedroom mirror, pulling his blood covered shirt from his chest, cell phone in the other hand, where he was hollering into it, voice sharp. Stefan spoke calmly from the other end, much calmer than my sister who was still yelling at me, something about my untimely death as if that wasn't imminent anyway. I sighed and laid back on Damon's bed with my cell phone floating in the air near my ear.

"Listen, Elena. I can handle myself, really I can. If I want to help Damon, I am going to, and there really isn't a thing you can say that will change my mind. Yelling at me only makes me enjoy helping him," I said truthfully.
She scoffed on the other end and I winced. "That sounded childish but it's true. I've never liked being told what I can and cannot do. Goes back to the days when I had no rights as a woman," I said.

I smiled when no sound came from Elena and I looked up to find Damon standing over me.

"Listen, Lena. I'll see ya in a few. Bye," I said reaching for my floating phone and hanging up.

"No rights, huh?" he asked leaning down, one arm on each side of me.

"Yep. Hated it. So I don't really like reminders," I said.

He smiled down at me and I opened his unbuttoned shirt, running my hands over his healed chest.

"Feeling ok?" I asked in concern, my brows furrowed.

He watched my hands move across his chest and his eyes fluttered closed when my hands slid across his stomach.

"Much better," he said.

I leaned forward and rolled him over, sitting astride up. I slowly buttoned his shirt, keeping my gaze on his. His blue eyes glimmered in the firelight.

"Good. Next time, don't try and protect me. I don't need you too," I said fastening the last button with a wink and small flourish.

I tried to move away from him but he held my hips tightly, a strange glow in his eyes. "You could come with me," he whispered.

I held my breath, unsure I had heard him right. "What?" I asked.

He sat up and held me close to his chest. "I'm leaving after this. I came here, for one thing, Katherine, and now that I can't get her i'm leaving. He ran his hands through my hair and I stayed still, shell-shocked. "You could come with me, we could find a way to break your curse together, just us," he said.

He watched me closely and I felt tears run down my cheeks. "So, what you're telling me is, now that you can't have Katharine, you want me to run away with you, knowing full well that I am going to die?" I said the tears falling onto my shirt. I slid off of him and, thankfully, he didn't fight me.

I wiped the tears from my face and chuckled. "Damon, I told you I would not play second fiddle." I turned around and faced him. He had stood and started towards me, his face ashen. "I also will not run away from my family. I will spend my last days here, Damon. Not playing Katherines under study," I said wrapping my arms around myself my heart dropping to my feet.

He stopped his journey towards me and ran his hands over his exhausted face. His eyes hardened as he shook his head.

"That's not what I want…" he started.

I raised my hands and stepped past him. "You don't even know what you want, Day. So please, spare me." I stopped in my tracks and turned on my heel, meeting his oceanic gaze with a dry laugh. "God, ya know, i'm being completely hypocritical. I don't really know what I want either," I
ran my fingers through my hair in frustration. Another pair of blue eyes flashing in my mind's eye. I
squashed the thought before it could fully form. "All I know is, every time Im around you I get
lost. After all this time...and even after everything you have done...I still love you." I gasped out,
shocked by my own words. I grasped my hair in my hands and closed my eyes for a moment taking
in the words and the meaning behind them. When I had finally opened my eyes again, it was only
after coming to terms with the truth. I did still love him. As bad an idea as that was. It wasn't
something I could help. I looked at the man I loved, his dark hair disheveled, and face pale, as he
stood as still as a statue, his face just as blank. His eyes never left my face, but I wasn't sure if he
was seeing me. There was so much fear there, so much anger. They were the only thing not blank.
So many different things swimming through them and then just as quickly sinking back towards
the bottom. I shook my head and brushed my hair away from my wet face. "I should be over you,
but I'm not, and it's killing me," I said my hands fisted in front of me.

I closed my eyes tightly and enjoyed the way they burned. When I finally opened them again
Damon stood in front of me, his eyes cold. "You can't love me," he said.

I stepped closer to him and shook my head. "Fine. I don't love you, then. Let's say I never did, does
that make you feel better," I said flatly?

He took my wrists in his hands and I looked away from him. "Don't say that. Never say that," he
said.

I yanked my hands from him and walked swiftly towards his door. "That's what you want, isn't it?
My hate?" I asked over my shoulder. I didn't wait for a response I just kept walking. I stood by the
door and waved my hands over my feet before speeding away into the night.

**************************************************************************************

The intersection was clear as I stood in the middle, waiting. I felt a slight breeze and smiled.
"Hello, Stefan," I said.

"What are you doing here, and how did you figure out where to be?" he asked taking my hand and
pulling me to the side of the road.

I inhaled deeply and sighed. "Well, I watched him kidnap my best friend and sped off ahead of
him." I looked at Stefan in anger. "I'm going to fucking kill him, Stef," I said my eyes blazing.

"I think we should let her have her fun, brother," Damon said.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Stefan narrowed his eyes at me but I just shook my head.
"Not now." I mouthed.

He nodded and I smiled thankfully. Damon tilted his head and smiled.

"Here he comes," he said.

I stepped closer to the road and looked at the bright headlights that were barreling towards us with
an evil sneer. Stefan took my hand and pulled me back. "Let's allow the indestructible ones to go
first, shall we?" he asked.

I bowed lowly and motioned for him to go ahead. "After you then," I said.

He grinned broadly and I shook my head in amusement clapping my hands. "This is going to be so
much fun!" I giggled loudly.
Damon and Stefan watched me with odd expressions as the car slowed to a stop at the intersection. Stefan sent me a wink and vamp sped to the driver's side pulling Logan from the car and slamming him into the pavement as hard as he could. I stepped in front of the car and looked down at the startled Logan.

"Eh, 7 points, Stef," I said.

Logan stood and inched towards me, Damon came out of the woods, gun in hand and shot him in the chest. I smiled as Logan fell to the ground in a groan of pain.

"As much as I hate saying this; 10 points to Damon for flair," I sighed.

"Paybacks a bitch isn't it," Damon said bending next to Logan.

I ran around the car and pulled open the passenger side, taking an unconscious Caroline into my arms. "Oh Care Bear," I said checking her pulse.

Stefan joined me and I slipped her into his arms. "She's ok. Get her outta here," I said brushing her hair from her eyes.

Stefan kissed my forehead and sped her away. I walked back around the car and found Damon talking to the Sheriff. "She's ok. I'm on Elm Street," he said, hanging up.

He tossed the phone into the car and walked to the back, opening the truck and removing the tire iron. I smiled brightly down at Logan and lowered myself to my knees. "We're gonna try this one more time. Who turned you?" I asked.

Logan looked at me and then back to Damon who swung the iron like a baseball bat. "You better answer her. We've had a really bad day, and I'm pretty sure taking some of our frustration out on you would make us feel a whole lot better," he said with a smirk.

I swung my hair over my shoulder and looked down at my nails. "I have to agree. I could definitely use a mood booster," I said cheerfully.

"I told you I don't know," Logan panted.

Damon swung the iron again and I applauded, running my eyes up and down his body. "Good form, dear," I said cheekily.

Damon smiled and looked down at the iron thoughtfully. "This iron here could take your head clean off." Damon held the iron over his shoulder, ready to swing, and looked down at Logan. "Is that your final answer?" he asked.

Logan looked between us, propping himself up on his elbows and shook his head at Damon in disgust. "How can you side with them?" he asked.

Damon arched his shoulders, preparing himself for a good swing, and sneered down at him. "I don't side with anyone. You pissed us off. We want you dead. Who turned you?" he asked.

"I don't know!" Logan yelled.

I stood and walked behind Damon, smiling at Logan over his shoulder. "Oh well. You're screwed," I said.

Damon winked at me and lifted the iron over his head and swung it towards Logan who
immediately raised his hands in surrender. "Wait wait! I do know!" he pled.

Damon lowered the iron and rolled his eyes. "Your lying," he said.

Logan stood slowly, his hands raised. "Do you think your the only one who wants to get in the tomb underneath the old church?" Logan said quickly.

My eyes darted between the two. "Damon...don't..." I said.

He looked at me and shook his head. "If your lying to me I will end you," Damon said roughly.

Logan looked at him in fear. "I'm not lying. There's another way to break the spell. We can help you. Meet me at the old church," Logan said, breathing heavily.

Blue and red lights flashed in the distance and I covered myself with a thick cloaking spell, my heart as heavy as the cloud of magic that had begun to cover my body. I had known this was coming, but it still didn't make it any easier. Damons heartbreak was inching closer and closer.

Damon stepped next to Logan, the iron raised above his head. "Take me down. Make it look real. Make it look real!" he snapped.

Logan pushed Damon as hard as he could, lifting him into the air and tossing him into the car before speeding off. Despite knowing he was perfectly ok I lowered myself next to Damon and looked him over. His blue eyes were bright and excited, even hidden under the fake mask of exhaustion and sadness he had placed there specifically for Liz. The Sheriff's car stopped and Liz stepped out, rushing towards Damon. "Where is she?" she asked.

Damon sat up with a groan. "She is ok. My brother has taken her home. Im sorry, Sheriff. I just wasn't strong enough," Damon said, his voice raw with sadness. I felt something soft brush my hand as I stood, but I ignored it, instead, heading exactly where I shouldn't.

I sat on one of the stones at the old Fell church, my eyes closed, the souls of the vampires beneath me calling out. I could feel them seeping through the dirt and stone.

"I thought I would find you here. You just can't seem to stay out of the thick of things, can you?" Damon asked.

I raised a finger to my lips and shook my head, eyes squeezed tight. He sat down next to me as I rubbed my temples gently. "There's so many of them down there. Sometimes it gets a little overwhelming. That's why I always avoided this place," I said opening my eyes.

I placed my hands flat on the cold stone below me and took a deep breath. "I promise I will reunite you with her one day, Damon," I said my eyes staring at the treeline straight ahead of me. "You deserve to find peace," I whispered.

Damon's phone buzzed, interrupting the silence that followed my statement. I listened to Damon's end of the conversation and understood more and more the bleaker his expression became. When he finally hung up he looked at me in shock. "Someone killed him," he said standing.

He reached down and took my arm, pulling me away from the church. "Come on. We're going to figure out exactly how to get into this church," he said.

I lowered my eyes to my feet. "I'll help you in any way I cant, Day," I said.
He stopped walking and I bumped into his back, stumbling over a few rocks that had found their way in my path. He pulled my face up, brushing the hair out of my eyes and smiled at me weakly. Moving his hand down my arm and into my own, he clasped his fingers around mine. "Thank you, El," he whispered.

I returned his smile and gripped his hand tightly. "Let's go," I said with a firm nod.

He looked behind us at the church he so believed held the woman he loved, and gently pulled me forward. He sped us towards the Boarding House, the roads empty and quiet until we stopped suddenly. A few feet away a car was lying upside down and a man was inching towards it.

A vampire.

I looked down at the car and recognition spilled within me.

"NO!" I yelled running forwards.

I moved my hand back and allowed it to fill with bright blue magic before flinging it at the vampire. He stood still in shock, his eyes zeroing in on me, as the ball of blue hit him in the chest, flinging him backward. Damon sped past me after him. I flew to the driver side of the car and slid onto my knees, the glass digging into my jeans. Elena was hanging upside down, unconscious. I tried to unfasten her seatbelt but my hands wouldn't stop shaking.

"Lena?" I cried feeling for a pulse.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I found one. I shook my hands heavily, squeezing some life back into them, before laying them on her belt and whispering a spell to release her. The belt clicked loudly, echoing through the car, as she slumped to the hood, her body limp. I took her by her shoulders and pulled her from the car, laying her on the concrete outside. I ran my fingers through long matted hair and checked the small head wound, relieved to find it didn't appear to be anything serious. I laid her head in my lap and cradled as if she were a child.

"It's ok. You're ok," I said running my fingers through her hair.

Damon came from the woods at vamp speed and lowered himself beside us. He leaned over Elena and checked her pulse before biting into his wrist and lowering into onto her lips. She shook her head, trying to pull away, but I held her head still, forcing her to ingest some of the blood.

"Just drink," I whispered.

Once she had ingested enough to heal any internal injuries she might have had he pulled away his wrist and lifted her into his arms, maneuvering her over his shoulder, before taking my hand and helping me to my feet.

"Let's go. We gotta get on the road. I have no clue who that was," he said.

I looked around us and frowned. "I think he knew me, Damon. He had recognition in his eyes, but I can't seem to place him," I said closing my eyes with a grimace. Damon lowered Elena into his arms and nudged me.

"Let's leave the strolls down memory lane for later, El,"

I rolled my eyes at him and winced as we moved forwards. I looked down at my knees and noticed the blood seeping through my jeans. Nice. I ignored the pain and pushed forward.
"Can you get back yourself?" he asked.

I nodded and watched as he flashed out of sight. I looked down at my knees again and wrapped myself in magic.

This was going to hurt.
The rumbling of the car engine and the slow breathing of Elena was the only sound in the small confines of the car I was now trapped in. I had never been one to handle silence well, not when so much was being left unsaid. I tended to blabber insistently until what needed said was finally out in the open, and there was no way to take it back, so instead of starting that battle, I forced myself to keep my eyes on the passing countryside, every field the mirror image of the one before. Elena laid in the back; still unconscious, her hair falling over the side of the seat. When Damon finally spoke I almost cried with relief, even if what he said had only to do with my sister.

"So you're saying she woke up long enough to say four words, and then passed out again?" I asked.

Damon turned his head and looked at me. "I. Look. Like. Her," he enunciated, lifting one finger for each word.

I placed my head in my hands with a sigh. "Well, that explains why she was out there. She must have found Stefan's picture of Katherine and completely freaked," I said.

I massaged my forehead and winced as I adjusted my legs.

Damon looked down and pulled one of my knees towards him with an angry frown. "When did you do this?" he asked, using one hand to pull my jeans over my knee, revealing the small cuts.

I bit my lip and took in a sharp breath. There were several small slashes across my knee where the glass had dug into my skin. "When I pulled Elena from the car. It's not that bad," I said, pulling up my other pant leg and looking at the similar injury.

He pulled away and gripped the steering wheel tightly. "Yeah, well I need you in tip top shape. Your gonna be the one who wrestles with Elena. Bringing her was your idea," he said rolling his eyes.

I smiled brightly as he bit into his wrist and offered it to me. I scrunched up my nose and sighed, leaning in and drinking down a few gulps. I moved away with a grimace and groaned. "Why is it that I have been seeming to drink so much blood here lately, and yet I still don't even get any of the extra benefits," I whined wiping my face with my hands.

Damon smirked, his expression darkening. "Which of the extra benefits do you want the most, El? The insatiable thirst or the eternal life filled with death and betrayal?" he asked.

I rubbed my newly healed knees and rolled my eyes. "Oh please, yes you have to deal with the bad side effects, but it's not all doom and gloom. I'd gladly take it," I sighed.

Damon shook his head angrily and I avoided looking at him by unbuckling my seatbelt and turning around to face Elena. "So, what should I say to her?" I set my chin on the seat and bit my lip in thought. "Hey Elena, sorry you look identical to your boyfriend's ex, but I must say, that isn't exactly the worst part. She was also a raging bitch who slept with his brother and sired them both.
Wanna know more?" I said my voice chipper. I slammed my head against the seat with an annoyed groan. "This is going to go super well," I mumbled.

Damon chuckled beside me and I reached out to slap him but was stopped when he pulled me back into my seat, slipping my belt over my shoulder. I narrowed my eyes at him and he smiled with a wink. "Safety first," he said.

I heard the click of my belt and crossed my arms. "So what do you recommend? It's not just Stefan's story to tell, Damon. Should we just allow him to tell it or would you like to? Because I would love to avoid this conversation," I said, raising a hand with a flourish.

Damon tapped the steering wheel with one finger and I sat quietly. I knew this wouldn't be easy for either of them. I watched his face, looking for any change, but there was none. His eyes remained clear and impassive, his face never crinkled nor changed from its smooth pale visage. He looked at ease as if this was a normal road trip, just some fun with his ex and her sister. Or to be more exact, his reincarnated ex and the doppelganger of his ex, who happened to become his reincarnated ex's new sister. My nose twitched and I laid my head back with a sigh, my eyes closed. My life was what nightmares were made of. I would need a morphine drip just to handle all the migraines this simple road trip would create.

"I think you should just let Stefan handle this one. Give her just the information she needs and let him go from there," Damon said.

I opened one eye and lifted my brow. "He does handle these situations best," I said, brushing my bangs from my face.

He nodded and flipped on the radio, letting the sweet sound of music take away the need for more discussion. I let out a deep breath and leaned my head against the glass of my door, the cold breaking the tension that covered my forehead.

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I squinted my eyes tightly as the light of the sun tried to seep through my eyelids. Running the back of my hand over my face I felt something vibrate in my back pocket. I reached underneath me and pulled out my phone, blinking a few times as my eyes adjusted to the day. When I could finally see I found Stefan's picture flashing across my screen, along with a large number of missed calls. I laid the phone in my lap and sighed in annoyance.

"How long has my ass been vibrating, Day?" I asked, my voice raspy from sleep.

I ran my fingers through my disheveled hair and lifted it into a ponytail, before looking at the vampire beside me. I growled lowly when I found him as perfect as he had been the night before, not a single hair out of place. Damn perfect vampires. He shook his head and brushed his thumb across my cheek, pulling away to show me his thumb, which glistened in the light, wet with my drool. I choked out a gasp and quickly wiped my face in agonized embarrassment. Damon laughed, wiping his thumb on his jeans.

"Oh El, you drooled in my time too," he said with a snicker.
I smacked his shoulder and grabbed my bag, pulling out some gum. I tried to ignore the blush that still covered my cheeks and was thankful when Stefan interrupted, my phone buzzing to life again in my lap. Damon's eyes narrowed as he glanced down at my phone, eyes burning with fury. "He has called you more then he has Elena. I wonder why that is?" he said tightly.

My brows furrowed and I reached over, patting his jacket down until I found the lump I was looking for. "Where did you find her phone, Damon?" I asked.

He pushed my hand away and fixed his jacket. My phone let off a cheery ding and I followed Damon's gaze as it lowered to my lap.

He reached for my phone and I smacked his hand away quickly. "Oi! My phone, thank you. I will read my own texts," I said, reverting to British slang in my annoyance.

He sat back and I huffed when I noticed his tightening jaw. "Damon, he is worried sick. Give the man a break. He has every right to text and call me all he wants," I said.

Shaking my head I unlocked my phone and read the text quickly, my heart hammering in my chest. "Elandra, please call me. Please. I need to know you guys are safe. You can't do this to me. I promise I will tell her everything. I'm sorry. I love you both. Please call me."

I swallowed hard and stared at the message until my screen went dark.

"We need to call him," I said.

Before I could blink Damon took my phone and unlocked it. His eyes darted back and forth as they scanned the message. I could hear a faint crack as he squeezed my phone. I pried it from his fingers and breathed a sigh of relief when I found it still worked. Damon's chest moved heavily, his jaw tight. I unbuckled my seat and moved next to him.

"Damon, calm down. There is no need for you to freak out," I said, running my fingers through his hair.

I could hear him grind his teeth together as he tried to keep himself under control. "So, I take it you've told him you love him," he whispered.

I placed my hand on his shoulder and ran my tongue over my dry lips. "Yes, I have. As a brother. Which is exactly what he is to me," I said slowly.

It felt like I was walking through a minefield. He turned his head away and I scooted back over, moving away from the mercurial vampire.

"A brother, huh," he sneered, a mirthless chuckle lilting from him.

I bit down on the gum I was chewing, using it to remain composed. "Yes, Damon. That's all he has ever been. You know that" I said with a small, weak smile.

I wasn't sure what was going on. Was this jealousy or just latent possessiveness. I had heard that since Katherine, both Salvatores were always edgy about the woman they fancied. They had a tendency to become wrathful if they thought one of them had any feelings for the other's lover. Even if Stefan hadn't seen me as a sister, he would have always known I was off limits. So why then was Damon acting so crazy?

A small rustling saved us both from furthering the conversation. Elena was pushing herself into a
seated position, the right corner of her forehead caked in dried blood, although she was fully healed. She ran her hand over her head, eyes still squeezed tightly shut. I watched in sympathy as she swayed from side to side, wincing slightly as she moaned, her voice cracking. Very slowly she opened her eyes and her pupils dilated when they focused in on me.

"Elara?" she said, voice breaking off.

I started to nod and her brown eyes filled with tears. I lifted my legs into the seat and forced myself over the middle console, ignoring the hand that covered my lower back protectively. I wrapped my arms around my sister and felt warm tears seep into my shirt as she cried. I ran my hand over her ruffled brown hair and directed small soothing sounds into her ear.

"I look just like her, Ellie," she mumbled.

I brushed her hair over one shoulder and nodded slowly. "I know. I should have told you, but I didn't think it was my place. Please know that if I had thought he was dating you for that reason alone, I would have," I said into her ear.

I could feel her stiffen and braced myself for her wraith. She sat back and looked into my eyes, her own full of confusion and anger. "What do you mean?" she asked slowly.

I sucked on my bottom lip and took her hand. "Elena, I've met Katherine many times," I said, wincing when she glared at me.

She yanked her hand away and looked around the car, suddenly aware of her surroundings. She pushed herself against the seat when she noticed Damon smiling at her from the front. I tilted my head in annoyance and smacked his headrest, my teeth partially bared.

"Where are we, and why are we with him?" she said, spitting out the last part with venom.

I sighed and scooted closer to her, scrunching up my face in apprehension. "Um, well that's the things, Elena. When we found you, we were planning a little road trip and I had a feeling you and Stefan had a little spat...so..." I trailed off, turning my head away and brushing the hair from my eyes.

Elena blinked quickly as she minutely lowered her chin towards her chest, her eyes starting to bulge as she began to understand. Her shoulders shook and she started to chuckle, shaking her head. "No...No. There's no way you would take me on a road trip with Damon," she said, reaching for the door and jumping out.

I crawled across the seat and quickly followed her. She walked behind the car and started down the road her hands fisted beside her as she mumbled angrily to herself. She stopped suddenly and bent over groaning, her hand on her knee. Damon sped beside her placing a hand on her shoulder. He smiled down at her, his patented half smirk fixed on his face.

"You're ok. No broken bones. I checked," he said.

Elena sneered and pushed his hand away from her.

"Listen Lena. We are all the way in Georgia. Take the opportunity to clear your head. I have already talked to Jenna. No one thinks we are dead. Live a little. You will only get to do it once," I winked.

With a roll of her eyes, Elena ran her hands through her hair, sighing. "I have a life, Ellie. We have
a life, we can't just run away. Why would you even go along with this?" she said.

Damon groaned loudly and sped back to his car irritatedly slamming the door closed, leaning against it. "I told you this was a bad idea, Elandra," he grumbled.

Something snapped in Elena, her brown eyes large as she spun around, quickly walking up to Damon, poking her finger into his chest. "That is not her name. Maybe you need to remember who you're talking to. She isn't the same girl from your time." She moved her finger to me but kept her eyes on Damons. "Her name is Elara, not Elandra. She is my sister, not your fiance and you should try to remember that," she spat, walking away from him.

"Why are we here, Elara?" she asked.

They both looked at me and silence filled the air, only permeated by the sound of the wildlife surrounding us, as they waited for my answer. My eyes darted from my sister to Damon and I covered my face with my hands.

"Because he needed my help, Lena, and he is my friend." I moved my hands through my hair and down to my neck. Elena watched me, her face stern. "Regardless of how you feel about him, Elena. He is important to me and always will be. So, if he needs me I will be there. I have a thing about family, Lena. You should know that" I said, letting out a rush of breath.

Damon stood silently by the car, his hands in his pockets.

Lena approached me, her head lowered to her feet. "How can you feel that way about someone like him, Ellie?" she whispered.

I shook my head at her and sniffed in annoyance. "No one is perfect, especially when they have lived for so long. Everyone has the ability to be dark, even you. So I would hold back the judgment, sister," I whispered, running my thumb across her chin.

I wrapped my arms around her and sighed deeply. "Just for me, please be open minded. Besides, I could have him make you enjoy this trip, you see to be missing something," I joked.

Elena pulled away and touched her neck, eyes wide. "It's ok. I won't let him control you," I laughed.

She narrowed her eyes and continued to rub her neck self consciously. A loud ringing came from Damon's pocket and Elena and I both turned to look at him. He stood against the hood of the car, arms crossed.

I smirked as Elena rounded on him. "That's my phone?" she huffed.

Damon reached into his pocket and pulled out her phone, looking down at the screen. I stood next to him and watched his expression. His blue eyes hardened like glass for only a second before he looked up at Elena with a sly smile. "Mmm, it's your boyfriend."

Elena turned away shaking her head, her hand still on her neck. I reached out and took her free hand, giving it a gentle squeeze before releasing it just as Damon looked back down at the phone with a sneer. "I'll take it." He lifted the phone to his ear and gave me a quick wink. "Elena's phone!" he said enthusiastically.

I stepped closer to Damon and he leaned down, lifting the phone slightly so that I could hear Stefan speak. "Where are they? Why do you have Elena's phone and why is El not answering me? Are they ok?" he asked angrily.
Damon looked down at me and I raised a brow. "Slow down brother. They are both right here. And yes, they are fine," he said calmly.

I shook my head and looked at Elena who was passing her weight from one foot to another, her eyes on her feet almost guiltily. I kicked her foot and she looked at me with a shrug. I straightened my back and flipped my hair over my shoulder with confidence. She laughed silently and leaned against the car with a sigh. I nodded, satisfied, and looked back at Damon who was lowering the phone towards Elena.

"He wants to talk to you," he said.

I crossed my arms and nudged my head towards the phone, urging her forward. After all, I was on Stefan's side. He really did love her.

Elena eyed the phone for a moment but looked away quickly her mind made up. "Uh-uh," she said shaking her head.

Damon pulled the phone back with a self-satisfied grin and I looked away, heart sinking on Stefan's behalf. "Yeah. I don't really think she wants to talk to you right now," Damon said shaking his head.

I could hear the anger in Stefan's voice as he spoke on the other end of the phone, and almost felt afraid for what would be waiting for Damon once we got home, but then I remembered I would be there to help defuse the situation. Not to mention Elena wouldn't stay mad at Stefan forever. Love was a very powerful thing. No one knew that better than I did.

"Damon, I swear to God, If you touch either one of them…" Stefan spat.

I felt a warmth spread through me at his protective behavior. Caroline was one of the only other people who showed such protective behavior over me, and I loved it. I was the same way, willing to kill for those I loved.

Damon smirked and nodded his head slowly. "You have a good day. Mmm-hmm. Bye now," he said.

I stepped away from him and pulled out my phone. I slipped into my messages and found the last one Stefan had sent me. I typed out a quick response and sent it just as Damon took the phone from my grasp. "Naughty. Who are you texting?" he asked, eyes narrowed.

I yanked my phone from his grasp and shook my head. "Stefan. Someone needs to assure him you don't have us tied up in your trunk. Even if that is a ridiculous assumption. Like you could ever get the jump on me," I sighed, placing the phone back in my pocket.

"What did you say to him?" Elena asked, opening the car door and slipping inside.

I followed her and hopped into the front seat. "Basically, I told him we were both here because we wanted to be and that we would be home soon. End of story," I said shrugging.

Damon slid into the driver's seat and slapped the wheel with a grin. "Well now that we have taken care of my poor brother's feelings let's get moving. We're almost there," he said.

Elena sighed deeply and sat back in her seat. "Can't we just go home," she asked.

I looked back at her and frowned. "No Lena. We're going to a little place right outside of Atlanta. Come on. It'll be fun. Remember what fun is Lena?" I asked throwing my hands in the air.
Damon looked at her through the rearview mirror and rolled his eyes. "No. I don't think she does. Come on, Elena. You don't wanna go back right now. Do you? What's the rush? Take a time-out. Five minutes. All your problems will still be there when we get back," he said.

I clapped my hands and nodded smiling brightly. This was one of the reasons I had always loved Damon. He could be so spontaneous and fun. I leaned my head on his shoulder and grinned, watching for Elena's response.

She looked out the window briefly before slapping her knee with a sigh. "Ugh. Are we gonna be safe with him?" she asked.

I looked up at Damon and shook my head. "Probably not, but i'm a badass witch, so you'll be safe with me," I smirked.

Elena scoffed and laughed lightly. "Ok. No mind tricks and it's a deal," she said.

Damon looked back at her reflection and smirked. "Deal," he said.

I gave them both a toothy grin and turned around in my seat, keeping my head on Damon's shoulder. "Atlanta here we come!" I said.

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Damon pulled into the parking lot of a small bar, parking directly in front of the entrance. The sign above the front door read Bree's Bar in bold blue letters. Damon slipped from the car at the same time I did, and I fixed my leather jacket as I waited for Elena to exit the back seat.

"You brought us to a bar?" she indignantly asked, her hair blowing wildly around her face.

Walking around the front of the car she tucked her hands in her pockets. "We're not old enough. They're not going to let us in," she said tilting her head in my direction.

I popped a piece of gum in my mouth with a chuckle. "You're not old enough. I'm about a thousand years old, dear sister," I said, tucking the wrapper in my pocket.

Elena stomped her foot lightly and grumbled. "Well right now your about 17, dear sister," she snottily answered.

I stepped closer to her and brushed my bright red hair from my face, tucking it behind my ear. I smirked at her and blew a giant bubble in her face with a smile, popping it loudly before twirling on my heel and taking her hand. "Come on, Lena," I said.

Damon shook his head and started forward. "They'll let you guys in. Trust me," he said over his shoulder.

I could hear scoffing behind me and laughed. "As if," Elena whispered.

I followed behind Damon, pleasantly surprised to find the bar was actually nice. It wasn't fancy, but it wasn't dingy or run down. Bree was taking care of it. Considering the time of day, there were very few people inside, just a few men playing pool, which would be good for the kind of
conversation Damon would be having. Elena lagged behind as I let go of her hand. I pulled my hair over one shoulder and stood in front of Lena as Damon approached the bar. The woman behind it was running a white rag over the dirty counters, her black curly hair bouncing as she moved.

When Damon clapped his hands together she turned her head towards us and smiled at Damon, shaking her head. "No. No, it can't be. Damon." she said, hopping over the counter and spinning around to jump onto the other side.

She landed gently on the ground, sauntering in front of Damon, her hips swaying. "My honey pie," she saucily said. Leaning in she placed her hands on either side of his face, kissing him deeply. She pulled him closer to her, humming satisfaction. My eyes widened and I had to pinch myself just to maintain my focus and keep my jaw wired shut so it would not plummet to the floor. This was definitely something Damon had forgotten to mention.

I looked away and found Elena watching me closely, her face full of concern. I managed a grimace that was supposed to be a smile and looked down at the floor. When Bree finally pulled away I looked up exhaling in relief. She took Damon's hand and led him to the bar. He sat down at a stool and I pushed Elena in the one next to him, sitting down beside her. I didn't really feel like being near him if they planned on going at it again. Bree took out four shot glasses and lined them up in front of us, taking out a bottle of Tequila and lifting it into the air. "Listen up everybody! Here's to the man that broke my heart, crushed my soul, destroyed my life, and ruined any and all chances of happiness!" she shouted, placing a shot in front of each of us and picking up her own. "Drink up," she said, downing her shot.

I lifted the glass to my lips and poured the nasty liquid down my throat, wincing at the deep, warm burn. I slammed the glass down and stuck my tongue out in protest. "Ugh, I hate Tequila!" I shouted with a laugh.

Bree chuckled and refilled my glass. "So, how did he rope you in?" she asked.

I looked up at her and leaned my head back with a sigh. "Oh, now that is a long story," I said, downing my newly refilled shot.

"Well, my advice is just to enjoy the ride," she said with a long sigh that spoke of previous enjoyment.

My stomach rolled and I flipped my glass upside down, waving my fingers over the top. She smiled knowingly and moved over to Elena, filling her glass.

Damon stood and walked next to me, leaning on his elbow. "Having fun, El?" he asked, looking at my upended glass.

I glanced at my fingers and forced a smile. "Loads," I said, grimacing and flipping my glass back over, tapping it on the bar.

"There we go, girl," Bree said, filling it.

Elena watched me carefully and narrowed her eyes when Bree filled the glass again.

"So, how do you two know each other?" Elena asked.

Bree leaned against the bar and smiled at Damon. "College," she said.

Elena's eyes widened and she looked at Damon in astonishment. "You went to college," she asked.
Damon leaned his head on his hand and rolled his eyes, smiling. "I've been on a college campus, yes," he said.

I laughed and covered my face with my hands. "Wow, I can definitely picture you stalking the sorority girls," I said.

Damon winked at me and curled a piece of my hair around his finger as he listened to Bree speak.

"About twenty years ago, when I was a sweet, young freshman, I met a beautiful man and fell in love. And then he told me his little secret, made me love him more. Because you see, I had a little secret of my own that I was dying to tell someone," she said.

Damon leaned in next to us and whispered smugly. "She's a witch," he said.

I widened my eyes and looked her over with new interest. When I finally focused on her, and not my feelings towards her, I could feel it, her power.

"As are you," she said, lowering herself onto her elbow in front of me.

I glanced around quickly, making sure I wouldn't be noticed, then lifted my hand and allowed my fingers to glow a bright blue. I smiled smugly when she gasped, bowing her head in reverence. It had been a long time since someone had shown such respect. I nodded in acceptance and felt Elena place her hand on my arm. I patted her gently and closed my hand, canceling the glow.

"When did you start hanging out with an Original witch, Damon?" Bree asked a tremor of fear in her voice.

I placed my hand on hers and looked into her eyes. "I'm the only Original he has met, Bree," I assured her.

I knew she feared who else may be walking through her door. Her face softened and I could see her breathing calm. Bree looked at Elena and smiled again. "He changed my world ya know," she said looking at Damon.

He smirked and nudged his head at Bree. "I rocked your world," he said.

Bree lifted her shot with a smile, looking at me. "He is good in the sack, isn't he." I raised my glass and clinked it with hers.

She chuckled and looked back at Damon. "But mostly he's just a Walk-Away Joe," she said.

I drank my shot, keeping my head lowered, and sat down my empty glass.

"See, she agrees," Bree said with a laugh.

I flung my hair from my shoulders and rubbed the back of my neck, avoiding everyone's gaze.

Bree laughed brightly and turned towards Damon, now more serious. "So, what is it that you want?" she asked.

Elena's phone rang and Damon took it from his pocket looking down at the screen before handing it over.

"Its Jenna," Elena said.

I patted her on the back and smiled. "It's ok. I told her you passed out at Bonnie's and then went
straight to school. I'm sure she just wants to check in," I assured her.

Taking a deep breath she answered the phone and started out of the bar, her hand in her hair. Damon and Bree found a table off to the side of the bar and sat down to discuss Katherine. Not knowing what else to do I followed. I moved to take the chair beside Bree, but Damon pulled me next to him, placing my feet on his lap.

Bree watched us closely, her brown eyes curious. "So, what's the story here?" she asked, using two fingers to point at us.

I snickered and laid my head on Damon's shoulder briefly. "Like I said, long story," I answered.

Bree threw her head back and laughed heartily. "What part of our dear Damons life story isn't long. I have all the time in the world," she said.

I smacked Damon's arm and looked up at him. "Your turn," I said.

He rolled his eyes and took a beer from the table. "El is my ex-fiancée. She was the woman I was with before Katherine. She is a reincarnate," he said simply.

I looked up at the ceiling and then back at Bree. "Well, I guess that really does sum it up," I shrugged.

Bree watched me, her eyes scanning my face, before trailing down to where Damon's hand held my knee. "After all these years, it's still only Katherine, huh. How do you know she's still alive," she asked.

Damon gripped my knee tightly and leaned towards Bree. "Well, you help me get into the tomb, and we'll find out," he said, touching her elbow.


I could feel Damons grip tighten on my knee and I placed my hand on his, his iron grasp loosened and I could feel him calm slightly. "There's a little problem with number two. I don't have the crystal," he said.

Bree raised her hands in the air and shrugged. "That's it, Damon. There's no other way. Its Emily's spell," she said.

I ran my fingers over Damon's hand and smirked at Bree. "In Witchcraft, there's always another way, Bree," I said, my eyes flashing angrily.

"What about a new spell with a new crystal that overrides Emily's spell?" Damon asked.

I bit my bottom lip and shook my head. That wouldn't work.

Bree placed her hand under her chin and looked at Damon, her black curls bouncing slightly as she spoke. "It doesn't work that way, baby. Emily's spell is absolute. You can't get in that tomb," she said.

Damon's face fell and his distant eyes glazed over. I moved my legs from his lap and gave his shoulder a squeeze. "Watch us," I said, standing to my feet, pulling Damon with me.

I led him outside and saw Elena standing by the car, her phone to her ear. "And I'm supposed to
believe that?" she said.

I could hear a low mumbling on the other end before she swiftly hung up, spinning around to find us standing behind her.

"You ok?" Damon asked.

Elena looked down at his shirt and smirked. "Don't pretend to care. I know your gloating inside," she said, looking up into his eyes.

Damon smirked, but before he could come up with some snotty remark I stepped in between them.

"Lena, Im starved can we just go inside and get something to eat. All that liquor on an empty stomach was a bad idea," I said.

Elena's eyes widened and she smacked Damon on the chest, her face scrunched up in disbelief and anger. "You didn't feed her? Witches still eat, ya know," she said, smacking him again.


Elena pulled me forward, leading me back inside. We found a seat at the bar and all three ordered a burger and fries. Damon handed me a beer and we drank silently as we waited for our food. By the time it came, I was feeling sufficiently sloshed. My vision was starting to blur and I was glad to get something in my stomach. I started on my fries, enjoying them more than I normally would. Damon watched me in amusement, his crystal blue eyes full of unfulfilled laughter.

"Let's just say that i'm descended from Katherine...does that make me part vampire?" Elena asked.

I giggled waving a fry in the air. "Nope. Not at all," I sang.

Damon shoved a fry in my mouth and ran a finger over my cheek. "Eat my little drunky," he said.

I finished my fry and stuck my tongue out at him.

"Vampires can't procreate. But we love to try." he picked up a fry and tossed it in his mouth, running his fingers against one another to dust the salt from them. "No, if you were related it would mean Katherine had a child before she was turned," he said.

I pushed the fries around on my plate and mouthed one word. "Bingo," Neither one noticed me and I was glad for it.

There was no way I would reveal something Katherine had told me in complete confidence. It was the worst part of her human life, and I wouldn't repeat it.

"Did Stefan think he could use me to replace her?" Elena asked.

I raised my hand in front of Damon quickly and looked at Elena, my eyes hard. "Never," I said firmly.

Damon moved my hand and looked at Elena with fake concern. "Kinda creepy if ya ask me," he said.

Elena took the pickles from her burger and moved them to the side.

Damon scoffed and took them from her plate, placing them on my burger and his. "Come on, what?
You don't like pickles? What is wrong with you?" he asked.

I rearranged the pickles on my burger and smiled over at my sister, who was watching Damon with unease. She was clearly trying to figure out how she was actually enjoying his presence while also getting some questions answered, ones she was too embarrassed to ask her boyfriend. Damon elbowed me, offering me the ketchup, I nodded and he spread some on my bun. I pointed to the mustard and he repeated the process. Scooting away a bit I lifted my hair into a ponytail and then sat forward to eat. I felt something tickling my neck and looked over to find Damon playing with a strand of hair I had missed. I raised a brow but he continued unperturbed.

"How can you even eat? If technically you're supposed to be…" Elena asked.

I looked up at Damon and sent him a cocky questioning look. Damon leaned in and gave her a foie nervous look. "Dead?" he whispered with a chuckle.

My shoulders shook as I laughed silently. "It's not such a bad word. As long as I keep a healthy diet of blood in my system, my body functions pretty normally," he said tossing a fry in his mouth to demonstrate.

Elena's face lifted and she laughed prettily her face never changing as she looked into Damon's eyes. "This nice act. Is any of it real?" she asked.

I took a drink of my beer before Damon took it away swishing it, revealing it to be half empty. He motioned for Bree who brought over another and a glass of water. He took the beer and handed me the water, smirking when I pouted. "Sorry, Elandra. I'm cutting you off, baby," he whispered.

I took the glass and sighed, drinking deeply. He watched me for a second before turning away.

"I'll have one of those," Elena said, pointing at Damon's beer.

I sat down my water and leaned in front of Damon to look at Lena.

She smiled at me and shrugged. "Time out remember? For five minutes. Yeah, well that five minutes is gonna need a beer," she said.

I looked at Bree and motioned at Elena. "Get the girl some alcohol," I said.

Bree handed Elena a bottle, winking at me. "There ya go," she said.

When Elena was more than a few beers in, Bree brought out the whiskey and some shot glasses. The bar was beginning to fill with people and a small group joined us for shots. Damon made sure I opted out, so I stood to the side, just watching my sister cut loose for once.

I drank another glass of water and smiled as Bree sat out another set of glasses, filling them with Whiskey. "Ready…Go!" she shouted.

Damon, Elena, and a few others all took their shots, Elena being the quickest, when she got going she was a machine with a hell of a tolerance. She slammed her glass down and clapped her hands, dancing in a circle in celebration.

"That's three," Damon said, wiping his chin.

Lena leaned down next to him and laughed. "Aww, do you need a bib?" she asked, a fake pout on her lips.
Damon pushed away from the bar and snickered. "We can't all unhinge our jaws like a snake, like the Gilbert girls, to consume alcohol," he said, finding me off to the side with a smile.

I sent him a wink and he turned back to Elena who was waving her hand in the air, describing her tolerance. The air changed as someone entered the bar, and my instincts went into overdrive. I looked around me and saw a man I had never seen before walk passed Damon and Elena, towards the other side of the bar. After Bree served Elena and the others another set of shots, she followed him. I kept my eyes away from her but watched from my peripheral. She said something to him before motioning to us, her face hard. I closed my eyes and ground my teeth together, anger coursing through me. Of course, she had to betray us. Now Damon would kill her and it would be yet another betrayal to drag him down. She better at least have a damn good reason. I started towards Damon when my phone rang, I looked down and saw Jenna calling. I sighed deeply and took one last look at Damon before grabbing my jacket and starting outside. I opened the door and winced at the biting cold. I slid the phone in my pocket, planning on calling Jenna back as soon as I got my jacket on. As I slid one arm in someone came behind me at lightning speed, grabbing me from behind and wrapping their hand around my neck, covering my mouth with unnatural strength. They began dragging me away, I struggled, tugging at their hands, momentarily forgetting that I was a witch and no vampire could hold me against my will. Before I could remember I wasn't helpless I felt a pinprick in my neck and winced in pain, trying to figure out what they could be using. It took me only a moment to realize, it had been centuries since I had felt this pain. The pain of Witch Hazel, such an innocent plant one so many humans use as a remedy, was my poison. I screamed through the pain, the sound being blocked by my attacker's hand. Slowly my body began to shut down and I could no longer move, just feel the agonizing pain that ripped through my body like wildfire. It felt like a million scalding hot knives cutting every inch of my body. Through the pain, I could sense the man moving my body away towards the back of the bar. My eyes were open and I could see the night sky above us as he lowered my body to the ground near a ladder beside an electrical building. The man leaned over me, blocking my vision of the building, his eyes red.

"Bree said not to use too much, so you should be able to move soon," he said.

The pain was still shooting through me and his words did little to relieve it. The only thing it did was make me want to kill Bree myself. He stepped away and when I could no longer see him I tried to think through the pain, to make out the sounds around me. After what felt like hours I could hear quick footsteps. I knew the poison was wearing off so I forced myself to turn my head. It took every bit of strength I had, but very slowly I turned to find Damon running towards me.

"Damon, No!," I choked out.

Damon stopped, his face falling as he saw me sprawled out on the ground. I knew what I must look like. I had seen myself after I had been poisoned with Witch Hazel, it wasn't pretty. My skin shadows with red as the poison heats my blood to boiling. "Elandra!" he shouted. The man who had attacked me flew towards him at supernatural speed with a wooden plank, knocking him to the ground, beating him repeatedly as hard as he could. Once Damon was on the ground he sped away, coming back with a can, covering Damon with gasoline. Breathing deeply I turned over just as Elena came running from the other end, shouting. "No!" Using my elbows I pushed myself up and crawled over to the edge of the concrete where the vampire was still beating Damon.

"Elena, stay away," I said weakly.

Elena covered her mouth in horror as she looked at me, tears covering her face. "Ellie..." she said.

I lifted my finger to my lips and shook my head as slowly as I could, still feeling weak. My skin felt like it was on fire and I could barely breathe, but I couldn't stay still. My sister and Damon both
were in danger.

The man turned towards me, revealing his red eyes and vampire teeth. "Why are you moving. Bree said you could die if I moved you too much," he spat. I laughed with a wince and sat up on my knees.

"Who are you?" Damon asked in confusion.

The man shook his head and adjusted his jacket with a sneer. "That's perfect! You have no idea," he said.

Elena stepped towards them and the man growled menacingly.

I raised my hand and shook my head at her. "Elena don't," I said.

The man turned his head back to me and looked me over, the color returning to his eyes.

"What did he do to you?" I asked.

The vampire scoffed pain covering his face. "He killed my girlfriend," he softly said.

He turned back to Damon, covering him in more gas. I shakily stood, my whole body aching in a way that foretold nothing but death.

"What did she do to you, huh? What did she do to you?!" he shouted, shaking the can over Damon until every last drop covered him.

I took several deep breaths and took a step forwards.

"Nothing," Damon panted.

"I don't understand," Elena said.

I shook my head and tried to remain upright, as I swayed back and forth. The man looked over his shoulder at Elena his eyes glassy. "My girlfriend went to visit Stefan, and Damon killed her. Got it?" he spat.

He hit Damon again and I winced as he shouted in pain. As much as he deserved this I couldn't stand watching it.

"Lexi was your girlfriend?" I asked.

The man looked at me again, watching the way I swayed. He nodded gently and I smiled. "She told us about you, but she said you were human," I said.

