Blood Is Skin Deep

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Summary

Nick's life had already been complicated enough with the revelation that he was from a long line of Grimms but just as he was starting to get a handle on the new life he found himself leading a new case hits his desk. Soon he is digging up secrets that he didn't know COULD exist and he finds himself running from a life that he is terrified of. Darkness is coming to Portland. AU

Notes

Hi everyone so, this is a story that I've posted on fanfiction.net but I wanted to spread it out further. I also wanted to ask anyone if they know how to insert a picture into the chapter? I spent a lot of time creating a picture on photoshop but I can't figure out how to place it in the chapter itself, can anyone help me?
Blood in the rain

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I own positively nothing apart from my own original characters.

Prologue:

Nick collapsed against the tree, his hand pressing hard against his profusely bleeding side. His vision was beginning to swim and each breath he took was difficult and energy sapping.

Rain showered down from the heavens above, the clouds dark and rumbling with thunder and lightning that crackled in the night sky.

The forest floor was quickly turning to mud and seeping into Nick's clothing, making his body tremble and icy tendrils to wipe out the warmth that his body had been trying to salvage. His clothes were soaked and clinging to him like a second skin, the feeling reminiscent of a boa constrictor trying to crush its prey.

With water trickling into his eyes and mouth he looked up into the night sky. A full moon was out tonight, spotlighting him like he was the star in a tragic play, it figures that his death would be on full display.

Looking back down he tried to focus his rapidly fogging vision to his wounded side. His movements were sluggish as he slowly pulled his hand away and squinted to try and make out the damage that had been done.

It was bad. No worse than bad, it was fatal.

Even with his clouding vision he could see that blood was continuing to pump out of him like he was some sort of fountain and the wound was deep, so deep that he swore he could see exposed tendons.

Self-preservation kicking in, he clasped the wound once more, hissing in pain only momentarily before numbness kicked in, which he knew was a very bad, bad thing.

Fighting through the nausea and light headedness he used the trunk he was sitting against to pull himself up and pushed himself forward.

He had to keep moving.

Stopping meant death.

Needed to find help.

A chilling cackle ripped through the air.

He stopped dead in his tracks. They were coming for him.

Forcing his feet to move he ran as fast as he could, branches whipping him in the face and rain bouncing off his chilled skin until finally he could see a road up ahead.
Adrenaline kicking in he took a few more steps but was blindsided by a branch coming out of nowhere and ramming into his stomach.

All the wind was knocked out of him as he was thrown back onto the cold muddy ground.

His beaten, distressed, dying body was starting to shut down on him.

Before he lost consciousness a clouded form came into his darkening line of sight.

"You can never escape us Nick, we'll always find you."

Then he was swallowed by the darkness. No longer able to defend himself against what was coming.
All is not what it may seem

Chapter Notes

I left out interpretations purposefully in this chapter so as to be interpreted later on.

EARLIER...

Nick’s vision began to swim as he finished up his last report by signing his signature at the bottom. Dropping his pen he leaned back in his chair and rubbed his eyes, trying to ease the headache that was blooming.

It was nearing midnight and the police station was almost completely empty, only a few other police officers and detectives were still in the building, like them, filling out reports. The room for the most part was silent, the only sounds being the scratching of pens on paper and the occasional cough.

Crime had been hectic in The City of Roses, a new crime almost every hour of every day. It was like Loki the God of mischief and chaos had sent out a mass email/text to every criminal in town that that week was a free for all.

Hank and him had been going from case to case and had only been lucky to catch a few cat naps before having to get back into crime solving mode.

Lowering his hand he looked over at his partner, Hank Griffin, who was still plodding through the report in front of him, and he still had two more to be completed.

“Done, finally” Nick announced, sighing in relief.

Hank grunted and set his own pen down, flexing his aching hand.

“You know, it feels like it takes longer to fill these out then it does to solve the actual crime. I think as part of the perp.’s sentence they should have to fill out these reports” Hank declared, looking over at Nick.

Nick chuckled, “I think that might be a good reform system too”

Both shared a short laugh then quieted down. Nick rose from his chair and slipped into his jacket and picked up his phone, badge and gun as he went.

“I’m going to head out, see you tomorrow” Nick said, zipping his jacket up.

Hank grunted in acknowledgment as he picked his pen back up and went back to filling out his remaining reports.

Exiting the station Nick jogged down the steps towards his SUV parked across the Street, his keys in hand and his focus on getting home and crawling into bed with Juliet.

Stepping down the last step he walked over to his car and just as he had pushed the key into the keyhole he paused, the hair on his neck standing on end.
He was being watched.

Moving as subtly as possible he slowly placed his hand on his service weapon and in one fluid motion whipped around, gun in hand, and was met….

With nothing.

Looking around, down the street, along the building and along the sidewalks he came up empty.

Still feeling on edge, probably his Grimm and detective instincts meshing, he stepped out into the middle of the road to do one last survey of the area. He was still feeling that uncomfortable prodding of being observed, and it was biting into his core like a needle full of anthrax.

The honking of a car jolted him out of his mind and he stepped back, waving in apology to the driver who scowled at him as they drove by.

Going back to his car he pushed the key into the keyhole and opened the door then slammed the door shut beside him.

Putting the feeling down to stress and lack of sleep he brought his SUV to life and pulled away from the curb, buckling in as he did.

As he drove away a figure dressed all in black stepped out from the shadows of the trees, watching the SUV getting further and further away.

~Break~

Martin “Moe” James Fitzgerald was just about to close his eyes when the creaking of floorboards reached his ears. When no other sound followed he was about to put it down as the small building settling when the floorboards creaked once more, this time followed by a distinct thud.

Now alert he rose from his bed and grabbed his cellphone off his bedside table, along with the aluminum bat he kept by the door.

Taking a deep breath he raised his bat and walked out into the short hallway that led out to his shop. As he walked his fingers dialed 911, bringing the phone up to his ear he waited until the operator picked up.

“911 emergencies-“

“Yes, this is Martin Fitzgerald, I-“ before he could get another word out he was assaulted from behind and shoved into the wall, his phone and bat clattering to the floor while plaster shroomed around them from the sheer force behind the blow.

Upon impact into the wall he could feel his teeth sink down into his lip and blood filling his mouth and flowing down his chin along with a cut that dripped blood into his right eye.

Before he could recover he was suddenly thrown into his shop where he collided with a bookshelf and fell to the floor, books collapsing on and around him along with wood that had cracked after falling to the floor.

Coughing and groaning in pain he turned his head and watched as his assailant approached him. He tried to move but every part of his body was on fire and looking down at his legs he saw that one of his other book displays had fallen and was crushing his legs, preventing him from getting up.

“Please, please don’t do this, you can take whatever you want, I won’t call the police I swear! Just
please don’t hurt me anymore” he whimpered, his face transforming into something that resembled a groundhog.

The assailant didn’t speak, instead just dropped to their knees in front of him and produced an ax from a black bag that was hanging by their waist.

The blade of the ax shined from the moon that was glowing from the window.

Moving the ax forward the assailant tormented him by running the blade along his cheek and throat, not applying enough pressure to draw blood but enough to incite fear in him.

“Please” he begged one last time, praying that they would gained some kind of conscious and decide not to do this, but he knew that that wasn’t going to happen.

He could feel death grabbing onto his soul and his life started to flash before his eyes.

Gripping tightly to the hilt the assailant gripped the hairs at the top of his hair then pulled back and rammed the sharpened blade into his neck. Arterial spray shot forth into the face of his killer and gushed down onto his clothes and the floor around them.

Martin ‘Moe’ James Fitzgerald was dead from the first blow. His mind had shut down like a string of Christmas lights being over powered and popping in an accelerated fashion until all that made him who he was, was gone and leaving behind only a bloody, horrifyingly disfigured shell.

Taking out a rag the assailant wiped the blood off the ax and placed the ax and rag back into their bag. Then, reaching out they smeared their hand with their victim’s blood and rose from the floor and walked over to a clear wall.

Using the blood they wrote out:

“Toate nu este ceea ce pare, pentru profunzime interior este o fiara.”

Wiping the remaining blood off on their coat they then looked back over at the dead Gräber then just as they were getting ready to leave a pair of headlights illuminated the store as a car pulled up to the shop.

Thinking quickly the assailant turned and ran down the short hallway then fled out the back door of the shop.

When they were halfway way down the alley that was behind the shop a loud, horrifying scream echoed through the night.

Adapting a cool, indifferent walk the assailant walked around the corner and disappeared into the night.

~Break~

The ringing of his cellphone roused Nick from his sleep and he blindly bumped his hand around the items on his nightstand until he found the phone and brought the device to his ear, his fingers reflexively answering the call.

“Burkhardt” he grunted, his mind still foggy with sleep.

“Morning sunshine, its Wu, we got a 187 at Moe’s Bookshop and your presence is needed” Wu chirped.
Sighing Nick sat up in bed and placed his feet down on the cold wooden floor. “Okay, I’ll be there in about twenty minutes”

“No, I know where it is, see you in a bit”

“See ya”

Both hung up and Nick rubbed the sleep from his eyes then rose from the bed, doing his best not to wake Juliet as he walked to the dresser.

Unfortunately one of the floorboards squeaked under his foot and woke Juliet from her sleep.

“Nick?” she asked, reaching over and turning on her bedside lamp.

Seeing that his attempt at being quiet had failed Nick put his plans of getting dressed on hold and walked over to Juliet who was staring over at him with sleep clouded eyes.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you. I have a case, so I have to go. I’ll see you when I get home” leaning down he pressed his lips against hers then pulled back.

“You too” he replied, but she was already asleep so she never heard him.

~Break~

Nick pulled up in front of the scene. Police tape had been strung around the small shop along with an ambulance, three police cars, the Coroner’s van and of course there was the group of bystanders who were moving and jumping around, trying to get a glimpse of a body most likely.

Getting out of his car he approached the uniformed police officer and was quickly ushered through once he showed the officer his badge.

Stepping under the tape he caught the eyes of Wu and Hank and the pair walked over to meet him.

“Our victim’s name is Martin ‘Moe’ Fitzgerald, 46 years old and the owner of the place. Dispatch reports that Mr. Fitzgerald called the police at exactly 12:13 AM but the call was dropped only a few seconds in. His only employee, Sarah Jones, found him at 12:23 AM and immediately called the police” Wu read from the notepad in his hand.

“Is Sarah Jones still here?” Nick asked, planning on asking her some questions.

“Yeah, she’s sitting in the back of the ambulance being treated for shock, did you want to speak to her?” Wu asked, already knowing that they would but needing to ask anyway.

“Not yet, but if she’s transferred to the hospital tell us” Nick requested.

“You got it, I’ll just stand around out here and get some fresh air” Wu walked away from the pair and over to another officer.

Right before they stepped over the threshold a feeling of malevolence rocked him to the core and instead of feeling fear or disgust towards the presence he actually found himself strangely attracted to it, for whatever reason.
Hank had already entered the shop and accepted a pair of latex gloves from a CSU officer when he noticed that Nick wasn’t with him, turning back to the door he was met with Nick standing in the doorway, his eyes blown wide and his body rigid in what he guessed to be shock.

Stepping back over to him he gently spoke his name and touched his arm, stepping back quickly when Nick jumped from the unexpected contact.

Looking around wildly Nick met his gaze and tried to calm his racing heart.

“Are you okay?” he asked, concerned that maybe Nick hadn’t gotten enough sleep and his body and mind was rebelling against him.

Nick gave him a shaky smile, that didn’t calm him and instead made him more concerned.

“Yeah, I guess just lack of sleep is finally catching up with me is all” he answered, trying to wave off Hank’s worries and focus.

They had been friends and partners long enough for Hank to tell when he was being bullshitted, something else was clearly going on and he would get to the bottom of it, but right now they had a crime to investigate and as long as nothing extreme happened he was willing to let it drop until later.

“All right, but if you fall asleep on the job I will not be covering for you nor protecting you from Wu’s infamous sharpie collection” he joked, clapping him on the shoulder then accepting another pair of gloves and handing them over to Nick.

Smiling the moment from earlier went to the back of their minds, at least most of it did, and they began their survey of the scene.

Nick accepted gloves from the CSU officer that was beside the door then entered the crime scene.

The shop was a mess; a row of bookshelves lay cracked and broken on the floor with books scattered around, there was also bits of plaster and glass that littered the floor as well from broken display cases and the obvious holes in the walls.

Being mindful of the CSUs working diligently around them Nick and Hank stepped around the evidence that was on the floor and out of the way of photos that were being shot and over to the body of their victim.

The sight was more than gruesome, it was barbaric; Blood covered the victim and the floor around them was painted in the life essence, his legs were being crushed by a glass display that had apparently fallen on him, likely during the attack, and of course the sick-inducing, mind assaulting image of Mr. Fitzgerald’s head laying on its side beside the body it had once been attached to, the eyes still open and fogged over in death, the eyes forever frozen in fright as his life was taken away from him.

Looking over at Hank he could see the obvious disgust in his partner’s eyes, his thoughts no doubt focusing on all the other gruesome crime scenes he had seen during his time on the force.

Taking a breath Hank met his gaze, “let’s get to work.”

Nodding in agreement Nick bent down in front of the body and started his examination, looking for anything that could be a clue to whoever had done this. Since he couldn’t move the body or else risk contaminating evidence he could only do a quick survey but with all the blood that covered the body finding anything that CSU hadn’t already was nearly impossible so he
determined that it was best to wait until the body was in the ME’s ‘office’.

Rising from the floor Nick looked around again at the crime scene, his search was interrupted when Hank motioned him over to a nearby wall.

“Remind you of something?” Hank asked, pointing to the ancient Germanic G at the bottom of the message that was clearly written in their victim’s blood.

The case from about six months ago came to mind. Ryan, a wesen that he hadn’t taken the time to find in the book, had become obsessed with him and was also battling borderline personality disorder that is, the hate of what he was and the need to be a Grimm.

He would never forget that case, not only because of the bodies that were left in the wake but also because it had revealed to him a side of himself that he had tried to deny existed. He had found himself going around police procedure and preparing to go full Grimm on the man, going so much as to attempt to use a truth serum on him, consequences be damned.

Thankfully it hadn’t gotten that far, but still thinking back on it now he was terrified of what could have happened if he had managed to go through with his plan.

“Ryan Smulson” he stated, the deeply, deeply troubled young man’s image coming to mind.

“How do you think another Grimm did this or are we looking at a copycat?” Hank questioned, keeping his voice down so as to not be overheard.

Nick looked around at the destruction and blood that stained the floor around their victim.

One of the skills he had honed while working for the police station was the ability of an almost empathetic sense of the crime scenes he worked, a gut instinct if you would, and that ability had only sharpened once his Grimm attributes had been activated.

Right now his detective and Grimm instincts were twisting and sizzling with the aura of fear, violence, pain and evil that practically coated the air.