He turned around to face me, eyes clouded with tears. "I was," he said.

I walked towards him and raised my hands in surrender. "Did Lex turn you?" I asked.

Tears fell from the man's red eyes and I could feel my own heart break for him. "If you want to be with someone forever, you have to live forever," he said voice breaking.

I nodded in agreement. "Yes, you do. I am sorry you lost your forever. What he did was unforgivable. I loved Lexie too," I touched my chest and tried to ignore the stab of pain that shot through me. "But regardless of how horrible he can be, im begging you not to kill him," I said.
The man turned away from me and back to Damon, who still laid on the ground, moaning in pain. He kicked him in the head in anger. I cried out and placed a hand on my knee.

"Lexi loved you she said that, "When it's real, you can't walk away," Elena said, her hands in her hair.

The man turned to me and shook his head. "Well, that's a choice you're going to have to make," he said.

I fell to my knees and gasped in pain, my eyes never leaving Damon. "Don't. Don't, please don't hurt him," I begged.

I hadn't felt this weak in ages. I had always had my powers to lean on, now though, I was as human as Elena and I hated it. The man reached into his pocket and took out a book of matches. I gasped in fear and agony. Lighting the match he lifted it into the air above Damon.

I raised my hand in one last burst of effort. "Lexi was a good person, and she loved you. Which means you are good too. Don't do this, be better than him. For Lexi," I begged, touching the ground my vision blurring.

The man leaned down and picked Damon up by the scruff of his shirt, eyes blood red. Damon's face was pale and drawn with pain and what I could tell was regret, whether that be for what he had done, because of what it was now costing him, or what pain it had inflicted on the poor pain in front of him, I wasn't sure. His head lolled against his chest and the man looked at him with pure hatred. I could see the pain and torture in his eyes, he wanted nothing more than to kill Damon, but his love for Lexi was fighting against that impulse. The red in his eyes darkened and his chin quivered slightly as he lifted Damon higher into the air, tossing him into the building a few feet away. Damon landed hard, his arms spread out, causing him to bounce off the building and land on his chest. I stayed on my knees, palms on the cold concrete in front of me.

Elena looked at the man her face ashen. "Thank you," she said.

The man stopped and looked at her, eyes hard. "I didn't do it for you," he said.

As he passed by me he lowered his head and cast sympathetic eyes down on me. "He will only lead you to death," he said.

I glanced up at him and smiled. "It's not him i'm worried about, but thank you. Lexi would have been proud of you," I said.

The corner of his mouth turned up and he lowered his head before speeding away. When he disappeared Elena ran to me, helping me to my feet. We both made our way to Damon and helped him stand. When he was finally able to so on his own my strength gave out and I fell. Elena sunk with me as she tried to cover my weight and Damon pulled me from her arms, eyes scanning me quickly.

"What did he do to you, El? I don't know how to help you, baby," he said.

I smiled weakly and reached up to stroke his cheek. "He poisoned me with something, something I didn't think anyone really knew about. Guess I was wrong, huh," I laughed, coughing deeply when my chest started to fill with blood. Damon lowered me to the ground and I could hear Elena crying somewhere beside me.

"What do I do, Elandra? Just tell me what to do," he said. I chuckled and lifted his wrist, shaking it gently. "Come on, you're more than just a pretty face," I wheezed.
Damon quickly bit into his wrist and fed me his blood. I drank deeply and felt my blood start to cool instantly as the effects of the poison left my body. I knew the change was occurring on the outside as well when Elena's tear-choked sobs turned into relieved gasps of air. I could feel her running her fingers through my hair and I smiled when Damon pulled his wrist from my mouth, running a finger over my lips to rid them of any evidence of his blood.

"There's my, Elandra," he whispered as he helped me to my feet.

I smiled up at him and sent him a wink. "You stink," I said.

Lowering his nose to his shirt he groaned his disgust. "This shirt is ruined," he moaned.

I shrugged as Elena came up behind me, wrapping her arms around my waist. 

I've always preferred you in blue anyways," I said with a smile.

My eyes hardened as I felt Elena cry against me and I looked at Damon, his face a perfect replication of my own.

"Lena, let's get you back to the car. Damon and I need to talk to Bree one more time before we leave," I said.

Elena looked up at me in fear and I smiled brightly at her. "It's ok, sis. There's nothing to worry about," I said.

I led Elena back to the car reassuring her time and time again that I was ok and then met Damon at the entrance of the bar.

"You sure you want to come in with me?" he asked, eyes moving to my face.

I flicked some imaginary dust from my jacket and sneered. "Please, as if this will be my first time," I said with a smirk.

Damon smiled and took my hand, taking me inside. Bree was alone at the bar, taking a shot, her back to us.

"We were just leaving. We wanted to say goodbye," Damon said.

Still facing the other direction Bree answered, her voice flat. "Good to see you again, Damon."

I crossed my arms and tapped my foot. "What about me. You showed me such respect before, Bree. I am one of the first of our kind am I not?" I said.

Damon approached her slowly, his face hard. "And no kiss for me?" he asked.

Bree turned around, fear covering her face, shoulders stiff. "Im full of vervain. I put it in everything I drink," she said.

Smiling evilly I stepped closer. "Vervain doesn't bother me, Bree," I said.

Tears started to pool in her eyes as she looked at Damon.

"And you're telling us this why?" Damon asked.
Bree's shoulders started to shake as she began to cry. "Lexi was my friend. How could you?" she asked as she turned around.

Damon spun in front of her and she gasped in fear. I came up behind Damon and placed a hand on his shoulder, trailing it down his arm, and looked at Bree with pity. "She was mine as well. I loved her, and honestly, I'll probably never truly forgive him for what he did. But he is still my Damon and always will be." I stepped closer to her as her breathing began to speed up. "And you tried to get him killed. No one hurts what's mine. Not to mention you poisoned me. That's a betrayal I just can't allow," I said my voice raw.

I stepped behind Damon as he moved closer to her. She gulped in fear. "Did you think you could send someone to kill me and poison someone I care about without conscience?" he asked her his eyes darkening.

"The tomb can be opened," she said.

Damon tilted his head menacingly. "Your lying," he sighed in annoyance.

Bree backed away her hands outstretched behind her. "Emily's Grimoire, her spellbook. If you know how she closed the tomb the reversal spell will be in the book. You can open that tomb," she said quickly, eyes wide.

Damon spun on his heels and looked at me.

I smiled brightly and shook my head. "It should work," I said.

Turning back to Bree he stepped closer again. "Where is this book?" he asked.

Bree's shoulders shook and she pushed her hands out towards Damon's chest. "I...I" she said.

Damon sneered, turning his head in disappointment. "You have no idea," he said.

Bree shook her head and waved her hands in front of her. "No. Im telling you the truth," she promised.

Damon stood intimately close, his hand on her face, caressing her cheek. He ran his thumb down onto her chin. "And I believe you. My dear, sweet Bree. That's why I'm almost sorry," he whispered.

I stepped closer and tilted my head, watching the fear fill her eyes as Damon plunged his fist into her chest. I felt sorry for the poor woman, but my pity for her could only go so far after what she had done. She gasped, mouth falling open, her breath catching in her throat. Her eyes bulged as she looked into Damon's eyes, their ocean depths the last thing she would ever see. My lips turned down, it could have been worse. Damon pulled his arm from her chest, heart in hand, and her eyes began to flutter closed. I watched her body as it fell to the floor, almost gracefully. Damon looked down at her heart before he dropped it, using the towel on the counter to clean his hands. Grabbing his jacket, he slung it over his shoulders pulling his arms through.

"You ok?" he asked.

I smiled brightly and fixed the color of his jacket, "Yep. You ready to go home and find a Grimoire?" I asked.

He looked into my eyes deeply, checking for shock or hatred. When he saw nothing to concern him, he twirled a piece of my hair and took my hand in his, leading me outside.
In the car, Elena leaned forward, her chin on the edge of my seat. "Are you sure you're okay?" she asked.

I laughed, my voice still a bit rough. "Yes! Please don't ask again, Lena," I smiled.

Pulling my hair towards her I could feel her braiding it with a sigh. "Well, I have to award you at least ten points for avoiding death like a champ," she said.

I rolled my eyes and scoffed. "We can't keep awarding points for non-prank related things, Lena. It's against the rules.

Elena grumbled loudly in the back, yanking my hair gently. "We make the rules and I say with how messed up our life has gotten, awarding points for its craziness is a-okay," she said.

When she finished braiding my hair I turned around and nodded. "Fine. It's a deal. We can award points for life's craziness," I said.

Damon pulled my braid and looked at me in confusion. "What the hell are you two going on about? I remember Stefan and I were awarded points recently," he said.

Elena shot me an amused look and I pointed at her, letting her fill him in while I texted Stefan, telling him we were on our way home. Damon eyed me warily but I ignored him.

After several hours we finally arrived back at the Boarding House. I slipped out of the car and stretched, my whole body cracking with the strain. Elena stood next to me her eyes on the house, watching it uneasily.

"Go. He won't bite, unless you ask," I snarkily said.

Elena pushed me away with a disgusted expression on her face. "Hey, don't knock it till you try it, sister," I said raising my hands in the air with a smirk.

She stuck her tongue out and headed inside.

Damon rounded the car and stood behind me. "Think she'll forgive him?" he asked.

I placed my hands on my hips and turned around. "She loves him. So yeah," I wrapped my hands around his neck and smiled wickedly. "Wanna give me a ride?" I asked.

With a smirk, he wrapped his arms around my waist and sped me away from Elena and Stefan.

We stopped in the woods behind my house and I brushed the hair from my face. "That is so fun," I laughed.

Damon looked down at me with interest, his blue eyes piercing. "Thanks for saving my life today, Elandra," he said.

I brushed my fingers through his raven hair and shrugged. "While I'm around, I'll always save you, Damon," I said.

His eyes closed and he took in a deep breath. "I thought I was going to lose you today, El. I can't go through that again. You have to live," he said.

Opening his eyes he took my face in his hands. "Once we open the tomb we will figure out what to do about this curse. Maybe Emily's Grimoire will have something in it that will help?" he said.
I stepped away from him and smiled weakly. "Maybe." I looked at the house and then back to him. "I better get inside," I said.

He watched me go before speeding away into the night.

I ran inside and found Jenna sitting on the couch. "Hey, Ellie. You ok?" she asked.

I touched my head and frowned. "No. One of my headaches," I lied, bounding upstairs.

I tossed open my door and sat down on my bed, placing my head in my hands. I didn't understand why every mention of the tomb was like a punch in the stomach, but it was. Before I could think too much on it I heard the front door burst open and Elena's angry voice float up to the stairs. I lifted my head just as she burst into the room.

"Did you know?" she shouted.

I sat back and widened my eyes. "Know what? Your gonna have to be more specific, Lena," I said plainly.

Elena slammed my door closed, locking it behind her and I stood quickly.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Did you know about Stefan saving me that night, and what he found out about us later on?" she asked.

My brows furrowed in genuine confusion. I had always wondered how Elena had survived the crash, and I had my ideas about us, but no one had ever told me anything.

"No. I don't know what you're talking about, Elena. Your gonna have to fill me in," I said.

Elena's eyes filled with tears and she threw herself into my arms. "We are adopted, Elara. Were not really Gilberts," she whispered.

I held her as she cried my own mind full of questions. If Miranda and Grayson were not our real parents then who were they?
Chapter Notes

Please let me know what you think that way I know there is still interest in this story.

Jeremy's pencil scratched its way across the paper as he sketched yet another picture of a Bram Stoker esque vampire. I laid my cheek on the palm of my hand, my elbow sitting on the dining room table as I watched him. Inwardly I sighed, knowing it wouldn't be long before he started piecing together the missing memories that had been ripped from him by Damon. Something I still found myself hating my own sister for from time to time. I had no doubt Jeremy would feel the same for a while. It would take him a very long time to forgive her for taking his memories of Vicki's death and all that he had learned because of it. A small creak from the floor above caused both Jeremy and me to raise our heads, narrowing our eyes at the ceiling briefly in disgust and annoyance. We were both avidly avoiding the upstairs where Elena and Stefan were doing God only knows what. Truthfully, I was grateful he was here, especially after he had shown me his little box of treasures. One which held vervain jewelry, he had allowed me to pick out a green and black beaded rope bracelet for Jeremy, one that would keep him safe from every mind control obsessed vampire that seemed to run rampant in this town. Still, I didn't like the idea that my sister could be getting her freak on only a floor above us. My head jerked towards the door when a loud knock interrupted my thoughts. I laid my head down on my arms in silent protest. The door was just too far away and I really wasn't in the mood to interact with the outside world. Jeremy laughed at my display of laziness and stood from his seat.

"I'll get it, Ellie," he said.

I stuck a thumb in the air and heard his feet move across the floor as he left the dining room. The front door opened and the low deep voice of a man told Jeremy the total for the pizza. I ignored them and stood, heading into the kitchen to grab the plates. I could hear Jeremy yelling for Elena and shook my head with a smile. Everything felt so normal for once. When I came back Elena was bounding down the stairs her ponytail swaying as she all but hopped towards the door, money in hand. Jeremy brought the pizza to the table and I helped him fill the plates, my mind a million miles away. I turned my head towards Elena and smiled when she came into the room with Stefan in tow.

They both had the most obvious expressions of satisfaction on their face and I bit my lip, trying to keep to the laughter from my voice as I spoke. "Ready to eat? Im sure you both have worked up an appetite by now," I asked smoothly.

Jeremy, who had been taking a drink, coughed loudly liquid running down his chin as he tried to breathe. Stefan raised a brow as Elena sputtered indignantly, a nice pink blush starting at her hairline and working its way towards her neck. I smirked at them both, watching Lena's face darken by the second. I pounded Jer on the back and caught my sister's eye.

"Remember Lena. If you're too embarrassed to talk about it then maybe you're too young to be doing it," I firmly said in my best motherly voice, a smirk on my face.

I reached beside me and handed Elena two plates with a smile.
"We'll talk later. Maybe then you can tell me all about Stefan's sexual prowess," I whispered with a dramatic wink.

As I had expected Elena gasped and shook her head at Stefan as if he would ever believe I would want to know anything about their 'extracurricular' activities. I giggled and Stefan rolled his eyes at me.

"Stop torturing your siblings El," he said.

I sat down with my pizza and watched Elena shoot Stefan loving and thankful glances for the rest of the night.

******************************************************************************

The next day sped by quickly despite my mind still being a complete mess. The news that Elena and I were adopted had really done a number on Lena. So, along with having to deal with my own jumble of emotions I had Elena's to deal with as well. It wasn't that I was all that surprised by it. I mean obviously, she is related to the Petrovas, not the Gilberts. It was the fact that I honestly hadn't the foggiest idea who our parents could be. Now that bothered me. I wasn't used to not knowing things. This whole ordeal was new to me. Usually, I lived and I died. Simple as that. But not in this life. In this life, I had a doppelganger sister who was in love with my vampire Ex's brother, and now come to find out we were both adopted. I was at a complete loss. I had no clue who she could be, and being on the outside; honestly not knowing something for a change was really rattling me. What good was being a reincarnate and an Original witch, if I was as clueless as the rest of them? I despised the feeling. When Elena and Bonnie had mentioned going to the Grill I was actually all for the idea, the noise and mundanity of it would help me stay out of my head. I had been nothing but quiet and contemplative all day, and I could tell it was starting to bother Elena. That was until Elena decided to tell Bonnie the whole sordid tale.

Now I was being forced to listen to Bonnie express her surprise and sympathy. "I can't believe you guys are adopted. I never saw that coming," she said.

Elena nodded, taking my hand. "And it gets weirder. We looked at our birth certificate. It lists Miranda and Grayson Gilbert as our birth parents. None of it makes any sense," Lena said.

Bonnie placed her hand on Elena's, her eyes soft. "Which is why you should ask Jenna," she said.

Elena leaned back in her seat and groaned in annoyance. Bonnie noticing her hesitance leaned in for the kill before Elena could shoot her down. "First of all, the Elena I know would always want the truth, good or bad," Bonnie said.

I looked over at Elena and watched her visibly cave. Her shoulders slumped and she sighed, all of the air leaving her body as if she were a rapidly deflating balloon. "And second of all?" she asked defeatedly.

Bonnie leaned forward, her eyes scanning our surroundings. "You just found out your boyfriend's a vampire, so unless your birth parents are aliens….how bad could it be?" Bonnie whispered.

Elena and I shared a laugh, some of the stress we had been carrying finally melting away. Bonnie
leaned away, a triumphant smile on her face. Elena shook her head and shared a glance with Bonnie before bumping shoulders with me. "Hey, I need to go to the store. My outfit for the dance is severely lacking accessories. Since I know you have a closet full of junk I decided to force Bonnie along instead," Lena said.

I placed my hand on my heart and fell against my seat with a heavy gasp. "So, is Mistress saying Ellie is a free elf?" I dramatically choked out.

Elena shook her head while Bonnie covered her flushing embarrassed face with her hands. "You are such a nerd. Yes! You are free. Go!" Elena laughed.

I quickly stood, clutching my bag as if it were an article of hard-won clothing. "Ellie is free!" I gasped loudly with a smile.

Bonnie sunk down in the booth as I jaunted merrily towards the door smirking at my twin. I waved with a wink before I slipped outside. I smiled brightly, having enjoyed the small embarrassing display that I knew had helped distract my sister, even for a moment. I took a deep breath, glancing at the beautiful blue sky above me. It was a perfect day. I cocked my head to the side for a moment and decided I would enjoy it with my friends for once. Pulling out my phone I sent a quick text to Caroline before hopping into my car. It wouldn't hurt to check on Damon before I tried to have any fun. I knew that if anyone could ruin a drama free day it would be Damon Salvatore. I might as well head off his plans before they ever had the chance to come my way.

I didn't bother knocking, knowing they would be alerted of my arrival as soon as my tires had hit their driveway. I bounded into the front room and frowned when I didn't find anyone. Usually at least one of them was there to greet guests. I raised my hand and cast a quick detection spell, finding Damon in the library. With a raised brow I fixed two tumblers of Bourbon and headed that way. As I rounded the corner I could hear the heavy thumps of something repeatedly hitting the floor. I slowly glanced around the corner and found Damon standing in front of one of the large wooden bookshelves. I stepped up beside the couch that sat a few feet away and watched him for a moment. He was looking through each book intently, obviously searching for one, in particular, the sleeves of his black dress shirt were rolled up to his elbows, his raven hair messy as if he had run his fingers through it repeatedly in agitation. If I didn't know better I would have thought he was unaware of my presence only a few feet away from him, but I did know better, so I just stood still and waited, giving him the time he needed to collect himself.

I could tell he was angry and losing his patience. His long pale fingers ran across the titles of a few books before he pulled them from the shelf looking through their pages quickly and then tossing them to the floor where they joined the rest in the pile that surrounded his feet. My inner bookworm winced at the many haphazardly strewn books now scattered across the floor. It made me angry to see books treated so disrespectfully, but something told me now was not the time to pull out my inner librarian. His searching slowed and his rigid posture started to slump as he turned on his heel towards me.
I raised one of the crystal tumblers of Bourbon and smiled. "Take a break. The books will still be there for you to abuse later," I teased lightly.

His blue eyes warmed briefly before they once again hardened as he locked down his emotions. Stepping down the stairs he headed in my direction, taking the proffered alcohol and downing it in one swift motion before leaning against the bookshelf behind him.

"Are you looking for a lead on Em's Grimoire?" I asked.

He nodded his head in an affirmative and I walked up beside him, downing my own drink; the harsh burn more than welcome.

"I'm looking for my father's journal. I know he had something to do with what happened to you and Emily. If anyone knew what happened to her Grimoire it'll be him," he said.

I ran my tongue across my teeth and shook my head. I had no clue where Giuseppe would have hidden Em's Grimoire but Damon was right, I'm sure he had something to do with our burning. He had taken it as a personal slight against him and his family when he had found out about me. He not only helped murder me but from what I heard, he had destroyed my family as well.

"I completely agree. If anyone can help us find it it'll be him," I said.

Damon turned around and headed back up the steps towards the bookshelf he had been rifling through. He reached up and pulled another book from the shelf. He let the cover fall open- flipping through the pages, before tossing it to his feet and grabbing another. I tried to keep my features from contorting in annoyance, but as soon as the book landed with a small thumb, the spine cracking open- pages fluttering; I knew it was to no avail. I quickly stomped up the steps and snapped my fingers, watching the books on the floor gently fly through the air and land in neat piles beside the shelf.

"You could at least show the books the respect they deserve. Don't take out your annoyance on them, Salvatore," I snipped.

I pulled off my jacket and sent it and my bag flying over to the couch, kissing my drama free day goodbye. There was no way I could leave these books alone with the disrespectful vampire. Damon smirked, his blue eyes crinkling. Very slowly he deliberately pulled a book from the shelve with both hands, as gently as possible. "So, I take it you're staying to help then?" he asked.

I growled at him and started on my own section, taking a book and examining it before catching his eye as I bent down slowly, gently placing it on the stack near my feet. Damon snickered at me but followed my lead. We worked in silent comradery for another hour before we heard someone walking into the room. Stefan casually stepped up the stairs, his hands in his jean pockets- the perfect picture of ease. He glanced down at the ever-growing stack of books at our feet with a raised brow and cocky smile.

I took a step away from the shelf and crossed my arms. "Can we help you, Stef?" I asked with a polite smile.

Stefan approached me with ease and I narrowed my eyes. He was going to push his luck again I could feel it. Why did he always insist on pushing Damon? Yes, most of the time his brother deserved it after everything he had done, but really it only made things worse.

"Just wondering what you're both looking for?" Stefan looked over my shoulder at Damon who had stopped his search, his back still turned away from his brother. "Besides, aren't you supposed to be
at school, Ellie?" Stefan said.

Damon turned towards us and stepped beside me, placing his hand on my shoulder. "She is welcome to stay as long as she wants, Stef," he said, enunciating Stefan's nickname with narrowed eyes.

Stefan's eyes fell on Damon's hand on my shoulder and then to all the books on the floor, his eyes hard. "Damon she has more important things to do than be here, helping with whatever this is," he said, waving his hand around at all our hard work.

I growled menacingly at Stefan and took a step towards him. "Stefan Salvatore! You and I both know I can learn nothing knew at that ridiculous excuse for a High School that I haven't already learned in the hundred I have attended before it. So don't you dare treat me like some helpless teenage girl. I am over a thousand years old! If I choose to spend my time here with your brother then that is what I will be doing. You will do well to remember who you're speaking to," I spat, my voice wavering between a high pitched screech and deadly calm.

Stefan's eyes were wide and almost fearful as I took a few deep breaths.

One.

Two.

Three.

I stepped away from him and took another book from the shelf, effectively ignoring them both.

"I'm sorry, Elandra. You are right. I just don't like you being involved with all this," he said calmly.

I scoffed lightly and Damon raised his brow beside me, but I kept my eyes on the books in front of me. "Stefan, my twin sister is the Petrova doppelganger and I am a reincarnate. I'm pretty sure my life is already dangerous and insane as it is. So what is adding a bit more craziness gonna do?" I said.

Stefan chuckled and looked at Damon with his brow raised. "What are you guys looking for Damon?" he asked again.

Damon leaned next to me and I continued looking through the books. I had no intention of getting involved in their sibling drama. I had enough of my own. Besides, theirs tended to end with stakes shoved in painful places, and I don't heal as easily as they do.

"Not your concern," Damon said.

Stefan leaned towards him, his arms crossed. "No, but putting Elena and Elandra in harm's way, that is my concern," Stefan said, his voice hard as steel.

I was shocked to hear my name added on to his little display of Alpha male possessive behavior and turned around quickly when Damon growled pushing past me to attack his brother.

"Elandra is not your concern brother!" Damon growled.

I stood in front of Damon, my hands on his chest as Stefan came up behind me. What was he playing at?

"Don't act like you care, Damon. You're just using her. You're bitter because one of us gets to be
with the person that we love, and poor Katherine is just out of reach. Unless there's another way for you to get into that tomb. Is that what Bree told you? Is that what you have El here helping you with? If so then that's pretty sad Damon. That you would force her to help you get back the woman you chose over her," Stefan weakly said.

Damon took a few steps back, his breathing ragged. For a moment I wasn't sure what to do. Stefan had taken things too far and he knew it. His eyes were clouded with regret, but I could tell he was fishing and hoping that one of us would reveal something to him. Damon was in no mood to fight with Stefan right now, so it was up to me to handle him. I turned slowly and tossed my hair over my shoulder. My lip curled with distaste and I narrowed my eyes hatefully at Stefan.

"You're pathetic when your fishing, Stef. Damon hasn't forced me to do a single thing. I have and always will choose him because I want too. Now go. I think your missing school and we all know how dreadfully important these human experiences are to you," I sneered.

Stefan's face fell I could, once again, see the regret, especially after the moment we had so recently had, but he had pushed me and we both knew it was too late to take back what he had said. He had used my past with Damon against us both and that's not something I will so easily forgive or forget. He moved towards me, but I raised my hand, motioning for him to just leave it. Thankfully, he didn't push me and slowly backed away, leaving Damon and me alone. I turned around and wrapped my arms around Damon as soon as I knew Stefan had left the house. I ran my fingers through his hair, hoping that I could give him some comfort.

"Don't listen to him, Day. You're not forcing me to be here. Don't forget we have already left the past in the past; where it belongs. All is forgiven," I whispered.

I could feel Damon's warm breath on my shoulder and tried to control my heartbeat. All I needed was to make a fool of myself. Before things could get too awkward, Damon pulled away. I looked into his crystal blue eyes and smiled, running my fingers across his jawline.

"Let's find this stupid journal. Before Saint Stefan gets home from school," I said.

Damon smirked the worry that had been etched across his beautiful features smoothing into his usual flawless cocky demeanor. "This is why you're my favorite, Elandra," he said.

*****************************************************************

I spent the rest of the day searching the Library with Damon to no avail. The journal was nowhere to be found. Before Stefan got home I decided it would be best if I wasn't still sequestered at the Boarding house. I didn't feel like going home yet and knew if I did I would most likely be hounded by Elena, so instead, I decided to just get dinner at The Grill. As per the norm is was fairly busy and I was surprised and a more than a little annoyed to find my plan of avoiding Elena had flown right out the window when I noticed her and Bonnie having dinner at a table in the corner. I quickly slid past them and headed towards the bar, hoping to sneak some take out and then pull a daring escape. I found Matt sitting at the bar and slid beside him while I waited patiently for someone behind the bar to notice me.

"Hey, Ellie. What are you doing here?" Matt asked.
I smiled brightly and leaned against him. "I am going to attempt to get some food and pull a runner without my less beautiful twin noticing my existence," I whispered conspiratorily.

Matty leaned back and looked behind us, glancing around until he caught sight of Elena. Leaning forward again he raised a hand until the bartender; Ben caught sight of us. Ben slid up to the bar and leaned forward, tossing his dingy off white rag over his shoulder with a smirk. "What do you need, Matt?" he asked, eyeing me up and down.

Matty shot him a simple glare before he pointed his thumb at me. "Think you can help out my friend?"

When Ben smugly smiled, leaning down onto the bar to get closer to me Matt quickly put his arm around my waist, clearing his throat roughly. "With the menu and taking her order," he quickly clarified, eyes narrowed.

I grinned, loving Matty's brotherly protective side. I knew he definitely needed to have someone to protect since losing Vicki, and if that was me then I had no issue with it. Matt had always had a bit of the white knight syndrome and maybe if he felt like he had someone to call family again, he would feel less alone in the world. I had always loved Matt anyways.

Ben stood back and shrugged not a care in the world, as he handed over a menu. "Fine, don't get your panties in a bunch," he sighed.

I quickly looked over the menu and ordered something for both me and Matty, much to his dismay. "You didn't have to do that, Ellie," he said, not meeting my eyes. "I have some money." he finished.

I bumped his shoulder with my own. "I know. I just wanted to repay you for your chivalry, Mr. Donovan," I said placing my hand on my heart and batting my eyes excessively.

Matt laughed, rolling his eyes in amusement. "Well thanks, Ellie," he said.

Ben brought Matt a plate of food and handed me a to-go container with a carefree wink. "Thanks," I said as he walked away.

Matt glared at his back and I shook my head with a smile. "I-I just want you to know that I don't need help Ellie," he said looking down at the job application he had been filling out since before I had arrived.

I hadn't wanted to draw too much attention to it. I knew Matt wasn't the most financially stable and he was really touchy about the subject of money. "I know that Matt and you know that I would never treat you as a charity case. Your just Matt to me. One of my dearest friends," I said stealing one of his fries.

With that said, Matt took a deep breath and I could see a lot of the stress he had been holding in finally let up a bit. "So your gonna be working here then," I said easing him into the subject.

Matt took a drink of his soda and nodded. "Yeah, busboy," he grimaced.

I spun around on my stool and leaned against the bar, facing towards the rest of the restaurant. "So? Sounds like a good job to me. Easy way to make some cash. Plus you'll still be able to see your friends since we all basically live here," I chuckled.

I leaned in and gave Matt a kiss on the cheek, grabbing my take-out box. "You'll do great," I
His blue eyes shined as he smiled brightly at me. "Thanks, Ellie Bean," he said.

I scrunched up my nose and pushed his head down roughly with a grumble. I hated that nickname and he knew that. I could hear his laugh as I headed stealthily towards the exit. All the while trying to keep Elena firmly in the corner of my eye. I hoped she and Bonnie would keep focused on their own conversation.

I was feeling almost as if luck was on my side when I heard my sisters chipper and surprised voice. "Elara?"

I stopped in my tracks and let my head and shoulders fall as I turned to meet her gaze. "Hey, Elena. I didn't know you were here," I said my voice dripping with false surprise.

Elena's doe eyes squinted in disbelief as they raked over my body, stopping at the foam box in my hands. As soon as she saw it her lips thinned and she huffed in annoyance. "Elara Marie Gilbert. You little liar. You were trying to escape like some prison inmate," she whispered screeched at me as only she could.

I swear my sister could make herself sound like a banshee even when she was whispering. It was a serious skill.

I winced and slowly opened the box. Showing her the bacon cheeseburger and fries inside. "Wanna fry?" I asked, trying to appease her as if she was some Greek Goddess.

Elena reached out and picked up the bun from my burger lifting it and sitting it aside before removing the top piece of bacon. She replaced the bun and closed the lid. Narrowing her eyes at me she ate the bacon. I scoffed loudly in disbelief. "I said a fry, Elena!"

Lena sidestepped me and headed outside still nibbling on my stolen bacon. I spun on my toes and followed her. "I did not say that I would apologize with bacon Elena. I did not kill someone. I just tried to avoid you. That's a minimum of two fries kinda punishment. NOT a slice of bacon. The punishment should fit the crime, Lena," I said.

Elena wiped her hands on her jeans and shook her head. "I pick the punishment and I wanted Bacon. So deal with it," she said.

I was about to harass her again when her cell rang, interrupting our sibling squabble. She answered it quickly, holding it to her ear as we walked toward her car. "Hello," she said.

I made it to my car which was nearer than Elena's and placed my food in the passenger seat. I watched Lena for a second and my stomach plummeted as she froze in fear. I forgot everything and rushed towards her. Elena stood in the middle of the parking lot her mouth gaping open as she looked frantically around her.

Her eyes found me and she dropped her hand from her ear, clutching her phone tightly. "Ellie its the vampire I hit with my car!" she frantically said.

I looked in front of us and saw a man in a hoodie walking towards Elena. Without thinking I pushed Lena towards her car and shoved her inside. "Go to the Boarding House Elena," I said.

Elena stared at me, her brown eyes wide with fear. "No! What about you?" she yelled.

I growled in anger and looked up at the man that was still approaching us at regular human speed.
Obviously, he was just playing games. I looked around, making sure no one could see what I was about to do and let my hand fill with a blue ball of electric light. I flung the ball of magic at the vampire and watched as it flung him back a few feet. Elena gasped in shock and I slammed her car door shut before I ran to my own. Once I was safely inside I honked my horn alerting Elena that I was ok. She ignited her engine and started out of the lot. Once I saw her leave I quickly threw my car into reverse and pulled out of the parking lot after her, speeding down the road towards Damon and Stefan.

*********************************************************************************************

I was pacing back and forth in front of Elena and Stefan where they sat on the couch in the Boarding House Library. I couldn't believe I was back here after already spending my entire day scouring through every book in this room. I was pulling on my fingers nervously as Elena explained everything to Stefan who was as always the pillar of support everyone needed.

"Why me? What does he want with me? A- and if he's trying to kill me, then why call first?" Elena asked.

Stefan stood and walked around the couch so that he could face her. "That because we're predators, Elena. We hunt. We stalk. It's often as exciting as the kill. I want you to take this," he said, sitting on the table behind him and handing her the vampire compass.

Elena lifted it from his hands and sent me a weary look. "This is Jeremy's pocket watch. How did you get it?" she asked, ever the dutiful sister.

"I found it after Logan Fell died and gave it to Damon," I said.

Elena raised a brow but thankfully didn't ask me any questions. She opened the lid and observed the inside in confusion.

"What happened to it?" she asked.

"Well, it's not just a watch. Its a...its sort of a compass, but it points to vampires," Stefan stuttered out his explanation.

I sat next to him and looked at my confused sister. "I used it to help Damon find Logan Fell after he turned. It pointed me right towards him. You'll be able to know exactly who is a vampire by using this," I said touching the cold metal of the golden compass.

Stefan gently took Elena's hand in his own, showing her how the compass worked. The needle began to whirl around in a circle before it finally clicked into place, pointing directly in Stefan's direction. Elena looked up at him in shock and then met my eyes.

"Why did dad have this?" she asked.

I turned my head towards Stefan and let out an audible sigh. "The Gilberts were one of the founding families, and back in 1864, they were among those who sought to eradicate the vampires.
The compass was used to find us,” Stefan said with a wince.

Elena looked at me in fear. "If we were hunters than that means we hunted more then just vampires. Did we...did we hurt you?" she whispered.

I closed my eyes and looked away from her. "Elena, it doesn't matter. That was a very long time ago," I said.

Elena took my hand and squeezed it tightly. "It matters to me,’ she said, voice tight.

I could feel Stefan's eyes on me and I avoided him completely. I had never told anyone who all had been there the night Emily and I had burned.

"Yes, Elena. The Gilberts were apart of mine and Emily's burning,” I said.

Elena's eyes filled with tears and I took her face in my hands. "Elena, it's ok. That was so very long ago and I wasn't a Gilbert then. I was a Miller," I said.

I took Elena in my arms and allowed her to cry for a part of me that she would never know or fully understand. "How can you love us after what our family did to you?” she sniffled.

I pulled away from her and shook my head. "Because their sins will never be your own. Just as I do not blame Stefan or Damon for what their father did that night," I said.

Elena's eyes widened and she looked at her boyfriend in shock. "Your father was there?" she asked.

Stefan looked away from us and nodded slowly. "He was the one who started it all," he said hatefully.

I looked down at the compass and pressed it closed. Stefan looked at Elena again, he reached up and caressed her cheek. "I want you to keep this. That way you'll know if you're ever in danger," he said.

Elena smiled at him and I could tell they needed a moment. I stood quietly and stepped out of the Library. Memories of the past following close behind me.

************************************************************************************************

Somehow I had been roped into helping Jenna clean the living room before the dance. "Ya know just cause we are dressed like we are from the 50s doesn't mean we have to act like it," I pouted as I adjusted my 50s style yellow polka dot dress.

Aunt Jenna, who was dressed up in her own 50s gear, rolled her eyes at me. "Oh please, you'll live Cinderella," she smirked.

I raised my hand across my forehead, careful not to hit my hair, which had been a terrible hassle,
and gasped. "Oh, stepmother please release from this prison of manual labor!" I said dramatically.

Aunt Jenna laughed and helped me fix the yellow ribbon that was holding my hair up and keeping the two tight curls atop my head in place. I had forgotten how much I had hated 50s hairstyles. "You are sure the red of my hair doesn't clash too much with this yellow dress?" I asked self consciously.

Jenna smacked my arm and sighed. "You look amazing."

Before I could respond Elena bounded down the stairs in a cute yet simple outfit. She had on a blue shirt that she had paired with a red belt that wrapped around her middle, capris and white snickers. Her hair was teased so that it looked fuller on the top and she wore a blue headband. She looked adorable.

"You look great, Lena," I said.

Elena spun around with a giggle and eyed me up and down. "So do you." She walked closer to me and leaned next to my ear. "Not fair that you have all that previous experience though. That is so cheating!" she said.

I pulled away with a laugh and Jenna shot us a questioning glance but chose to ignore our odd behavior as she turned towards Elena and heaved out a large sigh. "I spoke to the insurance company, Cars totaled. You'll have to share with Elara or use mine for now," Jenna said.

Elena and I both nodded. "So, you're coming to the dance?" Elena said looking at Jenna's clothing choice.

Jenna smiled a bit smugly and I crossed my arms and tapped my foot. "Alaric asked me to help chaperone," she said.

I clapped my hands and let out a little whoop. "Yes, Jenna! Get it!" I said.

Elena glared at me but I had my eyes on Jenna who had crossed the living room and was now leaning against the couch acting as casual as she could. Elena grabbed an apple from the bowl on the dining room table and took a bite.

I could feel the atmosphere in the room change and Elena finally let the question she had been dying to ask out. "Why didn't you tell us, Jenna?"

Jenna, who had been taken back by the sudden change of topic looked a bit startled. I felt bad for her. It hasn't really been her decision to make, and then she had lost her family. Who would want to drop that bombshell on someone after they had lost their parents?

"Your mom was gonna do it eventually. I never thought I'd have to," she said, looking at us both with grief plain on her face.

Elena looked down at the apple she had been eating as if it held the answers to the universe. "If our mom was here right now and I asked, she'd tell us the truth," Elena said.

Jenna stepped forward and held her hands close to her chest. She took a deep breath and started from the beginning; the day Elena and I had been born, the day our mother had handed us over to Miranda and Grayson. I listened carefully, although it really didn't matter to me why she had done it or how. She would never be my mother. I had one already and she had been a lovely woman.

"What else do you know about her? The girl?" Elena asked after Jenna had finished her tale.
Jenna looked at us and sighed. "Just her name. Isobel," she said.

Jenna left after our talk and I anxiously sat with Elena, deciding I didn't feel like arriving at the dance alone. I really don't care if I was third-wheeling and neither did Elena, not after what we just found out. This whole day was supposed to be stress-free. So much for that. Elena patted down her pants and sighed. "I forgot my phone upstairs. I'll be right back," she said. I watched her go and felt a strange sense of foreboding in the air. Something was coming.

I stood quickly and listened to Elena on the stairs.

"Where is he?" she said, speaking to someone on her cell. She stopped in front of me and I could tell she was listening to whoever was on the other end of the phone.

She held the compass in her hand and I could see the dial spinning rapidly. Something was definitely wrong.

"Oh thank God. This compass was spinning. Stefan must be here," she said.

I looked at the compass and started to panic. I looked around quickly, my eyes rapidly scanning our surroundings. Elena still hadn't noticed my reaction yet. Suddenly I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck lift as if someone was watching us, and my head involuntarily started to rise. Above us, I saw the vampire from the road braced on the ceiling. His eyes red with hunger, fangs bared and ready for the hunt, black veins growing under his eyes. I gasped in shock and sent a wave of magic at Elena on instinct. She dropped her phone with a scream and fell to the floor as her body went flying across the room and away from the hungry vampire. He growled menacingly at my interference and fell from the ceiling, landing behind me. I spun around, just as he went for my neck. I sent another wave of magic at him and he fell to the floor.

Before he could get up Stefan came bolting inside from the kitchen. "Elena!" he yelled.

The vampire looked between me and Stefan and with a hiss Vamp sped out of the house. Stefan looked at me in shock but I raised my hand and pointed towards a seriously freaked out Elena. As he helped her to her feet I swayed on the balls of my feet. The shock and sudden use of strong magic making me feel weak. Before I could sit down and rest I was assaulted by a doe-eyed doppelganger.

"Oh my God, Elara! You saved me." she cried into my chest.

I ran my fingers through her hair and whispered nonsensical words to calm her. "It's ok. We are ok," I said.

Elena looked up and I wiped the tears from her face. "You are seriously strong. You have to teach Bonnie how to do that!" she said excitedly.
I ran my hands down my face and shook my head. "Lena, normal witches can't channel their magic the way I can. They can't just shoot it out of them like that," I said trying to explain it in the simplest of ways.

Elena pouted for a moment and then placed a hand on her hip. "Well, im sure there is plenty of other stuff you could teach her. She would really benefit from someone as powerful as you teaching her," she said.

I clasped my fists tightly and tried to reign in my temper.

Now was not the time for this. Ever the peacekeeper Stefan stepped forward and held up his hands. "Let's table this discussion," he said.

Elena grumbled but conceded. Thank the Gods. A rustling could be heard at the front door and Elena immediately jumped behind Stefan. I glanced at him quickly, my hand raised, but he shook his head with an easy expression.

Damon bolted inside at Vamp speed and engulfed me in his embrace. I tried to breathe but was being crushed by his enthusiasm.

I reached up a ran my hands through his hair. "I'm ok, Damon," I reassured him.

He pulled away quickly, finally realizing we were not alone in the room. He turned towards Stefan, his face hard. "How the hell did he get in?" he said, stepping away from me, as he started to pace in front of the couch.

I brushed my dress off and watched him as he tried to reign in his temper. His face was hard and almost empty, but his eyes were crackling with emotion, a storm ready to break at any moment.

"Damon," I said.

He stopped his frantic pacing almost immediately and turned towards me. I raised both my hands in the air and took a deliberate deep breath, raising my hands up as I inhaled and down as I exhaled. "Breathe," I said with a smile.

He rolled his eyes and took in a deep and annoyed breath of air, then gestured with a smirk, as if to ask if I was pleased with the way he had taken in oxygen.

I giggled and raised my eyes to the heavens in exasperation. "He posed as the pizza guy last night, Day," I explained, catching his eye before looking at Stefan who laid his head in his hands.

Damon chuckled darkly. "Well, he gets points for that. Did he say what he wanted?" he asked.

Elena raised her head and glared at Damon, her hand on the back of her neck. "No. He was too busy trying to kill me and Elara," she said.

I raised my hand in the air, twirling my index finger. "Actually, he didn't show me all that much interest. I don't think he wanted me. Elena seemed to be his primary target. I was just in the way," I said.

Damon raised his brow and glanced at Elena in annoyance. "Well then, maybe you should stay home tonight, El. You've used up too much juice tonight as it is," he said, eyes scanning me.

I felt my mouth drop open and my hands folded into fists. "Hell no, Damon. There's no way I'm staying here. I will be going and that's final. I will be there to protect my sister. She is too important
in more ways than you know," I said.

I could see Lena's eyes cloud with tears and I sat down beside her, taking her hand in my own. She may have thought it was purely out of sisterly devotion that I wanted to protect her, but that wasn't the only reason. She had a purpose and I would be damned if she got herself killed or turned into a vampire before she could live up to it. Because if she did then Jeremy and everyone we love would go down with her.

No, I would figure out a way to save her and help Nik. This time everyone would get what they wanted. From the corner of my eye, I could see a grey ghostly figure sitting on the stairs, a cocky smirk on her face as she twirled her blonde hair around her finger.

"Oh, you've become awfully protective of your sister, Elandra?" Bekah cackled in glee.

I tried to keep my face straight and ignore the specter of my best friend. It had been a while since I had seen her.

"Do we have any idea who he was?" I asked the brothers, trying to stay on topic and keep my mind away from the Original.

"No," Damon said.

Stefan glared up at him, an unconvincing look on his face.

Damon scoffed in annoyance, tossing a hand in the air. "Don't look at me like that. I told you we had company," Damon spat.

Bekah stepped down the stairs and beside Damon, placing a hand near his shoulder. "He looks like he is telling the truth, El. You know I have a knack for being able to tell when someone is being truthful. Comes from years of Niks utter bullshit," she said with a smile.

I coughed through a laugh, the boys looking at me with narrowed eyes. Elena patted me on the back and looked at Damon in fear. "You think there is more than one?" she asked.

Damon looked at me, eyes soft and filled with warning. "We don't know," he said, blue eyes never leaving my green as he sat on the arm of the couch next to me.

Stefan took Elena's hand and leaned over looking at his brother. "Damon, he was invited in," he said, voice hard.

Damon nodded in understanding as Elena looked between them, not yet grasping their meaning. I patted her hand and glanced at Bekah.

"You'll have to make sure they kill him, Elandra. Then make sure your family does not let any more in. It could become a problem," Beks said.

I let out a sigh and nodded. She was right, things would only get more dangerous and I didn't want to have to worry about random vamps popping in on me at all hours of the day and night.

"Then we go get him tonight," Damon said.

He looked down at me with a half smile. "Since your so determined to go are you sure your up for it?" he asked.

I bit my bottom lip and stood, placing my hands on my hips. "Are you, Mr. Salvatore, because I
was born ready," I said with a playful sneer.

Damon scoffed, lifting himself from the couch. "I'm always ready," he said widening his eyes with a smirk.

Bekah gagged from the corner of the room and I ran my eyes over her form with a grin. "God, he is so annoying. What did you ever see in him?" she asked, glaring at Damons oblivious form.

As soon as Elena drew the attention of the brothers I stepped closer to the corner of the room that held the invisible specter of Rebekah Mikaelson. I crossed my arms, keeping my eyes trained on my sister who was taking in the plan for the night, her brown eyes wide as Damon filled her in on what she would need to do in order to draw out her vampiric stalker.

I casual lifted my hand and cast a silencing spell, as to not be overheard by the sensitive ears around us and leaned against the wall behind me. "Where have you been, Beks?" I asked, my voice betraying the worry I have felt in her absence.