He didn’t know how he knew but he just knew that the culprit they were looking for was not an ordinary man, nor wesen but something more powerful and full of hate.

His Grimm side almost seemed to be drawn to the powerful aura, like it was a kindred spirit. He found himself losing footing in the real world and instead traveling down the rabbit hole which led to the darkness that lay inside each soul.

“Nick?” Hank touched his partner’s shoulder and grunted in pain when Nick suddenly lashed out and grabbed his hand, blunt nails digging into his skin as his partner applied pressure to the pressure points in his hand.

Keeping in the cry that wanted to erupt as the nerves in his hands screamed at him, he tried to bring Nick out of whatever place he was prisoner in.

“Nick, listen to me, it’s Hank, your partner. You got to let my hand go man. There’s no threat here, just calm down and release my hand” he whispered urgently, trying not to alert the other officers around them.

When Nick’s hold seemed to increase Hank went to his next plan of action. Reaching out with his free hand he pinched the skin on Nick's neck and was rewarded with an unmanly yelp along with the release of his hand.
All the officers in the room turned to look at the owner of the yelp and shared looks of confusion as Nick rubbed the sore area on his neck and looked at Hank accusingly.

“S’alright folks, I accidentally stepped on Detective Burkhardt’s foot, nothing to worry about” Hank lied, a casual smile on his face to get his message of ‘it’s alright’ across. His smile remained until all the officers had gone back to processing the scene.

When he looked back at Nick he was met with an accusing glare.

“What was that for?” he hissed, pissed at his partner and his childish antics.

Taking Nick by the arm he dragged him out of the shop and over to secluded part of the crime scene. Growing tired of being ignored Nick shook his arm off and demanded again to know what the hell was going on.

“The reason I pinched you was because you went somewhere man, I mean you were gone, almost like in the doorway except this time you were in deep. As soon as you looked at that symbol you faded out, got this intense look on your face and I swear, it was like you had exited and someone else was put in your place. When I went to touch you to try and bring you back you lashed out and gripped my hand, I could have done a lot worse to get you to let go but I didn’t want to make a big display” he explained, subconsciously rubbing his throbbing hand.

Noticing his movements Nick looked down and a tidal wave of guilt, shock and terror washed over him as he took in the rapid discoloration of his partner’s hand.

How could he have done that? All he could remember was looking at the symbol and then this feeling of darkness and want consuming him and tethering deep into his mind to shackle him to the pool of darkness.

“Hank I…I don’t remember any of that. All I remember is looking at that symbol and then… darkness. I’m sorry, I-I didn’t mean to” he stuttered, anxiously running a hand through his hair then turning away from his friend/partner, not feeling worthy of facing the man after what he had done.

Worry and fear clouded Hank’s thought as he watched Nick go from a strong, well-minded detective/powerful, unique Grimm to a scared, guilt ridden man. Hating to see him like this he stepped forward and was about to reach out for him but thought better and instead spoke.

“It’s alright Nick, we all have stressful days, todays just yours. Look, I can finish up inside if you want to go talk to the witness?” he suggested, offering Nick an out to still be on the job but to also be able to take a moment to clear his head.

Nick was tempted to turn the offer down but with one look down at Hank’s bruising hand and the dark, consuming pull of the aura that showered the crime scene inside he knew that it was probably in the best interest of everyone if he stayed outside, at least until he got a better handle on himself.

Nodding in acceptance Hank gave him one last worrying look then reentered the shop. Sighing Nick turned around and located the ambulance that Sarah Jones was sitting in the back of.

As he approached the young woman he took out his notepad and pen, stopping in front of her he introduced himself.

“Hi Ms. Jones, I’m Detective Burkhardt. I know you probably want to be getting home but I just have a few questions for you” he requested, feeling remorseful towards the young woman who’s eyes were puffy and red from crying and the haunted look in her eyes.
She bit her lip and gave her consent.

“Okay, so if you can just go through the events up to finding Mr. Fitzgerald I would greatly appreciate it along with any sounds, sights like a vehicle anything that comes to mind” he requested, pen poised over the paper.

“I came back to the shop at about 12:23 to get my phone that I accidentally left on a table. Even before I entered the shop I could see that the door was open and I thought that maybe someone had broken in, at first I was just going to go back to my car and call the police but I looked through the window and I saw the blood. I ran inside, terrified that Moe was hurt and that he needed help but when I finally saw him I knew that no one could help him…there was so much blood, and his head…” her voice cracked and she looked down, tears filling her eyes and traveling down her cheeks.

He felt like an asshole with the probing questions and for prolonging the anguish that she was suffering from but he had to in order to solve the crime and bring justice to her boss’ murderer.

“Just a few more questions, I promise. Now, did you maybe see or hear anything? The smallest thing could help us catch who did this”

She wiped her eyes, smearing her already ruined makeup and Nick took a travel size package of tissues out of his pocket and handed them to her; it was something that he had started doing when a rather distraught and grief stricken now widow had used his shoulder as a tissue until the material was soaked with tears.

“Thank you. Honestly, I wasn’t really paying attention to anything but Moe but I do remember hearing the backdoor slam, it has a very distinct creak from all the times that I accidentally slammed it while taking out the trash” she explained, wadding up a tissue and wiping off the smears of makeup on her face.

“One last question. Can you think of anyone that may have had a grudge against Mr. Fitzgerald like an unhappy customer or even an ex-employee?”

Sarah didn’t take long to shake her head. “No, everyone loved him, he was a sweet, kind-hearted man. He volunteered at the soup kitchen and would donate books to under privileged children. He was like a second father to me, always giving me advice and encouraging me to go after my dreams. You know, initially he ran the store himself but when I expressed how much I loved his store and the unique literature that he had he offered me a job on the spot. I can’t believe he’s gone” she whimpered, looking back over at the shop and the worst opportune time when the coroner was wheeling the body and head out of the shop.

Her face ashened and she immediately looked away, her body trembling with sobs that wracked her body as she sobbed into a handful of tissues.

Nick finished his note taking and flipped the pad shut.

“Thank you for your time Ms. Jones, and if you think of anything else please call me at this number” he took out a card with his work number/cell then motioned over an officer.

After telling the officer to take Ms. Jones home he hesitantly walked back into the shop, the pull of the evil entity still there but now that he was expecting it he had a better handle on himself.

Walking through the destruction he finally located Hank in the back investigating the hallway where plaster dusted the floor along with a destroyed cell phone and an aluminum bat.
Hank looked up from the phone and met his gaze.

“Did the witness tell you anything useful?” he asked, rising from the floor.

“Yeah, apparently Mr. Fitzgerald was an all-around compassionate giving man who everyone liked so no enemies were named. She also said that when she found the body she heard the creaking and slamming of the back door, most likely our perp. running away when he saw her pulling up” Nick summed up.

Hank frowned, “well then either Mr. Fitzgerald did have some enemies, this was a robbery gone wrong or it’s something else entirely. By the way, we had a tech open the case in the office, the lock didn’t seem to be messed with but we won’t know for sure if any money was taken until we look at the surveillance videos which should be up and running now.”

“Lead the way”

Following Hank into the office area they met the tech. who had hacked into the security feed and had the video up and ready to play.

Seeing that the two detectives were waiting on him the tech. began.

“I’ve forwarded through to the time of the break in, unfortunately the video doesn’t have sound, is in black and white but the quality is pretty good” he explained.

Pressing play Nick and Hank crowded around the small computer space.

The three watched as their victim turned the lights to the shop off and double bolted the front door before turning and walking into the back of the shop, likely to his small sleeping area.