Rebekah's grey face turned towards me, the prominent veins covering her beautiful features puckering as she smiled brightly at me. I covered my wince with a smile and watched Stefan comfort a terrified Elena as Damon rolled his eyes, turning around to catch my eye before sticking his finger in his mouth and gagging dramatically. I laughed but stopped as soon as Stefan scrunched his eyes up at me, gesturing toward a saddened Elena, to mollify him I sighed and stuck out a shaming finger towards Damon, rolling my eyes. When he laughed loudly I grinned and sent Stefan a shrug.

Bekah shook her head next to me and I grumbled at the way the two brothers interacted. Sometimes I felt like they would never be the way they used to be. It was sad the way they had allowed Katherine to destroy their relationship.

"I was with Elijah," Bekah finally said. I casually turned my head in her direction, her blue eyes were bright against her grey skin. "He plans on killing, Niklaus. We cannot allow him to betray Nik like that. It will damage their relationship beyond repair," Bekah pleaded.

I gasped, the air leaving my lungs in one swift burst. I felt like she had punched me in the stomach. "What? Why would he do that to Nik? He of all people knows of Niks paranoia. Niklaus would be heartbroken if Lijah betrayed him in such a way," I said, my voice broken.

Beka nodded slowly and I swallowed the betrayal I myself felt at Elijah's actions. I would let Rebekah explain before I passed judgment on my brother.

"Nik told him that he buried all of us at sea. Elijah thinks he has lost us all, Elandra," she said.

I wanted to scream in anger at Nik I felt my magic swirl through me, as I fought with my emotions. My skin glowed brightly with power and I forced the surge down, biting my tongue until I could taste the coppery tang of my own blood. I felt the static of my magic flitter across my fingertips as my fingernails bit into the palms of my hands. I took in a few deep breaths so that I wouldn't reveal my outburst to the brothers and Elena who were all still only a few feet away from me, still in a deep discussion about our latest vamp attack. I shook my head and rubbed my forehead roughly. I just couldn't understand why Nik would do something so cruel to the one person who had always been there for him. Elijah had even been the one who had helped after he had murdered me when he had thought I was some sort of Doppelganger. He had saved him from himself more times than even I cared to know.

I casually turned my head towards Bekah my back straight, face firm. "I will take care of this
Rebekah. When he gets here I will make sure he knows the truth. I won't let him do anything that gets him daggered...or worse," I said.

Bekah's shoulders slumped in relief, her grey face falling forward as she sighed. "Thank you, El. I honestly don't know what my brothers and I would ever do without you," Beks said, her hand coming to hover beside my left cheek.

I smiled weakly, my memory conjuring up all of the many points in time where the Mikaelsons had proven how very easily they had moved on without me.

Bekah's blue eyes crinkled in annoyance her lips pursing. "Don't do that to yourself!" she snapped, slipping in front of me. "We never forgot about you, Elandra Rioult!" she roughly said.

The corner of my eyes stung as I fought the tears that tried to escape, my chest tightening in protest as I fought down a rough sob. I leaned forward and stepped away from the troublesome specter. I knew that if I stayed near her any longer the dam I had so painstakingly built up over the centuries would break and all the emotions I had hidden away would pour out of me, and I couldn't have that. Now was not the time to reevaluate how I felt about the Original family. I ignored her pained protest and stepped closer to Elena.

"So, are we ready to go?" I asked.

Maybe taking out the vampire who had it out for my sister was exactly what I needed.

Mystic Falls High

Elena and I entered the dance each on the arm of a Salvatore, which of course caused quite the little uproar. Several of our fellow students had gasped dramatically as if we had arrived naked and draped across them. I rolled my eyes, laughing at how stupid they all looked. I stepped passed the students all dressed in their best 50s getups. "This Magic Moment" was echoing through the gym as I took Damon's hand and swayed my way across the dance floor towards Caroline and Bonnie who danced together near the refreshment table. I smiled brightly at them and pull Damon into a dance.

"Hey ladies. We have a mini issue. So I want you both to stay inside and away from Lena until I find you, ok?" I told them, leaning closer as Damon spun me.

The girls looked at me oddly, fear on their face. "What's going on El?" Bonnie asked.

I shook my head in exasperation and caught Damon's gaze. He rolled his eyes and spun me into Care's arms as he took Bonnie.
I giggled madly but took Caroline in my arms and spun her around with a flourish. "Listen witchy poo. We had little surprise visitor earlier. He is here trying to get his paws on Elena. Stefan and I need to deal with this because he has been invited into the Gilberts. Got it?" Bonnie frowned, her mind obviously whirring with the new information.

I stopped dancing with Caroline and stepped closer to Bonnie. "I want you and Caroline to keep an eye on Jeremy for me and stay here. Please. We have this handled. But I need someone I can trust to protect everyone else, Bon," I said my eyes searching her's for understanding.

I knew she was powerful enough to protect my brother and Caroline. She just needed to believe it. Finally, it clicked with her and her green eyes hardened with emotion. She nodded her head sharply and took Caroline's hand, walking towards Jeremy who was standing by the far corner of the room, next to Alaric. I sighed and leaned against Damon, but tilted my head as I noticed the sharp look Alaric was shooting at Damon. What the hell was that about? His dagger filled glares stopped as soon as Jenna joined his side and I decided to file it away for later perusal.

"Dance with me?" Damon asked.

I glanced up at him and smiled. "Hell yeah! Show me some moves from Grease! I regret not being able to see what you were like in the 50s," I giggled.

Damon rolled his eyes, pulling me further onto the floor, spinning me into his chest. "I am not showing you any moves from Grease. I left the 50s in the 50s," he said.

I stuck out my bottom lip and tried my best puppy dog eyes. "Come on. I had very boring parents at that time. I never got to go out dancing and having fun. I was very much a Sandy without the sexy transformation at the end," I sighed.

Damon's eyebrow raised and he smiled. "So you wore poodle skirts and dated athletes?" he asked with a smirk.

I laughed lightly, laying my head on his chest. "No, I never even got to date that go around. I pretty much studied until I died. It was all very boring," I said.

Damon lifted my chin until I met his eyes. "Damn Ellie. How many times have you died a virgin?" he asked in shock.

I pulled away from him chuckling madly. "Damon! Only you would ask someone that." I slapped his chest and started looking around for Elena and Stefan.

After finding them dancing with bright smiles on both their faces I took Damon's hand and started pulling him towards the punch table. "And the answer is...a lot" I sighed regretfully, glancing back at him with a grin.

He laughed, shaking his head. He let my hand go and took two plastic cups, filling them both with fruit punch. I scrunched up my nose in distaste but took the drink with a simple nod of thanks. "Well, what about this time El? Do you need a little assistance?" he asked cockily.

I sputtered coughing lightly, the sticky punch running down my chin. I picked up a napkin from the table and wiped it away quickly, ignoring Damon's laughter. I raised a brow and narrowed my eyes. "Nah, not this time. Tyler Lockwood took care of that ages ago. Did a pretty good job of it as well," I smirked.

Damon growled lowly, crushing his empty plastic cup in his hand with a glare, blue eyes flashing in anger.
I bit my bottom lip, my eyes never leaving his. Our little stare down was interrupted as Alaric stepped up next to Damon.

"Hey, Elara. Are you having a good time?" he warily asked, obviously catching on to the tense atmosphere.

I kept my eyes trained on Damon, who was still fighting against his anger, pale pink cup crushed in his hand. "Yeah, Alaric. I'm having a blast. Just reminiscing here with Damon," I moved my eyes away from Damon and smiled at the History teacher I knew was hiding...something. "I was just about to remind him that the past is better left in the past. As he should already be aware of. Don't you agree, Mr. Saltzman?" I said, watching his reaction with interest.

His shoulders tensed, all emotion that had been previously bubbling in his eyes was shuttered immediately. He shut everything down, quickly becoming an empty shell of the man we were all coming to know, and I now knew it had something to do with Damon Salvatore. Great, just great. I internally sighed, rubbing my teeth together in irritation.

"Yes, I agree. The past should stay in the past," he said, his voice robotic.

I rolled my eyes and took Damon's arm in my own.

"You know, I don't recognize you. How'd you get roped into chaperoning?" Alaric asked, reaching out his hand towards Damon with a fake smile on his face. "Alaric Saltzman. I'm the new History teacher," he said, taking Damon's hand and shaking it.

Damon's eyes narrowed as he took in the History teacher that had taken over for the man he had murdered. "Ah, the, uh, cursed faculty position," he taunted.

I leaned my head on his arm and sighed. "If anyone cursed the position it was you, Day," I grumbled, knowing he'd hear me.

"So I've been told," Alaric said, watching my interaction with Damon closely.

I could tell he was ill at ease with the way I was standing so close with him. It was so very obvious that Alaric knew exactly what Damon was. I could see it in the worry that lit up Alaric's eyes. It was more than just the fact that Damon was older. It was sweet that he was worried about me. I knew he was a good man, but I needed to know more, especially if he was interested in my Aunt Jenna.

"Damon Salvatore," Damon introduced himself, brushing my hair from my shoulder, his eyes firmly on Alaric's.

Alaric looked towards Stefan and Elena and lifted his thumb in their direction. "Salvatore, as in, uh, Stefan?" he asked.

Damon looked at his brother before looking back at the man in front of him in ever-growing interest and irritation. "He's my little brother. I'm his legal guardian, hence the chaperoning," he easily answered.

Alaric nodded, then once again looked down at me, watching Damon as he wrapped a strand of my hair around his finger. "I hear he's very bright, not that I've had the chance to see for myself," he said.

Damon easily maneuvered around the new aspect of the conversation brushing my hair down my back and standing straighter as he answered. "Well, his attendance records a little spotty. Family
"drama," he said.

I coughed out a small laugh, running my tongue across my bottom lip as Damon handed me another glass of punch. Alaric frowned down at me, probably guessing I knew more than he had thought. Maybe he feared I was compelled? I drank my punch swaying to the new change of music. Damon smiled at me, shaking his head.

"No parents?" Alaric asked.

My face fell and I stopped dancing, my own anger starting to mount at his intrusive behavior.

"No Ric, their parents are gone," I said through clenched teeth.

I sat down my cup on my table and took Damon's hand, giving it a squeeze.

"I'm going to go dance with Stefan and Elena. Find me when this little Spanish Inquisition is over," I whispered.

I spun on my heel and glared at Alaric as I swayed towards Stefan and Lena. I smiled when I saw Stefan spinning my sister around in the middle of the floor. Coming up behind him I took Elena's wrist and pulled her away, yanking her against me. Elena yelped in surprise and I laughed brightly at her. Stefan stood behind me and I danced backward until I was against him.

"Dance with us, Stef! Come on. I never got to do anything like this with you or Damon as Elandra. Make it up to me," I pouted.

Elena tugged on a piece of my hair and I gasped. "Damn Lena! Gentle on the merchandise," I said.

Elena put her chin on my shoulder and looked at Stefan. "You don't have to dance with her Stefan. She's terrible and trying to guilt you," Elena laughed.

I spun her around, her brown hair smacking me in the face as I did. "She lies, Stefan! I would never!" I gasped, my eyes wide in foe shock.

I made my chin wobble comically as I spun around Stefan with my sister in my arms.

"It's just...you owe me, Stefan. You're supposed to be my brother and yet you've only danced with me twice Stefan...twice Not to mention you were mean to me earlier today," I pouted.

The corner of Stefan's mouth turned up as he watched me pulling Elena around in circles, my head snapping in Stefan's direction at every turn. "We don't have time to dance Ellie. We are supposed to be keeping our eyes open for Elena's little admirer," Stefan said, his eyes sweeping our surroundings.

Elena slowed our spinning procession around the dance floor and swayed closer to Stefan. "Maybe he's not gonna show," she said hopefully.

Stefan looked down into her big doe eyes and smiled at her innocent and hopeful expression. "You mean I've been forced to watch Ellie dance for nothing?" Stefan snarked, winking at me.

Elena threw her head back in laughter. I spun her into Stefan's arms with a smirk, laughing as she squealed in surprise but Stefan caught her with ease, her hands landing on his broad chest, once the shock cleared from her expression she ran her hands down his chest, her full pink lips spread into a bright smile. "Elara dancing! Ahh the horror," Elena joked.
I scoffed beside them, swaying by myself. "I am an amazing dancer!" I exclaimed.

I could see an intense moment was beginning to brew between them so I casually made my way off the dance floor. Blowing out a bored huff of breath I decided to once again head to the punch bowl and grab myself another disgusting cup of punch. Because other than dancing and making out in dark corners what else is there to do at functions like this? Scooping out the disgusting sticky liquid and pouring it into a clear cup I leaned against the table and scanned the crowd for Damon. I wasn't all that surprised when I found him quickly. Internally I groaned at his ridiculous display. It seemed he had easily found himself a distraction. I watched in disgusted interest as he groped the girl's ass, easily gliding them across the dance floor. She was pinned against him in a fashion that was better suited for a nightclub than a High School dance. I took a sip of my drink and sighed when I found it had yet to be spiked. Damn High Schoolers needed to get their act together. Where were the troublemakers when you needed them? I heard a familiar giggle and looked up to find my sister and Stefan standing next to me.

"You can't take him anywhere, can you?" she asked.

I looked back at my raven-haired ex and shook my head as Stefan answered for me.

"Uh, no," he said.

I sat down my cup on the table behind me and looked up at Elena when she let out a low gasp. "Stefan, the back corner," she whispered.

Stefan looked in the direction Elena had denoted and then down to me. "Get Damon. Stay together," he said.

I nodded quickly and took Elena's wrist firmly in my hand. Stefan took off seconds later across the dance floor, pushing students out of his way as he went. The man in the hoodie that Elena had noticed exited the dance quickly, leading Stefan away from us. I looked away from Stefan's retreating figure and pulled Elena towards Damon. Before we could get more than a few steps away Elena's cell rang. We both looked down at the silver device as if it were a ticking time bomb. Elena lifted the phone to her ear and swiped her finger across the screen. I leaned closer to her and put my ear next to her's.

"Hello, Elena. Here's what you and your sister are gonna do. There's a door behind you. You have five seconds," the man said.

I pulled away and started looking around us, searching for him.

"No," Elena gasped.

I looked at her and noticed the moment she gave in, he had obviously said something to her, her face paled and she spun around on her heels towards the punch bowl where I saw Jeremy, our Jeremy, and behind him was the vampire.

Elena looked at me in pure fear. "If we don't go then he is going to kill Jeremy, Elara!" she frantically said.

My stomach fell and I stepped up beside her, taking the phone from her grasp. I kept my eyes on the vampire a few yards ahead of us as I deliberately placed it against my ear.

"I can snap his neck so fast I bet there's not even a witness. Now, start walking. Both of you. No magic," he spat.
I nodded, taking Elena's hand, pulling her forward slowly, my eyes never leaving our very human brother. "If you touch our brother I swear to God there is not a place on this Earth you will be able to hide," I said with venom.

I guided Elena backward towards the door, feeling her body shake in fear behind me.

I heard him laugh and it made my blood boil. "Keep walking. Through the door," he said.

The vampire started past Jeremy, who was oblivious to all that was happening around him, thankfully the vampire decided not to touch him but my eyes never left him as I hung up Lena's phone. When I could no longer see the vampire I turned towards Elena and pulled her quickly past the exit.

"Run, Elena!" I shouted, pulling her behind me.

Our feet pounded against the glossy tile floors as we fled down the corridor, I glanced behind us to see if the vampire had followed us out yet but found no one. Elena's red face stared back at me in fear. Her brown eyes were red-rimmed and glassy. I pushed her into the next corridor and we started to run until we came across a set of double doors. Elena pushed at the doors but I stopped her when saw the chain wrapped around the push bar.

"Elena it's locked!" I said.

She nodded, her breathing ragged. I took her hand and squeezed it tightly.

"We're gonna be ok, Lena" I whispered.

She gasped out a cry and looked behind us. I turned around and found the vampire calmly stalking toward us. I pushed Elena behind me ready to take him on my own if I had to.

"No, Ellie," she cried, pulling me into the next corridor.

I ran behind Elena letting her lead me. I tried to ignore the eerie feel of the empty school. The only sound coming from our haggard breathing and the squeaking of our shoes. Finally, we made our way to the double doors of the cafeteria. I helped her push open the doors and we both ran inside. Elena rushed to the other side of the room, where another set of doors led to the exit but yelled out in frustration when she found them locked. I stood in the center of the room, watching the doors we had came in through, waiting for the vampire to burst through, my hands lifted in expectation. I was just about to ask Elena if she was ok, but was stopped by the double doors bursting open. I didn't even have the chance to move my hands before the vampire speed towards Lena. Elena attempted to bolt away from him but he was faster, grabbing her by the hair and pulling her towards him. Elena screamed in pain and utter fear, struggling to get away. I let my hand fill with a bright cloud of magic, tossing it at the vampire. It flung him back against the wall and gave Elena the moment she needed to stand and run towards me. I pushed her behind me and bent my knees, lowering myself into a fighting stance. Elena sniffled behind me, I could smell blood and knew she was injured somehow. The vampire stood, extending his fangs, and sped towards me. I lifted my hands in the air and pulled them back against myself before pushing them forward, yelling out in anger as I cast a large force of pure magic against him, sending him spiraling into the air. The vampire flew skyward his arms flailing out around him as gravity took effect and started to send him back towards the ground. Elena and I watched him fall, our mouths open in shock as he landed hard on a table, where he was shockingly impaled by several pencils that had been stored in a container right where his chest now lay. Of course with our terrible luck intact none of them hit his heart. As he started to remove the makeshift stakes Elena looked around us and ran behind me finding a bucket and mop, she quickly grabbed the mop handle and snapped it against her knee
until it broke in half, creating a very poor but semi-useful stake. I wanted to laugh but I was still a bit in shock from my excessive use of magic.

After not using for so long and then forcing so much magic all at once as I have been, I was still getting used to it. Elena rushed forward and realizing what she was planning I ran to join her. The vampire stood, and when Elena tried to shove the stake in his chest he grabbed her wrist, reaching for the stake.

I took it before he could and jammed it in his stomach. He yelled in anger grabbing a handful of my hair and went for my neck. Lena screamed and shoved the stake further into his stomach with her other hand, but before he could sink his teeth into me Stefan came from outta nowhere and ripped him away, tossing him to the ground. Elena ran towards me, tears falling from her eyes, and wrapped her arms around my neck. The vampire stood, yanking the makeshift stake from his stomach and tossing it to the ground with a growl.

"Hey, dickhead." The vampire looked behind Stefan to where Damon his standing, holding a real stake in his hand. "Nobody wants to kill you. We just want to talk," Damon finished, with a smirk.

He looked down at me, eyes scanning my form. When he saw nothing concerning he walked up beside Stefan, eyes on the vampire. Before either brother could speak again the vampire smiled and sped at Elena and me. Damon threw the stake at Stefan, who grabbed it and staked the vampire in the stomach, almost directly where I had gotten him only moments before. Elena winced beside me, and I stood bringing her with me. I stared the vampire down, not feeling an ounce of sympathy for the asshole who had tried to kill my sister and threatened my brother. The vampire grunted in pain, falling to his knees. Damon walked over towards Elena and me, taking my hand and leading me towards Stefan.

"Now you feel like talking?" Stefan asked.

I let go of Damon's hand and leaned over the vampire with a sneer.

"Screw you," he spat.

I lifted my hand and saw Stefan's fascination as the bright blue flames flickered across my fingertips. I placed my hand on the vampire's chest, just above his heart and watched in satisfaction as his back arched off the table, his face scrunched up in pain as wave after wave of my magical signature shocked him. It was the equivalent of being in the electric chair. When I thought he had finally had enough I lifted my hand and stepped away as he gasped for air, little whimpers leaving his lips against his volition. Damon watched me, his face blank. Elena turned away, disgust in her eyes as Stefan continued his bought of questioning.

"That was the wrong answer. Why are you doing this?" Stefan asked.

The vampire sneered, turning his head and looked at Elena, eyes taking in her face. "Because its fun," he said.

Stefan wrapped his hand around the stake and dug it in a little deeper, the vampire groaned deeply in pain. "What do you want with Elena?" Stefan asked, his voice beginning to fill with annoyance.

The vampire lifted his head and glared at Stefan in hatred. "She looks like Katherine," he said.

All at once, all of our heads snapped towards the vampire impaled on the table. How could I have not seen? Of course, this had something to do with Katherine. As soon as Kats name was mentioned Damon was alert and standing next to the vampire as if his whole world had been
altered. I shook my head and looked away from him.

"You knew Katherine?" Damon asked.

The vampire laughed, his eyes hateful. "Oh. You thought you were the only ones," he laughed through a cough, a painful gasp causing his head to fall back against the table. "You don't even remember me," he said.

Damon leaned over the vampire and I walked closer to him, tilting his face in my direction. The longer I looked at him the more familiar he looked, but I just couldn't place him. "What's your name?" I asked.

The vampire looked into my eyes and smiled at me. "Noah, and you look just like the Miller girl I helped burn," he laughed his teeth covered in his own blood.

I let go of his face roughly, my memory of him coming back in full force. I remembered Noah, he worked right alongside the Sheriff, rounding up vampires and witches alike. I backed away from them and stood next to Elena who wrapped her arms around me.

Stefan watched me sadly, his green eyes filling with anger.

"Tell me how to get in the tomb. Hmm?" Damon asked, his head tilting in my direction briefly.

Noah lifted his head from the table and spat at Damon. "No," he said.

Stefan leaned back and drove the stake deeper, an extreme look of satisfaction on his face. Noah gasped in pain, his voice gasping out in fear. "The Grimoire."

Damon looked down at him in disgust. "Where is it?" he asked.


Damon stood up and grimaced in annoyance, catching my eye. I nodded, letting him know without words that I would help him get ahold of that journal. In fact, I knew exactly where it was. Jer had it. Stefan took over the questioning as Damon took a moment to compose himself, finally realizing how close he was to getting into the tomb. The tomb that held absolutely nothing for him.

"Who else is working with you?" Stefan asked.

Damon stood next to him and looked back down at the vampire. "Who else is there?" he reiterated Stefan's question.

Noah panted in anger and shook his head. "No. You're going to have to kill me," he said in desperation.

Damon looked at Stefan, rolling his eyes with a nod. Stefan removed the stake quickly, looking at me as he raised it above Noah's heart, green eyes bright. I understood that he was doing this as much for me as he was for Elena. I smiled at him and nodded. Curling his lips into a half smile he shoved the stake into Noah's heart. Elena gasped in shock as he fell to the floor his skin greying as he desiccated.

Elena stepped forward her hands pulling on the ends of her hair. "What do we...how are you gonna find the others now?" she stuttered in shock.
I placed a hand on her shoulder with a sigh. Damon looked at her as if she were a frightened colt. "He had to die. Besides, he helped burn your sister alive once upon a time," he said.

Elena looked at me but quickly looked away. Stefan took pity on her. "Elena, he's been invited in," he said.

The sound of a door opening, had us all tuning in time to see the reflection of Alaric through one of the doors windows. Stefan looked at his brother. "Go. I've got this," he said.

Damon nodded heading out of the cafeteria. I just hoped Alaric didn't do anything stupid enough to get himself killed. I'd hate to lose out on the opportunity to learn his secret. Not to mention he and Jenna made such a cute couple.

I watched Elena and Stefan curl up together on the couch from my place on one of the top steps. She was telling him how nice it felt to fight back, how much more powerful she had felt. I tried not to think about the fact that she would be feeling more and more like a victim in the near future. There was no doubt in my mind that Katherine would have fun trying to torture her in any way she could. Then Nik would come along and force her to help him break his curse. I stood from my seat and headed up the stairs, passing by Jeremy's room where I could hear him talking on the phone with someone, a girl by the sound of it. At least somebody was able to have a bit of normalcy in their life. I shut my door behind me and plopped down on my bed beside Rebekah, meeting her blue eyes. "I will help you with Elijah when he gets here, Beks. Tonight though, I'd like to be alone," I said. Rebekah's eyes clouded over with remorse and I watched as she slowly faded away. Not even bothering to change into my pajamas I rolled on my side and closed my eyes, wishing for the oblivion that came with a peaceful night's sleep.
**AN- Sorry for the long wait. I hope you guys like this update. I changed a lot, and plan to continue on that route. I will still go by episodes but will be putting a lot more of my own spin on them. I plan on skipping ahead a bit, but it won't be a time skip kinda thing. I promise it will make sense and go, pretty smoothly, I think. I am beyond ready for the Originals to get here! Also, I don't know if any of you are as excited as I am for the reveal of how El breaks her curse, but I have officially decided how she is going to be doing that. It's not exactly how I had originally planned for it to happen, but I had a dream a few weeks ago and just loved the whole idea of what happened. Its a bit sad and I think it may piss a few people off for a bit, but that's part of the appeal:) As always, please review and let me know what you think. Don't be a silent reader. I swear I don't bite!*****

A steady buzzing pulled me from my fitful slumber. My neck ached as I rolled out of the tight ball I found myself wrapped up in. The muscles in my back burned, a searing protest as I sat up, stretching my body. An unhealthy popping sound brought a wince to my face as I moved my neck from side to side. I pulled my red hair from where it had become stuck to the side of my face and was once again thankful that there was no one else here to witness the side of me that was more troll than human. My phone buzzed incessantly again and I glared dangerously at the little black machine that was responsible for my being awake at the ungodly hour of five a.m. Before I could even consider seeing who had thought it a good idea to disturb my slumber, I knew I needed to get out of yesterday's clothes and find some sort of caffeine whether it be in IV form or otherwise, I didn't particularly care at this point. I slid off my bed and grabbed myself a change of clothes before slipping out of my room and tiptoeing to the bathroom. Once I was safely inside I went about my business, allowing the hot water to wash everything away. Hoping to rid myself of the metaphorical stain that I felt ingrained on my soul as well as the physical grime the day before had left all over me. After my skin was sufficiently rubbed a nice raw pink, I left the shower and dried my hair, pulling it into a loose french side braid. Aside from the lotion I rubbed into my parched skin, I left my face natural and exited the bathroom heading back into my room to grab my phone and purse. Shutting my door on the way out, I skipped over the squeaky step and stealthily made my way downstairs as I pulled out my phone to check who had tried to call. My head cocked to the side when I noticed I had an oddly large number of missed calls, all from Damon. What the hell did he want? Just as I was placing my finger over his name there was a knock on the front door. Dammit! Jenna, Elena, and Jeremy were still sleeping for God's sake. I quickly headed to the door and yanked it open, a few strands of hair blowing out around my face as it passed me by. Cool, crystal blue orbs and a familiar cocky smirk greeted me and I narrowed my eyes, grinding my teeth together. I could feel my cheeks warming and hated myself for it. Damon smiled wickedly and leaned against the door frame, one arm lifted above his head. His usual button-up shirt absent today, instead he wore a long sleeve black t-shirt, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His raven hair fell into his eyes as he moved closer to me. I bit my tongue, my traitorous fingers itched to brush the hair from his forehead. His smirk widened as if he could read my thoughts and I stepped away from him, flexing my fingers, which only made him chuckle.

I hated his stupid sexy face!
His right hand moved into view and I noticed a large coffee cup. My whole body reacted to the sight. Every ounce of my annoyance bled away at the thought of getting the fix I needed. My face lifted into a grin and my heart raced with joy. It was even my favorite kind!

"You bought me an iced frappe?" I squealed.

Damon laughed, his eyes mischievous. "It's a bribe," he said.

I took the cup, stepping outside and locking the door behind me. "What do you want, Day?" I asked, taking a large sip of the delicious caramel beverage.

I started down the porch steps and Damon followed beside me, his hands in his pockets. "Well, it seems that your sister spent the night doing the naughty with my brother." his face turned up for a moment, an unpleasant hateful expression marring his usually attractive face. Jealousy isn't a good look on Damon, and I found, that knowing that it was my sister that brought forth that sort of reaction, made me feel physically ill. "So, I want you to join me in interrupting their morning. To throw them off. I also want your take on Stefan's whole 'let's work together spiel'." Damon said, using bunny ear quotations when he talked of Stefan's idea.

I slid into Damon's car leaning my head back against the seat in frustration. When he got in I turned towards him, my eyes hard. "Fine, but I'll tell you right now before we even get there, I won't be involved in anything to do with damaging their relationship. I know this is hard for you, seeing them together, but she is happy and I won't help you ruin that," I said, my hand raised in the air.

Damon's eyes scanned my face, his own expressionless as he focused on reading me. I was an open book, at least at this moment. I didn't need to hide anything from him. In fact, he needed to see it. He needed to know he could trust me, but he also needed to know my limits, and Elena and Stefan's relationship; the game he wanted to play with his brother, that was one of them. Once he had seen what he needed to, he nodded moving back into his seat. He pulled out of my drive and moved towards the Boarding House, only slowing when I took out a coin to throw over Wickery Bridge.

"Why do you do that? He asked.

I rolled up my window and looked at him, shrugging. "It's silly but it's my way of remembering my parents. People throw coins in fountains and wells to make wishes, well I throw them over the bridge and into the water where my parents died, as a way to remember them. To make sure they know that I haven't forgotten them and that I wish they were still here," I said, my voice cracking.

He brushed a strand of hair from my face, placing it behind my ear, a rare smile gracing his lips. "There's my Elandra. Always so soft-hearted," he whispered, as we left the bridge behind.

I looked away from him, trying to ignore the way his hand had felt on my skin. Finally, we arrived at the house and I all but jumped from the car the moment he stopped. I stepped into the house and headed upstairs towards Stefan's room. I could feel Damon following me but decided to sip my coffee and ignore him. When I reached Stefan's door I stood to the side and allowed Damon to take the lead.

"This is so mean," I sighed.

Damon smiled, opening the door and taking my hand, effectively cutting off my protests. He approached the bed, slowly sitting down at the foot and smirking at the vision our siblings made curled up together, unaware of the world around them. They were snuggled up, spooning. It was an unsettling image. Not just because it was my sister I was watching, likely after she had just had sex. Which was just...disgusting. It was also like I was watching a vision of the past. It was like seeing
what it had been like when Katherine was with Stefan, all while Damon was in the wings, pining and devastated that the woman he loved was with his brother, always just out of his reach. It made my stomach roll. Was that the sort of thing Damon imagined every time he looked at my sister? I turned away, feeling more like my past self then I wanted to admit. My heart hurt, this whole situation was starting to bother me more than I expected it too. Katherine would love to know that, and I couldn't let her see it. I couldn't let her use the pain of my past to get what she wanted from me. Elena started to wake and Stefan joined her seconds later. He wrapped his arms around her tightly as he kissed her on the cheek, a bright smile on his face. I swallowed roughly, averting my eyes from their private moment.

"Mmm. Good morning," Elena sighed contentedly.

This was so wrong. I am the worst sister ever.

Stefan pulled her closer and looked down at her flushed face. "I could get used to this," he said.

Damon sneered, tilting his head and choosing that moment to make our presence known. "Rise and shine, sleepyheads," he cheerfully said, slapping the bed with gusto.

I winced, turning my head away as they both jumped, my sister revealing her lacy black bra in the process. I quickly walked over to them, yanking the sheet over Elena with a growl in Damon's direction.

Elena narrowed big brown accusatory eyes at me. "Damon, Elara! Please!" she yelled, turning to face him and taking hold of the sheet.

Stefan on the other hand, let the sheet fall, his bare chest in full view. Elena lifted the sheet to cover him again, glaring in my direction. I scoffed lightly, which turned into a full-on laugh when she bared her teeth at me in anger.

"Please, Lena. Do you know how many times I used to watch them swim in the lake with my brothers? I have seen both Salvatores bare-chested many times. Besides, Stefan is a brother in my eyes," I sighed, stepping next to Damon who smiled up at me.

"You've seen a lot more than my bare chest, Miss Miller," he mock-whispered.

I blushed profusely and smacked his chest avoiding my sister's fiery gaze. Stefan tried to reign in a laugh, turning it into a mild cough, which only made Elena grumble in anger. "What are you two doing in my bedroom?" Stefan asked.

Damon scoffed, his face playful. "Oh stop being smutty," he said.

Stefan pulled the sheet further up on Elena, making sure she was covered properly. "Seriously, get out of here!" Stefan hollered.

I jumped lightly and grabbed Damon's arm, he shrugged me off with a laugh and leered at Stefan and Elena. "If I see something I haven't seen before, I'll throw a dollar at it," he smirked.

I blinked several times at this and took a step back, my mind whirring at the oddly scientific idea he at proposed. I wasn't entirely sure that's what he had meant, but it had put the idea in my head. Are Elena and Kat COMPLETELY identical? It's a disgusting thought but an intriguing one all the same. While all these weird ideas were flying through my mind I didn't notice when Damon stood and leaned down, placing his hands on the frame at the foot of the bed.

"Now listen, we have some very important business to discuss," he said.
Elena sat back and sighed. "And it has to be right now?" she asked.

Damon sneered, crossing his arms. "Well, we have lots to do, now that we're all friends and working towards a common goal," he smirked.

Stefan and Elena exchanged a look, one that made me uneasy. I narrowed my eyes and stood side by side with Damon, crossing my own arms. Yeah, if they were working with Damon than Katherine was gonna win Miss Congeniality at the next Miss Mystic Falls pageant.

"So, in order to open the tomb, we need to find the journal to get the grimoire to undo the spell. First things first—since as you are Elena Gilbert. You're on journal duty," Damon said.

Elena huffed pointing her bony finger in my direction. "Hello! Elara GILBERT!" Elena spat, spelling out our last name hatefully. "Why can't she do it?" she asked.

Damon turned towards me and shrugged. "Miller" he enunciated slowly. "She'll always be a Miller to me, and besides I need her for something else. And she is an all-powerful witch, journal duty is below her pay grade," he said with a cocky smile.

Elena glared at me and I slapped Damon on the arm. "Damon, cool it. You're getting me into trouble" I whispered.

Damon turned to me with a wicked smile and I raised a brow in question. "Since when am I helping? Elara I get, you bat your eyes and somehow convince her to help you," she petulantly said.

I placed a hand on my hip and ground my teeth together, ready to let loose on my childish little sister, but Damon placed his hand on my arm stopping me before I could blow up on her. I let out a deep breath and tried to cool off, turning away as Damon continued with his little drama fest.

"Well, since Stefan's helping, and you have taken up residence in Stefan's bed, ergo…" he trailed off suggestively.

I bit my lip to keep from laughing, my cheeks burning from the effort. Stefan looked at Elena, ever the knight in shining armor...or sheet as it may be at the moment, and smiled warmly at her.

"You don't have to do anything that you don't want to," he said.

Elena sighed in acceptance, looking at Damon with a gleam in her eye, one that had my spidey senses tingling. Something was definitely going on. I tried to catch her eye and knew for sure they had some sort of plan the moment she guiltily avoided my gaze. I shook my head and turned away from her. She could look for the journal all she wanted, but she wouldn't find it. I would borrow it from Jer myself, then use it to locate the grimoire and take it before either of them ever had the chance. I wasn't going to let them stab Damon in the back. Not this time. He needed to know that Kat wasn't in that tomb.

"I'll look for it tonight," she said.

I stood straighter, lowering my chin and staring them both down in anger and defiance. Lena laid back in the bed, pulling the sheet over her face in annoyance.

"Good," Damon said.

Stefan looked down at Elena in amusement and then glanced at Damon and me. "How do we know that this journal will hold the location of the grimoire? We're really going to take the word of
this vampire? He seemed like a bit of a dimwit," Stefan said, obviously hoping to stall Damon a bit.

I placed a hand on the back of my neck and rolled my eyes.

"In lieu of any other options," Damon said.

I looked at them both and shook my head. "The location is in there. Don't worry. We'll get the grimoire," I said, staring at Stefan with heated eyes.

He watched me closely until Elena pulled the sheet from her face and sat up. "Ok, what exactly is a grimoire, anyway?" she asked.

Damon shrugged his shoulders and looked at me with a smile. "A witch's cookbook," he said.

I started giggling, my chest shaking with the force of it. Stefan sighed, laying back on the bed as Elena had.

"Every spell that a witch casts is unique itself, so every witch would document their work," Stefan explained, speaking towards the ceiling.

Elena watched him, her brows raised in surprise. She looked at me in excitement. "Do you have one?" she asked, voice rushed.

I lowered my head, my laughter dying down. "Elena, I'm not really that kinda witch, but yeah I have had a few. They were more like journals though, with memories and thoughts. They did have a few of my own spells that only witches of my kind could ever hope to cast. But they have all probably been lost to time," I said thoughtfully "Besides, with as many different names as I have had and lives I have lived, only I would even know it was mine," I finished.

I refused to tell her that there were a few people that could probably distinguish my handwriting enough to discover if a journal belonged to me. She didn't need to know that the Mikelasons were some of the few people who probably knew me well enough to piece together the different facets of my life.

Elena looked disappointed for some reason, probably hoping I would loan Bonnie a bit of my past. When would she learn that Bonnie would never be able to do what I can? We were two, very different incarnations of witch. She was one of nature: and bound to everything that goes with that. I am a witch of creation: my ancestors were chosen, created to be what we are. My magic was not a gift from nature; so I will never be bound to her, or her rules. Nor, will I ever be forced to bow to my ancestors or, any other witch for that matter; dead or alive. I felt lucky knowing my ancestors would never force me to do their bidding, or attack me because they disagreed with something I had done. I was free to make my own mistakes, and if or when I needed their help, I would always have the option of asking for it; free of fear. Whether they accepted was a whole 'nother story. I had been taught long ago that my family line of magic came from deep within our cores. Our very souls were infused with ancient magic; magic we can draw from. That's how I am able to channel everything through myself, and am visibly able to show my own magical signature, pushing it outward, and using the force of it as a weapon. The true story of how my family became infused with magic had long been lost, but my mother had told me as a child that the first of our line, Ayana, had come across a stone arch after our family had settled upon their new land. When she approached the arch - one she was sure had been there since the time of the old Gods - she found a peculiar script written across it. When she placed her hand on the jagged edge of the stone, she cut the palm of her hand. When her blood seeped onto the stone, a bright light engulfed her spilling into her body and lighting up her core; infusing it with the very magic that we carry within us today. Who knows if that is what truly happened, all I know is, that I'm grateful to not be beholden
to anyone, let alone mother nature. I had warned Bonnie once already of what could happen to witches that went against their ancestors, and I was glad to not be one of her kind. I shook myself from my thoughts and focused on the conversation unfolding in front of me.

"And I don't like that disadvantage, so…." Damon clapped his hands together. "Chop, chop." he smarted before grabbing my arm, escorting me towards the door backward.

I stumbled dumbly, wait, what had I missed while I was daydreaming?

"You know, I really like this whole menage a foursome team thing. It's got a bit of kink to it," he chuckled. "Don't screw it up," he said, pointing at them both as he pulled me out the door.

Damon slowly walked me down the stairs, once we hit the bottom step I yanked him to a stop my finger on my lips. I used my other hand and pointed at his ear and then the ceiling. He rolled his eyes, their blue depths staring upward where I knew Elena and Stefan were probably trying to act all innocent and teamy. After a second his face screwed up in disgust and he took my wrist, dragging me outside towards his car.

"What?" I asked, probably not wanting the answer if the look on his face was anything to go by.

He pushed me into the car and I huffed in annoyance. I was really getting tired of his pushy behavior. I really hated feeling like a doll. I watched him warily as he slipped into the car, slamming on the gas and speeding out of the driveway like a man possessed.

"He knew I was listening. Whatever Elena was about to say...he stopped her. Then she decided to...change the subject," he said through clenched teeth.

I crossed my arms and glanced out the window. "Well, good for her. Seems like Stefan may be more fun than I give him credit for," I said under my breath.

Damon, of course, heard me and made sure to hit every bump in the road on the way to my house. By the time he was back in my driveway, at the speed he had been going, my head was quite sore from hitting the roof of his car. But it was worth it. I was sick and tired of him fawning over my sister. I turned my head towards him with a sigh.

"Listen Damon. I hate to say this but I don't trust either of our Saint siblings. They obviously have some sort of plan of their own. But what they don't know is, I have insider info." At my words Damon's head finally shot towards mine, his eyes gleaming with curiosity. When I saw he was no longer harboring anger towards me I continued. "I already know where the journal is. So, I'm going to go get it and when I have it I'll recover the location of the grimoire, then I'm gonna put the journal somewhere they can find it, and they'll never be the wiser." Damon's eyes clouded with confusion and I smiled wickedly, leaning closer as if my next words were a closely guarded secret. I lowered my voice. "I thought you might wanna have some fun with them. We could see exactly what they planned to do. Play with them a bit." I said.

When I saw his eyes spark I quickly added my amendment. "But gently," I finalized.

His full pink lips pouted playfully, but his eyes never lost their spark, making them gleam like pure oceanic crystal. "You really are amazing Ellie," he said.

I laughed lightly and decided to taunt him a bit. "And just think I could have been yours. Elandra Salvatore."

His eyes darkened and my smile became predatory. "Too bad, eh. If only I had been born a Petrova," I sighed, my green eyes hardening for a moment.
Damon leaned away from me, his pale face slackening and I almost felt bad for a moment, but then I remember the pain I had felt watching him as he lusted after my sister all morning and the guilt vanished. Bekah would be proud. "I'll text you, Damon. Do not make them suspicious of us," I said, pointing my finger at him. He pushed back his emotions, his mask slipping back into place as he nodded. I slid out of the car and headed inside to find Jeremy and the journal.

Jeremy was pretty easy to locate, like most teenage boys he was lounging on the couch playing video games. "Hey Jeremy," I said, plopping down beside him.

He smiled at me and continued rolling the joystick on his controller around, a determined expression on his face. I leaned my head on his shoulder and watched him play for a moment.

"I have a favor kiddo. Well more like a question," I said.

At this Jer paused his game and spun around on the couch, lifting one leg onto the seat as he turned to face me. "What's up Ellie Bean?" he asked in concern.

My heart lifted at the love his expression showed, and I vowed to make sure Elena never forced him into anything again. At least for as long as I could. I felt my stomach sink and tried to forget, for now, that I wasn't going to be around for much longer.

"You remember that creepy monster journal you were reading of our ancestors? Can I have it? I am researching for a story I am writing," I said quietly, biting my bottom lip as if I were embarrassed.

Jeremy blinked at me, briefly surprised. Like everyone else, he didn't know that I was into writing(which I am, just never in this life) then smiled brightly. "Your a writer, El?" he asked excitedly.

I nodded quickly with faux enthusiasm, leaning in after looking around the room. "I like to write fiction. But since writing is Elena's thing I've never nurtured it until recently. So please don't tell anyone. Especially, that I asked about the journal. I don't want anyone to know I'm into that sorta stuff, Jer. It's kinda embarrassing," I flushed.

Jeremy grinned, slapping a hand on my shoulder. "Deal, but I gave the journal to Mr. Saltzman. So you'll have to wait until I can get it back," he said.

My eyes narrowed into slits. Alaric what the hell are you doing with a hunter's journal?

"That's ok, Jer. Just keep this between you and me," I smiled, rising to my feet. Jeremy nodded, pressing start on his game. I waved goodbye and raced out the door, pulling my keys from my bag. Well, looks like I'm making a trip to the school.
I pulled into the school, only a few cars lining the mostly deserted parking lot. I spotted the exact one I was looking for and felt my tight jaw tick. I didn't know what to expect, but Alaric Saltzman was proving to become more and more interesting, and not in a good way. It seemed he was going to be a problem, something I never wanted him to become. I had never gotten a bad vibe from him, and I had always been able to trust my vibes or 'sixth sense' about people. That was the only reason I wasn't calling Damon right now and giving him the green light to go in fangs blazing.

I shut off my car and held onto the strap of my purse tightly as I walked up to the entrance, silently praising whichever God was listening when the door was unlocked. I was saving my magical reserve just in case. I was still building up my stamina. The more magic I used the weaker it made me. I needed to train so that I could cast longer without weakening myself. Who the hell knew what I was walking into. I had never really gotten close enough to Alaric to get a good read on him. I knew he was human, but that didn't always mean weak. Humans had the potential to be quite powerful with the proper training. As I entered, I squinted in the darkness glancing around, when I knew I was alone I cast a low-level spell on myself so that I would blend in with my surroundings. I grimaced as the cool feeling of an egg breaking atop my head slithered over me. I exhaled in relief. I should be sufficiently hidden from all but those who were either trained in the craft or knew what to look for. I didn't want to be caught by anyone. I tiptoed towards the History classroom, all the while keeping my ears and eyes peeled. As I neared the room I could see a faint light shining in the darkness. Hello...someone was home. I peeked into the room and found Alaric sitting at his desk bent over the journal, pouring over its contents with avid interest. His eyes were strained with exhaustion, and I felt a pang of pity for the poor man. What was going on with him? I watched him read for a few minutes, just taking in his mannerisms, trying to understand a bit about him. When he stood quite suddenly, I gasped stepping away from the door as he burst through. I followed behind him, noticing with interest when he stopped in the middle of the hallway his back rigid. He spun around and quickly scanned his surroundings in a defensive position, that of a trained hunter. I knew that look. I had seen it many times before. Hell, I had used it myself after Kol trained me.

Ah, I've got you now Mr. Saltzman.

Interesting very interesting. Do the council members know?

I held my breath while his eyes passed over my near invisible form. I knew that to the trained eye a shimmer could be seen, but unless Alaric knew a lot about witchcraft he wouldn't know what to search for. I kept my breath held deeply and watched him wait, head twitching left then right. Finally, he gave up, feet smacking against the tile floor as he headed back the way he had started. Air escaped my lips as my lungs thanked me for the oxygen they so desperately needed. I gulped down a few lungfuls and followed after my mysterious hunter/history teacher. I would seriously need to pay better attention in class from now on. Who knows exactly what type of supernatural beings he hunts. No need to piss him off unnecessarily. I found him in the teacher's lounge making copies of the journal. The glow from the copier illuminated his still form and I bit my lip, unsure if him having a copy of the journal was such a good idea. I stood next to him and watched as he finished rather quickly. When he was done he shut off the light and I followed him back to his classroom, this time without any oxygen deprivation. He lightly tossed the original journal on his
desk and sat back in his sit, covering his tired face with his hands. Before he had covered his face I had seen the purple bags under his eyes and felt the pang of pity in the pit of my stomach again. I wasn't entirely sure what exactly it was about this man, but I had a bit of a soft spot for him. I knew he was a good man and that he would be good for Jenna, but he seemed to be as stuck in the supernatural world as Elena was and that would just put my family at further risk. Would it be worth it, to help this man? As he pulled his rough hands away from his face his blue eyes locked with my invisible green orbs and I felt my shoulders slump in defeat. Something was telling me Alaric Saltzman was meant to become involved with the Gilbert family. I could feel a firm sense of resolve fill me.

Ok, Alaric I'm going to help you.

I nodded as a plan started to form in my mind, and watched him grab a handful of papers from a tray on his desk. Leaning over them as he started to grade, with much less enthusiasm than he had before when reading the journal. A sudden movement outside of the classroom caught both Alaric and I's attention, our heads snapping towards the disturbance. I stepped away from Alaric and moved towards the journal, my hand reaching out to it. When Alaric stood, heading to the door, I took the journal from the desk, slipping it into my bag with ease. Alaric stepped outside the room, his back ramrod straight. I watched him closely, ready to step in if he needed me to.

"Hello?" he called out.

I rolled my eyes. Really?

I almost wanted to tell him how very teenage girl in a horror flick he was right now. When he left the classroom for the hallway, I slipped my hand into his desk where he had stashed the copy he had made and grabbed it as well.

Sorry, Alaric…

I stepped out of the room and slid past him as quietly as possible. I could sense a vampire here with us and it wasn't either of the boys. I didn't plan on staying to find out who it was. I cast a quick protection spell on Ric, hoping it would be enough to give him the shot he would need to take care of himself. I couldn't stick around all day protecting him. I looked back at Ric one last time, he was still calling out into the darkness and exited the school. As I hopped into my car I sensed a familiar presence in the air. Stefan? How did he find out about the journal? I put my car in drive and fled the school before Stefan got the chance to see me. I drove as quickly as I dared and pulled into my house ten minutes before I would have driving normally. I grabbed the journal and scanned the pages rapidly, searching for anything that would tell me what I needed to know. When I found what I was looking for my eyes ignited with hatred.

That stupid son of a bitch.

I should have guessed. I pulled out the copy from my bag and stepped out of my car, walking beside the house. I grabbed Aunt Jenna's tin bucket the garden and sat it on the ground in front of me, placing the copy of the journal inside. I stood, brushing the gravel from my knees and snapped my fingers, setting the pages on fire. I stood in front of the bucket for a moment, watching the pages curl and burn, the smoke twirling in circles in front of me. Once the pages were ash I took the bucket to the curb, dumping the remains in the trash can with a smirk. With the original journal in hand, I headed inside. I could hear voices coming from the kitchen but chose to ignore whoever it was for now. I sat down next to Jeremy, who was still lounging on the couch.

"Hey, Jer. Did you tell Stefan about the journal?" I whispered.
Jeremy looked up at me oddly but shook his head. "No, why?" he asked in confusion.

I frowned slightly, hoping I could believe him and sighed. "Who did you tell?" I asked.

Jeremy looked more confused than ever at my rapid-fire questioning and blinked heavily before realization dawned on his face. "Stefan was here earlier when I was talking to this girl Anna about the journal. She wanted to see it, but I told her I needed it once I got it back from Ric. He probably heard me," he said shrugging.

I leaned against his shoulder and smiled. "Ahhh. Well, that makes sense. Cause see, I went and borrowed it from Ric, but Stefan was there asking about it. I was nervous and didn't wanna bother them so I just took it. I'll explain to Ric later. I was just curious why Stefan wanted it. Could you tell Stefan you went and picked it up if he asks? Just tell him that when you grabbed it Ric wasn't around." I pleaded with puppy eyes.

Jeremy must have sensed my need and thought it was because I was a bit nervous around Stefan because his brotherly instincts kicked in. "Yeah of course Ellie. You don't have to say shit to Stefan!" he said.

I grinned broadly and kissed his cheek, giving him the tightest hug I could. "Ok, I'm gonna leave this here on the table for now. Remember this is just between you and me, ok?" I said.

Jeremy winked at me and I left him to the TV and his lazy day. I felt bad for using my baby bro like that, but I knew he would understand when the time came. I just couldn't wait until we could really team up and I could tell him everything. I headed into the kitchen and was shocked to find Aunt Jenna planted on the counter, a glass of red wine in hand. Damon was standing beside her cutting into a tomato.

"My father never approved of anyone I dated, which only made me want them more, of course. What about you?" he asked her.

I scoffed lightly, a hand on my hip. What an utter crock of shit. His father approved of our union until I was found to be a witch of course, but by then he had known Damon had basically dissolved our courtship in favor of Katherine. It had strained their relationship even more than it had already been. He had thought it a stain on their family honor, a broken courtship was a very big faux pas after all.

Damon spun around, the sharp blade pointed in my direction. "Have something to add there, Ellie," he asked, brow raised in a dare.

I held my jaw together tightly. "No, I was just under the assumption that there was one girl your father had approved of, once upon a time. At least for a brief period," I said tightly.

Damon cocked a grin, his eyes blazing in triumph. Had he been goading me? Jenna looked between us momentarily before watching Damon go back to cutting up the tomato.

"Yeah, there was one, but I screwed that up royally, so she doesn't really count," he said, in an almost whisper.

Jenna handed him her glass of wine and patted him on the back in a gesture of solidarity. I giggled under my breath when Damon chugged down the last of her wine before pouring her more, when he tried to stop in the middle of the glass Jenna took the bottle, filling the glass to the rim. Damon chuckled, going back to his chopping.

"There were a few guys. Logan isn't the only loser I've dated," Jenna said mournfully.
Damon looked at me and pointed the knife in my direction again. "What about you?" he asked.

I choked on my tongue and started coughing. Jenna laughed joyfully. "Yeah, El what about you? I'd like to hear this. You have always been so secretive and Elena won't ever spill about you," Jenna said.

I leaned against the island and sighed deeply. Damon was such an ass.

"Umm. I don't really date. I have had flings," I said, avoiding Jenna's eyes.

Jenna spluttered, wine flying onto my face. I wiped the liquid from my cheek and bit my lip, wincing at her surprised expression.

"Elara Marie!" she gasped.

I raised my hands in the air and shook my head. "Hey, no judgment. I am not...I have no time...I just don't want a relationship and I am not stupid. I'm careful" I said stuttering painfully.

Jenna watched me carefully weighing her words, with a resigned sigh her shoulders slumped as she smiled weakly. "At least tell me who?" she asked.

I laughed uneasily. "Um, Tyler Lockwood and a guy from the football team. No one that you know. After Tyler, I decided to keep things casual. No close friends. It's a rule," I explained, twisting my fingers.

"Well, at least it's not someone like Logan Fell. I hope...," she said.

I shook my head and she smiled. Damon who had been oddly quiet throughout our conversation apart from the savage sound of his chopping bit out a few words. "Did they ever find him?" he asked.

I turned away, rolling my eyes. That asshat had deserved everything he got.

"He's not missing. He's in the Bahamas working on his tan. Very entitled, that one. Marches to his own drum." She drained the remainder of her glass. "He's a Fell. They're all snooty," she added.

Damon chuckled and poured some more wine in Jenna's glass. Was he helping her get drunk? She smiled brightly at him and headed towards the living room. I watched her go, hoping Jeremy would make sure she didn't get too smashed. I stepped beside Damon and leaned next to his ear, in the guise of reaching for a slice of tomato. He made to slap my hand but I growled at him.

"I found it," I snapped next to his ear.

His body froze for a moment before he held a chunk of tomato against my lips with an expectant expression on his face.

"The journal?" he asked.

I opened my mouth and let him feed me with a roll of my eyes. I finished my mouthful and nodded before adding onto my sentence.

"Yeah, but that's not what I'm talking about. I know where the grimoire is. Also, our plan involving the Saints squared is in effect in the living room," I said with a wink.

Damon's brows raised and he dropped the knife with a hearty laugh. "The Saints Squared?" he asked in amazement.
I shrugged with a nod. "Suits them don't ya think. Everyone thinks they're so damn perfect. Can you imagine what that must be like? Id go mad under the pressure!" I said, placing my hands on my face.

I'd hate to live life feeling like I had to be so perfect all the time. He shuddered dramatically and I couldn't help but laugh. Damon drew my attention, my laughter ceasing when he spun on his heel, facing the doorway with a smile.

"Hello, Elena," he said.

I stepped away from him and looked at my sister, whose arms were stationed across her chest, her big brown eyes judging me harshly. I groaned and maneuvered around my sister.

"I have an Aunt I need to make sure has sobered up, and then I have to pick up something from the store," I said.

Damon smirked at my excuse but kept his eyes firmly on Elena, it was enough to let me known he would keep her preoccupied. Not that he would find his job all that hard. I stepped out of the kitchen and found Jenna seated next to Stefan and Jeremy on the couch. My eyes zeroed in on the coffee table, where I was pleased to find the journal missing in action. I bit my lip to keep the smile from my face and patted Jer on the shoulder.

"Hey kiddo, get Jenna some Advil and a bottle of water. I need to get something from the store," I sighed.

Jenna protested but Jeremy laughed ignoring her half-hearted swats and semi-slurred words. Stefan looked up at me, eyes curious and a bit weary but I smiled brightly.

"I saw someone got Damon to cook dinner. It's been a while since he put his skills to a less homicidal use," I whispered with a giggled.

Stefan's lips twitched and he looked away, focusing on the TV again. "I'll be back in a bit," I said grabbing my keys and jogging out the door.

Time to go dig up an asshole.

I drove as quickly as I could, heading towards the old cemetery where I knew Giuseppe to be buried. As I pulled up beside the gate I cut the engine and popped my trunk before I slipped out of the car. Digging in the back I pulled out a flashlight and winced as I slammed the trunk closed, the sound echoing and seeming louder in the darkness. I pulled my jacket around me and listened to the crunching of the wet grass below my feet as I journeyed into the graveyard, slowly repeating a silly mantra in my head to keep myself calm. Zombies are not real, zombies are not real. As the old fashioned tombstones came into view I clenched my teeth and tried to keep the Thriller music
video out of my head. Come on El, you're over a thousand years old. Get a grip! I pushed myself forward and flashed my light on every tombstone I came across, heading deeper and deeper into the graveyard. Finally, towards the back, I found a worn stone that read; Giuseppe Salvatore.

Asshole extraordinaire is a more fitting moniker. I sat my flashlight on the ground and sighed, thinking over exactly what spell I needed to use. I needed to dig him up and then put all the dirt back, making the whole grave look once again undisturbed. I nibbled on my bottom lip thoughtfully, then with a huff decided I would just pull the dirt up, then refill it and flattened the earth making it look as it had before. It would exhaust me, but I had my Blackwood branch so I would be ok. I lowered my hand over his grave and scrunched up my face in disgust. This was not my idea of fun. I took a deep breath and let my power flow, slowly turning my hand as I felt my core flair with magic. I opened my eyes and saw the electric blue light glow through my skin. The ground below me started to shake, the earth flying skyward. I used my other hand to stop its travel, freezing the dark earth in midair. I started to maneuver it to my right so that I could have it all together for when I needed to return it later. I lowered it into a large pile and looked at the hole I had successfully made with glee. I had done it. I stepped next to it, looking down. A light brown wooden coffin rested below, a smattering of dark wet earth still covering the lid. Jumping down I landed next to it and brushed off the dirt. I felt around the edges until I found a spot I could grasp, and started yanking up the side. Holding my breath I pulled it open, moaning when I looked down at the skeleton of the man who had once helped kill me. In his arms was Emily's grimoire. I looked away and gently pulled the book from his grasp. I tried to ignore the cold slimy feel of the hard bone but couldn't hold back a gag. When I finally had the grimoire in my grasp I sat it on the edge of the coffin and rubbed my hands down my jeans with a shudder. Ugh...so disgusting! I quickly slammed the coffin lid shut, gagging as I slipped out of the hole. I sat the spell book next to me and lifted my hands, watching the dirt fly into the air again, and fill the hole. Once the coffin was covered, I waved my right hand, flattening the dirt and making it appear as if I had never been here. I nodded in satisfaction when my work was done. I sent Damon a text, smiling and rolling my eyes when he sent back a bunch of heart emojis. I picked up the book and my light, as I headed back the way I had come. My prize in hand.

On the way home I stopped by the store and picked up a few things we had run out of as a way to maintain my cover story. So by the time I pulled up at my house I had been gone for an hour and a half. I quickly ran my hand over my clothes to cleanse them and placed the Blackwood branch back in my purse. I made sure the grimoire was in my bag and stumbled out of my car, closing my eyes as I shook my head roughly. I was a little weak from overexertion but the branch had helped to restore most of my magic and I was determined to fight through the rest of my weakness. I was getting tired of feeling so useless. I was supposed to be strong and powerful and I needed to be. Shit was about to hit the fan. From now on I was going to train every day. I ran inside, tossing my keys into the bowl by the door. I released a relieved breath when I noticed Elena and Damon were just now bringing the food in from the kitchen. I hadn't missed dinner. Hell yeah! I was starving. I took the groceries into the kitchen and rolled my eyes as I watched Damon deliberately bumping into Lena every chance he got. Well, I could have done without the flirting.

Was she the one digging up his father for him?

I grumbled under my breath as I went back into the dining room and slumped down into my seat, glaring at my sister as she laughed at Damon's actions. Damon placed a bowl on the table next to me, completely ignoring my existence as he focused on Elena. His eyes were hard as steel and I realized they had been having a conversation right next to me. What was with me and zoning out today?

"Then you understand what I will do if anyone gets in my way," he threateningly told her.

Elena visibly gulped and I couldn't stop the giggle that escaped me. They both shot me a look,
Damon raised a brow and smiled while Elena glared hatefully. Damon walked away leaving Elena alone with me.

She placed both hands on her hips and stared me down. "What are you doing, Elara?" This game you are playing with him is going to get people killed. People we love!" she snarled.

I stood from my seat and placed a hand on the table, leaning closer to her. "No, what is going to get people killed is you and Stefan standing in our way. He needs to get in that tomb, Elena. It is the only way. I'd ask you to trust me, but it wouldn't make a difference would it?" I asked, my eyes tearing up in spite of my anger.

Elena looked away her hair falling into her face. The fact that she couldn't look at me was all the answer I needed. I had felt a smidgen of guilt for tricking her and Stefan, but the way they were going about things, and the fact that she was refusing to even trust me, her own sister, was enough to wipe it all away. I sat back down, my head falling forward.

"We're done here, Elena. You have made up your mind. Chosen your side in this and I've done the same. It's a pity really, all this time we're wasting," I said, my voice breaking off as I lowered my head into my hands.

Elena stood beside me in silence for a moment before turning around and walking away. I shook my head, regretful tears spilling from my eyes. I brushed them away and placed my hands on my knees. There was nothing more I could do about our relationship right now. I had to do things this way. I knew what needed to be done, to ensure the future went as smoothly as possible. Besides, Damon had suffered long enough. He deserved freedom and this course of action would give him that. I shook off my melancholy as Damon and Elena brought out the rest of the food. Dinner was a stressful affair, my anxiety and I held hands throughout the entire meal. Damon made sure to poke at Stefan and Elena the entire time. I basically inhaled my food just for the chance at a quick escape. As soon as I was done I stepped out onto the front porch, the grimoire, still hidden in my bag. I sat down on the porch swing and held my bag against my chest, the heavy indent of the grimoire an oddly reassuring presence. I pushed my legs back and forth, as I swung. I let the cool night air clear my head, the breeze blowing the smell of honeysuckle and roses towards me from the garden at the back of the house. I slowly swung back and forth, the rhythm almost lulling me into a coma-like state, until I noticed a dark shadow blocking the light beside me. I turned my head and sighed when I noticed Damon, Stefan, and Elena all huddled together near the open window which brought their bickering to greet me despite my retreat. I inwardly groaned as I listened to Damon pestering Elena and Stefan about the journal. I couldn't help but smile when Stefan mentioned Alaric. Looked like he made it out of his encounter with the vampires alive. Good for him. I would need to introduce myself for what I really am sooner rather than later. I stopped swinging when Stefan brought Jeremy into the conversation. I stood quickly and stepped back inside the house just as Damon was heading back towards the couch where Jeremy was sitting with Aunt Jenna.

"No. Damon, leave him out of it!" Elena panicked, her eyes revealing the fact that she knew Jeremy had no idea where the journal was.

I wanted to pounce on her Ala cheetah and rip her to shreds. She had the nerve to accuse me of being the one who would involve the people we love, yet here she was willingly allowing Jeremy to be pulled into this even though she knew exactly where the journal was. I stood towards the back of their little group and crossed my arms, jaw tight.

"Why, what's the big deal?" Damon asked, shrugging his shoulders.

He was definitely enjoying this little game. I caught his eye for a moment and smiled briefly when
their blue depths twinkled with mischief. I let out a relieved breath and lowered my arms, my defensive posture loosening. As long as he wasn't really planning on pulling my brother into the thick of things I could let him have his fun. Besides, they deserved it after all. I stepped up beside Jeremy and Elena froze momentarily, her brown eyes widening.

"Damon, Elara!" she whisper-shouted, as only she could.

I cringed my ears protesting as my mind conjured up images of nails on a chalkboard. "Elena, calm down! Get a grip. Jeremy is going to be fine," I said.

I plopped down on the couch next to our brother and shared a loaded look with Damon, reminding him to tread carefully. Damon sat on the arm on the sofa and leaned close to Jer with his best attempt at a friendly brotherly expression on his face. I chuckled under my breath and placed a hand on my forehead, putting a checkmark on my mental checklist beside 'Teach Damon how to be less creepy.'

"So...I heard you found a really cool journal from back in the day. Who else did you show it to?" Damon asked, trying (what I hope was not his best) attempt at nonchalant.

My chest shook lightly as I silently laughed. I was sincerely hoping this wasn't Damon really trying to gather intel because if it was, I would feel really bad for him. I kept my eyes off my brother and was beyond proud when he didn't glance my way once. I had to give Jer credit, he had one hell of a poker face.

"Huh?" he asked, playing dumb.

Damon rolled his eyes, face hard. "Don't ask questions, just spill," he said.

I leaned across Jeremy and slapped Damon on the knee. Jeremy chuckled and looked between all four of us with guarded interest. "You're kidding me, right?" he asked, looking directly at me.

Elena started to speak, I assumed to ask Jeremy who else he had shown the journal to, but I held up my hand, stopping her mid-sentence.

"Its ok, Jeremy. You can tell us it's not a big deal. It's just….I guess that come to find out...the journal was a little more valuable than we originally knew," I half-heartedly explained, trying to convey with only my eyes that he shouldn't tell them about me.

Jeremy looked at me for a moment before he turned his head to look at Damon and Stefan, his eyes narrowed. He took my hand and gave it a tight, reassuring squeeze.

"Just this girl Anna," he said.

I released a breath I hadn't known I was holding and squeezed Jer's hand back in thanks. I could tell he no longer trusted the Salvatores and I wasn't sure how I could remedy that right now, but I had too many problems to deal with at the moment to add another, so onto the mental checklist it would have to go. At this rate, my list was going to be a few feet long.

Damon cocked his head in question. "The hot, weird one?" he asked.

I blinked a few times and tilted my body around so that I could see Jeremy. "The what?" I huffed. Jeremy blushed and nodded quickly, a hand on his neck. "Yeah," he said.

Elena took the lapse in talking to step in front of Jeremy. She looked down at him in curiosity.
"Wait, who is Anna?" she asked.

I leaned towards Jeremy and patted my knees excitedly. "What she said," I smiled, pointing my thumb at Elena.

Jeremy looked at all of us again, noticing all eyes on him, two sets of them anxiously awaiting his answer and huffed in exasperation. Before he could open his mouth Elena's phone rang and she yanked it out of her back pocket, glancing down at the screen. Her brown eyes blazed with annoyance for a second before softening as she answered, quickly catching my eye and pointing to Jeremy and Damon. I rolled my eyes and gestured for her to leave.

"How do you know her?" Damon asked Jer as soon as Elena headed up the stairs.

Jeremy looked away from our retreating sister and leaned against the couch. "I just know her. She wants to meet me at the Grill tonight," Jeremy said.

I smiled brightly and covertly winked at Damon. This would be the perfect way to meet Jer's mystery gal and get away from Elena and Stefan.

"Perfect," I said, clapping my hands.

Jeremy blinked rapidly, looking at me in shock. Damon stood, taking my hand as he did. "I'll drive. Come on," he said.

I grabbed Jeremy's hand and pulled him towards the door. "O-Okay," he said in shock.

I pushed Jeremy out the door and looked behind us, catching Stefan heading up the stairs towards Lena's room. I shook my head, a flare of betrayal stinging me. Even without super Vamp hearing, I knew he was heading up there to tell Elena he was going to read through the journal and find out where the grimoire was. I looked away from stairs and buried the feeling of betrayal, he was doing what he thought was best. Just as I was. I followed after Jeremy and hopped into Damon's car.

"You still with me, El?" Damon asked.

I turned my head towards him in confusion and saw the flash of fear and uncertainty in his eyes before he closed himself off again. I checked the backseat where my brother was staring out the window before I took Damon's hand and sent him a confident wink.

"Of course I am. There's nowhere else I'd rather be," I chuckled.

Damon squeezed my hand, his cold skin raising the hairs on my arm. I cocked my brow and used my other hand to motion towards the ignition. "We gonna go?" I whispered.

Damon rolled his eyes and gave me his best cocky smile as he started the car. I moved my hand from his and placed it in my lap. I really didn't need to blur any more lines with Damon. Once we reached the Grill Jeremy headed inside to find Anna. Damon and I stayed towards the back of the bar and waited. After a few minutes, Jeremy was joined at the pool tables by a short, long-haired brunette girl. Damon growled in recognition and I froze in fear. If he recognized her that could only mean one thing; she was a vampire. I focused in on the girl and was shocked when her smiling face turned towards me, recognition instantly ignited within me and my back become rigid with stress. I had seen her before, back in 1864. I knew her and her mother Pearl. Which was obviously why she was here now, flirting with my very human brother. Katherine might not be in the tomb, but I knew Pearl was. Anna had another thing coming though if she thought she could use Jeremy to get her out. A Gilbert or not. She would not be using him for her revenge. I stood next to Damon, a silent sentinel throughout Jer's entire 'date' with Anna. When the night winded down I texted Jenna and
asked her to pick Jeremy up. I told her I had a few things I needed to do before I would be home. She was surprisingly ok with my late night to do list and for that I was grateful. Damon and I followed Anna's scent to a dingy Motel where Damon easily stole Anna's room key. Once we were safely inside her room I sat down next to him on one of the beds and waited, my eyes glued to the door.

"You know I could do this part on my own," Damon said.

I rolled my eyes towards the heavens and looked at him in annoyance. "Yeah, cause I'm just gonna leave you to deal with a much older vamp all on your own. That's not gonna happen," I said.

Damon smiled briefly then held a finger to his lips. I slowly stood and crossed my arms. A low clicking sound came from the door, and Damon sped behind it just as Anna came inside. Grabbing her by the throat he vamp sped her against the wall, taking her by surprise for only a moment. Before I could take control of the situation Anna had Damon by the throat and she started to squeeze. Damon gasped in pain, choking from the strength of her grip. I sighed deeply and waved my hand, ripping the two vampires apart. They both went flying in opposite directions, slamming into the walls with loud gasps of pain and annoyance. I shook my head with a laugh and stood directly in the middle of the two. Damon was the first to sit up, leaning against his knees with a groan.

"Damn. You're strong for a little thing," he said, rubbing his neck.

I smirked, glancing at Anna who was looking at me in pure shock. "How?" she finally managed.

I pointed at myself and shrugged. "Original witch, cursed, Reincarnate. Very long story," I said, shaking my hand in a blase way.

Anna looked at Damon and started to laugh, her whole body shaking. Damon's face scrunched up in anger as he stood, moving towards the little vampire. I held up my hand, putting up a magical barrier between the two. Damon banged his hands against the invisible wall of magic in anger, his blue eyes furious.

"Whoa, moron slow down. I'm not gonna let you get yourself killed just because your mad that she is laughing at you," I sighed.

Anna stood up and stepped closer to the barrier with a grin. "So, how are you enjoying having your ex-fiance around while you're trying to get your lover out of the tomb?" she sneered.

I lowered the barrier slowly and stepped right next to Anna, tilting my head expression blank. I focused on her mind, smiling when she fell to the ground screaming in pain.

"Listen here bitch, I already know why you're here and what you want. I know Pearl is in the tomb, but ya see, you have nothing we need, so if you don't want me staking your mother the first chance I get, then you need to stay the hell out of our way. That means leaving my brother alone," I said, letting up on the witchy migraine I was giving her. Anna gasped, her pained sobs letting up.

She looked up at me in confusion. "Your brother?" she asked.

I leaned closer to her and smiled. "Oh yeah, you don't know who I am in this time. Elara Gilbert at your service," I said, waving brightly.

Anna's face whitened considerably and I could hear Damon chuckling darkly behind me.

"Yeah, Jeremy is my baby brother. Now I get your anger at the Gilberts, I do. I mean Jonathan
helped kill me, but ya see they are family now, so I can't let you exact your revenge on any of them," I said, my voice firm.

I stepped past her and opened the door to her room. Damon joined me and looked down at Anna. "You heard everything she said, Anna. We work alone and if I see you anywhere near the Gilberts I will kill your mother myself," he said, stepping outside.

I glanced at Anna one last time and bit my lip. "I'll get her out, Anna. As long as you don't cross me. I never had anything against either of you, and your mother was a nice woman, but you go against me or my family and you will regret it," I said.

Anna looked up at me, her brown hair falling into her eyes, finally, she nodded. "You have a deal. Just save my mother," she whispered.

I placed a hand over my heart and lowered my head. "Agreed. I'll call you when we open the tomb," I said, before turning and leaving the girl behind. I just hoped I made the right decision.

Once we were back in the car Damon looked at me in confusion. "Are you really going to help her save Pearl?" he asked.

"As long as she keeps to her end of the deal. It's the right thing to do, Damon," I said, turning away from him. "Now let's go deal with our Sainted siblings," I sighed.

Damon and I stood just out of view watching Stefan shovel the dirt out of Giuseppe's grave. Elena stood beside the deep hole the beam of her flashlight the only source of light in the darkness surrounding us. We were both shielded from detection by a magic barrier I had placed between us and our siblings. I watched in disappointment as Elena used the situation to joke with Stefan. She smiled down at him shaking her head.

"What?" Stefan asked.

Elena continued to shake her head in amusement. "Not many girls can say they've done this," she said.

I scoffed lightly next to Damon, tapping my foot on the ground. "Get a room, Elena," I whispered.

Damon placed a hand on my lower back and snickered. Stefan continued to dig until a loud thud echoed in the darkness. I rolled my shoulders in anticipation.

"Finally, it's about damn time. It didn't take me nearly this long," I ranted.

Damon stepped closer to the barrier and watched his brother toss the shovel out of the grave.
Stefan quickly started to wipe the dirt from the coffin as Elena knelt down, leaning closer to the hole to get a better look at what Stefan was doing.

"Hold the beam steady, Elena," Stefan said.

Elena nodded and held the light towards the grave with both hands. Stefan found an edge and started to pry the coffin open. Breathing heavily, Elena leaned forward with a gasp as the lid creaked open. I looked at Damon and we both shared a smile.

"What? No, that's not possible. The journal said it would be here," Stefan sputtered.

I lifted my hand and lowered the barrier stepping out from the shadows with Damon by my side.

Well, what do you know?" Damon playfully said.

He cocked his head to the side and smiled down at his brother. I stepped up beside him and watched Elena closely, her brown eyes narrowed as she took me in with distaste. Stefan slammed the coffin lid closed and pulled himself from the hole, speeding in front of Elena. Damon sneered at his brother and turned to me with a smile.

"This is an interesting turn of events, wouldn't you say, Elandra?" he asked.

I looked at my sister with a frown, my head tilted. "Very interesting, Day. But sadly, I can't say I'm all that surprised," I said.

Stefan looked at me sadly as if I were a small child being tricked into believing in a fairy tale. "I'm sorry Elandra, but I can't take that chance," he sighed.

Damon stepped in front of me, pulling me away from Stefan with a growl. "I can't believe I ever, for even a second, considered trusting you," he spat.

Elena whimpered lightly from behind Stefan and I rolled my eyes in annoyance.

"Oh. You're not capable of trust. The fact that you're here means that you read the journal and you were planning on doing this yourselves," Stefan said triumphantly.

I tried to step around Damon but was held back by his tight grip on my shoulder. Both Elena and I were being pinned behind the feuding Salvatore brothers, and I was beginning to lose my patience.

"Of course Elandra and I were going to do things on our own because the only people we can seem to count on is each other! You made sure I couldn't count on you many years ago, Stefan."

Damon stepped closer to his brother, blue eyes rolling with emotion, and pointed his finger at Elena. "But you...If I hadn't had your sister...you would have had me fooled," he sneered.

Elena turned away, hiding her ashamed and hurt expression behind Stefan's shoulder. I shook my
head and took Damon's wrist, pulling him back away from our siblings and hopefully offering him what little comfort I could.

"So what are you going to do now Damon? Because you know I can't allow you to open the tomb," Stefan said, stepping closer to us.

Damon laughed, smirking at his brother as he watched Elena follow closely behind Stefan.

"What are you going to do, Stefan? All we need to open the tomb is a witch and that won't be too hard to accomplish," Damon said, watching his brother with an intensely hateful expression.

As Stefan inched closer and closer to Damon, I held my bag tightly against my side, silently casting a spell that would prevent anyone but me from touching it. I knew Stefan was planning something and I was getting antsy. Stefan and Damon continued to dance around each other, each fighting for dominance, and I slowly tried to inch away from them, unknowingly giving Stefan the shot at me he had been aiming for. Stefan vamp sped in my direction. Before I could even take a breath he was biting into his wrist and bringing it to my lips, feeding me his blood. The coppery taste ran across my tongue as I tried to fight against him. But it was to no avail, and before I could think to use magic, I had given in and started to swallow. The thick liquid inched down my throat and I gagged, trying to turn my face away from him, but his fingers held my chin tightly. I could feel bruises starting to form and just prayed for him to stop. When I had accepted enough he pulled finally away. I quickly wiped the remainder of the blood from my chin and mouth, disgusted by the man I had seen as a brother. I didn't think I would be able to forgive him for this. At least not for a very long time. Before he could make another move I smacked him as hard as I could allowing the hurt and disappointment to show in my eyes. When I had accepted enough he pulled finally away. I quickly wiped the remainder of the blood from my chin and mouth, disgusted by the man I had seen as a brother. I didn't think I would be able to forgive him for this. At least not for a very long time. Before he could make another move I smacked him as hard as I could allowing the hurt and disappointment to show in my eyes. Stefan looked away quickly and without an ounce of emotion, wrapped his cold hand around my neck, pulling me beside him. My feet lifted from the ground as he dangled me in front of Damon.

"Give me the grimoire or I will snap her neck and we will see, first hand if her curse is affected by vampire blood. Are you ready to play Russian roulette with El's life, Damon?" he asked.

I clawed at Stefan's fingers but otherwise tried my best to hide the fear that was welling up inside of me. I could see everything I had been working for swirling down the drain.

I didn't want to die. That was a heady thought for someone like me to have, someone who usually had no choice but to accept death. Now though, all I wanted to do was fight...and live.

Damon stood in front of me, helplessly watching as his brother held my life ransom. I caught his blue gaze and followed it to my bag and then back to Stefan. I could see his resolve grumble as he started to give in. After everything, he was going to give in to save me. A small whimper of fear and disbelief caught Damon's attention and a flickering of hope started to grow in his blue orbs. Stefan's body froze in fear and I watched his eyes darken as he realized that unless he released me, there was nothing he could do to save her. His shoulders stiffened and I was sure he hoped that he could somehow still save Elena and get the grimoire out of this whole ordeal. He was a moron. Hopelessly I watched as Damon sped over to my sister, taking her by the throat. He quickly fed her his blood and Elena's face turned to me in fear as it spread through her system. You could see the moment the realization of what it could mean for her finally clicked. Tears began to well in her brown eyes, as her whole body began to shake.

Damon's hand held her steady as he stared down his brother, crystal eyes moving from Stefan to me in quick succession. "I can do one better. Give me Elandra, or you will have a vampire girlfriend, brother," he sternly said.

I watched the whole scene play out in horror, Damon had fed Elena his blood. He had made the
decision to do to her what had been done to him. It was so easy for them to play with immortality, for me it wouldn't work, but for Elena, it would, and it would be an eternity she never asked for. One that would cause a monumental disaster.

Oh God! There was so much that would be lost if Elena became a vampire. I could see the death and destruction of everything and everyone we loved flitter across my vision and panic began to set in. I could feel power start to course through my veins, sending a burst of magic across my skin. The bright blue burst of light caught Damon off guard and he dropped Elena in shock. My skin continued to glow and Stefan gasped in pain when his skin started to sizzle as if he had touched an open flame. I felt my feet connect with solid ground and caught myself as I fell forward, my hands landing on the soft grass in front of me. Stefan stepped away from me as I stood, my whole body still glowing with light. I turned towards the vampire that had held me captive and raised my hand, closing my palm into a fist, pulling him towards me. Stefan flew through the air his eyes wide with shock. I lowered him to the ground next to Damon and quickly made my way to Elena, the glow of my skin dimming into nonexistence. Elena, still shaking watched me in fear, doe eyes large. It was so reminiscent of the time I had once healed her when we were children that I froze momentarily, my eyes burning with unshed tears. I raised my hands with a smile, trying to reassure that I never wanted any harm to come to her.

"Lena, I am so sorry. I never wanted things to go this way. We were supposed to talk and nothing more. Stefan went too far tonight," I said with a wince.

My head was beginning to pound, one of the least fun side effects of vampire blood.

Elena shakily stood and backed away from me, heading closer to Stefan. "Elara this whole thing has gone too far and nothing will change until Damon leaves town. He can't be allowed to get into the tomb," she said, as she lowered herself down next to her vampire.

I ran my hands across my forehead and felt a cold hand against my neck. I glanced behind me and found Damon staring at Elena and Stefan with disgust. I shook my head and let out an aggravated breath.

"Elana, you really have no clue how very wrong you are. Damon isn't going anywhere and the tomb will be opened." I took Damon's hand and started towards the car. I turned my head back, watching my sister help Stefan stand, checking him over for injuries. "Maybe when the tomb is open and you both see that what you should be worried about was never inside it, then we can all work together again. Because we will need to be united for what's to come." My eyes connected briefly with Stefan's and I tried not to show exactly how saddened by his behavior I was. "Please make sure she is safe tonight. She cannot become a vampire," I said.

Elena's head shot towards me as Stefan's eyes filled with a mixture of fear and curiosity. Turning away, I allowed Damon to lead me to the car.

"You gonna explain what you meant by that?" he asked me.

I glanced up at him and shook my head. "Not until your free of Katherine," I said, slipping into the car. I leaned against the cool glass of the window beside me and closed my eyes. Tomorrow I would be heading to the Bennett house to procure us a witch. It was time to open the tomb.
I stood in front of the small brick house that was currently owned by the strongest witch of nature that Mystic Falls had to offer. I knew that getting her to help - especially once I mentioned that I was working with Damon - would be a feat all its own, but I had to try. The annoying conditions put in place by Emily stated that the spell on the tomb had to be lifted by a Bennett witch; or else I would have already opened the damn thing myself. I hated asking for help from anyone - let alone their kind. There was always red tape and conditions involved whenever making a deal with a witch of nature. They never did anything for free. At least going into this I already had a plan. I had promised Em that I would take over for Damon as the protector of the Bennett line - and I had meant it. Despite my general dislike for witches of nature, I would always have a soft spot for the Bennetts. Emily and Bonnie were not the only women of their line that I had met and connected with. With the knowledge that I would be using my curse to help protect her progeny, I hoped that Sheila would be more amicable, because if I didn't have her help than it would have to be Bonnie - and sadly - I knew where her loyalties would lie. She was and always would be - firmly on Team Elena. I couldn't fault her really, Lena was her best friend just as Care was mine. Edging my way up her porch steps I took a deep breath, stilling my resolve before I landed a heavy knock on her front door. I straightened my hair and shirt, reverting to my usual nervous habits as I waited for someone to answer. I could hear shuffling on the other end of the door and prayed to whatever God was in a giving mood, that I had come on a good day - one where she was feeling particularly willing to hear a fellow sister of magic out before slamming the door in her face. The doorknob jiggled and I took a deep breath- tilting my head and trying for a half smile, hoping I didn't come off as creepy. The door opened slightly - held back by the chain lock, and the narrowed brown eyes of Sheila Bennett greeted me. Her caramel wrinkled skin barely visible behind the confines of the door as she looked me over swiftly.

"Elara Gilbert?" she simply stated, her brow raised in question.

Before I could utter a single syllable, a swift breeze swatted me in the face as the door snapped shut. My jaw dropped open in surprise. I hadn't been able to greet her let alone make my case. Righteous indignation filled me at her utter dismissal and I raised my hand to knock again. This time with much less decorum. As my knuckles touched the cold front door I held back - moving my hand away when I heard the rattle of the chain lock being undone; the other locks clicking open shortly after. I blinked rapidly in surprise and waited, lowering my head I traced the cursive writing of her welcome rug to calm myself. After a few minutes and some shuffling around on the other side, it finally swung open and Sheila stepped out onto the front porch slowly, eyes scanning her surroundings. She wrapped her frayed grey shawl around herself, brushing her curls from her
"I came alone. Figured it wouldn't be polite to bring guests that wouldn't be as welcome as I hoped I might be," I said, rubbing my arm nervously.

Sheila nodded, her tight brown curls barely moving as she did. "To be honest, I had expected a visit from you much sooner, Elara." She raised her hand and motioned for me to step inside. I smiled in thanks and followed her into the cozy little house. "Is that the name you wish to go by?" she asked as she led me into her bright kitchen.

I raised a brow in surprise and smirked. Of course, she knew all about me. I chose to ignore her question for the moment and took a look around her kitchen. The walls were a beautiful pale yellow that caught the natural light that filtered through the small window in the corner of the room. The daisy covered curtains fluttered in the breeze as I took a seat at the round wood table opposite the window. I smiled at the comfortable country feel. It was beautiful and welcoming. I also couldn't stop the small laugh that escaped when I noticed the vervain growing in the flower bed outside the window. Sheila noticed my amused laughter and sat down in front of me with a tray of tea and a bright devious grin. I took my small china cup in hand and shook my head at how very alike her and Emily really were.

"Elara is what I go by; although both Salvatores have trouble remembering that," I said with a sigh, returning to her previous question.

Sheila watched me closely, I felt like an ant under her magnifying glass. "Bonnie tells me you are as close to the brothers as your sister is. But that you seem to gravitate towards Damon," she said tightly.

Ahh, and there it is.

I sat down my cup gently and clasped my hands together, keeping my eyes firmly on hers. "Yes, Damon and I are friends, and you may have heard from Bonnie that we were once more than that, but that is all in the past. Now, I am simply trying to do what is best...for everyone," I said.

Sheila sighed deeply and clamped her lips together, making them appear nothing more than a thin line. "What is it that you plan to do?" she asked.

I tried to keep the look of relief from my face and very slowly released the breath I had been holding in. I lifted my bag from my hip and laid it in my lap, pulling out Emily's grimoire. Sheila released a gasp, her fingers twitching with - what I assumed - was a deep desire to rip her ancestral property from my hands. She looked at me in clear shock when I very gently pushed it towards her.

"First, I want to return this to you, as it belongs to your family and I know Em would want you to have it." I looked at Sheila, my eyes soft, and placed my hand on hers. "I know that you do not agree with the way I associate with vampires, especially Damon, but Emily was a very good friend of mine and I loved her as I love Bonnie." I squeezed her hand and took a deep shaky breath. Now came the hard part. "I will protect your family for as long as I can Sheila Bennett. Even if that task was not given to me. I have taken it upon myself and will never forget it," I said.

Sheila's glassy eyes watched as my hand began to glow brightly and I could see she was shocked to find a bright gold ribbon of magic surround my wrist and join with hers, connecting us and our magic for life. It was a bond that every witch knew was not one to enter into lightly, and I could see the clear shock still present on Sheila's wrinkled face. As the glow receded I let go of Sheila's wrist and sat back as she flexed her fingers, her forehead crinkled in thought. Turning to me she sat up straight,
determination in the stiffness of her shoulders.

"If we do this then every vampire in that tomb must be burned," she firmly said.

I sat back, my mind whirring, and nodded slowly. "Every vampire but one," I said.

I do not break promises and so far Anna had kept her end of our bargain. Sheila watched me carefully and crossed her arms.

"One?" she questioned.

I sighed, running my fingers through my knotted hair, lifting it into a messy bun before rubbing my tired and sore neck in frustration. "I'm not sure if anyone has told you this yet, but as I have told most everyone, Katherine Pierce is not nor has she ever been, in that tomb," I grumbled.

As I had half expected Sheila gasped in shock and confusion. Obviously Bonnie had failed to mention one of the biggest revelations about the tomb to her grams. I nodded quickly and continued. "She is currently running around doing her own thing, healthy and with little care to what Damon Salvatore is doing. That is one of the reasons why I need to get him into that tomb, Sheila. He needs to be able to move on," I said.

Sheila sat back in her seat and nodded.

"If I can just help him to see that all this time she has been perfectly able to be with him, yet has chosen not to, then he can start to move on with his life," I said.

I leaned towards Sheila, my features serious. "We will need Damon on our side for what is to come, Sheila Bennett," I said.

Sheila watched me closely, her brown eyes clouded in thought. "I have sensed a change coming to Mystic Falls. Something dark and old," she whispered.

I took in a sharp breath and lowered my head. "I will do what I can to help when the time comes, if you'll but trust me," I said.

Sheila placed her hand on her knee and sighed. "Trust will have to come in time, Elara but I will help you open the tomb. If only to be free of the vampires that are imprisoned within," she said.

I sat back in my sit and swallowed deeply. It was as much as I could ask of her and more than I had originally hoped for. "What one vampire are you hoping to save; if not Katherine Pierce?" she asked, eyes narrowed in suspicion.

I glanced at my nails, raising my hand towards my face. "I made a deal with a vampire in town. She was searching for a way to save her mother who is imprisoned in the tomb. I told her if she backed off I would help her," I said.

Sheila's brown eyes blazed with fury. "That was not a deal you should have made. It wasn't your place! You are no Bennett nor a witch of nature!" she shouted, standing to her feet.

My magic surged within me at her blatant disrespect and my hands glowed brightly, the familiar static surge spreading up my arms toward my elbows. I stood, meeting her challenge head-on. The elderly witch shakily swayed before me - eyes darting between my glowing arms and back towards my face in quick succession. I lifted my hands flexing my fingers - my magical energy flaring outward, the kitchen light above us flickered as my power surged.
"Do not challenge me witch of nature! You will do well to remember your place! Your Mother may have gifted you with many wondrous talents, but do remember that even with all that power, you will never be a match for me. My kind was created to be no ones equal. I am your better, Sheila Bennett," I said, my voice echoing throughout the tiny kitchen.

Very slowly - as if she was still unsure of her own actions - Sheila lowered her head, bending forward, her hands shaking as she placed them on the table. I lowered my glowing hands, my eyes narrowed as I closed my palms - extinguishing the glow of my magic.

"Do sit Sheila. There's no need to bow," I snickered.

Sheila glared up at me, and then huffed out a laugh, plopping down in her seat. I sat down a moment after her, taking in a deep calming breath and crossed my legs, steady eyes never leaving the proud witch in front of me. Now that her little childish act of defiance was past us; I picked up my cup of tea, lifting it to my lips and taking a sip, savoring the hint of tart lemon.

"So you agree - aside from the one which you have promised to save - that the others must burn?" she asked.

I tapped my fingers against the table and nodded swiftly. "Of course. Every last one," I agreed.

Sheila held out her hand. "Ok then. Tonight we will open the tomb. I will contact Bonnie myself," she said.

Before I accepted her hand I leaned towards her, elbow on the table. "Do not attempt to betray me, Sheila. Try and remind yourself that despite my young appearance - I have lived a much longer life than you - and I have known my fair share of master manipulators. You will not be able to fool me. So let's not even try, yes?" I said with a bright smile, holding out my hand.

Sheila took my hand squeezing it tightly as she shook it in acceptance of my terms. "We have a deal, Elara Gilbert. Bonnie and I will be at the tomb tonight when the moon rises," she said.

I stood from my seat. "Damon and I will be there," I said, ignoring the grimace that spread across her face at the mention of Damon's name. I waved goodbye to the elder Bennett witch and hastily left. There was only so much judgy behavior I could handle. Even if some of it was slightly warranted.

I spent the rest of the afternoon in my room preparing for the ritual. I had sent Damon a quick text - explaining that I had spoken to Sheila and secured her help. I wasn't at all surprised when he responded - revealing to me that Elena and Stefan were both using Bonnie to try and get her to change her mind. I had actually laughed loudly, laying back on the floor where I had been sitting - practicing my own spell work - at their nerve. I couldn't believe that they actually thought that they could go behind my back and get her to help them betray me.

Me!