“I’m going to fast forward a little” the tech. said.

The time stamp at the bottom quickly forwarded in time until slowing down and playing at 12:20 AM.

They watched as a shadow appeared outside the window and soon the bolts on the door were expertly unlatched using a technique that spoke of experience. The door opened and a person in completely black attire entered the shop, their face covered in darkness due to the large hood that they wore and the cover of darkness, which they were using to their advantage along with just enough bagginess of their clothing that it was hard to discern their gender.

The intruder walked right past the cash register, not even giving it a second glance which told them right away that this had likely not been a robbery. The person then walked around the shop, randomly picking up books and leafing through them, which Nick and Hank took note of and catalogued them in their mind so that they could dust the items for prints

One minute into the video the intruder then picked up a rather heavy looking book then held it out and loosened her grip, allowing the book to fall and collide with the floor.

Events escalated from there.

The intruder disappeared from view for a few seconds before suddenly their victim was literally thrown into the scene and into a bookshelf that promptly fell down and a display collapsed onto his legs, trapping him, condemning him to death.

Nick watched as the killer squatted down in front of their victim, who seemed to be saying
something, likely pleading with them and he was only mildly surprised when his face woge into a wesen that resembled what looked to be a groundhog of sorts.

It seemed like 90% of his cases since discovering his Grimm heritage had been wesen centered and he sometimes found himself wondering back to all his older cases, how many of the criminals he had arrested were wesen? How many of them had had extenuating circumstances, like ‘instincts’ that had led to the crimes that had been committed?

In the blink of an eye the killer had procured an ax and in one swift move rammed the blade of the ax into their victim’s neck, blood spraying across their victim’s clothing and spattering the wall and ceiling with arterial spray.

The spike of pleasure that the violent kill displayed shot through Nick like a speeding bullet and he actually gasped aloud, his pupils dilating as he took an involuntary step back, his heart racing in his chest and his breath speeding up slightly.

Hank, at hearing the gasp looked away from the screen to Nick who he could see was in the middle of some kind of panic attack.

“Nick, you okay?” the events from earlier came to mind and Hank’s concern for his partner intensified. He didn’t know what was going on with Nick, whether it was Grimm related or stress but he did know that it was greatly distressing him and that was all he needed to know that whatever was going on needed to be taken care of.

The tech had stopped the video and was looking at Nick as well, wondering what had set the detective off.

Nick took a shaky breath and looked down at the floor before meeting Hank’s gaze, feeling the eyes of the tech on him as well which sent a wave of embarrassment through him.

“Yeah, just haven’t been getting enough sleep lately and thought I saw something but I was mistaken” he repeated the same lie from earlier, embellishing it a little at the end but he knew that Hank knew he was lying again.

Hank did see through the lie, especially since it was the same lie from earlier but like earlier discussing this with Nick right now wouldn’t be wise, not with so many people around that could overhear and either think they’re crazy and report them to the station psychologist or freak out when they discovered that Nick was a Grimm. Either way, the outcome would likely be bad.

“All right, Tim you can continue the video” Hank said to the tech.

Nick was silent as the killer coated their fingers in the victim’s blood then rose from the floor and walked over to a wall. His Adam’s apple bobbed up and down as they wrote out a message in the foreign language.

Seconds later a light illuminated the shop and their killer fled the scene, which was soon taken by Sarah Jones as she discovered the body of her boss.

The tech. stopped the video and looked up at them.

“The rest is just her calling the police and us showing up” he explained.

Hank nodded then instructed the tech. to copy all the videos and send them to his computer after receiving acknowledgement the detectives left the room and walked down the hallway towards the door that Sarah had described.
With his gloves still on Nick turned the knob, the door squeaking just like Sarah had said and, sharing a look Hank raised his gun and as soon as the door was open enough popped out and surveyed the alley with Nick following behind.

The alley was empty, trash cans, graffiti and a chain link fence was the backdrop for an atypical city alley.

Lowering their weapons they stepped forward and looked around for anything that the killer may have left behind, but as to be expected in a situation like this there wasn’t anything obvious so they would definitely have to send out the CSUs to get a closer look.

“So tell me what’s really going on Nick, and don’t give me that crap from earlier, I’m your partner, you can trust me” he implored, now a good a time as any for his questioning.

Nick was a little taken aback by the abrupt question but he shouldn’t have been, Hank knew an opportunity when he saw one and right now in an alley with no one else around was a perfect situation.

Since Hank had been introduced to the wesen world he had been asking questions non-stop and was very enthusiastic about learning about all the types of wesen that there were and past cases that had involved wesen. But Nick was also finding that Hank’s induction also meant that he would have to answer questions that weren’t easy to explain, such as the times where Nick lost himself to what one could call ‘instinct’ and he was finding that in those times it was as if he became someone else.

And that scared him.

He had just hurt Hank when he had been in one of his ‘episodes’ brought on by a feeling that should have disgusted him but in reality he had wanted more of it, to be closer to the darkness and power that the owner had.

Telling all this to Hank was terrifying, because it went against everything that he had originally told him and his friends about the type of Grimm that he was and was trying to be. Now he found himself pulled towards darkness and longing for more, but that wasn’t him, it wasn’t supposed to be him.

Nick had gone somewhere else again, and though past experience was telling him to do otherwise he crept closer to the man and tried to get his attention.

“Nick, c’mon man, don’t leave me again. We need to talk about this” he insisted, looking deep into his faraway gray eyes.

Coming back into his right mind Nick met Hank’s concerned gaze, a look that was becoming all too frequent in the last hour. He had heard his question, as incredible as that was, and he found his mouth moving before he knew how to sew it shut.

“There’s darkness coating every fleck of air in that shop Hank, before I even entered the shop I could feel it crawling under my skin, digging into my every molecule and the scariest part of it all, is that I LIKED it, I wanted more, hell I still do! What does that say about me?” he looked at his partner desperately, praying like a crazed lunatic that Hank would give him an answer that was as proportional as the answer to the meaning of life.

Seeing that Nick was in a desperate and panicked state Hank knew that he had better say or do something now or else Nick was sure to go off on another rant and this time could possibly attract
the attention of the other officers.

“You’re not like your ancestors Nick, you haven’t killed any wesen unless you had no other choice, and you are not evil. You haven’t gotten a full night’s sleep in days, you have bags under your eyes, which are almost bloodshot so of course you’re to going to be prone to crazy thoughts. Just a few hours ago when we were filing those reports I had the weirdest longing to take my gun out and shoot the hell out of those papers then just walk out, but I didn’t”

That wasn’t even close to what Nick was going through though, Hank’s was a feeling that practically everyone in the department had probably dreamed about, and anyone who worked in a cubicle. Hank had the right of mind and will power to not go through with that fantasy. Nick’s on the other hand was more along the lines of something that a serial killer would want to do and in more cases than not, those people usually followed out those fantasies.

In the place of Hank it would have been him and instead of shooting the hell out of reports he would have been shooting hole after hole into an innocent wesen who hadn’t done anything wrong except not being fast enough.

He had to get out here, he couldn’t trust himself to be around Hank right now or else if he lost it again he could seriously hurt Hank.

“Look, I’m going to go back to the station and look into our victim, see if he really was as clean as our witness says” before Hank could object Nick turned and walked away, choosing to tune out the words that Hank called after him.

He just had to get away.

~GRIMM~

The hooded figure crossed the dark, quiet street into the ominous and nightmare composing forest. Branches and leaves brushed and traced their arms as they walked, their steps muffled by the mossy and dirt packed floor, but animals could still sense the danger that this person was and scattered in all directions.