A witch who has lived for a thousand years. To think they would believe that I wouldn't have
secured her help in more than just words. The bond I had created between me and the Bennett line assured me that once she had given me her word she would carry through. Now the only thing I would have to watch out for would be trickery - and that I could do - any little side plan she may come up with I could conquer. After all, all I had really needed from her was her bloodline. Once the tomb was open I could use my own magic and would be able to accomplish anything I would need to. Once I had reassured Damon that all was well and that he would get in the tomb tonight - even with all his brothers annoying meddling, I went back to practicing. I needed to boost my stamina. I was tired of feeling exhausted and useless as soon as I was finished casting. If I continued on like that - I would end up dead before it was time. I laid out bunches of lavender and angelica, centering them around me in a perfect circle to help bring me calm and protection. Taking one bundle I lit the end, waving it in a semi-circle - allowing the smoke to waft around my room. The sweet smell of lavender filled my senses, clearing my mind. I closed my eyes and lifted my other hand, snapping my fingers and lighting the white candles I had strategically placed around my room. They had all been left outside during the last full moon so that they could soak up the energy it provided. I blotted out the bundle I was using to cleanse the room and laid it on the floor beside me. Taking in a few deep breaths I lifted my hands - focusing deep within myself on my magical core. I felt the surge flow through me. A triumphant smile broke out across my lips when I saw the beautiful familiar blue glow build from my fingertips spreading out towards my wrist. I pushed my magic forth, feeling the surge rise higher, crawling past my elbows. As I continued to push my magic the candles that surrounded my room rose from the floor. A relieved sigh broke from within me, but I was still unsatisfied when I felt the sweat forming on my brow after only a few short minutes of holding the spell. Sucking in air through my nose, I closed my eyes momentarily as I raised my hands higher - the static feel of my magic raising the hairs on the back of my neck. The creak of my four poster bed alerted me that I had finally achieved the next half of my spell. I opened my eyes with a gasp of exhaustion and smiled brightly when I saw my bed floating at least a foot off the ground. Glancing around the room I was proud to see all ten of the candles and my bed floating. I rolled my shoulders and closed my eyes again with a deep calming breath. I needed to focus and stay calm so that I could hold the spell for as long as I could. I stayed that way for what felt like hours, but finally - when I felt like I could no longer hold up my head - I opened my eyes, swaying slightly. My arms ached from the force of the pressure I was exerting. My forehead and neck were covered in a thick sheen of sweat but I couldn't care less - I glanced at the alarm clock by my bed and noticed that I had held on for a good half hour without fainting nor my power waining. I lowered my hands gently, allowing the floating items around my room to fall back to the ground with small thumps. With one final burst of effort - I snapped my fingers and extinguished the candles as I stood shakily - stumbling over to my bed and falling on top of it with a grumble of exhaustion.

A loud banging woke me from my exhausted unintentional nap...or coma...it definitely felt more like I had fallen into a coma. My entire body ached. It felt like I had attempted to run a marathon. Even my fingers hurt. Why did my fingers hurt? I sat up slowly, working my way to the edge of my bed as another bang came from my door. I flung my knotted hair over my shoulder and moaned loudly as I stood, whimpering as my feet protested the use. I was so magically out of shape and this was my body's way of reminding me I needed to take it easier when training. The banging
continued, whoever it was growing more agitated the longer I took to answer. I glared at the door as I waddled my way towards it, stretching my arms toward the ceiling. My back popped in the most fantastic way and I instantly felt a bit better about life. I let out a put upon sigh and flung open my door, revealing a pair of cool blue eyes.

"Hello, Day. Is it already time?" I asked, suddenly aware that I had probably slept longer than I should have.

Damon pushed past me, his entire being radiating stress. "Where have you been? And why is there some kind of force field around your room?" he spat out quickly, pacing around the room in a small circle.

I closed my door, stepping away from him towards my vanity. I watched him pace uneasily. His dark hair was ruffled and his shoulders stiff as he stopped his pacing to plant his cold stare on me. I picked up my brush and pointed it at him, flicking my wrist irritably before I started to brush my hair.

"Listen here, Salvatore. I get your freaking out because something you have been waiting over a hundred years for is finally coming to pass, but that doesn't give you a right to barge into my room and start spitting your fire in my direction. Cool your flame, Damon!" I growled eyes narrowed.

I pointed towards the window where the sun was only now heading towards the horizon. "The Bennetts aren't even starting the ritual to open the tomb until the moon is high, Day," I said, stepping towards him and placing my hand on his arm.

Damon reached for my hand, taking it in his, and closed his eyes. "I'm sorry, Elandra. I just...I've been waiting so long to see her again and after this..." he said, looking away from me.

I glanced down at his palm, tracing an unfamiliar pattern and shook my head. "No matter what happens just remember...you will see her again. Even if it's not tonight," I said with a grimace.

He let go of my hand and stepped away, running his fingers through his hair. I knew he was still fighting the truth.

"Let's go. I'm ready to get her out of there," he roughly said.

I grabbed a hair tie from my vanity and pulled up my hair, twisting it into a bun as I followed him out of my room. At the bottom of the stairs, Damon took me in his arms pulling me against his chest. I laid my cheek on his cool leather jacket, taking in his familiar scent, and let out a small silent sob. This was going to tear him apart. I couldn't stop the burst of white-hot hate I felt for Kat at this moment. I understood her to a point, but this...this was just cruel. I squealed in surprise as he sped us out of the house and towards the woods.

I let out an unladylike curse when I saw the bonfire and large crowd of drunken high school and college students. Stepping through a patch of trees and into the small clearing that laid just before the tomb, Damon growled lowly beside me and I took his arm, giving him a gentle warning squeeze.

"It's the damn Duke party, I forgot. I hope they all stay out of our way," I sighed.

Damon chuckled darkly, eyes sparkling in the firelight as we stepped past the bonfire. "Your hope, not mine," he said.

I shook my head, smacking him in the chest as hard as I could as we continued past the group of drinking partygoers. I could see the treeline that led to the church and was just about to let out a
cheer to our good fortune when I heard someone calling my name behind us. I bit the inside of my cheek and winced, spinning around and stepping in front of the irritated vampire beside me. Matt and Caroline bolted towards us, their fingers intertwined, giant smiles on their faces. Inwardly I beamed. I couldn't wait to grill her about all the details! I knew they would become a couple.

"Ellie, hey!" Care said, pulling me into a hug. "I've been texting you all day, girl. I was wondering if you were gonna show up," she said, eyes quickly darting to Damon with unease.

I took her wrist - very grateful to see she still wore her bracelet - and pulled her away, keeping one eye firmly on Matty who was awkwardly standing near Damon.

"Listen Care, Elena, and I are dealing with some supernatural bullshit at the moment. So, I am gonna need you to stay right here, no wandering off. Please, I will call and explain everything later," I said, placing my hands on her shoulders.

Caroline moaned loudly, stomping her foot on the ground with a scowl. "You know ever since those stupid Salvatores came to town we have had nothing but scary supernatural crap going down. They need to go," she said.

I smiled brightly and pulled her into a hug. "Sweety, this is Mystic Falls. There would be supernatural shit no matter what. They are actually gonna be extremely useful in the end. Besides, they are family, Care," I said patting her on the cheek with a giggle.

Care stepped away and shook her head. "They aren't my family," she grumbled, before pointing at Damon with a harsh glare. "If one hair is out of place on her gorgeous ginger head I will personally stake your ass," she whispered.

I chuckled lightly, turning it into a cough when I saw the dark look in Damon's eyes as he watched Care pull Matt back towards the party. I stepped beside him and took his arm.

"Come on, Damon. I won't let my guard Barbie hurt you," I joked.

Damon jerked his arm away and rushed forward. "We are wasting time," he said.

I followed after him, my breath floating in front of me in puffs of white clouds. I rubbed my cold hands together and pushed along - walking in relative silence until we finally reached the church. Sheila, Bonnie, and Elena, all stood huddled together against the cold near the entrance to the tomb. I nodded in greeting to Sheila just as Stefan climbed up from the tomb - a shovel in hand.

"Cleared the debris away. Set the torches like you asked. We can get down now," he said, glancing at Sheila and Bonnie.

I took Damon's hand and pulled him towards Sheila. "Sorry, we're a bit late. I got held back by Caroline and Matt," I said.

Bonnie and Elena both froze momentarily and I rolled my eyes. "Don't worry. I didn't invite them to the vampire roast," I said, snapping my fingers.

In front of Stefan two red containers of gasoline appeared and Elena jumped in surprise.

"What is that?" Bonnie asked.

I gestured towards the containers and Stefan reached down to pick one up. "It's everything we need to destroy them. I made a deal and I intend to keep it. Only one of them comes out of there alive," I said, catching the eye of every person huddled around me.
Sheila nodded and placed a hand on Bonnie's shoulder when the young witch scoffed and made to start her inquisition. Stefan handed Sheila a flashlight as Damon walked past me, descending the stone steps down into the tomb. Stefan tried to catch my eye but I avoided him, instead choosing to follow after Damon. When we entered the tomb Sheila stood in front of each torch - lighting them as she began to chant.

"Air. Earth. Fire."

Bonnie - who stood behind her with a clear plastic container full of water - handed it to Sheila who proceeded to sprinkle it on the floor in front of the entrance.

"Water," Bonnie said.

Having seen these types of rituals before I was less than impressed, so instead, I chose to focus on my numb hands. I continued to rub them together forcefully, before giving up with a grumble of annoyance. I sidestepped closer to one of the torches, sticking my hands close to the flame - letting out a sigh of relief when they started to tingle as they thawed. Damon caught my eye and chuckled, shaking his head in amusement. I shrugged, placing my warmed hands in my coat pocket. As Sheila sprinkled the last of the water on the ground. Elena scoffed, looking at me in shock.

"That's it? Just water from the tap?" she asked.

I rolled my eyes and stepped closer to her. "What did you expect? Were we all supposed to dance around naked as we chanted in Latin?" I snipped.

Damon leaned against the stone wall and cleared his throat. "I mean…" he started.

I smacked his chest and glared at him as Sheila looked at our resident doppelganger in annoyance. "As opposed to what?" she diplomatically asked.

Elena glanced around at all of us as she scooted closer to Stefan. "I just figured maybe it would have to be blessed or mystical or something," she said.

I laughed, shrugging as I glanced back at Damon. "That's a common misconception, Lena. Only certain ingredients in certain spells have to be mystical or blessed. And it's never the water. Usually, it's the blood," I said, tilting my head and running my eyes over her swiftly.

Stefan placed a hand on her arm as he stepped in front of her, moving towards me slowly as if he was prepared to attack. I scoffed at his reaction, rolling my eyes as I moved away. I wasn't at all surprised when I bumped into Damon as I backed up. He was standing directly behind me, eyes firmly placed on his brother.

"Ok guys, come on. There is no need for this. I'd rather just get this over with," I said.

Damon pulled me away from Lena and his brother, leading me towards the witches as he reached into his jacket - unraveling a blood bag. I smirked up at him, his blue eyes were gleeful as he glanced at his brother who was shining his flashlight in our direction.

"What's that?" Stefan asked.

I jerked my head towards him with a snort. "Please. You know exactly what that is, Stef," I laughed.

Damon smiled at his brother and drug his blue eyes towards my sister. "It's for Katherine. Gotta have something to get her going. Unless your girls offering a vein to tap."
Elena glanced at us both, disdain clear on her face.

"Admit it. Your hoping Katherine is in there because if she is, you get rid of me. And you can't wait for that," he whispered looking at his brother.

I avoided my sister's heated gaze in favor of Bonnie and Sheila who were reading from the grimoire on the cold stone ground at our feet. Stefan chuckled, gently shaking his head. "I can't wait to get rid of you," he said.

I sighed deeply and bit my bottom lip in agitation. Why couldn't they just get along the way they used to?

Bonnie glanced up at us her brow furrowed. "We're ready," she said.

Sheila and Bonnie stood, stepping into the middle of the tomb as they interlocked hands, their eyes closed. The air around us became thick with magic and tension as they started to chant, reciting the spell to unlock the entrance to the tomb. Damon paced back and forth, watching them intently.

"What are they saying?" he asked.

I tilted my head, watching them cast. I kept my senses peeled - ready for anything. I knew that the spell they were using would unlock the tomb, but something was off.

"Sounds Latin," Stefan said.

Elena stepped closer to me, glancing at me for confirmation. "I don't think its Latin," she said.

I shook my head, too focused on the spell to bother answering them with words. Damon stopped his pacing and stood next to me, the blood bag held tightly in his grasp. After only a few moments of the witches chanting the torches around us flared brightly, the Salvatores and my sister flinched back in surprise. Elena rushed over to Stefan, grasping his arm in fear.

"What's happening?" Elena gasped.

I turned my head towards my sister and smiled. "It's working," I said.

As the words left my lips a loud creaking echoed throughout the tomb as the stone door started to crack, separating into two. Damon looked down at me, shock and happiness shining in his eyes, centuries in the making. Sheila and Bonnie's chanting stopped as the rumbling around the room finally ended and Bonnie's excited gasp was the first thing we heard.

"It worked!" she said, staring at the opened tomb in awe.

Sheila let go of her hands and stepped away, glancing at me with her usual air of superiority. "Of course it worked," she said.

Damon glanced behind him towards his brother as he took my hand. "We have some fires to build," he said.

Stefan watched me closely before he looked down at Elena, gently touching her shoulder. "I'm gonna go get the gasoline. I'll be right back," he said.

I rolled my eyes and sighed, smiling when I could hear the chuckle coming from the young witch to my right even if she tried to hide it. Stefan glared at me as he ascended the stairs out of the tomb.
Damon looked from the witches to my sister and back as he pulled me towards the entrance. He looked down at me, his eyes hard.

"You ready?" he asked.

I stepped in front of the tomb and raised my hands feeling the shrouded power that still radiated from it. I chuckled darkly, shaking my head. Before Damon could step through the entrance I placed a hand on his shoulder and pushed him away. Spinning around I started to clap my hands slowly, earning a raised brow and speculative gaze from the vampire beside me.

"Very tricky, Bennetts. I've gotta hand it to ya, it was a clever plan," I said, walking towards them my eyes narrowed.

Sheila watched me her face paling. I raised my index finger in the air with a smirk. "But, as I explained to you Sheila, none of your plans would be clever enough for a witch my age. Because you see, I can still feel the magic wafting off the damn thing! What did you think I would do to you when he couldn't escape, hmm? Did you think I would just leave him there to rot?"

I extended my hand towards Sheila, my face a mask of anger. She gasped in fear as she fell towards the ground yet never met it. Her body floated in the empty air, her hands grasping at her neck where an invisible force held her in place. I pulled my hand towards my body and Sheila was drug towards me, her feet scraping across the stone floor, small pebbles fluttering in her wake. Bonnie rushed forward, her fists clutched in anger, but Damon was beside me in an instant, his vampiric features on display as a warning to the young witch and my sister. I glanced at them both with no emotion. At the moment I couldn't have any. Sheila had tested me and tried to betray our deal, I couldn't allow her to get away with it. I wasn't Elara Gilbert right now, but Elandra Rioult, Original witch. I knew Elena and Bonnie wouldn't understand that and would probably never forgive this, but sometimes these things had to be done if you wanted to protect those you loved. This world wasn't as black and white as they believed, and I truly hoped someday they would understand that.

Sheila flew into my grasp and I tightened my hand around her thin neck. Leaning towards her I ran my eyes over her face. "Now, you and Bonnie will complete the spell, leaving the tomb entirely open. I know that you do not have the power you need to safely do that." I lifted my other hand towards her, running my finger across her cheek. "I can sense your power is nothing compared to Emily's nor is Bonnie's, not yet at least. So, even though you have betrayed me I will help you. I will save your life, seeing as it is now my job to do so," I said with a sneer.

I let go of her neck, allowing her to fall to the ground. I took an audible deep breath before I lowered my gaze to the crumbled witch at my feet. Damon placed a hand on my shoulder and I shrugged it off. I didn't need his comfort right now. I needed no one's comfort or strength when I was casting. I bent over Sheila, my hand lit with magic and placed it on her forehead. My magic seeped into her skin and Sheila gasped in surprise, her eyes widening before fluttering closed in delight. I knew my magic would probably feel like the best high to her.

"Your magic will temporarily have a boon. It will be enough for you to complete this spell. Do not try any more of your tricks. I expect us both to be able to exit when we are ready," I said.

Sheila stood, her eyes planted on the ground as she backed away from me. Bonnie stepped forward, Lena's hand placed firmly on her shoulder. "Who do you think you are, Elara? You can't just attack my Grams like that. What the hell happened to you?" she yelled, trying to step closer to me.

Elena pushed her away when Damon growled threateningly, the black veins growing under his eyes as he bared his teeth. I placed myself in front of Damon and Bonnie my hands raised. "Bonnie,
I warned your Grams. I told her what would happen if either of you dared betray me. There are consciences when you break an oath between our kind. Even if we are inherently two different breeds of witch - Magic is the same, and your Grams and I had a deal. She broke it," I shrugged.

Bonnie scoffed glaring at me menacingly. Sheila grabbed hold of Bonnie's elbow before she could do something stupid - like try and cast something against me - and pulled her away.

"Bonnie, she is right. I broke our deal and that means she had every right to cast her retribution. That is the way of things. The fact that she didn't actually punish me, means we owe her a debt, one that I intend to pay now by performing the spell as it was meant to be performed," she said, taking Bonnie's hands in her own.

Bonnie's eyes were wide as they flitted from her Grams to Elena and back. My sister stood off to the side of the tomb her hands shaking. She shrugged in shock, unable to help her friend or tell her what to do as she usually did. I crossed my arms and raised a brow as Sheila jerked Bonnie's arms. "Focus Bonnie," Sheila castigated.

Bonnie turned her head, closing her eyes with a small whimper of disbelief, joining her Grams as she chanted. When I was satisfied by their continued spellwork, I took Damon's hand and pulled him towards the entrance of the dark tomb. Elena skated her way towards us, her doe eyes round as she realized she would be left all but alone. The two witches too busy with the spell to offer her much protection.

"You can't just leave me here!" she whined.

Damon turned to me, raising his hand, and motioning towards my sister with a smirk before stepping into the darkness, his deft figure disappearing completely. Even though I wasn't sure he could see me I still sent him the finger, annoyed that he had left me to deal with my sister alone. A ghostly chuckle bounced off the walls ahead of me and I stuck out my tongue towards the darkness.

I twisted my head, turning towards Elena, giving her my full attention. "Listen, Lena, Stefan will be bringing the gas back down here shortly. In fact, I have no clue what is taking him so long."

I glanced back towards the stairs, idly wondering what had caught the youngest Salvatores attention. I pulled out my phone and checked to make sure he hasn't tried to contact me. When I saw no new messages I placed it back in my pocket and looked up at Lena.

"You do not want to come in here with us. Believe me, desiccation is not pleasant and I'd rather that not be something you ever witness Lena," I said, brushing her hair from her eyes.

She pulled away from me, crossing her arms, eyes narrowed. "Like you care what I have to witness. You just attacked someone in front of me," she smarted.

I licked my lips, my eyes widening at her tone. She was right, after all. I had just attacked Sheila right in front of her. My true self shining through without a second thought. I looked back into the darkness of the tomb and rubbed my shoulder.

"Your right, I did. But this, what lies in there" I pointed at the entrance, glancing at her sternly. "That is not something you need to see. What I did with Sheila was unavoidable. Just stay here Elena. For once listen to me and wait for your boyfriend. I'll be back for the gas shortly," I said, stepping into the darkness and pulling a flashlight from my bag.

I turned on my light and took a deep breath as I steadily made my way through the dark tunnel. I
could hear low moans reverberating off the walls and knew that they were coming from somewhere near my feet. A loud clunk of metal hitting stone had me gasping loudly, my heart pounding unsteadily against my ribs when my foot hit something solid.

They were chained! Oh my God.

They had chained them all to the walls. I closed my eyes, swallowing heavily as I lowered my light towards the huddled masses of pale grey flesh nearest me. The dessicated man beside me was more mummy the man, his grey flesh sunken in and paper thin. I lowered myself closer to him and shined my light on his face. His eyes popped open, their glassy red depths staring back at me hungrily. I shrieked in utter fear, shocked by his sudden lifelike animation. It was so easy to forget that they were alive when staring at their mummified appearance. I stumbled back, my feet colliding with another starved prisoner and I fell, landed heavily beside the desiccated vampire. I gasped, rolling away breathing heavily. I tried to get to my feet as quickly as I could and screamed again with I felt a warm hand on my arm, lifting me to my feet. I stumbled against the hard chest of Stefan Salvatore. His dark brown hair breeze swept, eyes warm and full of concern.

"Elandra, it's ok, it's ok. It's just me," he softly said.

He ran his fingers across my cheek breathing deeply to help calm me. I nodded as I took in his words, my heart still pounding unsteadily. The mixture of the darkness and being so alone had left me feeling trapped and that was one of my worst fears. I felt completely silly, and much to damsel like. I moved away from him, my hands still holding onto his arms for support as I tried to steady my breathing.

"Thank you, Stef. I fell...and it was just so dark...and I was alone again," I whispered.

Stefan's face fell, his eyes clouding with something heavy not unlike guilt. "Well, I was here this time, El," he said.

I smiled weakly, running my hands over my face. "Yeah, you were. I appreciate that." I said with a half smile.

He ran his hand over the back of his neck awkwardly and I bent over to pick up my flashlight, seeing the gasoline at his feet.

"I see you brought me a party favor," I said, twirling my light.

Stefan chuckled, reaching down and grabbing one of the containers, giving it a gentle shake. "Ready for our own little bonfire, Ms. Miller?" he asked with a smirk.

I shook my head with a small pout. "I'm only sorry I didn't bring marshmallows," I said.

Stefan sighed exaggeratedly and glanced at the bodies surrounding us. "So? Where should we start?"

I shined my light on each vampire that was near us glancing over every male quickly, only really giving the women a thorough examination. I needed to find Pearl.

"Go ahead and cover them with the gas, Stef. I need to find Pearl and Damon," I said over my shoulder.

I could hear the light shake of the container as Stefan started to cover the vampires with the gas, but I ignored him as I very carefully made my way towards the back of the tomb. Finally, against the wall near the back I could see a woman in a long old fashioned dress, her normally jet black
hair was now dead and grey placed in a high updo.

I bent down beside her with a heavy sigh. "Hello Pearl," I said, pulling out my phone.

I knew Anna was waiting nearby, having sent her a text that we were opening the tomb tonight. Dialing Anna's number I waited patiently. "Do you have her?" Anna spouted as soon as she answered.

I smiled, knowing how excited she was. "Well hello to you too Anna," I smirked, hearing her frustrated growl.

"Hello, Elandra. Do you have my mother?" she asked again.

I looked down at the grey mummified version of Pearl with a wince. "Yes, I do. You did exactly what I asked of you, so you may come get her. Do not hurt anyone in my town and leave immediately or I will come after you," I said firmly.

Anna took in a deep breath and then I could hear the rush of wind come through the speaker as she sped toward us.

"Agreed. I'm on my way," she said, hanging up.

I could smell gasoline and knew Stefan was standing behind me. "So, Anna is on her way I take it?" he asked.

I nodded slowly and lifted my foot, reaching into my boot and pulling out my knife. Stefan's breath caught in his throat when he saw it, and I could feel him moving closer. "What are you doing, El?" he asked.

I ignored him and ran the blade over the palm of my hand swiftly. Blood dripped down my wrist and I heard Stefan growl in anger. "Elandra!" he yelled.

I rolled my eyes and laid my palm against Pearl's lips. Her bright red eyes - the same color of the blood the I was using to bring her back to life - snapped open and met my own green ones. I smiled at her and lowered my head in a welcoming fashion. She started to lap up my blood, briefly reminding me of a sick cat I had once owned in another life. I pushed away the oddly sickening thought and allowed her a few more moments with my blood before I pulled away. She was still grey and appeared more like a corpse than a living person, but she no longer looked like a mummy. She laid back against the stone wall, her breathing ragged.

"Lady Miller?" she rasped.

I smiled, my eyes burning with unshed tears. "No, Pearl. Not anymore," I said my throat dry.

Pearl's red eyes hardened and I knew what she was about to say was going to be a knife to my heart. "Don't tell me you actually married the Salvatore boy even after what he did with Katherine," she whispered glancing at Stefan. "Should I call you, Mrs. Salvatore then?" she asked.

I stood quicker then I thought I could as a human and stepped away, my heart aching. Stefan took my elbow but I jerked myself away from him. Pearl watched my reaction, her eyes soft with sadness.

"No, no I did not. Anna...she will be here momentarily," I stated.

I took my light and rushed as carefully as I could towards the back of the tomb. I knew that's where
I would find Damon and the ghost of the woman who still haunted us both, no matter how much I wanted to deny it. I could hear a rustling of dirt and stone hitting the wall as I rounded the corner, entering the final room in the back of the tomb. Damon stood in the circular room, his back to me shoulders tense, his hand rushing through his hair as he paced around the room.

"She's not here," he said, more to himself than me. I lowered my head my shoulders slumped in defeat.

"I know Damon," I whispered.

Damon turned to me, the useless blood bag fisted in his hand. "She's not here!" he yelled, tossing the bag at the wall where it spattered, trailering down in tears of red.

He looked to me, anguish written across his face

"It doesn't make sense, El. They...they locked her inside," he said, stepping closer to me.

I reached towards him, running my fingers across his cheek. "No Damon. She convinced someone to help her escape. She was never here. I told you she was never here," I said.

He laid his forehead against mine, his eyes squeezed tightly shut. "How could she not be here," he said, his voice pained.

I moved my fingers through his hair, and down his neck. "I am so sorry," I said, unbidden tears falling from my eyes.

Damon let go of me, stepping away. "No, there has to be a reason," he said, rushing out of the tomb.

I watched him go, my heart breaking for him. Taking a deep breath I follow after him, finding Stefan at the entrance.

"Damon didn't find her?" he asked, looking out towards the direction Damon presumably fled.

"No, I told you both she wasn't here," I said.

Stefan looked at me, his eyes full of regret. "I should have believed you," he said.

"I scoffed, shaking my head. "Yes, well should have doesn't really mean a lot to me right now Stefan." I turned back towards the darkness of the tomb. "You sure you covered every vampire with gasoline?" I asked.

Stefan shook the empty container with a nod. "Yes. They are ready for a lit match," he said.

I rolled my eyes and faced the darkness, raising my fingers, and with a quick snap, the darkness became lit with bright fierce firelight as every vampire within the tomb began to burn. Low screams rang through the air and from the corner of my eye I could see Elena's tear-filled eyes as Stefan comforted her, whispering reassuring words in her innocent ears. I stayed put, watching the fire and listening until every agonized cry died out. They didn't deserve to die alone. I hated having to end their lives, but I couldn't chance them seeking revenge on my family or any of the other Founders. When I could hear nothing but the sizzling of the fire I flicked my wrist, sending a quick burst of wind to douse the flames. Turning on my heel I avoided the searching eyes of those that had stayed behind. Bonnie and Sheila lowered their heads as I passed and closed my eyes, unable to play the part of the superior witch at the moment. My phone buzzed in my pocket as I ascended the stairs towards the moonlight above me. I lifted my phone from my back pocket and moaned in
annoyance at the message that awaited me.

"Elandra, we just received a visit from Damon. He asked us about Katherine. He wasn't happy to find out that I knew she wasn't in the tomb. I was forced to tell him about the last time I had seen her. He didn't seem all that surprised to find out it was in 1983. He seemed broken when I revealed that she knew of his location. I am so sorry, but I thought I should let you know. He looks on the verge of something terrible. Be careful. Anna.

I sat on the ground in front of the tomb, my head on my knees. This was bad. I needed to make sure Damon didn't do anything stupid until I could get him and Katherine together. He needed to be able to confront her. This was all beginning to become too much and I felt so powerless and alone. Something warm touched my shoulder and I looked up, brushing the tears from my cheeks. Elena and Stefan stood beside me.

"He's gonna be ok El," Stefan said.

I shook my head in disbelief. "I'm not so sure about that. Not this time," I said.

Elena took my hand, lifting me to my feet. "Then you'll be there. As much as I hate the idea of that," she smiled.

I chuckled, sniffing as she helped me clean my face. "Let's get you home, Ellie. I think you've done enough for today," she whispered, glancing at Stefan.

They both nodded and for once I conceded, allowing someone else to take care of me for a change even if I knew their kindness was most likely temporary.
The weeks following the opening of the tomb flew by; a blur of the usual family drama with a bit of the new in the form of a game Elena had started to play called: "Who's our mama?"

Lena was shocked to find out I had no interest in her Sherlockian games and once I informed her I had absolutely no desire to find the woman who had abandoned us, she had no choice but to join forces with Aunt Jenna and Stefan. With me out of the equation, Elena followed Aunt Jenna’s suggestion to go digging up our father's old medical records. She hoped that it would help them discover who our birth mother really was. Of course, my sister's luck being what it is, they quickly found a lead, and after Aunt Jenna searched the web for the faux last name Isobel had given our father, she uncovered a woman that lived nearby with the same last name. Elena, the idiot she is, took off alone to visit her. That led to a whole new bundle of revelations.

Trudie(our dear mother's old friend) told Elena that Isobel had gone to Duke University, exactly where Alaric had met his wife. So, as I had expected, Alaric just happening to show up in our town with an obvious hatred for Damon and a deceased wife with our bio moms first name, was more than a mere coincidence. That wasn't the only odd thing Elena discovered about Isobel's old friend Trudie. It seemed she knew a little too much about vervain and home invitations to be considered a normal ill-informed human. After Elena's visit with Trudie, and the new basket full of info she had gotten from it, she received a special visitor, a compelled one. Really, I should have been more surprised than I was, but after everything - one insane discovery after another - I guess I was becoming desensitized.

So, when Isobel decided to leave Lena a message she wouldn't forget, I wasn't as blown away by it as Stefan and Elena were. The man Isobel sent caught us while we were in town. He stood in front of Elena his face blank and told her to "stop looking" and then proceeded to step in front of a truck. Needless to say, that was a wake-up call for Lena. It also proved that Isobel was about as dead as the Salvatores. A vampire mother...now that was a new one, even for me.

When I wasn't following around my sister and dealing with our mama drama, I was worrying about Damon and his 145 years of pining. It had hit him just as hard as I figured it would - finding out that Kat had never really loved him. The fact that he had put his life on hold for her for 145 years
for nothing, was killing him. He had taken to filling his time with sorority girls and massive amounts of alcohol. I spent my free time sending off compelled, half-naked college girls and helping his drunk ass up the stairs once he was too far gone to do it himself. Stefan was no help and chose to just watch his brother self destruct with only mild bouts of sympathy. So without his help, my weekends were spent catering to Damon's whims and allowing him to yank me to random clubs and then back home once we were either kicked out, or the sun came up. During these trips, I would act like I was drinking my fill, while I made sure he didn't kill anyone or reveal his and Stefan's secret during a drunken stupor. It wasn't how I wanted to spend my last year of life, but I had suffered through worse things in my centuries of living, and people tend to do whatever it takes for those they love.

Yet, even with my interference, eventually, it all started to become too much. Everyone was on edge and I knew Damon was bound to crack. He was always the type to say or do something to set everyone off, and I tried everything I could to keep that from happening. Though of course, it didn't really matter. It all came to a head during the Mystic Falls Bachelor Auction. Damon, in yet another drunken stupor, decided to take the stage and taunt Alaric about how 'delicious' his wife Isobel had been when he had drinks with her at Duke. The revelation that it had been Damon who had turned our mother, had been a big blow to both Elena and myself. I honestly hadn't expected it. Although by the look Stefan had given Elena, he had known. I was surprised by how well he had hidden it from me. Usually, I am the first to discover these things. Naturally, Elena had not found Damon's little joke funny. Really, the whole encounter had been tiring and had been enough to prove to me that what I was doing wasn't helping Damon. I was enabling him, and I had to stop. I knew that Katherine was preparing her big move and that there was more to Isobel then she was letting on. I was exhausted and completely done with the extra drama.

After Elena confronted Damon I decided to ignore the Salvatore family for the most part. I stayed away, choosing to help Elena and Caroline get through the Miss Mystic Pageant. It was nice just being a normal teen for once. Watching my sister and Stefan dance together, their eyes like liquid fire - it was almost as if they were staring into each other's very souls. I had never wished a vampiric eternity for her, yet when I watched them dance, I couldn't help but think - not even time should part them. Then having Caroline's mega-watt smile shining down on me when she won - finally able to best my sister at something, it was amazing. An experience that I will always be able to look back on and never regret being a part of. Even with the small measure of peace that I had been able to soak up the past two weeks - after finally deciding to ignore the Salvatore family - stress was still a permanent part of my life. I was just glad that for now, the biggest form of stress in my life was the Miss Mystic Falls Queen and her ever bubbly personality.

As I glanced at my own exhausted reflection in the mirror in front of me, I sighed at my appearance. The young woman staring back at me was almost unrecognizable, her green eyes dull and hanging lifelessly over a heavy set of purple bags that didn't seem to want to go away no matter the cover-up that was liberally applied. Her red hair was dry and lying heavily across her shoulders appearing almost as exhausted as she did. The girl in the mirror frowned, her shoulders slumping as she looked down, defeated. Rubbing a hand across my brow I rotated my shoulders, hoping to relieve a bit of the stress that was covering me like a lead blanket, drowning me. I shook my head, allowing my thoughts to scatter. Scrunching up my eyes, a shrill blast permeated the air as I headed out my bedroom door and bounded down the stairs. Hopping off the last step I headed towards the front door. The blaring of Caroline's car horn had been alerting me of her ever 'patient' presence for the past three minutes as I had tried to quickly gather the rest of my belongings and exit the house. Jeremy rounded the corner beside me, his eyes narrowed in annoyance as I yanked open the front door and waved my hand around wildly, the silver heart of my bracelet swinging madly.

"I'm coming! GOD!" I hollered, laughing lightly.
I took my bag from the coat rack beside me and leaned against the wall next to Jer.

"Ya know, sometimes I wonder why you still associate with her," he said, rolling his eyes.

I shook my head with a scoff and pulled him out the door. Jeremy's attitude had been a bit harsh and withdrawn ever since Anna had 'disappeared.' I was trying to ignore the little nudge of suspicion that tried to tie my stomach up in knots. I was both parts terrified and hopeful that maybe Jeremy was becoming suspicious of all the 'weird' that was a part of Mystic Falls. Maybe Anna was the push he needed to finally put two and two together. I just hoped he could forgive me for not doing more to help him.

"You know you love Care just as much as I do. She's basically family, Jer," I said.

Jeremy pulled away from me and put his headphones in his ears before he hopped into Caroline's back seat. I took a deep breath and tried to control the look of defeat I knew was working its way across my face. Caroline's bright smile greeted me as I slid into the front. I tried to focus on her innate babbling as we headed towards the school, but my focus was torn between her and my ever distant brother. He was hunched up in the back, his face all but covered by his hood as he listened to music, eyes never leaving the scenery. Something was really bothering him, and I knew it had to have at least a bit to do with Anna. He might not have really clicked with her, but she was yet another girl that had known him and then just up and disappeared. I felt terrible for him. There was so much pain in his life, much more than any teenager should ever have to suffer through. I reached down and grabbed my backpack from my feet, pulling my journal from inside. I nodded my head at Caroline while she continued talking to me about something to do with the Founders Day Parade. I started to sketch, terribly, but I at least hoped it would bridge the gap between myself and Jeremy. I glanced at my brother, hoping to capture his sad expression. I wanted to make sure I did him justice so that he understood what I was trying to accomplish. I slid my pencil across the paper, my eyes narrowing as they focused on the black lines of his eyes. Once I was done, I quickly drew a frowny face beside the sketch and wrote a quick message, asking him why he was so pouty this morning.

I yanked the page from my journal and folded it into an airplane, sending it towards its intended victim. The little paper jet lazily flew towards Jeremy, smacking him lightly in the nose before it fell into his lap. Jer blinked, jerking his head back as he yanked out his earbuds, eyes shooting towards mine.

"What the hell Elara?" he said.

I stuck out my lip and shrugged, turning back towards the front. He rarely ever called me Elara. I was right, there was definitely something up with him. I looked at my hands and picked at my thumbnail, feeling beyond grateful when a pale hand joined my own, grasping it tightly. I smiled weakly at my best friend, her pink lips turned up briefly as her blue eyes crinkled in sympathy. When we pulled into the parking lot Jer was out of the car before I even had the chance to utter the first syllable of his name. I lowered my head with a deep sigh. He didn't want me trying to pry and I guess I could understand that. Caroline's warm blue eyes shined as she smiled weakly.

"He'll be ok, Ellie. Try to remember, Elena is the one that likes to hammer away at him. You just need to wait, let him come to you," she said.

I smiled, nodding my head. "Yeah Care. As always you are right." I said.

Caroline grinned brightly and slid out of her car. "Of course I am. Well, I have to meet Bonnie so I'll see you later," she said, coming around the car and kissing my cheek.
I laughed at her, waving as she left. I watched her saunter away, swaying her hips, hair blowing around her in the breeze. She really did look like a Queen. I shook my head with a sigh and started towards my first class. Before I could get two feet, my phone started to buzz. I pulled it out of my pocket, frowning when I saw a text from Elena. She wanted me to meet her in Alaric's classroom.

Why?

I growled, annoyed by whatever new bit of drama was sure to be awaiting me. Placing my phone back in my pocket, I hurried towards the History room, my brain busy conjuring up the many different scenarios that would have Elena interrupting my day. It wasn't until I heard someone clearing their throat that I realized I was no longer alone in the hallway. I brushed my bangs from my eyes and looked up, groaning loudly when I found a smirk wearing vampire standing in front of the classroom door, effectively blocking the entrance. My eyes took him in for the first time since the "Hey, by the way, I turned your mom into the undead" incident. He was wearing his usual black leather jacket, dark jeans, and a button-up shirt. His raven hair was messy and windswept. I crossed my arms and tapped my foot, the sound echoing loudly in the empty hallway.

I gestured towards the door. "May I pass?" I snarkily asked.

His cool eyes assessed me, running across my stern form as he remained staunchly in front of the door. "It's been two weeks, Elandra. Two weeks. You haven't called or texted me. I thought of all people you would have understood. I didn't know who she was," he said, running a hand down his face.

I turned my head away, biting my lip. He was right. I did understand, I may still be a bit bitter about it, but I understood. It was more the fact that I couldn't be his babysitter anymore. I couldn't just watch him self destruct. Couldn't act like it was ok.

"Damon, just step aside. Now is not the time," I said, moving forward.

I jerked away, narrowing my eyes when I noticed his hand move to touch my face. I wasn't at all prepared to deal with him today. I was just planning on a regular school day, but of course, the universe wouldn't allow that. He pulled away, his eyes hard as he opened the door swiftly.

"After you then," he said, voice like liquid steel.

I could smell Bourbon and a hint of mint as my body brushed past his and I tried to ignore the jolt of memories the smell elicited. All I needed was to get lost in a fantasy of what his lips had tasted like. It was hard enough keeping our past buried when it happened over a hundred years ago, but this...well it was a lot harder to ignore, especially now that he finally knew the truth about Katherine. I kept my head lowered as I found a seat. When I finally raised my eyes I tried to keep my alarm at bay. Alaric had gathered Elena and Stefan along with myself and Damon, that could only mean this was an Isobel problem. Whatever had happened was obviously a big deal. Elena stood beside the window, arms defensively crossed as if she was shielding herself, Stefan next to her. I ran my eyes over Stefan and noticed his stiff shoulders, he was covered in a thick layer of stress, which only served to elevate my own. Alaric was casually leaning against his desk, his eyes quickly scanned Damon.

"Damon, thanks again for coming," he said.

Damon nodded with a half smile as he slid into the desk next to mine. "Sorry, I'm late. My dog ate my uh...never mind," he said, finally taking in the tense atmosphere that permeated the room.

Glancing uneasily between Lena and his brother, Damon shrugged his shoulder in a questioning
motion. "What's with all the furrowed brows?"

Alaric pushed away from his desk and regarded Damon carefully. "I saw Isobel last night," he said.

I lowered my forehead to my desk and grumbled unintelligibly in frustration. I hated being right more than I was wrong. Damon cursed in anger beside me and I turned my head, placing my cheek against the cold surface of the desk, observing his currently alert, ironclad demeanor. He sat up straight, eyes glacier. "Isobel is here?" Alaric nodded as Damon continued. "In town?" he asked, turning to Elena and myself, eyes filled with trepidation.

I sat up, looking away quickly and focused on Alaric. "What did she want? Because I know damn well it had nothing to do with catching up," I asked.

Alaric leaned back against his desk and sighed, shaking his head. He avoided my accusation, instead, choosing to focus on Damon's rapid-fire questions. I felt so bad for the poor man. He had grieved for his dead wife wishing to avenge a death that had technically never happened, only to find out now, that she had willingly turned herself into a vampire and left him behind. She was a cold-hearted bitch.

"Did you ask her about Uncle John? Are they working together?" Damon asked, huffing in annoyance as he leaned forward. I wanted to laugh at his constant hate for Uncle John. Ever since he had shown up on our doorstep a few weeks back, Damon had taken an instant disliking to him. Of course, most people do. He just has that aura of an asshole about him. Jenna, Elena, and Jeremy all hate him as well. I seem to be the only family member who actually likes John. The reason for that being I can see past his attitude to find the man behind it. That's something I have always been good at, as a member of the Mikaelson family, I really have to be. John is just a man who knows too much about the supernatural world and what it can do to the people he loves, so he is determined to protect them from it. He just goes about it the wrong way and is under the very common misconception that all supernatural beings are evil and cannot be trusted. Someday, I hope to change that.

Alaric looked at his feet with a barely noticeable wince. "No," he said.

Damon of course, the annoying vampire that he is, noticed the little chink in Alaric's armor and started grinding his teeth together. "No they're not?" he asked, voice thinning with anger and annoyance.

Alaric turned his head back towards Damon, stepping away from his desk again and walking towards the window. "No, I didn't ask," he said, hand running through his hair.

Damon sat back heavily in his seat, knuckles tapping against the desk. "What about the invention?" he asked.

I rolled my eyes and laid my head on my hand. The stupid invention, I was so sick of hearing about it. I suspected Kat had something to do with all the yammering that had passed through our small group about the damn thing since Isobel had shown up. What she wanted with Jonathan Gilbert's special little device I didn't know, but it couldn't be good. I had told her I wouldn't interfere unless she started hurting those I loved, and a device that put vampires in danger fell under that category. I would have to do something about it. I leaned back in my seat and sighed, adding "Deactivate Gilbert device" to my mental checklist.

Damn it was getting long again.

Alaric shrugged. "Didn't ask," he said.
Damon threw his hands in the air in exasperation his blue eyes flaming with irritation. "Did words completely escape you?" he asked.

Alaric stepped closer to him, a hand falling on his hip. "No, I was a little too distracted by my dead vampire wife to ask any questions," he said, voice filled with sass.

I chuckled, resituating myself and ignoring the glares I received. I loved sassy Alaric. Damon glanced past me towards Elena.

"What did she want?" he asked her.

Elena reached towards me, taking my hand from where it lay atop the desk. Her doe eyes connected with mine and she took a deep breath. "She wants to see us, Damon," she said.

I closed my eyes and lowered my head in acceptance. I could feel Damon place a hand on my shoulder and I let the stress melt away temporarily.

"Neither of you have to go if you don't want to," he said, his voice soft as he rubbed circles on my shoulder.

Elena let go of my hand and stepped closer to me. "We don't have a choice," she said.

There was no mistaking the resolute desire to go and meet our mother hidden in those words. Although I was sure Isobel had made the invitation one that couldn't be backed out of, there was no doubt in my mind that Elena wanted to meet our mother. Alaric bit his lip and looked away from us.

"She threatened to go on a killing spree," he said.

Damon moved his hand from my shoulder and brushed my bangs from my forehead. "Oh! I take it that's not ok with you guys," he said.

I could hear the joke in his words, but as the others jerked back in disgust, I could see they did not. My chest shook as I tried to hold back the laughter that tried to break free, but it was to no avail. Elena grumbled in distaste as she walked back towards Stefan. I covered my face with my hands and let out something between a sigh and a giggle, as I finally shook off the nerves. Damon smiled brightly and I could feel the pleased air about him. This was the first time in weeks that I had actually acknowledged him, let alone laughed with him as if we were old friends. Elena took Stefan's hand and looked at me with annoyance.

"I need to meet her. I want to. If I don't, I know I will always regret it, and I think you will too," she said, eyes never leaving mine.

I stood up and joined her near the window, my eyes zeroing in on the way the sunlight reflected off the auburn highlights in her hair. I tried to smile as I nodded. "Elena, if that's what you need then I will be there right by your side," I said.

Elena let out a relieved breath and hugged me tightly. I was so going to regret this.
Elena squeezed my hand tightly and I tried to ignore the way my fingers pinched together. I watched them slowly turning from red to a pale white. Lena scanned the Grill uneasily before her head lowered, eyes running across the wood table, her tongue running over her lower lip.

"Can you hear me? Thanks for coming, I'm nervous," she whispered, slowly turning her head towards the other side of the bar, where Stefan was leaning over a pool table cue in hand.

From where he stood guard, Stefan's lips curved upwards, eyes roaming over our joined hands with amusement. I laid my chin on Elena's shoulder and kissed her cheek. "Listen, Lena, everything is going to be fine. Even if she is awful it won't matter, because we have already had a brilliant mother," I said.

Elena glanced down at me and smiled lightly. "Yeah, your right. We already had the best mother, so really she can't do anything but reaffirm the fact that her abandoning us was the right choice," Elena said, rubbing circles on the top of my hand.

Elena lifted her head from mine and turned towards Stefan. I watched him mouth three simple words to her and felt the way her body reacted to them. Her shoulders relaxed, slumping forward as she took a few deep calming breaths, finally loosening her death grip on my hand. I tried to ignore the jab of jealousy that ignited within me at the simple display of their love. They had it so easy, aside from her mortality - something that could be swiftly remedied - they had it all. There was nothing keeping them from one another, and no matter how much I loved the two of them, there would always be a part of me that also despised them for having what I never could. I raised my head from Lena's shoulder, straightening my back as the clear jingle of the welcome bell had Elena stiffening again. A tall brunette woman appearing to be in her mid-thirties breezed through the door. The air around her was thick with tension, as she headed for our table, green eyes running over both of us with interest. Her long wavy hair fell in her eyes as she tossed her jacket into the seat beside her before lowering herself into the chair in front of Elena. Releasing a breath through her nose, she tilted her head, examining Lena as one would an exotic piece of art.

"Hello, Elena. You look just like her, that's eerie," she said, raising her hand and waving it around in a dramatic fashion.

Turning towards me she reached across the table and took a strand of my hair, gently pulling it towards her and allowing it to fall from her grasp as her fingers caressed it. I jerked away from her, after the mention of Katherine's name, there was no way I would sit here and play along. There was no longer a doubt in my mind that the two were working together. Although, the longer I watched Isobel's actions, the more I realized there was something off about her, something wasn't quite right. I scanned her quickly, hoping to find her tell or a distinct feel of magic. It was always possible she was somehow using or it was being used against her. Her entire being radiated a cold aura. You could easily sense that she was the monster humans were warned to fear, she held absolutely no humanity within her. You could see it in the way her cold detached eyes viewed the world. Isobel smiled at my reaction, her lips spreading across her bright white teeth.

"So, you're the Reincarnate witch then? I have to say, it kind of gives me a bit of a big head, knowing I delivered two such special children," she said, tossing her hair over her shoulder.

I scoffed, turning towards Stefan and raising my hand in Isobel's direction with exasperation and annoyance. I mean come on, seriously? This was what they wanted me to deal with? Stefan placed a hand on his forehead, shaking his head. I turned back towards IsoBitch and Elena. Isobel was
watching my interaction with Stefan, her eyes filled with questions, ones I had no intention of answering for the vampiric abandoner. Elena placed a hand on my arm and I sighed in frustration. Why must we continue to deal with her?

"You've met Katherine?" Elena asked, her shoulders stiff.

I rolled my eyes, sitting my elbow on my armrest and laying my head on my clenched fist. Isobel's mouth twitched at my irritation but kept her eyes on my sister.

"She found me after I turned. Genetic curiosity I suppose. She would be fascinated by you," she said.

I chuckled, shaking my head. I narrowed my eyes on my current timeline mommy. Elena may want to continue this useless bout of questioning, but I knew we would get absolutely nothing from Isobel by continuing to play her little games. If Elena had any hope of getting the answers she wanted, we would have to do it my way. Besides, I would be the one handling Isobel in the end anyway, why not start now? I dug my nails into the wood of my armrests and propelled myself forward, narrowing my green eyes viciously.

"Listen here you annoying little bitch. I know you and Kat have something planned and I have no interest in whatever it is. As I have told her before, if she fucks with me or anyone I love, I will destroy all her little plans, and I doubt she wants that."

Isobel leaned closer to me, her iris darkening as black veins began to spread out beneath her eyes. She was getting angry at my impertinence. I tilted my head and smiled brightly, raising my hand as I felt Stefan's fear for us from where he still stood at the pool tables. I waved him away and then tapped the wooden table merrily with my knuckles.

"Ah Ah Ah!" I said with each tap.

I lifted my finger into the air and waved it back and forth in front of her face. A deep growl rumbled from within her chest and I sneered hatefully, reaching out and taking a strand of her hair, twirling it around my finger.

"Now, if you don't want me taking that ugly little necklace from around your neck, and leading you out back to watch you burn in the light of the sun, then you'll listen to what I have to say," I said, looking into her cold eyes.

Elena tried to pull me away but I tightened the muscles in my arm and jerked her away from me. I kept my eyes on the vampire in front of me and waited for her answer.

"What do you want?" she said, her voice tight.

Dropping the strand of her hair that I still held, I pulled away from her. "You will answer all of Elena's questions. All. Of. Them." I emphasized.

A spark of fear filled Isobel's eyes and I sighed, finally understanding what was wrong with her. I should have seen it sooner. I sat back in my seat, internally berating myself. I was slipping. She had met one of the Originals.

Damn, but which one?

I looked at her closely, suddenly sick to my stomach for reasons I did not want to analyze.

"We will keep our questions...family related," I said, my voice strained.
I kept my eyes on the table, no longer able to look at her. I needed to get myself together. What was wrong with me? I took a few calming breaths and finally looked at Elena. Her face was white with fear, a thick sheen of sweat beaded across her forehead. I placed a hand on her shoulder and motioned for her to ask her questions.

"Lena, I'm sorry I had to play rough, but when Katherine is involved - partially or not - there is no room for messing around. I don't play games, Elena." I turned back towards our mother and smiled. "But, if I did, I would play to win," I said, threateningly.

Elena looked down at the necklace Isobel was wearing. "So that is how you walk in the sun?" she asked. Isobel glanced at me and I raised a brow, lifting my hand into the air and allowing her to see the light blue tint that covered my fingers, just enough to remind her of the power I held within me. Isobel swallowed deeply and nodded at Elena.

"Katherine helped me obtain it," she said.

Elena placed her hands in front of her - fiddling with her fingers - and struggled with her next words. I could tell what she was about to ask was something she had been wanting to bring up since Isobel had first joined us, and I felt for my sister. Her jaw tightened a bit as she took a jerky breath in.

"Who is our father?" she finally asked, eyes meeting Isobel's with a fierce fire.

Isobel crossed her legs and met my gaze for a moment before she looked at Elena.

"It's not important. He was a teenage waste of space," she muttered.

I slammed my hand on the table, drawing a bit of attention from the group nearest to us. The older couple sitting next to the fire sent me a scandalized glance, the woman clutched her chest dramatically, mouth open in shock. I lifted my hand and showed them my favorite finger, much to Elena's dismay. She grabbed my hand and pushed it down onto the table with a growl.

"Elara!" she gasped, mouthing a quick "Sorry" to the grey-haired elders.

Isobel smiled, her green eyes shining as she watched Elena admonish me for my behavior. I pulled my hand from Lena's and placed it palm down on the table, eyes firmly placed on Isobel once again.

"Answer her question, Isobel," I said, venom leaking from my tone.

"A name would be nice," Elena added, rubbing her tired eyes.

Despite my earlier display, her fingers slid underneath my hand and I gripped them tightly, sensing that she needed my support for what was to come next. Isobel leaned her head towards the ceiling and grumbled in anger. "You already know your father."

She looked at us both. I could see she hoped one of us would figure it out without her actually having to say his name. I narrowed my eyes and scanned her face. Her brows were furrowed as if she were in pain, her forehead glistening with sweat. It was almost like she was being tortured by some invisible force. Shit. He was a part of her compulsion for some reason. I caught her eye and nodded, showing her I understood what she couldn't say. Her chest rose heavily and I could see the shuddering of her shoulders, the hair surrounding her face fluttering as the air left her in a grateful rush of breath. Elena sat beside me, tapping her foot as she waited for the answer to one of the most important questions of her young life. One Isobel could not give her. My stomach dropped at the thought of how utterly disappointed she would be if I was forced to reveal that fact to her.
Especially after she had been so close to the answer. No, I would not be sending her away with yet more disappointment. Isobel had said we knew him already. My mind flew through the limited options and suddenly came to a rapid halt, my eyes falling closed briefly as I came to the heady realization that Isobel wasn't lying. We did know our dad. We had grown up with him, our parents had made sure we had seen him often enough. I glanced up at Isobel and frowned.

"We know our father already?" I weakly asked.

Isobel sighed, nodding. I bit my lip and turned towards Elena with a small grimace. Turning back slightly towards Isobel, I tried to keep my voice steady. I had a feeling Elena was not going to like who our father was.

"Do we already consider him...family..." I bit out, grimacing again.

Isobel chuckled, her soft voice grating on my already frayed nerves. "You really are quite the brilliant little witch," she said.

I ignored her and looked at Elena. "Lena, our father is Uncle John," I said.

Elena's mouth fell open and she stood, her chair falling back a loud thunk against the hard floor. "No, no. Our parents...they would have said something. He would have said...something," she protested, scanning Isobel's face searchingly.

I stood gently, slowly approaching her with my hands raised. "Lena, mom, and dad didn't say anything because we weren't ready, and neither was John. Then i-it was too late," I said.

Isobel watched Elena's internal struggle with cold emotionless eyes, leaning back arms crossed. I so wanted to watch the bitch burn but realized that would be a bit much, and Elena would probably be against it. Instead, I focused on my sister, who had finally noticed the attention she was garnering from the other occupants of the Grill. People were now openly staring at us with interest. I glared at each of the staring gossip mongers with malice. I refused for Elena to be the topic of their small town tattle come tomorrow morning. Their eyes left us quickly, returning to their food and normal conversations. Elena ran her fingers through her hair, hands covering her temples as she tried to remain calm. She stared at Isobel with unease and I could see she had all but had her fill of the compelled vampire. Bending closer to our mother, hands on the table, Elena's soft eyes filled with sad innocent confusion.

"Why did you compel that man to kill himself right after he told me to stop looking for you?" she asked, a coloring of sick disbelief in her voice.

I stood next to her and tried to keep my thoughts to myself. It was hard to know what was coming and be helpless to stop it, but I knew I couldn't. Elena's innocence would be tainted regardless of Isobel's answer. What with Katherine and Niklaus, she would soon get a taste of the real world. She would see its darkness and realize that there was so much more to the world then the black and white she thought tinted it. The world was full of so many different colors, so many different beliefs and forms of right and wrong. Nik was definitely proof of that. There were many people that thought him evil incarnate, but that just wasn't true. He had a reason for everything he did, even if his reasons were well...fucked up. He was a product of his environment, after all. He had been through so much and it had nearly destroyed him. Life was a vortex of colors that contained insurmountable hurdles and there's not always a happy ending, and someday, Elena would have to wake up and see that for herself.

"Dramatic impact. I wish it would have been more effective," Isobel said, shrugging her shoulders, her hair falling away like a dark waterfall.
Elena turned from her, eyes wet, her shoulder brushed mine as she looked towards Stefan who was
studying us intently from beside the pool table. He was no longer acting as if he was doing
anything but avidly observing our conversation. His eyes crinkled in sympathy as he watched his
soft-hearted girlfriend come to terms with her cold-hearted mother.

"Human life means that little to you?" Elena asked.

She still had the smallest bit of hope in the way her question begged to be answered with a
negative. I placed a hand on Lena's shoulder, unsure of what else I could do for her at the moment.

"Means nothing to me. It's just part of being what I am," Isobel said.

Elena backed away from her and crossed her arms. "No, it's not. I know other vampires, that's not
true," Lena protested, stubborn as ever.

Isobel smiled wickedly, a rumbling chuckle escaping her pursed lips. "Your new boyfriend over
there by the pool table? Stefan Salvatore," Isobel gestured towards Stefan, smile turning Cheshire
when his back arched as his whole body became alert.

Isobel tilted her head, green eyes briefly falling onto me before darting away. "Why Stefan? Why
didn't you go for Damon? Or are you enjoying them both as Katherine did?" she asked, a small tick
in the corner of her mouth giving away her game.

I sneered at her childish behavior and glanced at Stefan, rolling my eyes. Elena avoided looking at
her boyfriend, cheeks pinking with embarrassment. Slanting my head to the side I glared at Isobel,
tapping my bright red fingernail against my chin. "You know Isobel, I really appreciate you giving
me all these extra moments to remember when I kill you. It'll really help do away with any guilt I
may have felt," I said.

Elena took my arm and pulled me to the side, her mouth turned down into a tight frown. "Elara,
you have got to calm down. You can't just go around threatening to kill people. Especially our birth
mother. There is obviously something wrong with her," Elena said, her eyes flicking towards a
silently chuckling Isobel.

I lifted my head and growled in displeasure. "Elena you cannot tell me that you think that there is
anything left in Isobel to save. I mean, she is working with Katherine for God's sake. I know you
don't really know her and what she is capable of yet, but I do. So please for once, trust me when I
tell you that you cannot save her," I said, holding my hands out towards her.

Elena turned her head away from me, her chest rising and falling heavily as she tried to come to
terms with the loss of another mother. Running her fingers through her hair, she looked upon Isobel
one last time and shook her head. "You may be right, but before you two decide to try and off one
another, I at least want to know how she and John met. We deserve to know how we came to be,
Ellie," Elena said, sitting down with a huff.

I snorted at her attitude and sat down next to her, staring at Isobel expectantly.

"I used to spend a lot of time here when I was younger. John had a crush on me for years. He was
the first one that told me about vampires," Isobel said, shrugging with a smirk.

Elena's jaw tightened and she tapped her fingers against her crossed arms. "What made you want to
be one?" she asked.

Isobel looked at me, her green eyes flickering as if seeking out an emotion she couldn't conjure. "A
very long list of reasons. All of which I'm sure you've both thought about," she said.
Lena vehemently shook her head, placing her hands in her lap and glancing at her clasped fingers. Isobel threw her head back and cackled.

"That was your first lie. It's inevitable, you're going to get old, Stefan won't," Isobel said.

She stopped to watch Elena sadly glance at Stefan, her eyes thoughtful and misty. A far away look took over her face as she thought over our mother's words.

"Forever doesn't last very long when your human," Isobel finished.

I crossed my legs and scrunched up my eyes in question. I had been curious about our mother's motives since first realizing she had sought Damon out for immortality. "Why did you not go back and turn Alaric so that he could join you?" I asked.

Isobel's lips quirked. "Alaric, a vampire?" Isobel laughed hatefully. "There is no possible way he could survive an eternity of thirst. Besides, I yearned for freedom. What is the use of love when it keeps you chained to the mortal coil?" she asked, waving her hand as if to bat away an annoying fly.

I raised a brow, thinking over her question with intense personal reflection. I couldn't help but wonder - if it ever came down to it - could I give up love for a way to break my curse?

Isobel watched my internal reflection closely. "I've asked you everything I want to. So, what do you want from us, Isobel?" Elena asked.

I mentally shook myself from my reverie and focused on Isobel.

"Elara here knows exactly what I want from her, or Damon to be exact, and what I will do to get it," she said, veins growing under her eyes briefly before her skin returned to its pale perfection.

Elena shuffled beside me, her breath catching at the obvious threat.

I chuckled, my red hair falling off my face as I threw my head back merrily. "Oh Isobel, you aren't getting The Gilbert device, and even if you somehow did, it would be worthless. I've made sure of that. Did you honestly think I would allow such a dangerous weapon to just lay around Mystic Falls where anyone could get their hands on it?"

I kept my eyes firmly on her, making sure there was no way she could see the tiny white lie hiding within their green depths. I had yet to actually deactivate the device, but it was the first thing on my to-do list. I just hadn't found the time yet. Watching her eyes blaze with fury, I knew I had her convinced. My upper lip raised with triumph and amusement.

"You stupid little girl! You have no idea what you are messing with. Have you not learned that none of these vampires care a shred about you?" she asked, her voice rising an octave with each sentence.

I stood, leaning towards her, Elena made to stand behind me but I reached out, pushing her back in the chair, effectively keeping myself between her and the furious vampire. Stefan was slowly inching towards us, trying to avoid angering Isobel further.

"Be that as it may Isobel, I still care for them, and I protect what's mine. You will not come into my town and threaten those I love, expecting me to sit by and do nothing," I said, voice firm.

Isobel stood and met my stance her face turning red as she tried to remain calm. "You can try to protect them, but you will not succeed, daughter," Isobel sneered, spitting out the endearment with
Grasping her coat from beside her, she glared at Elena, her eyes darkening with hate as they ran over me before she bolted towards the door. I stood in front of my sister until I felt a warm hand cover my upper shoulder. I rigidly glanced down at the offending appendage, finally noticing my protective stance. I let out a heavy sigh, blinking rapidly as I stepped away from Elena so that she could finally get up from the seat in which I had her trapped. I watched my sister for a moment as she fell into Stefan's arms, making sure he had it covered. She was still shakily recovering from our mother's threats and I didn't want to leave her unless I knew he could handle her distress. As she folded herself into his arms, practically melting as he patted her hair down and kissed her forehead, I rolled my eyes at my own assumptions. Of course, Prince Charming had it covered.

I glanced around me, glaring at the busybodies one last time, and headed towards the door to give my report to Thing One and Thing Two. I knew Damon would be chomping at the bit for info after seeing Isobel flee the bar. I pushed the door open, squinting as the sun assaulted my eyes. I slid my sunglasses from my bag, slipping them on with a flick of the wrist. I smiled, shaking my head when I caught the flash of raven hair across the street and standing next to him was Alaric Saltzman. I watched them as I waited to cross the street, one of Damon's hands was in the pocket of his signature leather jacket, the other was waving around frantically as he passed his weight from one foot to the other, speaking quickly. Alaric appeared to be trying to talk him down. I bounded towards them, waving my thanks to the car that had kindly allowed me to pass, and smiled as I watched Damon run his hand through his hair, something he often did when stressed. Alaric saw my approach first and threw his head back, a relieved sigh escaping his lips.

"Thank God! Please deal with him," Alaric said, waving his hand towards Damon.

I laughed, grabbing Damon's jacket and yanking him towards the nearby bench. "Come on you two, let's sit here while I fill you in. I think Lena and Stefan are gonna need a minute," I said.

Damon pulled his jacket out of my grasp and looked back at the Grill. "Why? What did Isobel do to her?" he quickly asked.

I sat down, Alaric joining me, his eyes falling on my face with unease. I crossed my legs and watched Damon's eyes stalk the Grill. "Day, she is fine. As if I would allow our mother to hurt her. It was just a rough meeting is all, and towards the end, Isobel got angry at me and made some threats. Nothing I can't handle," I said, waving away Alaric's concerned expression.

At the mention of threats, Damon's eyes finally fell on me. "Threats? Did she threaten you, Elandra?" he growled, sitting down next to me.

I laid my arm on the back of the bench and laughed. "Please, like she could hurt me. No, she knew better she just threatened those I loved. Which was mighty stupid of her. Now there's no other choice. I'll have to kill her." I glanced at Damon with a smile. "Oh well, wanna help?" I asked brightly.

Damon's answering smile was wicked. An agonized moan came from Alaric, one which we both ignored with ease.

"Murder huh? You know im always up for a little murder," he said, patting my knee.

I giggled, my red hair falling around my face like a halo. "Good, then it's settled," I said with a shrug.

Alaric shook his head watching Damon smile at me, eyes lighting up. I knew that making any sort
of plans with Damon was a big deal after distancing myself from him as I had been, but I really might need his help with Isobel, especially if Kat was nearby. It would be good for him to finally confront Katherine, it would help him break out of the unhealthy routine he was in.

"So, what did Isobel want from you two?" Alaric asked.

Rolling my eyes I turned my head and let out an annoyed sigh. "The same thing that everyone has been harping on about for the last few weeks. The damn Gilbert Invention," I said.

Damon stood taking a step away from us and started pacing. "And what did you tell her?" he asked.

I turned towards him, raising a brow. "That she couldn't have it, that no one could. I've destroyed the damn thing, after all. It's worthless now," I said, waiting for the outburst I knew was coming.

Damon stopped his pacing and turned towards me, eyes rushing between Alaric and myself. "When the hell did you have the opportunity to destroy it? And why would you? We aren't even sure what it does!" he yelled, leaning closer as to avoid drawing attention to us.

I scoffed, tilting my head with a raised brow. Damon ran a hand through his hair. "You know what it does. Don't you?" he asked, his breath leaving his lungs in a deep rush.

"What it did. It's a useless piece of metal now. I deactivated it. It was a weapon created to identify vampires so that they could be killed. It was painful and not something you wanted in the wrong hands. So I took care of it," I said.

Alaric leaned back, running his hands down his face. "Well it looks like you did the vampires in town a favor," he said.

Smiling weakly I avoided their eyes, knowing that they were still unaware of the furry little problem Mystic Falls had.

"But, how did you know what it did?" Alaric asked, leaning his elbow onto his knee to get a better view of both Damon and myself.

"Well, Emily Bennett is who created the weapon and all of Jonathan Gilbert's little hunting devices. I knew she was secretly helping the Gilberts with something back in the day, but it wasn't until I read her Grimoire that I saw what she had done," I said, hoping I had kept the hint of betrayal from my voice.

I had been so angry to find out Em had been working with someone like my current ancestor, but deep down I could understand her hatred for vampires. She was a witch of nature after all and had probably felt sufficiently used by Katherine. I stood from the bench and clapped my hands together.

"Well, I've told you what I know. If you want a play by play you can go and bug Elena. I've given her enough of a reprieve," I said, nodding to them both.

I needed to make sure they were being kept busy so that I could go and actually destroy the device before Isobel found it. Alaric stood beside me and reached out, pulling me into a hug. I closed my eyes, enjoying the way he made me feel safe and cared for. It wasn't until this moment that I realized how much I missed my own father. I truly loved Grayson Gilbert, he had been an amazing father, as had many of my other fathers throughout the centuries, but none would compare to my first, my real father. There was something about the way Alaric hugged me that reminded me of the way my father always made me feel, and a part of me hated it as much as loved it because remembering someone who has been dead for over a thousand years would only bring me pain and
make me weak.

I quickly stepped away putting as much distance between us as possible. Alaric raised a questioning brow. I gave him a swift watery smile, hoping he would buy it.

"Are you ok?" he asked. I nodded, placing my hands behind my back awkwardly. "Yeah, Ric Im fine," I said, closing my eyes as I realized what I had called him, hoping he hadn't noticed.

Damon came up beside me, glancing down at me with a raised brow. I ran my eyes between the two and almost laughed with happiness when I noticed my sister leaving the Grill with Stefan. I quickly pointed towards the Grill and shrugged. "Oh, it looks like Lena is feeling better. Now you can go bombard her with your questions," I said.

Damon and Alaric glanced down at me uneasily one last time before they headed towards Elena and Stefan. Before any of them could notice my absence I bolted, heading towards my car. It was time to destroy my ancestor's invention.

I arrived at the Boarding House fairly quickly, hoping to find out where Damon hid the damn thing and deactivate it before anyone else headed home. I stepped through the unlocked front door, smirking at their arrogance. Shaking my head I resolved to remind the boys that if they planned to hide important items in their home, then they should at least make it harder to break in. I headed towards the sitting room, my hands on my hips as I walked around the room, eyes scanning the interior. Now, where would Damon stash one of Jonathan Gilbert's Devices?

I tapped my foot, biting my lip in thought as I tilted my head, turning it towards the shelves where a slight hum of energy was leaking from the books. My brows knitted together as I moved forward to examine the shelf. It wasn't uncommon for some magical texts to leak energy, but those types of books were not something I'd expect to find amongst the Salvatores library. For one, none of their family were ever witch's or very fond of them, to begin with, so why then, would some of their books be leaking such strong magical energy? I ran my fingers across the spines of the books exuding the most energy and frowned as my skin tingled, goosebumps rising on my hand and up my arm. I started pulling the books from the shelf, slowly sitting them on the table nearby as the magical energy departed, leaving the books behind. I ran my fingers over the covers of the books and sucked in my bottom lip, they no longer held any trace of magic. Abandoning the books, I turned back towards the shelf, my forehead wrinkling in exasperation as I finally found the device laying against the back of the shelf. I touched the cool metal gently, taking it from its generic hiding place with a chuckle. The magic tried to latch onto to me immediately, seeping into my skin as I quickly replaced the books before walking over to the couch, placing the device onto the table.

I would be glad to be rid of it. I had always loved Emily, but intent was a big part of magic, and it definitely left its mark during casting. It was easy to establish what her intent had been with this spell, to hurt. The magic leaking from the device was cold and angry, it almost made me sick as it continued to try and latch onto me. I sat on the couch, leaning over the device, my hands raised above it an arch. I took a deep breath and concentrated on what I wanted, needed, to accomplish. I
closed my eyes tightly as I felt the strings of Emily's magic trying to fight against me, a futile attempt at best, but as always her magic was still strong and respectable. She would always be one of the best her kinds ever produced, and really, her ancestors could think her for the renowned stature their family possessed. I plucked at the binding, sensing their almost golden strands as I tried to find a weakened link to exploit. I squeezed my closed eyes tighter as her magic jolted, attacking me fiercely. I winced as I felt a small piercing deep within the bones in my hands, the ache forcing me to flinch briefly. Emily's magic was fighting back with all its might, sensing its impending doom. I almost felt bad for what I was about to do, but reminded myself that I was protecting those I loved and this was only an imprint of Emily, nothing more. With strengthened resolve, I sent a bolt of power towards the device, snapping the remaining strands of magic. They flickered for a moment, before flaring powerfully, sending a bright flash of light that even with my eyes closed, I could still see through the lids.

I found myself thanking the Gods that I had kept them shut. My eyes fluttered as I opened them, glancing down at the device I almost expected to find it in tiny pieces, but there it sat, perfectly intact. I raised my hand above it and smiled. It was now a completely harmless hunk of metal.

Ha! Take that mother.

I took the device from the table and tossed it into the air, catching it with a bright smile. I placed a bold check mark next to that task on my mental checklist. It felt good removing something from the list instead of adding something. I stood from the couch and placed the device back where I found it. Well, that was done. I glanced around me as my phone rang, yanking it out of my pocket I sighed deeply. Elena again, that can't be good.

"Yes?" I answered.

"Elara? Where are you? We have a problem. Isobel is threatening Jeremy. She wants the device reactivated, Elara!" Lena shouted, her breathing labored.

I rubbed the bridge of my nose roughly as I huffed in annoyance. "Well, Elena that is impossible, and I can promise you she won't touch Jeremy. Let me handle this. Please, just give me a few hours and Isobel will no longer be a threat, ok?" I said.

The line was silent but for Elena's heavy breathing and I waited, listening to her silently fret and hate herself for what she was about to say, but we both knew that much as she did with Damon, she would let me be the bad guy because that was what she needed. "Ok, just don't get anyone killed trying to act like some kind of badass, Elara. You may be a witch, but your still human," she said.

I scoffed, rolling my eyes. I wanted so badly to remind her that I may be human in her eyes, but in my own, I hadn't felt human for centuries. Living and dying repeatedly all while being surrounded by so much supernatural drama, does not make you feel very human.

"Lena, I will deal with this, and the only death that will come of it will be necessary. You have to remember, some people can not be saved." I glanced down at my feet and shook my head sadly. She would always hold this against me, I knew that deep down. It would be just another thing that would end up festering between us, ruining our relationship in the end. "I'm sorry Elena. I will call you when Jeremy is safe," I said, hanging up the phone.

I glared at my phone for a moment before heading towards the front door, running my fingers across the screen until I found Isobel's number. I tapped on it twice and bit my tongue as I waited for her to answer. As I slipped into my car her irritating voice escaped the speaker, sending a fresh wave of anger down my spine.
"Hello, Isobel. So, I just got an interesting call from my sister. Something about a threat against our brother? You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, now would you?" I said my voice chipper.

Isobel chuckled deeply. "Oh, Elara dear. I knew you'd give in and call me. "Now bring me what I want or I will kill every single person you care about," she furiously said.

I pursed my lips in anger, gripping the steering wheel with my left hand tightly, my knuckles pink. "Where exactly would you like to meet, Isobel?" I asked, my eyes crinkling with fierce determination.

"Grove Hill Cemetery," she said triumphantly, hanging up.

I started my car and sped off, tossing my phone in the seat beside me.

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Driving into the cemetery I stopped beside a black SUV that could only belong to Isobel and her cronies. My phone vibrated against the leather of my passenger seat, the screen lighting up again showing me a picture of Damon, I flipped it over avoiding his call. I know I should have told him, or at least Stefan, where I was meeting Isobel, but I couldn't. Not after figuring out that she had some sort of contact with an Original. There was every chance it could be Elijah, but for them, he would be just as dangerous as Nik. Especially since I knew that they wouldn't follow the same code Lijah did, they would go back on their promises just as quickly as they made them. That was something that would get them killed, and quickly. I sent my phone an apologetic glance and grabbed my bag, slipping out of the car.

I sneered, narrowing my eyes as two tall vampires made their way towards me. I pulled my bag over my head and smirked at the approaching vampires cockily. "Gentlemen," I said, lowering my head in greeting.

The first vampire, his long dark brown hair tied back in a small leather hair tie, went to grab my arm and I jerked away, my hands glowing lightly.

"Ah, ah! Where are your manners?" I asked, stepping around him.

I avoided his blonde companion as I motioned for them to lead the way towards me. I pulled my bag over my head and smirked at the approaching vampires cockily. "Gentlemen," I said, lowering my head in greeting.

The first vampire, his long dark brown hair tied back in a small leather hair tie, went to grab my arm and I jerked away, my hands glowing lightly.

"Ah, ah! Where are your manners?" I asked, stepping around him.

I avoided his blonde companion as I motioned for them to lead the way towards me. I made sure to stay between them as they started forward, maneuvering their way through the tombstones that surrounded us as we made our way up the hill towards the middle of the cemetery. I kept my eyes ahead of me, though I made sure my senses were on red alert around the two unknown men beside me. Just as my nerves were starting to get frayed from the nonstop glances from the tall blonde vampire to my right, I finally saw Isobel standing beside a tombstone a few feet in front of us. As we approached her, she lowered herself down in front of the stone, clearing some leaves from the top. I stepped behind her, leaning forward to read the name etched onto the grey marble. "In loving memory" - Isobel Flemming. I placed my hands in my jacket pockets and stared at the stone for a few minutes, allowing Isobel however long she may need. I knew she had been compelled to shut off her emotions, but I was sure she could still use a moment to collect her thoughts. Besides, this was my mother's grave, and even if she wasn't really buried there, this was still where people who
loved her came to mourn, and that should demand a bit of respect.

"My parents, your grandparents, they put it here when it became clear that the police weren't gonna find my body. They visit every week, and they bring flowers, even though there's no one buried here. The Isobel they knew is dead. So maybe there's a part of me that's buried here, the-the human part, the part that I abandoned when I-when I chose to become a vampire, the part that used to dream about the day that she'd know her daughters," Isobel stuttered, standing to her feet.

It was the first time I had seen her appear anything but cold and unfeeling. "I don't know what you expect me to say?" I said, removing my hands from my jacket pockets.

The air was cool and my cheeks were starting to numb as the breeze struck me like an abusive asshole.

"And instead you and Elena got to meet the other part...The part that would betray her own flesh and blood." She looked away briefly before reaching her hand out flicking her fingers in annoyance. "Where is it?" she asked.

I stepped away from her and ran my fingers through my hair, as my eyes flickered towards her neck where she wore a beautiful silver Daylight necklace. "Isobel, I can not reactivate the device for you and Katherine, and even if I could, you know I wouldn't. I am sorry. Please don't make me do this. Don't...," I said.

Now that I was here, standing in front of her, I truly didn't want to do this. To have yet another person's blood on my hands, on my conscious. Isobel glanced down at her grave, her cold eyes resigned. Taking out her phone she quickly dialed a number. I watched her intently, hoping that she would just give up on the device and move on.

Isobel jutted out her chin in defiance as someone started talking on the other end. I could recognize the familiar voice and ground my teeth together in irritation.

"Did you get it?" Katherine asked.

Isobel met my eyes and shook her head. "No, she said there is no way to reactivate it, and I believe her. There is nothing else I can do about the device, Katherine. I am done," she said with a deep-seated sigh, immediately hanging up.

Isobel took a deep breath and lowered her arm, letting her phone fall from her fingertips. I watched it land next to the tombstone and looked up at my mother.

"I can't just let you go, Elara. Katherine won't let me drop this and you know about the other little secret of mine, and how dangerous that makes me," she said, her eyes searching mine for understanding.

Her compulsion meant she was a wild card, someone I could never trust. I let out a gasp as my shoulders shook. I hated this part.

Isobel nodded, her face blank. "The others." She jerked her head towards where the two vampires had disappeared. "They will not bother you as you leave, that I can promise you. They are loyal to me and know what needs to be done," she said.

I felt warm tears falling down my cheeks, but kept my eyes on Isobel as I nodded.

"You are a brave woman. Be proud of what you are," she said emotionlessly.
I clenched my jaw and stepped towards her, reaching out and pushing her hair off her shoulder, finding the clasp of her necklace.

"I am sorry that I could not be what you and Elena expected. But I can only be who I am," she said, her green eyes cold.

I met them one last time and nodded, a half smile on my face. "We can expect nothing more from you. I wouldn't want to be someone else for anyone. You deserve peace Isobel, and I am glad I can give you that," I whispered, unclasping her necklace.

The cool silver strands fell from her pale flesh as I stepped away, the sun finally meeting her unprotected skin. She screamed in pain as she burst into flame, falling onto her knees next to her grave, one that would no longer be a place that held nothing. I watched her burn, unable to leave her to die alone. She may not have been someone I liked or even loved, but despite that, she was my flesh and blood, and at one point, she had loved us. I watched as the wind picked up her ashes, carrying them away, and wiped the remaining tears from my face.

"Goodbye Isobel," I said, pocketing her necklace.

It was something I was sure Elena would appreciate having. As I moved away from her grave I felt my foot press something hard into the cold earth. Lifting my shoe, I saw Isobel's cell and felt a rush of excitement and irrationality fill me. I slowly lowered myself to the ground beside it, sitting down on the cool damp grass. I stared at the slick black contraption, running my hands up and down my crossed legs, debating with myself over and over again. With an exasperated sigh, I grabbed the phone, pressing the button on the side. I let out a great rush of breath as it turned on. Finding her list of contacts I slide my finger down until I came upon the Ks, and there it was, Klaus. I couldn't believe it, after all these years, there it was, a way to contact him. His fucking phone number. This was stupid! I couldn't do this. I sat, unblinking staring at his number until my fingers were numb from the cold. Finally, I couldn't take the silence anymore and shook my head.

"Bekah, I need you," I whispered into the cool, silent air.

I waited only a few minutes before my grey skinned best friend sat down in front of me, her blue eyes zeroed in on my pink hands, the hands that were still wrapped tightly around Isobel's phone as if it were my lifeline.

"What is that, Elandra and why are you in a cemetery?" she asked gently.

I pried my eyes from Nik's number and started crying, my chest heaving. I explained everything to my sister, my voice cracking from the cold and the number of tears that I had shed the last few hours. Bekah moved as close as she could and glanced down at the cell phone, her face hard.

"You know how dangerous it would be to call him. You need to destroy the phone, El," she said.

I shook my head vehemently. "I just wanna hear his voice is all," I weakly protested.

Bekah's hands hovered over my own and she smiled. "Honey, you are physically and emotionally exhausted. You need to go home and let yourself rest. This isn't you," she begged.

I gripped the phone tighter, holding it against my chest, and started rocking myself. I understood where she was coming from, but I couldn't come this far and just let him go again. I deserved this, didn't I?

After all this time, I should be allowed to be weak, just this once, what harm would it do?
I shook my head roughly and glared at her. "I need this Bek. I'm sorry," I said, glancing down at the phone and pressing his number roughly.

Rebekah lowered her head and watched me rock myself, phone tightly pressed against my ear. The phone rang a few times and I thought maybe I would just get his voice mail and this would have all been for nothing. Then I heard a click and two words that stopped my heart.

"Hello, love," Nik said.

My whole world lit up like the fourth of July. Until this moment I never realized what even his voice could do to me, his smooth accent, the way his tongue caressed each word. I let out a deep sigh and smiled weakly. I laid my head on my knees and listened to his irritated breathing, my smile brightening. Bekah watched me closely, her blue eyes glistening.

"Isobel, love? What is it that you wanted? I don't take kindly to people wasting my time," Nik growled, his irritation doing nothing to me but making my heart ache.

As he let out another frustrated growl at my silence, I couldn't help the giggle that escaped my lips. Nik inhaled sharply, his strained voice capturing my attention immediately. "Who? Is? This?" he enunciated.

My eyes darted towards Bekah and she vanished quickly, leaving me to deal with my mistake alone. I took a deep breath in and tried to force myself to hang up.

"Tell me now!" he shouted.

My nose scrunched up in annoyance, I had always hated his impertinent shouting. I huffed, standing to my feet. "There is no need to shout, Niklaus," I said.

I heard an agonized moan as he took in another sharp breath, and closed my eyes in disbelief at my own stupidity.

"No. Whoever you are, I will kill you for this," Nik said.

I sighed, shaking my head. This had been one of the worst decisions of my life.

"I shouldn't have called, this was stupid. I am so sorry, Nik," I whispered.

"E-Elandra?" he asked, fury and doubt seeping through his words.

I pulled the phone from my ear, but before I hung up I could hear something crack and another whisper of my name.

I took the sim card from the phone and let it burn in my hand so that he could not track Isobel's location. Hopefully, for now, he would think that this had been a trick set up by a witch that had it out for him. It only had to be that way for a little while longer. I left the cemetery, glad to find myself completely alone. I drove home with the radio blaring, trying to avoid any silence as to stay out of my own mind as much as possible. Finally arriving home I was unsurprised to see Damon and Stefan's car in the driveway. I let out an annoyed grunt and hopped out of the car. As I opened the front door I was assaulted by an over-exuberant brunette.

"Oh my God! Where the hell have you been? You said you were gonna call!" Elena shouted.

I pushed my sister's hair from my face and looked over her shoulder, finding the annoyed face of
Stefan, and the angry faces of my brother and Damon, all staring at me from the living room. I pushed Elena off of me and stepped into the room, falling onto the couch and covering my face with my hands.

"Listen, guys, I am freezing, hungry, and exhausted. So, can we save any anger for tomorrow?" I begged, catching all of their eyes.

Damon turned away from me with a furious chuckle. "You expect me to just be ok with the fact that you took off alone to go after a vampire?" he asked, sneering.

I leaned back, reaching into my pocket as Elena sat down next to me. I handed her Isobel's Daylight necklace with a sad smile.

"No Damon, I would never ask you to be ok with me being in danger, because I know I wouldn't be ok if the roles were reversed, but it was my choice and I was totally safe," I said.

Damon growled, shaking his head. "Safe? You think you were safe, alone and up against a vampire?" he asked in frustration.

I sighed, watching Elena play with Isobel's necklace, a sad expression on her pale face.

"Damon you forget what I am sometimes. Even if she was a vampire she was no match for me," I said, exhausted by the whole repeat conversation.

I understood they were just worried and none of them truly understood what I could do, but they all needed to learn to trust me. My eyes left the pacing form of Damon and found my brother. I guess he now knew. I wondered when it had all come out.

While I was with Isobel?

"Jeremy?" I said, seeking out some form of acceptance from him.

His eyes fell on me, any warmth I had hoped to find in them absent. His face was angry and hard.

"So, I guess you were lying to me the whole time as well then? Not only about all of this, but about yourself too," he spat.

I felt tears welling up in my eyes once more and tried to hold them back. I didn't want him to think I was trying to guilt him into forgiving me. I sat forward and kept his gaze, shaking off Elena's hand when she tried to comfort me. I told her this would happen and yet she chose this, not only for him but for me as well.

"Jeremy, I wanted to tell you. I planned on it, remember when I told you and Elena that I had a secret to reveal after the Halloween party? Well, that was when I was going to tell you everything." I glanced at Elena and Stefan. "Have you told him about me, about what's to come?" I choked out.

Elena shook her head and I angrily stood with a laugh. "Of course you didn't. Of course, you'd leave that to me. I begged you not to take away his memories, begged you to let me tell him, and now after the day I've had. After I was forced to rip the Daylight necklace from Isobel's neck, this is what I come home to?" I wiped my teary eyes fiercely and rotated my shoulders with a deep breath, stepping closer to Jeremy.

I lowered myself to my knees in front of his chair, taking his hands. "Jeremy, I will not ask for your forgiveness, regardless of what I'm about to tell you. I should have done more for you. I should have protected you the moment the Salvatores came back to town. This is as much my fault as
Elena's and I take full responsibility. I am so sorry," I said, keeping my eyes firmly on our joined hands.

I took one more deep breath and started in on my story, revealing to him everything I had Damon and Stefan. Aside from Damon's steady pacing and Elena's quiet sobs, there was no sound. Jeremy remained silent throughout the whole story, much like Stefan had. I had lost all feeling in my legs about an hour ago, but finally, after I finished telling him tidbits about past lives, I felt brave enough to meet his gaze. Although there were unshed tears in their glassy depths, they were still cold and distant.

"So, you're going to die on your next birthday then?" he said, his voice frigid.

I squeezed his hands tightly and tried to keep my own voice from breaking. "Jeremy, I never wanted to hurt you. That is why I usually keep the truth from my families. But, after everything, I couldn't do that this time. I've tried everything to break my curse and I'm still looking, but I...just don't know what else I can do," I tried to explain.

Jeremy shook his head, tossing my hands away from him. "I can't do this with you right now," he said.

"Jeremy, please," I said, raising my hand towards him.

Jeremy stood, sidestepping so that he could get away from where I still sat in front of him. "I want nothing to do with you or Elena right now," Jeremy said, eyes shooting between me and my twin sister.

Elena stood, her face paling as she watched me cry on my knees, no longer able to hold back. This day had been too much for me. Stefan started towards Jeremy and I snarled, eyes glowing a bright blue for the first time in this life.

"Stay away! He said he doesn't want any of us bothering him. Just go, this is a family matter," I spat, glaring at the boys.

I raised my hand, flicking my fingers so that the front door snapped open. "Out!" I yelled, my emotions flaring.

Jeremy jerked back as both Salvatores sped away the door slamming closed behind them, shaking the nearby pictures.

Elena scoffed her hands on her hips. "Was that little performance necessary?" she asked, her face scrunching up in anger.

I stood to my feet, my knees shaking, and glared at her, pointing towards our brother in frustration. "Yes, it was Elena. This is a lot for Jeremy to take in, and I am sure having two vampires in the house is not exactly making him comfortable right now. Especially knowing one of them took his memories at the behest of his sister." I stepped closer to her and rubbed my temples. "I may have been a bit harsh, but you'll have to forgive me. I have had a rough night, Lena. I've helped our mother commit suicide, then had a bit of a personal crisis, before coming home to reveal my imminent doom to my little brother, who because of your stupidity, hates me!" I yelled, stomping my foot like a child.

Swiftly lifting her hand Elena slapped me, her eyes misty. "No one asked you to kill Isobel, Elara. You are the one who chose to handle that alone. As for Jeremy hating you, that is not my fault either. I only wanted to save him from the same pain he felt after our parents died," she cried.
Rubbing my cheek, I shook my head, unable to deal with even a minute more of this day. "Your right, Elena, no one asked me to handle the Isobel situation. I did that all on my own because I knew I could, and I wanted to make sure those I cared about were safe from her. But, you cannot tell me what you did to Jeremy was ok," I said, turning away from her and heading towards the stairs.

As I passed by Jeremy he grabbed my arm, holding my gaze firmly. "I don't forgive you for just sitting by and watching all of this happen, or for hiding what you are, but thank you for fighting for me," he said.

I smiled weakly, reaching out and running my fingers through his hair. "Jeremy, I will always fight for you." I took his wrist in my hand, where he still wore the rope bracelet I had given him, and ran my finger across the top of it. "I may not have given this to you in time, but you have it now, and it will protect you from compulsion as long as you wear it. I plan to fill the house with vervain as I have done as Carolines. For both you and Jenna's sake," I whispered.

I didn't plan to tell Elena that I was going to inoculate Jenna against vampires. I was positive she would be against it. She would protest that it was for her 'protection' but I know its because she wants to keep her in the dark for as long as possible, most likely because she knows Jenna will be against a lot of her behavior. Inhaling deeply, Jeremy gently stepped away from me, heading up the stairs. I waited a moment before following him, sliding my hand along the silken wood of the banister. I ignored the sound of my name as it was hollered by my sister from where she still stood in the living room. I was done with her for the night. I sent Jeremy a half smile as he watched me head towards my room from his doorway, his face was blank as he quickly closed his door. I lowered my head, shutting my door dejectedly behind me and locking it for good measure. I made my way to the windows and repeated the process. I wasn't sure if Damon would try to stop by, but I was sure I didn't want him to. I wasn't in the mood for company, especially that of my ex. Not after tonight. I could still hear Nik's voice in my head, still hear the sharp intake of his breath after he heard me speak, the disbelief and anger in his voice when he said my name. My heart fluttered in my chest as my mind pulled forth the memory of the way my name rolled off his tongue, the way his accent made my name sound beautiful in a way only he could make it. I quickly changed, trying to banish all thoughts of him and slid into bed, pulling the covers over my shoulders. As I started counting backward from a hundred, hoping to clear my mind, I felt eyes on me and inwardly cursed at my misfortune. Rolling on my side I opened my eyes and met Bekah's crystal blue orbs.

"That was insanely stupid! You know that right?" she said, her nose wrinkled in distaste.

I covered my face with my comforter and sighed. "Yes Beks, I do. I was weak and it made me stupid. It won't happen again," I said.

Bekah sat up, pulling the comforter from my face, the crystals on her dress shining as they met the light spilling from my window.

"It better not. I have only ever seen him that angry a few times. He has every witch working for him searching, for not only his moonstone now, but you, Elandra." Her eyes scrutinized me briefly before she let out a rush of air. "For some reason though, not one of them has had any luck. It's like your invisible to their magic," she said.

I sat up on my elbow and frowned. "I knew that part. I can block their kind if I wish, and since I started recovering my memories in this life, and realized how deep in the pit I was this time, I've been subconsciously keeping my block up." I explained, tossing my hair over my shoulder after it got caught under my elbow.

Rebekah snickered, shaking her head with laughter. "Of course you have. Sneaky little witch," she
said.

I waved away her amusement and frowned. "What I'm worried about is the fact that he actually believed it was me. I mean, why would he? He thinks I've been dead for over a thousand years. What would lead him to actually start searching for me, and not someone just messing with his head," I asked in confusion. Bekah's eyes warmed, her hand hovering over mine as the grey skin around her eyes crinkled.

"Ellie, I'm quite sure he would remember your voice, no matter how many centuries it's been. Besides, you know Nik, if he thinks someone is keeping something from him, he will do whatever it takes to figure out why," she said.

I chuckled, laying down with a deep sigh. "Yeah, you are right. I guess I'll just have to be extra careful from now on and make sure I keep my block up," I said.