Stopping in place beneath a ceiling of lush leaves that created a portrait around the moon, they took out a compass attached to a short metal chain and laid it flat in their glove clad hand.

The needle spun around until it bobbed to a stop pointing in the direction of North, turning slightly the needle swayed and bobbed again until coming to a stop in the direction of 3 degrees east.

With the compass still in hand they followed the arrow and didn’t stop nor slow down until they looked through the patched covering of bushes and saw a large bonfire up ahead.

Pocketing the compass the figure walked ahead and through the brush and out into the opening that the bonfire was thriving in.

other people were dressed in similar black attire as the individual, but not wearing coats were scattered everywhere. There was about 30 in all and all were engaged in either training exercises or cleaning and sharpening weapons.

There was one individual though that was just sitting on a large stump in front of the fire, her eyes filled with the sparking flames of the fire.

On instinct she looked up and met the hidden gaze of the returned individual. Her face was marred with the hardships of the life she led and carved into the left side of her face, next to her eye, was a
reminder of a betrayal that she would never get revenge for. Rising from the stump she walked around the crackling fire and approached them, meeting them halfway in the opening.

“Have you completed your assignment?” she asked, her voice and expression cold and intimidating.

The figure nodded and retrieved the knife and bloody rag from their pocket.

Eyes alight with satisfaction she took the two items and examined them.

Signaling with the hand that held the knife another black clad person hurried to her side, holding a bowl of what looked to be water but was actually something much more potent.

With the bowl in the person’s hand the woman dipped the blade into the liquid and as soon as the blade slipped through the surface the liquid started to bubble then turned dark blue.

The smile on the woman’s face increased and she handed the ax over as well.

“Be sure to add this to the collection” she ordered.

On receiving a nod she ushered them away and turned back to face the person before them.

“So you have, this is most excellent. You are ready for the next step. Kneel!” she ordered, her eyes hard and purposeful.

Eagerly but with grace the individual kneeled down and lowered their head, holding their breath in anticipation.

“Pentru jertfa de nevinovăție și de delestare sange, AM tine bun venit clanul nostrum” She recited, her index finger smearing with blood as she spoke.

At the last word the hooded individual looked up and pulled down their hood, revealing a young woman who looked to be no older than 20, her hair a fine blond, skin a delicate ivory and eyes that were a mossy green but yet looked to be infected with insects of evil.

Raising her finger she pressed the bloody digit against the girl’s forehead and traced out an Ancient German G. A small drop of blood dripped down from the tail of the G and raced down her forehead and came to a rest at the bridge of her nose.

“Rise”

Rising from the ground the young woman nodded in respect at her leader, ready to do what she had been born and trained for.

The war was coming, and the prize was a certain Grimm.
For deep inside there is a beast

Nick had just finished going over their victim’s records and hadn’t found a single thread of evidence that the man had been anything less than a law abiding citizen of Portland, Oregon; which was a good sign for the society as a whole but not so good for their investigation.

The only link of any possibility was a break-in that their victim had reported five months ago. The suspect, Alec Harrison was arrested for the theft of $508 from the safe in the office and property damage. He was currently serving 4 years since it was his second offense at Columbia County lockup.

Bringing up the arrest record he scrawled through the information until he came to the list of next of kin. Harrison had two older brothers, Mathias and Benjamin who also had criminal records but for car theft and credit card scams.

Maybe it was a revenge killing? But somewhere in the back of his mind disagreed; this killing had been about something else. The way that Martin Fitzgerald had been killed and the extreme lack of evidence spoke of an experienced killer, something that neither of the brothers appeared to be.

But it was the only lead he had so he had printed out the information.

Currently he was sitting at his desk going over the crime scene photos, his eyes scanning the photos for anything that stood out, but so far he was getting nothing.

When he came to the bloody message on the wall he leaned back in his chair and traced each letter with his mind, imprinting it to memory. He didn’t recognize the language but then again he wasn’t very fluent in a lot of languages.

Now that he was away from the crime scene the feeling from earlier had faded away to nothing more than a bothersome headache but looking at the photos brought back that familiar longing and pleasure again so he looked away. Feeling tainted for just allowing those emotions to resurface.

What was happening to him?

No longer able to handle looking at the photos he exited out of the file and went to Martin Fitzgerald’s personal file.

His next of kin was listed as Sarah Jones, his employee, and from what Nick could see that was likely due to the close bond the two shared and his lack of children or a spouse along with being an only child.

Shutting the file he rubbed his eyes then looked over at the time on his computer. 2:30. was that really all the time that had passed? It felt like hours had gone by.

God he needed to sleep. But he was afraid to close his eyes because every time he did he would see that symbol and the lust inside him would rise and give way to other images that were dark and filled with blood.

Deciding that he needed to take a moment to clear his thoughts he picked up a pad of paper and a pen and started to draw.

He wasn’t drawing anything specific, just letting his mind concentrate on the lines and curves that were randomly taking form and the darkness of the shading.
But just as he didn’t want to do his mind inadvertently went back to the gruesome crime scene. The way the blood seeped into the hardwood floor, the cracking of glass with each step taken, and the horrified glazed over eyes of their victim. Soon it wasn’t just images that he was recollecting but also the smell of copper, dust and if he searched deep enough he could almost make out the putrid smell of fear; not from their perpetrator, no they had no fear, but from the victim as they looked their mortality in the eyes and blinked.

His pen dug harshly into the paper, furiously drawing out jagged lines and shadowing that spoke of great distress and frustration. It was when the pressure he was exerting on the fragile writing tool became too great the pen actually snapped in half, coating his hand and spattering the paper and his desk in blue ink.

The action brought him back to reality and he looked down in surprise at the blue mess that his hand had become and the mess that he had created.

Cursing he was about to rise and get some wet paper towels to clean up when he saw the image that he had drawn, not just once but multiple times all over the paper; it was the Ancient Germanic G from the crime scene.

With shaking hands he picked the slightly damp paper up, the fallen ink dribbling down and making a further mess of his desk but he didn’t notice.

Looking at the symbol once more the familiar longing returned but it was quickly followed by rage, rage that this symbol would invoke such monstrous thoughts in his mind and the history that this single letter held.

A scowl dominated his features as he tightly crumpled and flattened the paper, more blue ink staining his hand as he did so. Dropping the ruined paper back into his wastebasket he rose from his desk, however, instead of going to retrieve wet paper towels like he had originally intended he found his feet leading him towards the bathroom.

When he entered the bathroom he was grateful to find that it appeared to be empty, he really didn’t want to deal with explanations, at least not yet.

Walking to the nearest sink he turned the faucet on and adjusted the temperature to luke warm and dipped his ink stained hands under the flow. The water became a light blue as it swirled down the drain.

Going through the motions he pressed out a generous amount of soap and attempted to get all the ink off that he could.

He vigorously scrubbed at his hands until they were raw and on the verge of bleeding before pulling his nearly red hands out and gripping the countertop, his head hung low.

Leaving the water going the temperature went up and was soon scolding hot, steam rising from the sink and rising into the air, fogging the mirror which held his reflection, the image becoming fogged as well; much like he was starting to feel.

Turning the faucet off, his hand almost burned from the hot temperature of the handle, he then used his arm to wipe off the condensation on the mirror, the image still fuzzy but clearer. He wished it was that easy to fix his perception.

The bags under his eyes were prominent, so prominent that it looked like his face was trying to sink in on itself. His eyes themselves were bloodshot and riddled with the darkness that he was
battling. Along with that his skin was deathly pale and resembled a corpse more than a living human being.