Bekah nodded as I closed my eyes. I could sense her hand hovering above my head and I heard her humming an old lullaby. One I hadn't heard her sing since she was human. I smiled as I fell asleep, resolved to continue the fight tomorrow.
Standing in front of my bedroom mirror, I felt a familiar tug around my ribcage as Jenna tightened my corset. Wincing, I let out a small gasp — trying to ignore the burn in my chest caused by the lack of room to breathe. It had been centuries since I had been forced to dress this way, and I couldn't say I missed it. If it wasn't for Caroline — I wouldn't be forcing my body to slip into this little contraption created by Satan himself, but she was insistent that I join in the festivities. Even if Mystic Falls seemed to have one too many celebrations, she wanted to be a part of every single one, and if she was, then I — as her best friend — had to be. I so wanted to see where — in the best friend handbook — it stated that I had to be glued to her side at every damn function, but Caroline seemed to think it was a part of my job. To pass the time, I watched Jenna's reflection, her forehead was wet with perspiration — cheeks pink as she tugged at the white laces on my gown — brows furrowed in concentration. I ran my tongue over my bottom lip to stop the smile that tried to escape, I didn't want to make her self conscious. With one final yank(and gasp from me) she was tying me up, finished with the complicated task.

"God that is exhausting. At least I'll know what to do when I have to seal Elena into her dress," she said, bending down and wiping her hands on her jeans.

I laughed lightly, wincing at the pain that shot through my chest. I almost forgot that along with losing the ability to breathe, I also would no longer be able to eat, move, bend, or laugh. What a way to live, but at least I'd look glamorous. I slowly lowered myself onto my vanity stool, allowing Jenna to toss my gown over my head. She was careful not to mess up my elegantly braided hair, for which I was insanely grateful. It had taken me forever to perfect. Once I had the dress draped over my thighs, Jenna reached out; helping me stand. We walked back over to the mirror, and she helped me button up the front of my gown, smiling at my reflection.

"Oh, you look so beautiful, Elara. This gown is perfect. You look like you just walked off the set of a period film!" Jenna squealed.
I chuckled, shaking my head as I eyed the dress. I ran my hands down the fabric with a nod. "Your right, it is perfect," I agreed.

The dress I had found online had been made by a company specializing in realistic period fashion. As much as I hated dressing up and joining in on all of these silly functions — if I was going to do it — I was going to do it right. I lived through this period once and wasn't going to walk around wearing something unrealistic and costume-like. As Jenna bent down to straightened the bottom of my dress, I took a moment to appreciate the design. I had chosen a sky blue, victorian bodice dress with lace trim around the sleeves. The fabric layering the top of the dress had a beautiful floral print in pink with golden hues, giving the whole design a burst of color. It was different, and not something I would have worn in that time period because the cotton would have cost too much to dye. It felt good to splurge a bit now; when I could afford it. I couldn't help but imagine how proud my mother (in that time ) would have been to see me in such a colorful gown. It's silly how material ideas like that still stick with you; even centuries later. Standing, Jenna took the cotton and lace choker that had been created to match the gown and stepped behind me.

"and…" She lifted my hair and snapped the choker in place, sighing with pride. "...you are done."

I pulled the end of my braid over my shoulder and smiled brightly. "Thank you, Aunt Jenna," I said.

With a nonchalant shrug, she grinned, leaving my room. I glanced at my reflection one more time, fiddling with my hair until I felt it was perfect. Noticing a pair of blue orbs shining from behind me, I spun around. "What do you think, Bek?" I asked, waving my skirt around.

Rebekah walked a circle around me and smiled. "It's gorgeous, and would have cost a small fortune back in the day," she said.

I scrunched up my nose, avoiding the topic of cost, and slid into my flats.

"Hey, those are not period accurate!" Rebekah huffed, arms crossed.

I rolled my eyes, tossing my skirt over my blue flats as Rebekah came to stand beside me, facing the mirror, her chest rising as she sighed heavily. She ran the back of her hand over her cheek and down her neck, staring daggers at her absent image. "You know, I miss being able to see my reflection. Although, I guess — with how long I've been daggered — I doubt I'd wanna see what I actually look like," she said, sorrowfully.

I glanced at her reflection, seeing her as easily in the mirror as I did standing beside me. I had never fully understood why she could not see herself but guessed it had something to do with the fact that, essentially, she wasn't here. Only her soul traveled to greet me from time to time. I still had no clue why I was the only person who could see her, yet, had never been able to do the same with her brothers, Finn and Kol. Both were in the same state she was. I bit the inside of my cheek and watched her stare wistfully at my reflection. The sickly grey skin around her blue eyes, wrinkled with sadness. I turned towards her and smiled weakly.

"You're still as beautiful here and now, as you ever were, Bekah. Even if a little grey."

Rebekah laughed, stepping away from the mirror as she brushed the hair from her eyes. Though she tried to hide it, I noticed her glance at the mirror one last time, her hand coming to hover over her chest. I knew, wherever her body lay, that was the spot where the dagger sat; buried in her heart. I was grateful that I didn't have to see it when she was in this form. Since it was her soul that came to find me, the taint of the dagger would always be absent. The dagger had been created with dark magic and was unable to travel with her. Unlike what some believe, vampires still possess
souls, and dark magic can not latch onto an uncorrupted soul. The only way dark magic can corrupt someone's soul — is if they allow it — and so far Rebekah had not succumbed to its temptations. I shut off my lights as I slipped out of my room.

"Those shoes are still not period accurate, ya know," Rebekah said, voice sing-song as she stared down at her nails.

I started down the hallway, tossing my head back with a moan. "Yes, I know. For future reference, I only need one blonde nipping at me over every small detail. I already have Caroline for that, dear sister," I said.

Rebekah released an affronted scoff, as I headed down the stairs. "Excuse me, did you just say you had replaced me?"

Stopping in my tracks I spun around, rolling my eyes. I looked over Rebekah's face, taking in her wide watery eyes and pursed lips. She was feeling insecure for some reason.

"Rebekah Mikaelson, you are much too old for such childish nonsense. You know I could never replace you. You are my sister. What I meant is: I don't need two people constantly harping me about the little things. I'll keep Caroline for that, you just be there for when I screw up. I need you for the "I told ya so" speech and then to subsequently help me save my ass," I said, smiling up at her from the steps below.

Rebekah turned her head, casually wiping her eyes with the heel of her hand, light laughter leaving her lips. I could tell by the sardonic upturn of her lips, that she was following me into the memory of my terrible idea to call her brother a few nights before. "Deal, sister," she said, standing straighter.

Blowing her a kiss, I carefully made my way down the last few steps. I was surprised to find no one milling about on the lower level of the house. Placing my hands on my hips, I raised my eyes towards the ceiling, finding only the auras of Jenna and Elena residing upstairs. Jenna was probably helping Elena get dressed. With a devilish grin, I winked at Rebekah and lifted my gown, making my way over to my bag. Slipping my hand inside, I dug around until I found my leather pouch of ground vervain. I had been biding my time — waiting for the right moment to start hiding the vervain around the house, as I had done at Caroline's. The last few days had been rough — Stefan and Elena had been following me around like puppies — never giving me a moment's peace. I was sure it had something to do with me finding the time to break into the Boarding House and deactivating the Gilbert device. They had probably come to realize how much trouble I could get into left to my own devices. Whatever their deal was — it was starting to irritate me — and was bound to lead to a bit of a meltdown on my end. It wasn't like I couldn't find ways to do what I needed; even with an escort of Goodie, Goodies. Rebekah watched me curiously as I slowly walked into the kitchen, pulling the coffee from the cabinet. I removed the lid and shook in some vervain, rotating the container to mix it all, and then slipped it back into the cabinet. Once that was finished, I very slowly bent down, opening the cabinet under the sink so that I could reach our water filtration system. Biting my lip, I narrowed my eyes, feeling around until I could find where the filter attached to the base. Finally, I found where it snapped open. Pulling it out, I took a clump of vervain, layering it out smoothly over the filter so that the water could still seep through. Replacing the filter with a smile, I used the sink to lift myself off the floor, wincing as my ribcage protested fiercely. Wobbling slightly on my feet — I took several small breaths — blinking away the white spots that appeared in front of my vision, and shook off the small bout of dizziness. Rebekah stood behind me, her hands outstretched as if she could catch me if I fainted, and I giggled, rolling my eyes good-naturedly. She let out an irritated huff of breath, and I tilted my head, smiling lovingly at the apparition of my sister. I turned on the water and let it run watching for any
spurts or lack of water pressure — when I found nothing — I shut it back off, satisfied. Well, that was done. I had already given Aunt Jenna some of my very 'special' vitamins, the same ones Caroline, Elena, and now Jeremy used. I had made several extra bottles of vervain tablets when I had created them to dose Caroline. I decided to then pass them out to those I cared about once I saw how well they worked. Still, I wanted to make sure our house was protected, that way if she ever forgot a pill one day, at least she would be drinking coffee, showering, or using the water in some way. At least I now knew Jenna was safe from compulsion, and for now, that was all I could do for her. I planned to try and convince Elena that we needed to tell her that truth. I wasn't going to allow her to sway me in the same way she had Jeremy. Yes we were all a family — and I didn't want to go behind Elena's back — but this really was important, and could quickly become a life and death situation. So if she didn't listen, then I would go to Alaric. He had to be smart enough to realize his girlfriend needed to be safe and to do so, she needed to know what was really out there. Then, if they both were too stubborn to see reason, I would choose to take care of the problem myself and tell her the truth without them.

Nodding at my internal dialogue like a total dweeb, I rolled my eyes heavenward. Lifting my heavy dress I headed back towards the front door. I took a moment to check in on Jenna and Elena, glancing at their aura's from the bottom of the steps. They were both centered in Elena's room and I didn't plan on bothering them — partly because the idea of seeing Elena made me cringe — and partly because I didn't think my lungs would survive the trek upstairs. With that decision made I pulled my phone and car keys from my bag — knowing that if I tried to take my bag with me — Caroline would have my head. Rebekah smirked beside me as I dispiritedly placed my bag back on the coat rack. It was rare that I went anywhere without it. It was kinda like my version of a security blanket. Reaching down, I fussed with my dress until I found the hidden pocket I had insisted the seamstress sew-in for me. Wiggling the pocket enthusiastically, I showed Rebekah with a bright smile, as I slid my phone inside. Covering her face with her hands she followed me out onto the front porch, trying to hide her smile. I waved goodbye half-heartedly as I stepped off the porch. I waited for her to disappear before I turned around and headed for the driveway. It wasn't until I stood in front of my car — a stressed grimace on my face — that I realized exactly how exhausting this normal endeavor was going to be. The satanic deathtrap I was being forced to wear was making the simplest of tasks marathonic. Tapping my foot on the pavement, I let out a small breath before wrapping my left arm around my waist. I bundled up my dress as I opened my door with my other hand. I took hold of the steering wheel and pulled myself inside. By the time I was backing out of the driveway, I was panting, a thick layer of sweat forming under my dress. This whole ordeal sucked, and I would be damned if I ever did it again. I didn't care how adorably blue Caroline's puppy dog eyes could be. Shaking my head, I added 'Grow a backbone, you thousand-year-old wuss!' to my mental checklist. Rolling my eyes I groaned, acknowledging to myself that I would probably never check that one off my list, no matter what my age reached.

Pulling into the High School parking lot, I let out a heavy sigh, my head falling back against the headrest as I saw the hustle and bustle. I wasn't in the mood for such a crowd. Several parade floats lined the blocked-off city street in front of the school. In the middle of the street, the school band was dressed in their uniforms, instruments in hand. Amongst the large crowd, I saw Matt, Tyler, and a few other boys all busy placing chairs atop the floats for people to use. Exiting my car, I fixed my dress, glancing around for Caroline; who I easily found standing by the Founders float. Before I could even consider bothering her, Mrs. Lockwood started barking orders for all of the Miss Mystic contestants and their dates, to start finding their places on the float. Making my way toward the group I sadly belonged to, I caught two familiar silhouettes out of the corner of my eye. Stefan and Damon stood off on their own, presumably awaiting Elena's arrival. Stefan's appearance made the breath hitch in my throat and I couldn't avert the heavyweight that fell into the pit of my stomach. It was silly of me, but all of these small reminders were like slaps to the face. Stefan wore a suave black suit — his hair of course — wasn't styled as it had been in our time, but he looked as
he once had as a human, and it made me feel like Elandra Miller all over again. My eyes moved to the man standing next to him... Damon, the man that had promised his mortal life to me. Here we all stood — together again — in Mystic Falls. I watched them for a moment stunned, the bleak surrealism of the entire situation hit me like a ton of bricks. As I stood there watching them, there wasn't a single moment where either of them noticed my green eyes observing them. As it had been in the past — once Katherine had joined our merry little trio — I was invisible, neither of them was waiting for me, but for the Petrova doppelganger. The similarities between the past and now; were staggering. As memories flooded me, I realized just how little some things had changed. I was no longer able to stop the uncomfortable chuckle that fell from my lips; my ribs flared hotly in anger. Both Salvatores turned towards my approach, Damon crossing his arms curiously, his bright blue eyes narrowing as I continued to giggle. His silk long sleeve black shirt, winked in the sunlight, catching my attention. My eyes roamed over his tight muscled arms of their own volition. The quick upturn of his lips told me he had caught the way I had appreciated his muscled form, and I rolled my eyes, coming to stand in front of the vampiric brotherly duo.

"Mr. Stefan Salvatore, you are looking quite dapper this afternoon," I said, my voice refined.

My eyes quickly took in Stefan's appearance with a stiff nod. He tried to fight back his grin but failed, his lips pulling up into a toothy grin.

"Well, Miss Elandra Miller. I appreciate the compliment. You are looking very lovely yourself," Stefan said, smiling at my attire.

I held back a wince at the use of my old surname as Stefan took my hand, planting a quick kiss on the back of it. With a laugh, I started fanning myself exaggeratedly, earning a growl from Damon.

"Such a gentleman," I sighed, batting my lashes.

Stefan rolled his eyes, helping me maneuver over the uneven ground. Turning around I could see why they had chosen this spot. They were both shamelessly enjoying a show in the form of a frazzled Mrs. Lockwood.

"So, I'm assuming you are both awaiting a certain sister of mine?" I said, my voice still holding its prim facade.

Stefan chuckled, shaking his head. "Yes, do you know if she is on her way?" he asked.

I watched Mrs. Lockwood running towards Tyler, wobbling in her heels, clipboard raised above her head as she yelled at him.

"She was still dressing when I left," I said, a smile painted on my pink lips as I watched Tyler try and keep his temper in check.

Damon leaned towards me glancing past his brother, head cocked to one side. "Are you going to fill us in on the earlier joke, Elandra?" he asked.

Keeping my gaze firmly on Tyler, I maintained a blank expression. "I don't think that would be wise, Damon. I doubt either of you would find my dark thoughts as humorous as I did," I said.

Stefan's hazel eyes curiously shined on mine, his hands sliding into his pockets as he turned towards me, Damon following him. Both brothers stared at me questioningly — for once their entire attention focused on me; something that I wasn't used to. Blinking rapidly, I scrutinized the Salvatores, refusing to be cowed by their intense staredown.

"I told you both, it was nothing. I can have my private thoughts, ya know," I said, with a scoff.
Damon stepped closer, lips turned down in a frown. "No, cause you see…the last time we didn't ask questions… the last time we just let you go about things alone, you died," he said.

Stefan nodded behind him, his expression was bleak and unforgiving. "Elandra, if we are going to get through this — find a way to break your curse — then you cant be hiding things from us. We can see when you're hurting, and we are both here for you," Stefan said.

With a shake of my head, I placed a hand on the back of my neck, glancing at my pseudo brother and ex-fiance.

Here for me?

Since when are they both here for me?

"Ok. Well then, since you're both so very adamant to know my every thought."

I stood taller, lifting my skirt and stepping closer to Stefan, patting his chest roughly.

"I was so enjoying the reminder of the past you brought on with your retro getup Stef."

Turning towards Damon I gave him my best sickly sweet smile.

"Then I realized how very little things had changed. I mean, here we all are, in Mystic Falls… together again, and here you both are…waiting for Katherine's lookalike."

I ignored the way they both flinched, too caught up in the feeling my whole body was giving off. It felt stiff with the need to release a bit of the built-up stress I had been carrying on my shoulders since the tomb had been opened. My heart fluttered in my chest as heat flared across my cheeks and down my neck, anger, and adrenaline pumping through my veins. Glaring at both men, I let my fake smile fall.

"Both of you are head over heels for her." I laughed, ignoring their stunned expressions. "And I-I am alone. Yet again," I stepped further away from them.

"That was what was on my mind. Now, maybe next time, you will both allow me my private thoughts. I will tell you both, when or if, I need you," I said, my voice weak.

Damon's blue eyes darkened for a moment, his hand twitching as if he wished to reach out for me — but as per usual— my sister's arrival drew his attention. The breath of every person — myself included — in our small circle hitched, as she started walking towards us. She looked exactly like Katherine. Every detail, down to her curled hair, was identical. As Damon and Stefan turned towards her, I stepped back. After she had slapped me, I had been avoiding her as much as possible. Yes, she and Stefan had been following at my heels, but I had been avoiding being alone with Elena, or even looking her in the eye. It may be juvenile, but the bitch had slapped me, all for being overwrought and angry; something I had every right to be. After everything Elena had done to me, I had only raised my hand to her once, when we were children. Turning around I headed for the Float, and Caroline. As always, she was a safe haven and would understand if I wasn't ready to deal with Elena's bullshit. I had explained everything to Caroline and I was a bit surprised when she had sided with me. She had not taken the slap well. The only person who had taken it worse had been Rebekah. If she hadn't been daggered, I would have feared for Elena's safety. I still might, once I do undagger her. I would be lying if I didn't say it brought a small smile to my lips, having at least two people who I knew were inherently on my side. Taking one last look back at the Salvatores and my sister, I sighed. I watched them both smiling down at her brightly as she swayed in her bronze dress, she lifted her green sash with a beam directed solely at Damon. As I watched
him smiling at her enthusiasm, I knew deep down there was nothing I could do for him, he had fallen for her same as he had Katherine. The only thing I could do was be there for him when it inevitably fell apart; when she chose Stefan. Then again, maybe I was just being a cynic. Maybe she would break the cycle and chose Damon. I watched Damon's face fall as Stefan took Elena's hand, leading her towards the Float. I turned away from his painful pining and finished my own trek towards Caroline. It was time to help her with the parade as promised. I was already ready for the day to be over with.

Shoving my dress into the garment bag, I smiled viciously, sending it a glare as I zipped the bag with much more venom than was necessary. The entire parade had lasted much longer than I had ever thought possible. My designated job of handing out handfuls of fliers and packets of candy to herds of children, as their parents asked me for picture after picture 'Oohing' and 'Aahing' over my costume had been much more than Caroline had ever said I would have to endure. In all of my many…many lives, today is one I do not ever want to relive. In all, I am proud I made it through the day without killing anyone. There was one point, I almost lost my cool. Damon had the nerve to start taking pictures of my debacle on his cell. I almost considered zapping him, then and there, damn the crowd and the possibilities of being burned at the stake again. He deserved a strong bolt of lighting burning his immortal ass to a crisp. Grabbing my garment bag from where it hung, I tossed it over my shoulder; leaving the bathroom. Fighting my way through the Grill, I waved brightly at Matt who was sitting with Caroline at the bar. When she saw me heading out, she turned around in her seat, blowing me a kiss; winking flirtatiously. Wagging my eyebrows, I continued out of the bar, walking backward to better catch her kiss. I held it against my chest with a fluttering of my lashes as I spun back around on my heel. Caroline laughed, turning back towards Matt. Pushing open the door, I screwed up my eyes, raising my hand to shield myself from the blinding sunlight. I pulled the garment bag over my arm and started towards my car, noticing Jeremy and Damon standing at the end of the street, bickering back and forth. As Jeremy moved to leave, Damon grabbed his arm, pulling him roughly back towards him. Quickly heading in their direction, I could feel my magic flaring inside me. I squeezed my hand shut tightly.

"Damon!" I yelled, drawing the elder Salvatores attention.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing. Get your hands off my brother."

I pushed myself in front of the vampire. Jeremy jerked his arm away, jaw tight. My eyes scanned him, checking for any injuries before they snapped back to Damon.

"You didn't hear the way he was talking to, Elena. He needs to cut her some slack. She was only trying to protect him, and wasn't the one who took his memories," he said, glancing down at me. Scoffing I stepped back — balancing my weight and handing over my garment bag to my brother — who I was surprised to find took it with no complaints.

"Dammit Damon. I've told you this is a family matter, and not for you to interfere in. What goes on between Elena and Jeremy is just that, between them. Jer has every right to be pissed at her — she may not have been the one to physically take his memories — but she asked you to take them for her; that's one and the same, Day," I said, shaking my head.

Damon took a step into my personal space. I wasn't sure if he meant it to intimidate me, or if it was just a habit from centuries of being such a huge ass. Either way, Damon Salvatore didn't scare me. Beside me, I could feel Jeremy's whole body tense.

"He is being a little punk, Ellie," Damon said.

I reached out and patted him on the cheek, gently caressing his face as I pulled away. "Damon, he
is a teenager whose sister had his mind wiped of his first love. Then he finds out his other sister is
dying, and also a witch, having never been told any of this. I think he deserves to be a 'punk' if he
so wishes," I said.

With a raised brow, I reached over and took my brothers elbow, pulling him away from Damon,
and pushing him behind me. "Your just old, and have forgotten what it's like to be a human
teenager — but even if you hadn't — my brother doesn't exactly have normal issues," I smiled.

Damon scoffed, glacier eyes widening as he watched me lead Jeremy down the sidewalk, his hands
in his jacket pockets. "I am not old, Elandra!" he hollered, glancing left and right, pale cheeks pink.

I chuckled, waving at him merrily over my shoulder, placing my arm in the crook of Jeremy's. I
allowed him to lead me further away.

"I still haven't forgiven you, and I don't know if I can," Jeremy finally admitted as we turned the
corner.

Taking my garment bag from his arm with a nod, I swallowed heavily. "I understand."

I pulled him to a stop, looking up into his eyes. I allowed the corners of my lips to turn up as I
realized how much taller than myself my younger brother had become. "I would really like your
forgiveness, Jeremy. But regardless of if you forgive me or not, I will never stop loving you," I
said.

Glancing to my right I noticed we had stopped next to my car. "This is me, Jer. Would you like a
ride home?" I asked.

Jeremy stepped away from me, his hands coming up towards his hips as he pulled his jacket back.
"I don't think Im ready for that, Elara. I should go," he said, shaking his head as he headed in the
opposite direction.

I started forward, my eyes peeled towards where he had bolted, watching him flee; his form
becoming a speck in the distance. Throwing my head back, I let out a small grunt of anger,
stomping my foot in exasperation. I huffed, angrily heading towards the back of my car. I tossed
my dress into the trunk, slamming it closed. I not so secretly enjoyed the way the unsuspecting
people nearby jumped in fright at the loud noise. Hopping into my car I sat back in the seat,
sighing heavily. I fumbled with my car keys, the warm metal a very welcome distraction. With the
many thoughts that were still swirling through my mind, it wasn't until I felt the small hairs on the
back of my neck rise, goosebumps growing up both of my arms, that I realized something wasn't
right. My eyes rose, focusing on the people surrounding my car all of them going about their
normal routines, none of them paying me any mind. With a deep breath, I slid my key into the
ignition, before closing my eyes and focusing my attention on the backseat, where I knew someone
sat; waiting for me to notice their presence.

With a grimace I let out a breath, a low rumble leaving my throat. "Hello, Katherine," I said,
looking into my rearview mirror at my sister's doppelganger.

Katherine's reflection smiled at me, her wavy hair bouncing as she laughed at my angry expression.
"Oh, come on. Our last meeting was much more pleasant. Was it not?" she asked, red lips pouting.

Rolling my eyes I swiftly turned in my seat, finally catching the full view of my tiresome
companion. Katherine was wearing a long-sleeved red v-neck sweater, a pair of denim blue jeans,
and black over the knee boots. As usual, she looked fantastic. Her ruby lips pursed as she caught
my scrutiny.
"Well?" she asked, annoyance leaking from her tone.

"Yes Kit, last time we were in a much better place. But that had a lot to do with the fact, that you hadn't been trying to kill people I care very deeply for. Did I not warn you what would come from that?" I said, teeth bared.

Katherine propelled herself forward at vamp speed, her face inches from my own. She lowered her nose against my skin, slowly caressing me as she took a deep breath in.

"I forgot how mouth-watering your scent is, Ellie. Your breed of witch smell particularly appetizing. It would be such a pity if you were to die… early," she said, taking one last long draw of breath.

I let out a small shaky laugh, even if I wasn't at all afraid of her, my body still betrayed me. It could sense a predator and reacted accordingly, no matter the fact that I knew I could defend myself against her. My hands shook as I laid them in my lap.

I stared at Katherine, eyes hard. "You and I both know, that unless I want you to kill me — you won't be able to. Your threats mean nothing to me, Kit," I said.

Katherines bared her fangs, black veins appearing under her eyes as her vampiric visage appeared before me, something I had seen many times. I held my hands together tightly as they shook. I willed my body to focus and the fear to dissipate. I wasn't sure why my body was choosing now to betray me? Maybe it was the enclosed space or the fact that this was Katerina Petrova — but whatever it was — I wouldn't allow it to make me appear weak.

"You may not fear me yourself, little witch but there are others that are not as protected as you are. People you care about," Katherine smiled.

Her bright white fangs disappeared, leaving behind perfectly shaped teeth. I sat up, leaning towards her as my hands started to glow. "You touch anyone I care about Katerina and there will be a war between us. No longer will I hold anything but malice for you," I promised, my eyes pleading with her.

We had a history, Katherine and I, and I didn't want to fight her. She had been there for me when I was all alone, and she had tried to save me once. Yes, she had also done a number on me, at one point in time. Not to mention what she had done to hurt the Salvatore brothers. There was no denying Katherine's past was filled with darkness. Yet, I understood that you can not expect people to be perfect. Not when they have lived through hell. Katherine leaned towards me, placing a hand on my face.

"We were already at war the moment you stood between me and my freedom. I asked you to stay away, Ellie. Then you interfered with Isobel. Now, you are a threat. I can't abide threats, not when my freedom is so close," she said, running her fingers down my cheek.

"Then I guess this is goodbye, Katerina. The moment you step out of this car, that's it. I will be coming for you," I said, my eyes wet.

A part of me had always hated Katherine, but there was also that hidden part — that cared for her. Katherine smiled, her red lips parting wickedly.

"You know, there's only one other group of people I'd fear more." She smirked, her curls falling into her face.

When she looked back up at me I watched her brown eyes fog over with sadness for a brief
moment — a moment where I could see everything she would never say to me. It was the only goodbye we would ever share. I allowed her to see the sadness in my own eyes, before I blinked, breaking through the fog.

"You won't be able to protect all of them, Ellie. I will be getting my revenge for what you did to Isobel, and my plans," she said, pulling away from me.

Before I could say a single word, she was gone, my back door hanging open, a breeze filtering through the car. I took a deep calming breath and stepped outside, shutting my door quickly. Fear was threatening to overwhelm me. I needed to get home and make sure Jenna and Jeremy were ok. I knew Elena was fine, there would be no way Katherine would hurt her. Nik needed her for his spell, and that was the whole reason Katherine was here in the first place. I slipped back into the car and sped towards my house. As I drove home, I started running through who would be on Katherine's hit list. The Salvatores would take much too long to kill, and be more fun to mess with later on down the road. She would be going for someone quick and easy, someone human. As I pulled into my driveway, my mind kept coming back to Jeremy and Jenna, they would be perfect. They were human, and family. It would not only hurt me but Elena as well. Katherine had to know what hurt Elena, also hurt Stefan and Damon. So hurting Jenna or Jeremy would be like hitting all of us at once. I bolted from my car and ran inside, tossing the front door open fearfully, a loud bang echoing through the entryway as the door collided with the wall. Jenna dashed through the kitchen door — telephone in hand — her eyes widened in shock as she assessed me.

"Did you get the news then?" she said, voice shaking.

Her body jerked as the kitchen door swung forward, almost knocking her unsteady figure over. I quickly headed towards her, my head moving up and down as my eyes roamed her body, checking for any signs of trauma.

When I stood in front of her shaky form, I placed my hands on her cheeks. "What happened, Aunt Jenna?" I asked, my whole world seemed to be standing still as I waited for her answer.

Jenna lifted the phone that she still held tightly in her hand, her eyes misty. "Oh sweetie, there was something wrong with Mr. Lockwood's brakes. He and Tyler were taking Matt and Caroline home." Jenna took in a sharp breath, her face falling as I stepped away from her. "There was a wreck, Ellie. Caroline is in surgery now, Matt and Tyler are ok, but Mr. Lockwood… he didn't make it," Jenna said.

I stumbled away from Jenna, my vision blurry as I came to terms with the fact that I had been wrong. Katherine had gone after my friends. The only three people in Mystic Falls that I cared very deeply for outside of my family. I turned away from Jenna as I felt my power surge, I caught my reflection in the mirror that sat on the wall beside me as I stumbled towards the door, my eyes were shining a bright and powerful blue.

"Elara wait! You are in no shape to drive, let me take you. Elena and Stefan are already there," Jenna said, coming up behind me, her hand finding a place on my tense shoulder.

I closed my eyes, taking a few shaky breaths to calm myself and take back control of my magic. I nodded, unable to speak. Caroline needed me and I had nothing to give anyone else at the moment. Jenna drove me as quickly as she legally could to the hospital, thankfully accepting my silence without badgering me. When we finally arrived I all but flew through the halls of the Hospital, only stopping at the nurse's station so that I could be directed to the right floor. After I had been given Caroline's information — Jenna and I slipped into the elevator and I slammed my hand down on the appropriate button; tapping my foot impatiently as I waited for the doors to close. When they finally did, I let out a deep shaky breath, my whole body drooping as I felt the weight of what was
happening fall down on my shoulders. Jenna wrapped her arms around me from behind, giving me the silent support I needed without asking anything of me in return. I stood there with Jenna's arms wrapped around me, and let out a few quiet tears, my whole being racked with guilt. I should have saved her, should have been there. She would never be able to forgive me for this, not when she found out it was all my fault. I sniffed, my nose itchy I could see my reflection in the silver mirror-like surface of the elevator doors. My eyes were red-rimmed and my nose pink and swollen. The elevator dinged, alerting us that the doors were about to open. I patted Jenna's hand, straightening my shoulders as I took a few steps forward. My mini break down was over, I couldn't afford to be weak. I sent Jenna a small smile over my shoulder as a thank you for her support. A nod of her head was all the return I got, and I was fine with that. We understood each other; always had. She knew I didn't like to feel or appear weak, and she respected that about me. We both knew that if we ever needed each other — we would both be there. We were family after all. The elevator doors opened and Jenna and I stepped out, speeding around the corner to find Matt, Tyler, and Liz sitting at the chairs opposite the nurse's station. I rushed towards Liz, and only just kept my tears at bay as she wrapped me in her arms, gently patting me on the back.

"It's going to be ok, Ellie. She is going to be fine," she whispered.

I sniffed, wiping my eyes as I stepped away. "How is she, Mrs. Forbes?" I said, sitting next to distraught looking Tyler who laid his arm over my shoulder.

"She is still in surgery, there was some internal bleeding," Liz said.

I shook my head, internally cursing Katherine. White-hot hate bubbled inside me as I thought of the many ways I could torture her. Tyler laid his head on my shoulder as Liz paced in front of us, her hands held in front of her, constantly wrapping around each other as she fidgeted. I could hear Tyler quietly sniffing beside me and my heart ached for him. His father had been an awful man, but he had still been his father. I knew better than anyone that losing a parent was never easy. I ran my fingers through his hair, playing with the strands at the nape of his neck. Matt watched us from the chair beside Aunt Jenna, and I sent him a sad smile, one he weakly returned. We waited for what felt like hours, never moving from our respective spots. All of us watched Liz uneasily as she continued to pace. We knew there was nothing we could do for her. Her daughter's life was hanging in the balance only a few rooms away, and that wasn't something you could just soothe away. Glancing around, I began to wonder where the heck Elena was? I vaguely remembered Jenna saying she and Stefan were both here; waiting for Caroline to get out of surgery.

I moved my fingers from Tyler's hair and kissed his head lightly. "Hey Ty, have you seen Stefan or Elena?"

Tyler sat up, glancing at Matt, his red eyes tired. "Yeah, they both took off somewhere a few minutes before you showed up," he said, voice cracking.

I patted his leg gently and stood from my seat, stretching my arms out above me. I tilted my head from side to side, glancing down the hallways as I scrunched up my nose, wondering where the heck my annoying doppelganger of a sister had gone off to. Before I could think too much on it, a tall man in a white lab coat came bursting through the double doors behind Liz.

"Sheriff Forbes?" he asked, glancing down at the clipboard he was holding.

Liz sped towards him, her eyes frantically searching his face. I followed behind her, quickly joined by Tyler, Matt, and Jenna. The Doctor looked up at our small group — all of us crowding around him — and sighed, his lined features exasperated. "Ok, why don't you all back up and take a deep breath."
He looked at each of us in turn, and I narrowed my eyes, stepping beside Liz. I placed my hand on her stiff arm for support and glared at the pompous ass before me. "No, why don't you do your fucking job and tell us about Caroline, yeah?" I said, leaning towards him aggressively. 

My nerves were shot and I was about to blow up on somebody. This man just happened to be here, provoking my wrath. Liz wrapped her arms around me, pulling me away from the now shocked Doctor.

"Elara, calm down." Liz, ran her hand down my back as she passed me to Jenna who whispered soothing words in my ear, glaring at the Doctor with malice.

Liz turned back towards the frazzled Doctor, her face hard. "Now, I suggest you listen to my daughter's friend and do your damn job. Tell me how my daughter is," Liz said.

The mans Adam's apple bobbed as he nodded, fumbling with his clipboard, he flipped through the pages. "Your daughter is out of surgery. The next 24hrs will be crucial," he said.

Liz's head fell forward, her shoulders slumping. I wrapped my arms around her and nodded at the Doctor, permitting him to go.

"You can see her now, two at a time," he said, taking his leave.

I comforted Liz as the others moved back to their seats, talking quietly amongst themselves. When she was finally able to hold her head up, she smiled at me, wiping her eyes on her knuckles. "Would you like to come with me to see her?"

I took a deep breath and nodded, following her towards the double doors and down the long sterile hallway. Finally, we stopped in front of an off white door — the same as all the others — and I stood in front of the window beside the door, staring into the room, eyes wide. A nurse was standing beside Caroline's bed, messing with the machine that stood directly opposite her, but that wasn't what held my attention. My eye had been caught by the still form of Caroline; who laid in the hospital bed next to the busy nurse. Her blonde hair almost blending in with her ghostly pale skin. Her normally plump pink lips were now cracked and colorless. I held in a choked sob as Liz took my hand, leading me inside. The nurse beside the bed glanced our way — smiling briefly — before turning back around and continuing to press a few buttons on the machine. I stood beside the bed, taking Caroline's cold hand as I lowered myself into one of the chairs beside her. I could hear Liz talking quietly to the nurse behind me, but couldn't make out what they were saying. All I could hear was the beeping of Caroline's machines. The machines that were keeping her alive. The longer I listened to their incessant beeping, the more it sounded like they were saying 'your fault, your fault'. I lowered my head and closed my eyes. I tried to ignore my surroundings, and instead focus on the feel of Caroline's hand in my own. Somewhere along the line, Liz told me she was going out to find a Doctor, but I chose to stay put, Caroline's hand still firmly in mine. I sat back in my seat and placed my empty hand against the bridge of my nose, applying a bit of pressure; in hopes that it would alleviate the migraine that was starting to pulse against my skull.

The doorknob jiggled, drawing my attention and I lowered my hand, opening my eyes slowly, my expression guarded. I was so not in the mood for any more stress. The green eyes of Bonnie Bennett greeted me as she slid into the room, her face sad, as she caught the image of Caroline laying motionless beside me. I sat forward, scooting to the edge of my seat as I watched her move closer.

"How is she?"

My eyes moved back toward the still form of my friend, scanning her swiftly as I shrugged half-
heartedly. "She's not good, Bon," I said.

Bonnie sat down beside me shaking her head, her green orbs never leaving Caroline. "What happened?"

I sighed heavily, wondering briefly if she had lost a game of rock, paper, scissors and had to be the one to come in here and question me. "Katherine happened, Bonnie. She came to visit me earlier and told me since I stepped in and handled the Isobel situation; effectively destroying the Gilbert device. I was in the way and would pay for messing up her plans. Caroline is serving as Katherine's payback," I said, tears burning at the corners of my wet eyes.

Bonnie gasped, her emerald orbs flashing between me and Caroline. "Why didn't you do something? I've seen your magic, you could have protected her," Bonnie said, voice thick with accusation.

I turned swiftly, my empty hand gripping the hand rest of the chair tightly, nails digging into the wood. "Don't you think if I would have known her plans, I would have interceded! I would give my life for those I love Bennett," I said, venomously.

Bonnie raised her hand in supplication, standing to her feet and stepping away from my lethal glare. "Your right, I'm sorry. We are all just scared. Katherine is here then? Elena's doppelganger? Basically her twin," Bonnie said, summing up the entire situation as if I didn't already know.

I groaned, gripping Caroline's hand to keep myself from screaming. "Thank you for explaining to me what a doppelganger is, Professor Bennett. I was starting to get confused."

The witch spun around and narrowed her eyes at me, stepping around Caroline's bed.

"Yes, Katherine is in Mystic Falls and she is here for a specific reason; one she hasn't revealed to me. What I do know is: she is dangerous," I said, motioning towards Caroline.

I tucked away the guilt I felt, lying to Bonnie and the others. I wanted to tell them exactly why Katherine was here, but there was no way I was going to be the one to reveal Nik's curse to them, and what Elena would have to give up to help him break it. I would be labeled an enemy just as quickly as Nik, all because I knew him… personally. That was a problem I was still trying to find an answer to; how to regain their trust once all was revealed. I sat back with a sigh and raised a brow.

"Oh, and that she looks exactly like my sister. I know that now too. Thanks to you," I said, sassily.

Bonnie glared at me hatefully, shaking her head. "Yeah, we don't have time for you snark, Elara. We need to warn everyone, and figure out a way to help Caroline."

I laughed lightly, looking down at my nails. "Oh Bonnie, I'm sure they all already know she is here. Do you honestly think she hasn't left her mark yet?"

I raised my green eyes to meet Bonnies darker ones. "This..." I motioned towards Caroline, my muscles protesting from exhaustion. "...was just the beginning. Caroline was just a big middle finger in my direction. A reminder for me to stay out of her way," I said.

Bonnie looked away, crossing her arms.

I looked down at my hand, the one that still held Caroline's, and frowned. "And what exactly would you like for us to do about Caroline? The Doctor's have done everything they can. I am powerful, yes. But there is only so much you can do with magic before it borders on the dark," I
said, watching the witch carefully.

I could see her mind whirling, and knew whatever she was planning, wouldn't turn out the way she wanted.

"I thought your magic was different, that you didn't have anyone to answer to?" she huffed.

Standing I let out an annoyed sigh, running my fingers through my messy hair. "Your right, Bon. I don't answer to my ancestors as you do. But, there are still some things that count as dark magic no matter what kind of witch you are, and messing with life and death… well, that's about as dark as it gets." I looked down at the pale visage of my friend and grimaced. "Healing Caroline would take dark, heavy magic. She sustained extensive damage in the wreck. I'm not sure what would happen if I tried to pull forth such powerful magic and place it inside her. It could change her in very fundamental ways, Bonnie. Some pieces of magic are best to leave alone," I said, raising my eyes to look at the young witch in front of me.

Bonnie was watching me with disbelief and anger. "How can you say that? How can you just leave her to die?" Bonnie asked, her voice rising. I lowered my head, closing my eyes against her anger. "Bonnie, I am not leaving her to die. She is in a Hospital and I have been here all night, sitting beside her and lending her as much of my energy as I physically can. It's not as much as I wish I could do, but its all I can give her at the moment. Caroline wouldn't want anything else," I said, opening my eyes and staring her down.

Bonnie glared at me, her hands falling to her hips. "You may think you know everything about Caroline, but I know she wouldn't want to die, and I won't let her," Bonnie said, yanking the door open and storming out of the room.

I couldn't believe that Bonnie actually thought I would sit here and just let Caroline die. I was doing everything I could to help speed up her healing. I was sending her my magical energy, filling her with as much strength as I could without going too far. It would help her stay strong and alive. Whatever Bonnie was planning wouldn't end well; I could feel that much. I sat back down and felt my eyelids drooping. I was exhausted, lending Caroline my energy had done me in. Leaning forward, I laid my head on the bed, keeping my hand in Caroline's, I allowed my eyes to fall closed.

I felt something soft brush against my forehead and groaned, moving my hand to smack whatever it was away. A lighthearted giggle met my ears, heating my insides like liquid fire. I sat up quickly, my head spinning as I met the cool blue eyes of Caroline Forbes. Her blonde hair was held up in a bun atop her head, her skin pink and warm to the touch. My chest immediately started to heave, my dry eyes burning as they filled with hot tears. Caroline's face fell and she reached out to me, motioning for me to lay beside her on the bed. I stood, moving beside her and very carefully laid next to her so that my head fell on her shoulder. I let the tears continue to fall, unguarded. Enjoying the way her fingers combed through my tangled hair. Deep down, I knew something wasn't right — that she shouldn't be awake and looking so healthy — but at the moment all I cared about was that she was alive.

"Its ok, Ellie. Im ok."

I snuggled into her arm and scoffed. "You bitch. You almost left me!" I said, lightly smacking her shoulder.

Caroline laughed, hugging me tightly. "Well, I see you made sure I'm still here; stuck with you."

Caroline smiled brightly, a single strand of healthy blonde hair falling from her updo. Blowing the errant hair from her eyes, her expression softened. "You stayed with me the entire time?" she asked.
I looked up into her baby blue eyes and nodded. "I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else," I said.

Caroline kissed my cheek and sighed contentedly, continuing to run her fingers through my hair. After a few minutes, we heard voices outside of the door and I moaned, standing and pulling my hair into a ponytail. Bonnie and Matt slipped into the room, and I sent them both exhausted smiles. Bonnie smirked at me and I narrowed my eyes, my heightened senses flaring. Of course, she had something to do with Caroline's newly recovered state.

What did she do?

Bonnie sauntered past me, a bright smile on her face as she flung herself at Caroline, hugging her tightly.

"Careful, still a little sore," Caroline said, wincing.

I tapped my fingers against my thigh as I watched their interaction. I grinned as Matt was the next to greet Caroline, kissing her enthusiastically.

"Oh, isn't he cute?" Caroline said, pulling away and cooing as she pinched Matt's cheek.

I giggled, shaking my head. Caroline peered past Matt, scrutinizing my tired form as a yawn overtook me. My back popped as I stretched my arms out in front of me.

"Ok, that's it. I appreciate you being here all night, but you need sleep. Matt will take you home," Caroline said, snapping her fingers at Matt, and pointing in my direction.

Matt quickly jumped to it, ushering me toward Caroline for a quick goodbye.

"Care, I don't think it's a good idea for me to leave. I need to talk to you," I said, eyeing her pink cheeks and bright eyes.

Bonnie crossed her arms, glaring at me with a fiery expression. "Caroline will be fine by herself, Elara. She is healing well."

I stood my ground, staring at her pleadingly. Something wasn't right and I couldn't stand by and say nothing, even if I was happy she was awake. She directed her bright smile at me like a rising Sun.

"There is so much I need to tell you, Care Bear," I said.

Caroline took my hand, rubbing my wrist gently with her thumb. "I'm sure whatever it is, it can wait for a few hours while you rest up. You were here for me while I was out. Now you need to take care of yourself."

With a resigned sigh, I nodded, squeezing Caroline's warm hand one last time, before allowing Matt to lead me out of the room. I glared at Bonnie as the door started closing behind me, her expression was one of smug triumph, a triumph I had a sinking feeling wouldn't last. I was terrified of what I felt coming. All I could do now was hope the fall wasn't one that had me losing Caroline; this time for good. When the heavy door snapped close, I followed Matt down the hall, stopping in front of the coffee machine with a moan of delight.

"Hey Matt, I'll meet you outside, I am gonna get me a cup of caffeine before we go. I am so gonna need something to keep me awake long enough to get home and take a shower," I said, chuckling.

Matt nodded, his lips turning up in amusement. "Sure thing. I'll go start the car and get the heat
I waved him away and poured myself a cup of coffee, enjoying the strong smell that always reminded me of rushed mornings full of loud voices, and the delicious smell of sizzling bacon. I was stirring the sugar into my cup when I saw a flash of dark hair out of the corner of my eye. I spun around and narrowed my eyes, stepping toward the hall. A quick flash of Bonnie Bennett was all I saw as she escaped around the corner. With an indifferent shrug, I grabbed my coffee and slowly headed down the hall. As I turned the corner, my ears perked up catching a few familiar voices. I edged closer to the end of the hallway and slowed down. I stood at the edge of the corridor, my back pressed against the wall. Bonnie's clear voice rang out in the empty hallway, an edge to her unforgiving tone. She was discussing Caroline's newfound health with Elena and Damon. Bonnie and Damon bickered back and forth as I sipped my coffee, unwilling to step around the corner and get involved. It angered me that the only way I was able to receive any real answers to what their little gang was actually up to, was by eavesdropping. I closed my eyes as Damon taunted Bonnie, reminding her that she had been the one to ask him to use his blood to heal Caroline. I leaned against the wall, shaking my head. Now that made sense. How the hell had he been able to get into her room last night without me sensing him? How could I had been so stupid? I had allowed myself to get so weak that it had led to missing something vital. It was a mistake I could not repeat. I tried to remain calm, reminding myself that at least Caroline was in a hospital surrounded by witnesses. Katherine had her revenge, hopefully, she would leave it at that. I was still too weak right now to place any protections around Caroline's room. I needed to go home and rest so that I could get my strength back. I inwardly groaned as Bonnie snapped a scathing final remark at Damon, leaving him and Elena alone. Thankfully, she went in the opposite direction and away from me. Glancing up I could see Damon and Elena's reflections in the safety mirror above me. They both stood in front of each other, shoulders tense. Damon was only inches away from my sister, obviously unconcerned with her personal space. I bit my lip, my fingers scratching against the styrofoam cup I was still holding. I glared at their reflections with annoyance.