In short, he looked like crap.

Exhaling he waited a few seconds then turned the faucet all the way to cold and dipped his hands in, hissing at the glacially cold water. Cupping his hands he brought his head down and splashed the chilly water onto his face, giving him the kick back into wakefulness. He turned the faucet off again this time for good then pushed himself away from the counter and ripped out a few paper towels, drenched them in water and walked out of the room and back to his desk.

As he walked back to his desk he ran into Wu who was holding a file and quickly took notice of his state, particularly that of his blue hand.

“Whoa, what happened to you? Did you squeeze a Smurf to death?” he joked, his usual blank expression on his face as he delivered.

Instead of responding Nick ignored him and continued on his way, not noticing the raised eyebrows he received from Wu in confusion/worry.

Arriving at his desk he found that at some point during his trip Hank had returned and was going over something at his own desk. Of course, every once in a while looking over at Nick’s in curiosity about the ink bomb that had gone off.

Seeing that his partner had returned Hank got up from his desk and took a few steps to greet Nick, his eyes of course, like Wu, quickly zeroing in on the blue hand. He wanted to ask what happened but by the almost dead look in his partner’s eyes he knew that it was best to just let it go.

“CSUs didn’t find any evidence in the alley, but there were security cameras that were pointed towards the shop and alley from other stores so I have a CSU tech. compiling those; hopefully we got something on that. Did you find anything in our victim’s record?” he asked, keeping the conversation strictly formal.

With the way Nick had been jumping at the smallest sound or interaction and the obvious lack of sleep he figured it was for the best.

“No, he doesn’t have a criminal record so either he’s never been caught or he was genuinely a law-abiding citizen. He doesn’t have any living relatives so it’s not a family connection, but I did manage to find a past break-in that he reported five months ago. The suspect, Alec Harrison was arrested and is currently serving 4 years at Columbia County Lockup, so it can’t be him but he’s got two brothers who have records for car theft and credit card scams” he finished.

Throwing the damp and ink stained paper towels away he wiped his hands off on his jeans then sat down in his chair.

“Murder is a long way from car theft and credit scams” Hank commented, reading through the files on Alec and his brothers that Nick had handed him.

Nick nodded his head in agreement, having had similar thoughts earlier.

“But they’re the only suspects we have right now and there’s something else that I forgot to mention…our victim was wesen” he lowered his voice at the end, not wanting to be overheard.

Hank’s eyes widened slightly in surprise, but he really shouldn’t be considering all the other cases they had been working recently. It seemed like more than half their cases had had wesen involved
to a point.

“Do you know what kind?” he inquired.

“No, he woged into something that looked like a groundhog and I’ve never seen one before so I’m going to have consult the books and likely Monroe” Nick explained, planning on looking at this as a possible wesen reason.

Hank nodded, “well how about we go check out the two brothers, seeing as how they’re roommates it shouldn’t be too hard to find out what they’ve been up to” clapping Nick on the shoulder the two detectives left the station and drove to the address that was recorded on their records.

~GRIMM~

On the other side of town Jennifer Miller was getting ready for work, her nursing uniform was on and she had just gotten off the phone with her boyfriend who was coming to pick her up in an hour.

The timer on the stove went off and she went over and turned it and the stove off then picked up a ladle and spooned out two scoops of oatmeal.

Inhaling the aroma she smiled and walked over to her small dining room table, her glass of orange juice waiting for her along with the morning crossword puzzle.

Just as she was about to tuck into her breakfast and start her daily crossword her doorbell rings.

Not expecting company, at least for another hour, she rises from her chair and walks towards the door, a distorted figure visible through the stained glass windows that adorned the door.

Unlocking the lock and deadbolt she opened the door and was greeted by the sight of a young man, looking to be in his late teens standing there with a charming smile on his face, which was curiously outfitted with a pair of dark sunglasses.

Warning bells were going off in her mind, warning her that something was very wrong here and that she should close and lock her door now.

But curiosity had always been a potential character flaw of hers and right now that flaw was gnawing at her to take a closer look at this stranger.

“Yes?” she asked, keeping the door partially closed and only part of her head sticking out.

The charming smile remained on his face, “hi, I’m sorry to bother you but I’m trying to find Briars Street. I’ve been driving around for about an hour now and I’m completely lost, could you help me out?” he laughed.

“Yeah sure, you just drive up the street here towards Myers Lane then turn left once you reach the Andy’s market then keep driving straight and you’ll be there” she was about to close the door but was startled when he stuck his foot in the door, preventing her speedy retreat.

“Sorry to bother you more but I have the worst memory, would you maybe write it down for me?” he asked, his smile now becoming a little too bright.

Her heart rate accelerated and the danger vibe she was getting off this man was becoming so tense that she lost control and wuge into a reinigen.

“I’m sorry but I’m busy getting ready for work but I’m sure someone down at Andy’s market will
glad to help you” the store wasn’t even open but she didn’t want to talk to this man any longer.

Not caring about the teen’s foot she tried to pull the door closed, in an attempt to force his shoe out from the doorway but she was not prepared for the blow that was dealt to her exposed face.

In an insanely clear moment she only just noticed as his fist met her face that he was wearing black gloves. It wasn’t cold outside and there was no need for sunglasses. Her mind put together in only a length of a millisecond where she put together that this man had planned this.

Stumbling backwards into her house, blood flowing from her broken nose she lost her balance and fell to the floor. The teen slammed the door closed and stalked towards her, removing his glasses as he went and taking out a shining ax.

Eyes widening in fear she tried to push herself up from the floor but cried out in pain when he stomped down on her ankle, grounding down on it until she was sure that he had broken her ankle.

Tears streamed down her face, mixing with the blood that was continuing to flow from her bruising and swelling nose.

He merely wiped the running the blood off his lips, removing his glasses and pocketing them.

Looking down at her with malice.

It was then she looked into his eyes and she knew in that instant, that she was going to die.

He was a Grimm.

Flight instincts kicking in she tried to crawl away, her movements smearing the blood as she tried to get as much distance between her and the Grimm.

She screamed in terror and denial as he grabbed her ankles and pulled her back to him, her broken ankle throbbing in his hands as he dragged her down the hallway and into the kitchen where he dropped her ankles then proceeded to kick her repeatedly in the ribs until she felt fluid filling up at the back of her throat and she started to cough up blood.

It was only a small blessing when he stopped kicking her but that blessing was turned into a curse as she watched him kneel down to her level once more and raised the ax.

Her body was frozen in fear, she couldn’t move so much as a finger. Reinigen weren’t fighters, they didn’t seek out battles, they ran and when met with confrontation the only action they could manage was to flee in the opposite direction. That method had failed her, and now she was going to die at the hands of a Grimm.

The ax came down and severed the arteries in her neck, the arterial spray fizzing out of her like a fountain, the blow did not kill her immediately but the blood that was quickly filling her airways was drowning her and in her last moments she watched as he raised the ax back one more time then delivered the blow that chopped her head off entirely.

All functions and thoughts ceased.

Staring down at the dead Reinigen he smiled in satisfaction then leaned down and coated his gloved hand in blood and walked over to the right side wall in the hallway.

The message he wrote was the exactly the same as the one in Moe’s bookshop, along with the ancient Germanic G that was added at the bottom.
He then calmly washed the blood off his face, gloves and clothes the best he could at the sink then walked out of the house and out of the still slumbering neighborhood.

It would be an hour later that Jennifer Miller’s boyfriend arrived and discovered the horrific scene.