"I know this is probably the last thing you want to do right now, but we should talk about what happened last night," Damon said.

Elena crossed her arms, shaking her head in a questioning manner. "Yeah, someone tried to break into the house last night. John was the only one home and wouldn't tell me who it was. He said I shouldn't get involved," Elena said.

My brows raised in surprise. Well, that was a new development. Who the hell had tried to break into our house? I mean, it had to be Katherine, right? How did Uncle John know she wasn't Elena? I ran my hand over my face, sighing quietly. Why does my sister insist on keeping things from me?

Damon leaned forward in shock. "What? When? After I left?"

I watched Elena lean towards him in confusion. "You were there?"

Damon took a step back, his hand outstretched towards Elena, head tilted in unease. "Come on, Elena, you know I was."

Elena shook her head, refusing to fall for whatever trap she assumed Damon was setting for her. I could see that no matter what he had done for her recently — even saving Caroline's life — she still didn't trust him.

"When were you at the house?" Elena asked.

Damon ran his hand through his hair exasperatedly. "Really? Last night, on the porch, we were talking — all cathartic — feelings exposed. Come on, we kissed, Elena."
Elena's eyes widened comically, staring at Damon as if he had lost his damn mind. My stomach churned as I watched him gaze at her, his blue eyes sincere. He had kissed my sister? I mean, I had known about his feelings for her — but to know she returned them in some form, was completely different. Yet, as my eyes ran over Elena I could see she wasn't lying. She had no clue what he was talking about. So, if he didn't kiss Elena, there was only one other person it could have been; Katherine. My hands clenched into fists, crushing the cup I held. Scalding hot coffee spilled down my hands and wrists — and I jumped — flinching with a stuttered curse of anger. I dropped the ruined cup, shaking my red hands out beside me.

**Dammit!**

I looked up at the safety mirror and sighed, a pair of cerulean eyes were staring down the hall in my direction.

**Well, cover officially blown. Well down Elara.**

Clutching my hands to my chest, I side-stepped around the corner, leaning against the edge of the wall. I wiped my raw, wet hands on my shirt, biting my cheek as my skin protested the contact.

"Hey, guys. So, I'm assuming you have both realized Katherine is back in town?" I asked, glancing at Damon with a raised brow.

Damon's guilty expression was almost too much for me.

"It was Katherine that kissed him," Elena stated, her eyes dazed and nervous.

I nodded, biting my lower lip. "Yeah, she also caused the crash that hurt Care. She was pissed at me for getting in her way. I am not on her good list right now," I said, chuckling softly.

Elena moved towards me, eyes roaming my body. "What the hell, El. You should have called me and Stefan. You could have ended up in a bed right next to Caroline," Elena said.

I rolled my eyes, brushing her away as she tried to take my hands. "I can handle myself. She knows not to come after me directly. That is why she went after my friends. The fact is, we are going to have to take her down. We can't have her running around causing trouble," I said.

I looked behind her at the ever silent Damon. He had been watching me closely, expression guarded. I didn't think either of them would ever truly understand me. That's why I decided to keep my true plans for Katherine to myself. I didn't feel like seeing the harsh judgment fill their eyes. She would pay for what she did to Caroline. I wasn't entirely sure when I had started to claim those I loved as people belonging to me, but I did. I didn't see them as objects but as treasures. I was sure it had something to do with the fact that I had been forced to lose so many people over the centuries. Becoming overly attached to the people I loved was yet another by-product of the curse. When I love someone, I tend to get a bit possessive. In the best way possible of course. That's why Katherine should be very afraid. She knew that no one got by with hurting anyone that belonged to me.

Rubbing my eyes, I yawned. "Listen, Elena, I am exhausted. Before you guys decided to feed Care Damon's blood..."

My eyes darted between the two people in front of me and I shook my head.

"Behind my back, I might add..."

Elena shifted her weight from one foot to the other uncomfortably, avoiding Damon's eyes at all
costs.

I rolled my own and continued. "I had been feeding her my energy. So I am tapped out. I need to sleep and recharge," I said.

Elena rubbed my shoulders and glared at Damon. "I didn't like the idea either. I told Damon and Bonnie that you probably had a plan, but they didn't listen," Elena said.

Stepping away from my sister, I met her gaze. There was no way she would get on my good side that easily. She and I were not on good terms, regardless of what side she had chosen to take this time.

"Good for you, Elena." I brushed past her, ignoring the hurt expression on her face by focusing on the pulsating pain of my burnt skin.

I would be bathing my hands in Aloe when I got home. Damon turned towards me as I passed him, and I lifted my head with an annoyed sigh.

"You spoke to Katherine?" he asked, the skin around his eyes crinkling.

"Yes, she showed up in my backseat earlier and we had a nice chat."

I tilted my head and watched his eyes darken.

"What did she say to you?"

Pulling at my sleeves I avoided looking at him. I knew they would have their inevitable meet-up soon, and I just hoped he would finally get what he needed from her.

"Same old, same old. Hi, how ya been. Im gonna kill everyone you love. Yadda, yadda." I said, waving my hand in a circle.

Damon leaned closer to me, his jaw clenched in agitation. "You are fooling yourself if you think you can take on Katherine. You are acting like this is nothing. She wants you dead, and if she wants you dead; then you will be"

I couldn't stop the small grin that enveloped my lips. My cheeks warming as I watched the anger build across his face. "Yeah, I know, Damon. I have known her for far longer than you have, ya know. The thing is, she won't be able to kill me unless I want her to — and guess what — I don't. Not this time. Katerina will not be my end in this life, Damon. I can promise you that," I said, placing a hand on my hip.

Elena took hold of my elbow, spinning me around. "No one is going to be your end, El. You aren't going anywhere."

I frowned at my sister, my heart aching as I covered my eyes with my hands. "Listen, I need to go home. I don't have it in me for any more of these discussions. I need to sleep."

I looked up at Damon, noticing the way his eyes watched my sister and turned my head. "Elena, you need to make sure Stefan knows his ex is out and about. I am positive she will be raring to play mind games with everyone in town. Especially, her pet Salvatore's." I sneered, ignoring the stern look on my sister's face. "Then once we get Care out of the Hospital we need to meet-up and discuss a way to get rid of her," I said, brushing the hair from my forehead.

Elena took her phone from her back pocket and started to slide her finger across the screen,
nodding her head. "Right." She looked up as she put the phone against her ear, turning her head in Damon's direction. "And you need to make sure you don't mistake her for me again," she said, smirking at Damon.

She tapped her foot on the floor as she waited for Stefan to answer his phone. Turning towards me she took in a deep breath. "El, I will tell Stefan about your plan. I am sure he will agree that we need to set something up. Katherine is dangerous. With you, Stefan, and Damon we know enough about her to figure something out," she said, lowering her head and walking away.

I watched her talking animatedly into her cell as she rounded the corner. I let off another yawn and started down the hall, Damon following close beside me. I tried my best to ignore him — yet after only a few moments of silence — he turned towards me, harshly shoving his hands into his pockets.

"Do you honestly think you can beat Katherine?" he asked.

I lazily turned my head in his direction. "Yes, Damon I do. Cause, I don't see her as some Goddess that set the sun shining in the sky."

Damon growled, an affronted expression on his face. I raised my hand before he could speak. "You have loved her for so long, that you have built up this otherworldly view of her. I can understand that. There is also the fact that you know she is — and always will be — stronger than you and Stefan. So, she has you right where she wants you. You love her and fear her. Two very powerful emotions, wrapped up in one," I nodded, deep in thought as we continued down the hall.

I turned a corner as I saw the way to the exit. Damon quietly watched me contemplate what I would say next. "To me though, she is just another vampire. Powerful and old as she may be. I knew her when she was just like Elena, nothing more than a doppelganger. A human with fears and desires, just like any other. You have to remember, everything she wanted or feared as a human, she still wants or fears now. All you have to do is pick which you want to exploit," I said, sighing as I saw the entrance.

The sun shone brightly and I could see Matt's truck waiting for me. I wrapped myself up in my jacket and turned toward Damon, looking into his eyes, their usual bright blue darkened with fear and anger.

"How well do you know Katherine, Elandra?" he asked, face blank.

I looked down at my red hands, suddenly even more tired then I had been only moments before. "I know her very well, Damon. What she revealed to me in the past, will end up being her undoing, but I gave her a chance." I looked back into his eyes and shook my head. "She chose this war, and I always play to win. Even if it leads me down a darker path then I like to take," I said.

I could feel my face harden as I spoke, remembering Caroline's still form laid out in her hospital bed. "I don't like any of this, Day. But I protect what's mine, and Katherine crossed a line," I said, turning away and heading out the door.

I could feel his eyes on me but ignored him. I needed to sleep. I smiled at Matt as I slipped into the car, my head falling against the soft seat.

"Let's get you home, Ellie," he said, driving away.

My phone buzzed on the nightstand beside me and I moaned, my hand smacking at the offending piece of machinery. When I missed it, instead knocking my lamp from the table, the loud crash
jolted me into consciousness. I sat up quickly, shielding my eyes with my hand as I slipped out of bed, pulling my curtains closed so I could see without being blinded by the stupid sun. My phone continued to vibrate against the wood of my nightstand and I hobbled towards it, my lids hooded as I yawned. Grabbing my phone, I rolled back onto the bed, pressing it to my ear.


I placed a hand on my forehead as Tyler's exhausted voice greeted me. "Hey, Elara. Did I wake you?" he asked.

"Yeah, but it's ok. What's going on? Is everything alright?"

I could hear him take a deep breath, the speaker crackling, as I waited for him to speak.

"Um, yeah, mom is going a bit nuts, but she called Uncle Mason," he said.

I sat up, resting on my elbow, brow raised. "Mason is back in town?" I asked, surprise evident in my voice.

An actual werewolf was in town. One who had activated his curse. This was not going to go well, the Salvatores were bound to notice his… differences.

"Yeah, mom called him and told him about dad, and I guess he could tell she needed help…" Tyler's voice trailed off, something left unsaid.

I bit my lip, giving him a few moments before I started poking him for more info. There was obviously something he wanted to say but was hesitant. I could hear his heavy breathing and knew he was fighting back tears.

"Ty, what's going on? You know you can tell me anything," I said, standing and taking the brush from my vanity.

I pulled the brush through my hair as Tyler collected his thoughts. "It's just… Mason is acting strange, Ellie. He keeps asking me odd questions about m-my dad and some kind of moonstone he was supposed to have,"

The brush fell from my hands with a loud thunk, hitting the edge of my vanity and rocking back and forth before it tumbled to the floor. I stared straight ahead, my breathing ragged.

A moonstone?

No, it couldn't be. What are the fucking odds?

"A moonstone, Ty? What kind of moonstone?" I asked quickly.

I moved to my chest of draws and yanked on the first pair of jeans that met my hand.

"I don't know, Elara. He said it's white, sorta cloudy looking. Said it's a family heirloom, and very important," Tyler said.

I sat my phone on the vanity and placed it on speaker, before running my hand across my room — casting a silencing spell — to make sure I didn't have any eavesdroppers listening in.

"Listen, Tyler, this is going to sound odd, but do you know where the stone is right now?"

Tyler huffed in confusion. "Why would you ask me that? What is so important about some stone
anyways, El?” Tyler asked.

I pulled a sweater over my head and closed my eyes in annoyance. I needed that moonstone and didn't want to deal with an untriggered werewolf to get it. Triggered werewolves alone, were prone to bouts of emotional irrationality. Tyler though could be far more dangerous. He hadn't triggered his curse yet — and until he did — and finished his first turn, he would be extremely unpredictable. His anger could spike, blinding him to all else.

"Tyler, can I meet you at yours? I swear I will explain everything to you when I get there. Everything, ok? No more secrets," I said, vowing to do just that.

I would rather him find out what he is from a close friend. If Mason told him, who knows what would happen. He could try and tempt him into joining a pack full of vamp hating, human-hating, wolfs. Tyler sighed, and I picked up the phone — taking it off of speaker and heading out of my room.

"Yeah, sure. I'll be here, but no more secrets, Ellie," he said.

I nodded, even though he couldn't see it.

"No more secrets."

I drove quickly, my mind flying through so many different scenarios. I just couldn't believe that the moonstone was here, in Mystic Falls. How had it ended up in the same town as the Doppelganger and me? What are the odds? After all these years, everything Nik needed to break his curse was in one town, and he didn't even know it. I bit my lip against the shocked laugh that was fighting its way up my throat.

This was sheer insanity!

I was a few more revelations away from the nuthouse.

Pulling into the Lockwoods driveway I took in a breath through my nose, shutting off my car. Tyler was waiting for me on the front porch, his arms crossed against his broad chest. I brushed a strand of loose hair behind my ear as I approached, smiling up at him. I took in his house with a slight blush.

"It's been a long time since we've been here alone, Ty" I whispered, standing next to him.

Tyler's chest shook as he chuckled, his tan skin darkening.

His throat rose and fell as he swallowed deeply. "Yeah…” he said, eyes roaming my face.

The air thickened as he took my hand, pulling me inside. We headed upstairs and toward his bedroom. He stopped just outside the door and cleared his throat awkwardly, his hand on the doorknob. I placed mine on his shoulder, squeezing reassuringly with a soft nervous giggle. Tyler led me inside, shutting the door swiftly behind us. I stepped further into the room, glancing around with a small grin. It had been years since I had been in Tyler Lockwood's bedroom. I had avoided his house altogether since that one awkward time we had shared; our first time. Nothing about his room had changed, even his decor was the same. Everything in his room was centered around football. I stood in the middle of the room and watched Tyler awkwardly run his hands down his jeans, staring at his bed, teeth nibbling on his bottom lip. Sensing his nerves, I motioned towards the bed, slowly walking over and sitting down. With a relieved rush of breath, Tyler joined me.

"This was a lot more uncomfortable than I thought it would be,” he said.
I laughed earnestly, my head falling back with amusement. Tyler's face was flushed with embarrassment, his forehead wrinkled with concern.

"Well, of course, it is, Ty. The last time we were in this room together we were losing our virginities," I said, giggling.

Tyler's flushed face darkened further, red traveling down his neck. He averted his eyes, and I grinned as he fumbled with his fingers.

"Let's just focus on the present, yeah?" I asked.

Tyler's upper body sunk with relief as he let out a grateful breath. "Sounds good," he said.

"Ok, Ty, I told you I would explain everything. The complete truth."

I turned towards him, tucking my left leg underneath me. Tyler watched me with an uneasy earnest expression, his shoulders stiff. I could see how important this was to him. As I ran my eyes over him I felt some of the weight I had been carrying begging for release. I had promised Tyler the complete truth, and that is exactly what I found myself wanting to give. I wanted to free myself of everything. Tyler and I had never been extremely close, but he had been there for me when I needed him. He had always known how to help me work through some of my worst days. Days when I had remembered things a young girl should never have to remember. Tyler was a good friend and had the potential to be a great man. All he needed was someone to believe in him; trust him. Swallowing deeply, I lifted my hand, allowing my magic to seep through my skin, lighting up my fingers with its electric blue tint. Tyler's eyes widened comically, his body falling backward, tumbling from the bed. He started inching away from me, crawling back toward the wall behind him. I lowered my head in exasperation, extinguishing my magic with a frown.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Tyler," I said, standing.

I walked toward him, my hands raised in surrender. Tyler watched me approach, his brown eyes wide, panting for breath.

"You were glowing, Ellie."

He stared at my hands in shock.

"Why the hell were you glowing!" he yelled.

I winced at the volume of his voice, waving my hand to muffle his room. Tyler watched the room glow briefly before dimming, in abject terror. I tried a weak smile, which Tyler ignored in favor of pointing his finger around the room. "What was that? What did you do?" he asked, voice reaching a new key.

I took a step back, fearing for his poor heart at this point, and sighed. "Um, it was a spell to muffle your room. I didn't want you to draw anyone's attention. You wanted the truth, Ty, and that's what I'm trying to do now. Tell you everything, but it's easier to show this part. People tend to believe what their eyes can see," I said.

Tyler lowered his head onto his knees, chest heaving. "A spell?" he asked, shaky voice muffled.

I lowered myself, sitting down a few feet away from him, curling my legs in front of me. "Yes, a spell. I am a special kind of witch. The last of my kind, actually," I said, leaning toward him with a smile.
Tyler looked up, eyes meeting mine with uncertainty. "A witch?" he said, brow raised.

I nodded, biting my lip. Tyler laid his head against the wall. "What, like in the Wizard of Oz?" he weakly chuckled, shaking his head in disbelief.

I kept silent, allowing him a moment to come to grips with his new reality. It wasn't easy realizing the world was full of the supernatural. After a few silent moments, Tyler lifted his head — gaze trained on me — his hands placed on his knees. "Well then, I guess I only have one question for you," he warily said.

My chest rose as I took a deep breath. Tyler leaned toward me, lowering his knees. "Are you more like Glenda or The Wicked Witch?" he asked, eyes filling with mirth.

I bolted toward him, crawling into his lap with a laugh. I wrapped my arms around his neck, grateful sobs of relief leaving my lips. I had been so afraid of another reaction like the one Elena had originally had. Tyler ran his shaking hand down my hair and I curled myself into his chest — deciding then and there — that I would finally trust someone with the complete truth.

"Tyler, I want to tell you a story?" I said.

I moved to sit next to him, leaning my head on his shoulder. Taking my hand, he nodded. I gripped his rough hand tightly and started in on my story. I told him about my mother and how she died, leaving me to grow up with the Mikaelsons. I told him about Nik and how much I loved him and his siblings. I even told him about how Esther had cursed me, leaving me to die eternally on my 18th birthday. Tyler listened to me explain everything intently, only making a few shocked outbursts at certain parts of my story.

"Your telling me vampires are real, and you helped create them?" he asked in shock.

I winced, looking away from his round brown eyes. "Yeah I did, but in my defense, I didn't know what the spell entailed. I just knew if I didn't help Esther — then Mikael would be furious — and I didn't want him taking his anger out on his family," I said.

"They did it to fight the local werewolves?" Tyler asked, his brow furrowed in thought.

I kept my face blank, nodding slowly. "Yeah, Henrik wanted to see the men turn into wolves, so Nik took him out during the full moon. Henrik was killed. It was a fatal mistake. No one's fault. Just a mistake," I said, defending Nik even to this day.

Memories flowed through my mind. Nik carrying Henrik's body back to town, covered in blood and gashes. Nik had been inconsolable and didn't even try and fight back as Mikael took his anger and disgust out on him. I was sure Nik still blamed himself for Henrik's death, and always would.

"Werewolves are also real, then?" Tyler asked, looking down at his hands.

A moment of pure fear and realization flitted through Tyler's eyes.

"How do you become a werewolf?" he asked, looking at me.

I sent him a sympathetic smile. "You are born into it, Ty. If you have at least one parent that is a werewolf, then you have the curse. Which has to be activated for you to turn. To do that: you have to kill. By accident or otherwise, a humans death has to come by your hand," I said.

Tyler let out a breath I didn't realize he had been holding in, raising his hands out in front of us. "I'm different aren't I, Ellie? I've always known it, my anger comes on so strong sometimes. It's
always felt like something inside me is trying to escape, El, clawing at my insides," he said, voice cracking.

I held in a choked sob, feeling so badly for him. I had always had a soft spot for wolves, their existence was so excruciating. They had to fight so hard every day, just to survive their curse. That was something I could relate to. I sat up on my knees, leaning toward Tyler with a watery smile.

"Yes Ty, you are different, but that is not always a bad thing. You were born with this curse and can learn how to cope with it. I can help you protect yourself, and you'll never have to become a wolf," I said.

Tyler frowned, his forehead wrinkling. "You don't think I should activate my curse?" he asked.

I tilted my head in confusion, running my eyes over his face. "Do you want to?" I asked.

Tyler ran his fingers through his hair roughly in irritation. "I'm not sure, but I have this feeling of being trapped, like part of me is locked away. Do you think that would stop if I did?" he asked.

I laid my head on my hand, my heart aching for the choice Tyler had to make. "I think that after your first moon, you might feel the freedom you have been searching for. But, Tyler, it's painful and you'll be dangerous to those you love," I said.

I took Tyler's hand and decided to continue explaining what was to come. After all, if he was going to decide to activate his curse then I wanted him to know that eventually, he would have another option. Nik could give him one after he broke his own curse. Tyler could become a Hybrid, never again being forced to turn. So, I told Tyler about Nik's curse and how he had to break it. I pulled away from him when I explained the Petrova history and why their blood was so important. Tyler stood swiftly, stepping away from me as I revealed Elena's involvement in the ritual.

"Elena has to die in the Hybrids ritual? Have even you told anyone!?" he said, glaring at me.

I stood, pointing my finger at him in anger. "Of course I haven't! What do you think they would do if they found out Nik was coming for her, huh?" I shrugged my shoulders, waving my hands out beside me. "They would try to convince her to run. Then when I explained what Nik would do if he found out she was trying to hide, Elena would stay. She would convince them that they could fight. Useless as that would be. There is no fighting them, Tyler," I said angrily.

Tyler shook his head in denial, pacing in front of me.

"Besides, no one said she has to die permanently," I said, placing a hand on my hip and tilting my head.

Tyler stopped in front of me, his brow arching in confusion. "Permanently?" he said.

I smiled cockily, bobbing my head. "Nik doesn't know this yet, but I have done loads of my own research on his curse through my many lives. I have contacted several witches — alive and dead — and I have found out that Esther put a little safety net in Niks curse. That way if he ever did break it, she could still be sure that he didn't get what he ultimately desired; to create more beings like himself," I said.

"Hybrids," Tyler added, nodding.

I jerkily agreed with him, running my hand down my neck. "Yeah, so the blood he needs to break the curse, also happens to be the blood he needs to create Hybrids."
I twisted my hand, raising my brow in Tyler's direction, waiting for him to bite.

Tyler's eyes widened and he started laughing. "Elena! He needs Elena alive to create Hybrids!" he said.

I tilted my head with a small nod. "Precisely. Unbeknownst to him, he is going to kill the only person he can use to create more Hybrids. Unless I stop him," I said.

Tyler's face was one of pure excitement. "That means you could save your sister and I could still become a Hybrid," he said, turning in a circle hands bunched in fists.

I watched him closely, his reaction surprised me. I stepped closer to him and raised a hand, stopping his procession around the room.

"Is that really what you want, Tyler. To become a werewolf and then a Hybrid? Nik isn't exactly an easy man to be around," I said, a firm warning in my tone.

Tyler looked at me with irritated amusement. "It's not like I'm the one who has to love him?" he said.

I blinked quickly, chuckling. "I don't have to love him. But yeah, despite his many, many flaws. I do. Yet, I will be one of the first to warn you, that he isn't an easy man to like, let alone love," I said.

Tyler looked down at his hands again, squeezing them tightly into fists, his knuckles whitening. "I'm sure about this. I need to be free of this... feeling." He placed a fist on his chest, beating it roughly. "I can't even find myself anymore, Elara. I am losing who I am. If I can just be free, then maybe I won't feel so lost anymore," he said, tears filling his brown eyes.

I swallowed, nodding swiftly. "Ok, Tyler. I will help you activate your curse and when Nik gets here, I'll make sure your one of his first Hybrids," I said, a weak smile on my lips.

Tyler reached out, taking my hand. "And I will be there with you when everyone finds out the truth. You won't be alone, Ellie," he said, pulling me close.

I rested my head on his shoulder. "Thanks, Ty. It's nice having someone else who knows everything about me. It was getting lonely..." I said.

Tyler kissed my head, before pulling away. "I'm here now. We will do this together, and I will help you with your curse too," he said.

I sighed, allowing the corner of my lips to turn up to appease him. I already had all the help I needed, and the idea of having yet another person feeling guilty when nothing ended up working — just made me feel sick. Tyler smiled brightly, moving away from me and heading towards his computer desk. I watched him curiously as he opened a drawer and pulled out a little black lockbox. Taking the key from around his neck, he inserted it into the front, opening the box and lifting the lid. Reaching inside, he took out a small cloudy white moonstone; about the size of a hockey puck. My breath caught in my throat as he let it slide into the palm of his hand, holding it out to me with a smirk.

"Is this the moonstone you were talking about? The one the Hybrid needs for his ritual?" he asked.

I lowered my head, eyes wide as I stared at the milky white gemstone. The power flowing from the small stone was undeniable. I could sense the bound curse that was trapped inside, my skin crawling at the proximity. Tyler watched me eyeing the stone, my expression flickering between
amazement and unease.

"Is it?" he asked, pushing the gemstone toward me.

I jerked away, stepping back without truly meaning to. It had just been so long since I had been around Esther Mikaelson's magical signature, and it was enough to make me feel sick. I blinked, snapping myself out it.

"Yes. Yes, it is," I said.

I reached out, allowing him to drop the stone into my hand. The cool smooth gemstone fell into the palm of my hand, the weight making my wrist dip slightly. I wrapped my hand around the magically imbued object, my fingers gripping it tightly. The skin on my hand prickled, and I tried to ignore the magic that was begging to seep its way into my flesh.

"What do we do with it? Mason keeps trying to call me, asking about it," Tyler said.

I pulled the stone closer to me, my hand still holding it tightly.

"There is a reason he wants it, Tyler. Many believe that it holds the curse of the Sun and Moon," I said. Tyler's brow cocked, and he looked down at my hand; where the stone was hidden in my grasp. I sighed and sat on the edge of Tyler's bed.

"Nik and Elijah created the curse of the Sun and Moon so that they could motivate vampires and werewolves all over the world to search for the two keys to breaking Nik's curse: a human doppelganger from the Petrova bloodline, and the moonstone. The Sun and Moon curse have led many to believe that the moonstone's owner could control how the curse was removed; for example, a werewolf could leave the vampires' curse of the sun in place while removing the werewolves' curse of the moon," I said, looking down at my hands. Tyler sat beside me and glanced at my cupped hands, the milky stone lying in their depths.

"You think that someone told Mason about the stone and he somehow figured out we have it?" Tyler asked.

I shrugged, my shoulders seeming heavier than normal. "Yeah, I do. Now, we just have to figure out who has his ear," I said.

I lifted my hands to my eye line, concentrating on the stone and the way it felt. I ran my fingers across its smooth surface, focusing on its measurements and color. I needed to be precise if I planned on fooling anyone. Tyler raised a brow, watching me with his head cocked. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath in through my nose and imagined the stone replicating — leaving behind an imprint of my magical signature in the duplicate — so that any witch who knew the moonstone should hold power, would feel it. I wasn't stupid, I knew that if someone with enough knowledge about the stone got their hands on the fake — they wouldn't be fooled — but anyone who only knew it was a magical artifact; would be. I looked down at my hands: where two identical moonstones — minus the magical signature — now lie, and smiled. Tylers shocked brown eyes greeted me when I lifted my head.

"Wow, that is so cool," he said.

I laughed, handing him the fake stone, feeling a part of my magic leave with it. It was odd imbuing something with a part of yourself, it was a feeling I had never gotten used too.
"Give this to Mason, tell him you found it... ya know...wherever your Dad kept important stuff," I said.

Tyler tossed the stone in the air, catching it before he pocketing it. "Deal. What's your plan, partner" he said, a terrible southern accent to his voice.

I widened my eyes and, scrunched up my nose. "No... Just no, Ty." I laughed, pushing him away.

"My plan is: to find out what his plan is, and who he is working with," I said, bumping shoulders with him.

Tyler stood, dragging me with him. "Well then, you need to get the hell outta here so I can get started. I think it would be best if he didn't see you here today," he said, shoving me toward the door.

I fought against him, laughing at his sudden abundance of enthusiasm. "Ok, ok. I'm leaving. Goodness, someone is pumped," I said.

Tyler pulled me out of his room and down the stairs; dragging me toward the front door. "I am ready for this, El. I have been in the dark for so long, that now when I can finally see some light, I am not going to lose it," he said, eyes wide.

I touched his cheek affectionately as I stepped out onto the front porch. "We will have to activate your curse soon, Tyler. The next full moon is coming up fast, and it would be best if you were to change during it. You'll need to be able to control yourself by the time Nik and Elijah get here. They aren't very forgiving," I said.

Tyler's head jerked in some semblance of a nod, and I headed for my car; waving farewell to the soon to be wolf.

I walked through the front door my bag slung over my shoulder — moonstone hidden safely inside — concealed by magic; just in case I came across a certain Bennett family. Heading for the living room, I was surprised to find Elena and Stefan sitting on the loveseat in front of John. Stefan was holding Elena's hand in his lap, watching her closely as she leaned forward, gaze firmly placed on Uncle John.

"We know it was Katherine who tried to break in last night," she said.

I stepped into the room, walking around the couch to stand beside John, arms crossed. "Having family discussions without me again, Elena?" I asked, eyes hard.

Elena jumped, glancing up at me with a wince; squeezing Stefan's hand for support. "We were gonna tell you what we found out, Ellie," she said.

I chuckled, sitting on the armrest. "Sure, you were. Let's just say: from now on — I'd like to be involved in what's going on," I said.

Elena licked her bottom lip, dragging it between her teeth with a jerk of her head.

"Now, what's up?" I asked my head following a path between Stefan, Elena, and John.

John sat back against the couch, crossing his legs. "Katherine tried to break in, but quickly discovered I couldn't be fooled as easily as some others." John shrugged, as a Cheshire smile began to make its way across his lips. "I guess she had tried to break in while Jenna was here, but for some reason, Jenna couldn't be compelled," John said, his eyes rising to zero in on my
expressionless face.

I kept my eyes on my fingernails, picking at my tan nail polish. Elena's gasp made me flinch, my head lifting to glance at my sister's angry doe eyes.

"What did you do?" she asked, jaw tight.

Stefan's hand found her shoulder and he rubbed her tense muscles, avoiding my gaze. John chuckled beside me and I glared at him, smacking his arm.

"I did what I had to, Lena. Jenna was left unprotected and I knew eventually someone was going to show up here and try to use Jenna against us. This time it just happened to be Katherine," I stood, hands on my hips. What about next time, huh? I mean, our own mother tried to use our brother to get us to do what she wanted. Our lives are not easy nor safe, and Aunt Jenna deserves a fair shot at protecting herself," I said.

John pointed his finger in Stefan's direction, his expression fierce. "This is why my daughters should have driven a stake through your heart by now. I can't stand the sight of you and your brother with my girls. You, Salvatores, will get them and everyone they love killed," he said, spittle flying.

I ran my hands down my face and over my neck, my chest shaking with unamused laughter. "Oh please, John!" I shouted, looking down at him mirthlessly.

"You are ridiculous. You and I both know that regardless of the Salvatores, neither I nor Elena would have a normal supernatural free life. I am a witch and Elena is a doppelganger for God's sake," I said, leaning close to him to gauge his reaction.

As I had expected, John averted his eyes, avoiding the subject of Elena's status. Of course, he knew, I suspected Isobel had used Nik and his ritual to scare John into trying to help her and Katherine in some way. Elena took in a rattled breath, holding Stefan's wrist tightly as she watched me confront our father.

"What do you know about Katherine?" I asked, bending down in front of him.

John leaned toward me, his green eyes so similar to my own that it made my heart ache. A flash of silver caught my attention as he reached out, taking a strand of my hair and placing it behind my ear. When he pulled away, I focused on his finger — my attention still captured by the flashy heirloom ring he wore. I had seen several similar rings in my time. The Salvatore's for example: had their family crest signets; that had been turned into Daylight rings. This ring though had the Gilbert family crest on it — and I inwardly groaned — remembering exactly where I had seen it before. Emily had listed the Gilbert Rings amongst the many things she had enchanted for Johnathon Gilbert in her Grimoire. These specific rings resurrected any human wearer that had been killed by supernatural means. I had wondered where those pieces of Gilbert family history had gotten off too. At least now I had a little less to worry about when it came to my bio father. John noticed my scrutiny and covered the ring with his other hand, clearing his throat.

"I never spoke to Katherine directly," he said.

I closed my eyes as I stood to my feet; a mournful sigh escaping my parted lips. "You see the world with such hatred, John. It's gonna get you killed someday," I said.

John shook his head, standing to his feet and heading toward the stairs. "And you and Elena are getting wrapped up in a world that can only bring you death and heartbreak." John stopped at the
edge of the bottom step, his foot hovering above it. "I'm going to get my stuff and head out. I can't watch what is coming," he said, voice breaking.

I watched his trek up the stairs before turning to Elena and Stefan, my shoulders stiff. "Well, that was a bust. It seems John is not willing to explain what he knows." I shrugged, taking a minute to gather my thoughts. "It's not a big deal, though. We already know everything we need to. Figuring out why she is here is not what's important. We need to deal with her before she hurts anyone else," I said.

Stefan stood, taking Elena with him. "Your right. We will handle this, Elandra," Stefan said.

I lifted my head, John's aura wafting over me as he swept through his room; presumably packing his things.

"Let's hope so, Stefan. Because she is just getting started."

After the long day I had suffered through, all I wanted was a drink. Yet, being stuck at 17 made my options limited. There was really only one place I could go, and I wasn't entirely sure I would be welcome. After I had found out Damon had kissed — who he had thought had been Elena — there wasn't a lot I wanted to say to him, and I was sure he knew that. Even with all that in mind, the idea of a stiff drink won out, and I found myself walking into the Boarding house. I headed for the front room where I knew I would find the elder Salvatore and the alcohol I so desired. Damon stood in front of the bar, pouring himself a glass of Bourbon. He glanced over his shoulder with an uneasy smile.

"You get bored of our siblings?" he asked.

I stepped up behind him, taking the glass from his hand and leaning against the bar. "I got thirsty," I smirked, taking a long swig of the smooth liquor.

I closed my eyes, allowing the burn to push away some of the negative aspects of such a long day. I opened my eyes at the sound of crystal clinking and watched Damon poured himself a glass, before refilling my own. I raised my glass with a thankful wink in his direction. I turned around and faced the bookshelf, staring at their beautiful and vast collection.

"Elandra, about what you heard today..." Damon started.

I turned my eyes toward him and shook my head gently. "No, Damon. You don't have to explain. I get it. I always knew how you felt about Elena," I said, looking down at the amber liquid in my hand.

Damon stepped closer to me, his eyes soft as he sat his glass down on the bar beside him. He reached out and brushed a strand of my hair behind my ear, running his finger down my jawline. "It's not just Elena I care about," he said.

I turned away from him, the crystal glass held tightly in my grasp. "That may be true, Damon... but I want to be someone's first choice, not third," I said.

Damon moved his hand from my face, his jaw clenched as he glanced down at his tightly fisted hands. I ran my tongue across my teeth and sat my glass down next to his, looking up at his tense face.

"You need to figure out what you want, Damon. I'm never going to be the kind of woman that will sit on the sidelines while you fawn over my sister and Katherine. I already had to move on from you a long time ago."
I watched as his eyes darted to mine, a sharp intake of breath leaving his parted lips. I smiled at him, my hand raised. "Yes, I still have feelings for you, and probably always will, but I can't do this with you, Day," I said, running my fingertips over the edge of my glass.

Damon's jaw ticked as he stared into my eyes. He stepped closer to me, his body almost pressed against mine. I kept my gaze on him, refusing to be the first to break. He brought his hand to my face and ran his fingers over my cheek, lovingly caressing my skin. My heart hammered heavily in my chest, and I knew he would be able to hear it. His eyes were deep pools of blue as they ran over my face, memorizing my features. I hated this as much as I loved it. We both knew that it couldn't last. He loved Elena and still had strong feelings for Katherine. Damon and I could never be. I felt a small part of me being tugged in another direction; far away from Damon — and was reminded that he wasn't the only one who had feelings for someone else. The hand that Damon had on my face suddenly stiffened and he slowly started to turn toward the other side of the room, his eyes steely.

"Very brave of you to come here," he said, voice acidic.

I jerked back in confusion and Damon took my elbow, pulling me behind him as he stepped forward. I stumbled, gasping in shock until I heard the familiar voice that had me grinding my teeth in anger.

"I wanted to say goodbye," Katherine said.

I peered around Damon, glaring at the vampiric doppelganger. Katherine sat on the couch, her legs crossed elegantly, fingers running through her curly hair.

"Hello Katerina," I sneered.

Katherine smiled wickedly, sitting forward she waved her fingers in my direction.

"Elandra, but of course I'd find you here with our Damon." Katherine covered her mouth, eyes shining mischievously. "I hope you don't mind me calling him that. I mean, we technically shared him after all. You two never did officially break up," she laughed, winking at me.

Damon growled, his blue eyes growing black as dark veins appeared under his eyes.

"Oops, did I hit a nerve, lover?" she asked.

I gripped Damon's arm, stepping around him with a roll of my eyes. "Oh Katherine, you and I both know I got over what happened back then a very time ago. Now, what are you really here for?" I asked, my fingertips glowing lightly in my annoyance.

Damon took my arm and pulled me away from Katherine, his eyes still dark. Katherine watched his interaction with me, amusement and calculation running through her deep brown eyes.

"What are you doing here, Katherine?" Damon asked, roughly.

Katherine vamp sped towards us and Damon sped in front of me to meet her, a deep growl reverberating through his chest. Kathrine laughed, her brown locks falling over her shoulders.

"What no goodbye kiss?" she giggled, smiling at me over Damon's shoulder.

Damon backed up, pulling me with him as he started to lead me out of the room. Katherine sped in front of him blocking our exit, her smile started to waver.
"You asked why I'm here? Nostalgia, curiosity, et cetera," she said.

Damon kept his body firmly in between mine and Katherines as he smiled. "I'm better at the enigmatic one-liners, Katherine. What are you up to?" Damon asked, his hand pressing against my stomach.

I glared at Katherine as she started to pace in front of Damon, her 'I'm better than you' smile plastered on her face. I wanted to claw her eyes from her face, but I knew Damon needed this. He needed to get answers.

"Trust me, Damon, when I am up to something, you'll know it. Come on. Kiss me. Or kill me. Which will it be, Damon? We both know that you're only capable of one," Katherine goaded.

I felt the bones in my hands ache as my magic flared to life. Damon's shoulders slumped and Katherine smiled evilly, a triumphant and pleased expression on her face. She had come here for one thing: to torture an already tortured man. There was no way I could just stand by and allow her to toy with him. Someone needed to put her in her place — and since I was the only way capable of doing that right now — it would have to be me. I pushed a momentarily shocked and hurt Damon out of my way and stepped toward Katherine. My hands glowed brightly as I allowed them to fill with energy before pulling them toward my chest. I bent my knees and placed my weight on the balls of my feet as I flung my hands forward, sending the powerful energy toward Katherine. The electric burst of my magic hit her square in the chest, propelling her backward, and knocking her against the wall. A loud thud echoed around us, the walls shaking. A few books fell from the shelf beside where she had landed, small thuds against the wood floor. Katherine's hair fell around her in a soft brown halo. Her shocked face sent a burst of joy through my chest and I chuckled, standing up straight and raising my glowing hands out in front of me as she snarled, blackened eyes narrowed in my direction.

"You have no right to come here and toy with Damon after everything you've done," I said, pointing a glowing finger in her direction.

"You were warned, Katherine. You know I don't tolerate people hurting those I care about."

Katherine stood, wiping nonexistent dust from her shoulder. "I can and will do whatever I want to him. He has been, and always be my little toy," she said, smirking at Damon.

I tossed another ball of light in her direction, and she snarled in pain as it hit her in the stomach, leaving a scorch mark on her shirt. Damon placed a hand on my shoulder, stopping another ball of energy from leaving my grasp.

"Tell me something Katherine, I just need the truth, just once," Damon said, standing beside me.

I looked up at him, his blue eyes were sad and full of hope, even after seeing the way Katherine was acting. Katherine stepped closer to us, her hips swaying as she stared Damon down without hesitation.

"I already know your question and its answer. The truth is…I've never loved you. It was always Stefan." Katherine's face was blank as she turned to look at me. "You gave up everything... for nothing..." she said, the final word falling off her tongue.

With one final smirk — for my benefit— she sped away — once again — leaving a distraught Damon behind. I ran my hands over my face and stood in front of Damon, placing my head on his rocking chest. He put his nose in my hair and I started to rub his shoulders, unsure what I could say or do for him.
"I'm so sorry Damon. She is just an awful person, and never deserved you," I said.

I felt Damon shake his head as he stepped away from me, his crystal eyes almost cold as they stared down at me.

"She was right. It was all for nothing. I gave up everything… for nothing," he said, pushing away from me.

I reached out to him, but with a fluttering of my hair, he was gone. I blinked rapidly a few times, my eyes scanning my surroundings with little hope. This had not gone well. I was hoping he would get some sort of freedom from confronting her, but all it seemed to do was make things worse.

Sitting on my vanity stool, I slowly brushed my hair, staring at my reflection. Empty green eyes stared back at me and I looked away, unable to see myself appearing so void of emotion for even a moment longer. I stood, making my way to my bed, braiding my hair as I went. I plugged in my phone beside my bed and made sure the volume was on. I wanted to make sure Caroline was able to get a hold of me if she needed to. She was supposed to come home tomorrow, and I was glad, if not a little concerned. She still had Damon's blood in her system, and that had me on edge. A vampire Caroline… now that would be something. I was sure she wouldn't want immortality. I sat down on my bed and let out an audible sigh, my entire body drooping with exhaustion. As I adjusted the covers on my bed, I heard a loud thud and a scream, my body stiffening at the sheer pain of the sound. I stood, running toward my door and flinging it open.

"Elara! Please, please. Help me, please!" Elena screamed.

I ran down the hall, as I noticed Damon standing outside Elena's room — I stopped momentarily — my heart stuttering in my chest.

What had he done?

Oh, Gods.

Damon looked at me, his blue eyes sad and vacant of emotion. My mind conjured up the image of my reflection only moments before, but I shook it off as I heard Elena's moan of pain. I pushed past Damon who started down our hall, disappearing from view and stepped into her room. Elena sat on the floor in front of her bed, Jeremy in her arms. I fell to my knees, stomach-dropping, as she cradled him to her chest, rocking back and forth. I reached out toward her, my hands shaking. His neck had been broken and I felt a burst of white-hot anger fill me. My body began to glow and I let out a loud agonizing wail of pain. My hands shook as I clamped them closed, rocking as Elena did. I held my fisted hands against my eyes and tried to control my magic. I could feel myself losing it. Jeremy, my baby brother… gone.

Damon had killed him.

Why?

Elena's voice broke through my internal reverie, and I took in a rattled gasp of breath.

"Ellie, l-look…"

Elena held out Jeremy's limp hand and I saw a silver ring shining on his finger. I let out a gasp of startled, elated breath. The Gilbert ring! He was wearing the Gilbert family ring. He was going to wake up. I sat back, allowing my legs to stretch out in front of me, and scooted next to my sister, my fingers running through Jeremy's hair.
"He will wake up… he is going to be ok," Elena said, tears running down her face.

I nodded, bending down to kiss Jeremy's head.

"I hate him, El."

I narrowed my eyes and turned to Elena, not entirely sure who she was talking about. My head was still foggy from the thought of losing my brother. Elena was looking down at Jeremy's face, rocking him slowly.

"Damon. There is nothing good left in him," she said.

I lifted my knees, placing my head on them with a sigh. "I know you hate him now, Elena. You have every right to," I said.

Elena glared at me and I shook my head. "Don't. Please don't start a fight. I am not going to sit here and say I hate someone I don't."

Elena's mouth fell open and she held Jeremy tightly against her chest. I placed a hand on her shoulder and shook my head.

"Don't get me wrong, I am pissed, and don't know if I can forgive this… but I am hoping he knew Jer would wake up… that he somehow saw the rin-"

"He didn't see the ring, Elara."

I turned away from her and covered my face with my hands. "Still, its no excuse, but I know what happened today, what led to this…” I said, gesturing to her and Jeremy.

Before Elena could further the conversation Jeremy sat up, his eyes wide, gasping for air. I moved toward him, but Elena stopped me, her expression hard. She was still mad at me for having hope that Damon wasn't completely lost to me. To Stefan. I sat back, my heart hurting. Elena took his face in her hands and tried to get him to meet her eyes.

"It's ok. You're ok, shhh," she said, soothingly.

Jeremy turned his head away from her, fighting to get out of her tight grasp, and his eyes found mine.

"Oh God, Ellie! He killed me! Damon killed me!" Jeremy said in shock.

I nodded, a sad but relieved breath leaving me. "Yeah he did, Jer," I said.

Jeremy pulled me into a hug and I smiled, squeezing him tightly.

"I missed you Jer Bear," I whispered in his ear.

Jeremy grumbled, pinching my arm. I winced, pulling away from him and smacking his arm.

"Ow!" I said.

Jeremy, grinned pulling Elena toward him for a hug. Elena smiled, hugging him with a few tears falling from her tired eyes.

"What? Just because I died doesn't mean you can pull out that tired old nickname. You know I hate it," he said, weakly.
I laid my head on Jeremy's shoulder as Elena stood. "I'm gonna call Stefan. He needs to know what Damon did," Elena said.

Jeremy looked up at our sister and nodded. He turned to me, kissing my forehead before he stood, pulling me with him.

"I am going to head to bed. Dying is exhausting," Jeremy said.

I laughed, shaking my head as he led me out of Elena's room. I said my goodbyes to Jeremy and headed for my room. My phone was blinking on my nightstand and I picked it up, finding a new message in my inbox. I tapped on it and felt my skin crawl as I read the obvious challenge from an unknown number.

"Game on."

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