~GRIMM~

Hank and Nick pulled up in front of the brothers' home; the house was really just a small shack like structure that had two vehicles stationed out front, one a beat up red truck the other a rundown jeep. The finishing touches was the nearly dead grass that was straw yellow and a rusty mailbox that was missing its flag.

“I like what they’ve done with the place” Hank sarcastically commented as they walked up the small hill to the house, the grass crunching and flaking off with each step.

Stepping up onto the porch the whole structure seemed to groan, wheezing at their combined weight on the ancient supports.

They shared a look, one that spoke of disbelief and amusement.

Reaching out Hank rapped on the side of the fraying screen door, the hollow sound echoing along the remains of the building.

“Who is it?” a male voice demanded, likely one of the brothers. The voice was coated in distrust and malice, years of being a criminal making them wary of any unexpected ‘guests’.

“Detectives Hank Griffin and Nick Burckhardt with Portland PD, would you mind coming to the door sir?” Hank responded, looking into the dark house to try and see the inhabitants.

A loud curse was hissed and the sound of objects falling to the ground, shoes scuffing the floor and the slamming of a door was heard, which meant that just like millions before them, they were running.

No longer needing an invitation Nick, with gun in hand, kicked the flimsy door down and sped inside with Hank running behind him, brandishing his own weapon.

They ran through the house and out the back door, arriving just in time to see the two brothers jumping over a short metal fence and making a mad dash through their neighbor’s yard, one brother continuing forward and the other splitting off for the street. Hank and Nick mentally synced and split off.

Nick continued the chase, leaping over the fence in one bound and quickly regaining his footing as he blurred across the lawn in the same direction the perp. had gone. He was gaining ground quickly, and he could almost make out the hairs on the back of the guy’s neck.

“Freeze, Police!” he shouted, in a vain attempt to get him to stop, which they never did.

His breathing and heart rate had barely changed and his muscles were singing in praise at the adrenaline that fueled his actions. The Grimm inside him was jolting in aggression and the thrill of the chase, the darkness that sided it was also the high of the coming kill.

Putting all of his strength into the soles of his feet he pounced onto the perp.’s back and they both tumbled to the ground, grunts of pain from the perp. and grass, leaves and rocks were kicked up into the air as Nick fought to gain control over the flailing man in his arms.
It was during the fight that the man actually met his gaze for more than a second and he immediately stilled, his eyes wide in terror. As usual the response to him was for the man to woge into a Jagerbar.

“Grimm” he roared, his efforts to get away increased and he tried to claw at Nick’s arms and face with his elongated claws but Nick grabbed his arms and twisted them until he cried out and arched his back in pain.

The Grimm in him responded to the fear that he saw in his eyes and its hunger increased, wanting blood, wanting the jagerbar’s head on a stick with blood dripping in rivulets down to the ground.

Something in him, something that knew between right and wrong, shut down and Nick found himself giving in to the urges that his inner Grimm was hungering for.

The jagerbar could tell the moment the switch flipped because Nick’s eyes became hollow and he knew in that moment that he was going to die.

Releasing one of his prey’s arm’s he was about to pull his arm back and deliver the first of many brutal blows to the wesen’s face but was stopped and whipped back into reality by the firm grasp of Hank’s hand around his wrist.

Seeing that Nick had come back to himself Hank released his hand and watched as Nick turned back to their perp. and flipped him over onto his stomach and slapped his cuffs on the man and hauled him up from the floor.

“You’re under arrest for evading police” he growled.

“I caught the brother. He’s in the backseat of the car. Want me to take him off your hands?” Hank offered, seeing the adrenaline that was still coursing through his partner.

Nick shook his head, “no, I got it” tugging the man forward Nick led him out of the neighbor’s yard and back to Hank’s car where the other brother was sitting in the car, a glare dominating his features as the two detectives approached the vehicle with his brother in cuffs.

Hearing the beep of the lock unlocking Nick yanked the door open, almost a little too hard and was in danger of ripping off its hinges.

He none too gently forced the jagerbar into the back of the car and slammed the door shut. He purposely kept his back to Hank as he took a moment to try and cool down before getting in the car.

“You okay man?” Hank asked, watching his partner and friend suffer silently.

It took a few moments before Nick was able to answer, his mouth set in a grimace as he thought over what he had been about to do the Jagerbar. He had wanted to kill him, sate his thirst for blood and that had terrified him, just as if not more than with what had happened at the crime scene.

He needed to get his mind under control. He couldn’t afford to lose it, for his sanity, his consciousness and the safety of those around him.

“Ask me in an hour” he responded, not able to articulate how he was really feeling, not yet anyway.

Accepting the answer Hank walked around to the driver’s side and got inside, Nick following his example and climbing into the passenger’s seat.
The ride back to the station was spent in silence.

~GRIMM~

The two detectives were leading the two brothers towards separate interrogation rooms, planning on questioning them until the one flipped but were stopped by Wu who looked to be on his way out.

“You guys might want to lighten your load, we got another one”


Hank pawed off the two brothers to a passing officer and told him to take them down to a holding cell.

“A residence: 1015 Wilbur Avenue. From what I got so far, the victim is a young woman” having relayed all the information he had he walked away.

Changing directions they headed for Hank’s car.

“Do you think the brothers did this before we got to them?” Hank questioned, keeping in step with Nick as they jogged down the stairs.

“It’s possible, could explain why they ran when they found out we were cops” Nick offered. Not that deep down though, Nick knew that the case wouldn’t be this easy to solve.

“Or they did something else and we’re barking up the wrong tree” Hank added, hoping that they had truly caught the guys. But knowing with their luck this case was far from over.

~GRIMM~

The young man dressed in dark clothing with a messenger jogged across the road and into a familiar forest.

The morning sun peaked through the full branches and collection of leaves which created a natural disco ball effect on the lush ground covering.

Going by memory and instinct he walked past the several moss encased trees, bushes and panicked animals that could sense the evil he was capable of.

Brushing the bushes aside he stepped over the threshold and entered the camp where the rest of his clan was waiting for him. All eyes moved to him as he approached their leader who was waiting for him by a boiling pot of gruel.

She didn’t look up as he approached, continuing to stir the gruel in the pot.

“It’s done” he stated, taking out the bloody ax and rag, presenting them to her.

Stopping her stirring she set the wooden spoon aside and looked up at him, eyeing the objects in his hand.

“Were you seen?” she demanded, her eyes steely black and her voice cold.

“No, I made sure of it” he swore, knowing and accepting what would happen to him if he had failed her in any way.
Taking his word and knowing that he wouldn’t dare lie to her, she picked up a bowl filled with a clear liquid concoction and took the ax from his outstretched hand then dipped the blade into the liquid, almost instantly the water turned a dark blue.

“Excellent” she handed the ax over to the young woman who was seated beside her, and she hurried off, adding another piece to the collection.

Instructing him to kneel she repeated the same phrase from earlier along with the marking of the Ancient Germanic G in the blood of the wesen who’s life he had taken.

After the ritual was over she sent him away with an order to bring her Elijah.

~GRIMM~

Entering the house Nick and Hank walked around the CSUs in the cramped hallway who were photographing and analyzing the scene, their eyes stopping when they came to the bloody message on the wall.

“Same message as the other scene, we really need to get a translation on this thing” Hank commented, going through his mind as to who could be a possible candidate for the job.

The tugging of his Grimm instincts was trying to bubble to the surface, to revel in the violence that coated the aura of the home, but he stamped the urges down, not allowing a repeat of what had happened earlier.

“Yeah, how about we check out the body” it was meant to be a suggestion but instead it came out as a statement and he turned away from the enticing message and entered the kitchen to look over the remains.

This one was just as gruesome as the last. Her head had been completely severed from her body and was lying on its side a few feet away. Blood smeared in a line from the rolling that occurred after the head had been decapitated.

The blood that was still slowly trickling from the body was filling the air with its coppery scent, arousing the Grimm in him to take a closer look at the artwork that lay before him. Whoever this artist was, the Grimm was a fan.

Crouching down beside the body Nick couldn’t help himself as he reached out and was about to touch the glistening blood but was suddenly stopped by Hank who had noticed his movements and had pulled him back up, not wanting him to risk contaminating evidence.

“What are you doing? Contaminating evidence is a rookie mistake, especially blood. C’mon, let’s talk to the boyfriend” Hank tried to physically lead Nick away from the body but Nick tugged himself free, taking a step away from his partner who was looking at him with both concern and tiredness.

His eyes tried to keep going back to the gruesome remains of their victim but he forced himself to only look at the hardwood floor, following all the lines that separated each individual board.

“Actually I’m going to head back to the station and try to get that message translated” not waiting for his response Nick strode past his partner and out of the house.

Walking down the short path to the end of the front lawn Nick’s instincts were churning within him, the feeling that prey was near was so strong that he couldn’t fight the compulsion to turn his head just time to see the victim’s boyfriend woge into a Fuschbau.
Without his permission his legs started to walk towards the wesen, his hand sliding over to his holstered gun.

Just as he was about to pull his weapon out and shoot the Fuschau point blank, witnesses be damned, he could just kill them all and be done with it, his cell phone rang.

And with that reality check Nick ground his feet into the grass and pulled his hand away from his holster and retrieved his ringing phone from his jacket pocket.

Looking at the caller ID, Nick was extremely relieved to see that it was Monroe.

“Monroe?” his voice was raspy, his emotions at a boiling point concerning what he had been about to do.

The other line was silent for a moment before Monroe spoke.


Nick couldn’t help the dark chuckle that escaped him, “oh yeah, yeah everything’s fine. Listen um, I’m working a case right now, one that’s similar to that case we worked about 5 months ago, the Ryan Smulson case” he added, turning his body around and walking in the opposite direction.

Seeing as he hadn’t driven here he was lucky that the station wasn’t too far on foot from here.

“Of course I remember! How could I forget? I had nightmares for weeks that an Endezeichen Grimm was going to come and cut my head my off” he responded, leaning back in the chair he was sitting in.

At his words Nick involuntarily flinched, the name singing to his Grimm instincts.

“Someone is going around killing wesen and leaving a message in blood in some language that I can’t read along with an Ancient Germanic G” he relayed, his nerves close to frying with all the emotions that were coursing through him.

Monroe’s throat went desert dry, his eyes widening in shock and fear of the implications this could mean. He swallowed a few times in an attempt to bring some moisture back to his throat before speaking.

“Are you sure this isn’t just a copycat? I mean…are you really sure?”

Nick was afraid to tell him how sure he was. If he told him that he knew because his Grimm was keening and demanding to get closer to the evil that had perpetrated these horrific crimes he knew that Monroe would never look at him the same way again.

He sure as hell didn’t.

“Yeah, I am. Look I got to go but I’ll come by your place tonight at about 8” Nick decided, not feeling like it was the smartest idea to be talking about this out in the open.

“Okay Nick, I’ll see you tonight…are you sure you’re okay?” he had to ask again, giving Nick one last chance to come clean about what was really going on with him. He could hear the whirlwind of emotions that Nick was trying to keep a lid on through the line. That was how bad he sounded.

Nick hesitated a moment before he replied, a second of hope that maybe Monroe could shed light
on the darkness that was slowly but surely consuming him. But that was snuffed out when he recalled the way the man was sure to feel, he would never tell him to his face that he was afraid of him but there would be no denying the terror he was sure to show in his eyes.

“I’m fine, just concerned that this will be a threat that not everyone is going to walk away from” he admitted, and he wasn’t just talking about lives but his own soul as well.

“Okay, I’ll see you tonight. Do you want me to call Rosalee?” he asked.

“No, not yet anyway, not until we’re sure that we really are dealing with one” he answered, feeling bad enough that he was involving Monroe on this one, he didn’t want his best friend getting hurt or worse, killed because of him.

“See you then”

“Bye”

Both hung up and Nick continued the walk to the station in silence, trying to get a hold on the Grimm that was trying to reach out and grind his human soul to ash.
Entering the bullpen Nick stalked over to his desk and collapsed in his seat, instinctively resting his right elbow atop the wooden desk and mashed his fist against his mouth.

His entrance hadn’t gone unnoticed; the air in the room had noticeably thickened seconds before he entered and seemed to only intensify the closer he came to his desk. All eyes watched as the detective collapsed at his desk chair and transformed into the literal representation of deeply troubled.

They were wise though and resisted approaching the man.

One man though was not as inclined. Captain Sean Renard.

Like his officers he had also noticed the coming presence of Nick, but unlike them he could tell who the aura belonged to before having visual. It was an aura that Sean had first ingrained into his memory when the younger man had first entered his precinct. Even before Nick had discovered his Grimm heritage he had known and felt the power of the Grimm that was lurking deep inside the man, a power that enraged his zauberbiest side but intrigued the other part of him that was Regnant.

He hadn’t run into a Grimm in a good three years at that time, the last one having been ‘taken care of’ when he had entered his protectorate and had gone on a killing spree of any and all wesen he came across.

His whereabouts to the public and precinct were still unknown.

He had purposely given Detective Burkhardt and his partner Detective Hank Griffin their current case, having seen earlier pictures that had been sent to him by CSU. If they really were dealing with an Endezeichen Grimm, then the wesen population in Portland was in serious danger of being exterminated.

Looking out his window he watched as Nick sat at his desk, his computer off and still in the same pose that had fueled Sean’s concern for the younger man. Something was deeply troubling the detective, and common sense told him that it had something to do with the case.

~GRIMM~

Lowering his hand he finally turned on his computer and opened up the pictures that contained the message. There had to be a meaning behind them, otherwise why leave them behind?

When he had told Hank that he was going to try and decipher the message he had mainly said it as an excuse for leaving but now with the actual task at hand he found that his mind was all over the place and bouncing from the gruesome images at the crime scene to the pulsing emotions that were skittering around his mind and shocking his insides in want to attention.

Shaking his head in an attempt to kick down the wall that was preventing him from seeing beyond the images with little success. In the end, much to his chagrin, he did the only thing he could do at this point, run the message through the internet and see what results he got. As expected he didn’t get any specific results but there were plenty of documents that came up that had similar letters to it. Clicking on one of the links he was brought to a long document that went on for five pages, all in a foreign language.
Suddenly a bar dropped down on the screen and it was there that he saw the page was written in Romanian. Finally having something to go on he picked up a pen and wrote out Romanian on a pad of paper then dropped the pen and went back to his computer.

He spent the next fifteen minutes going through various translation websites until he found one that translated Romanian into English but when he did find one he had to go through several others just to make sure that it was accurate.

By the end he had finally managed to get a rough translation of the message:

“All is not what it may seem, for deep inside there is a beast.”

Sitting back in his seat he ran the words over in his head, trying to figure out if there was any special meaning behind the words. He didn’t recognize it from any literature but just to be sure he also ran the phrase through the network but came back with nothing.

Fatigue starting to set in, he picked up his cup of coffee but was dismayed to find that it was empty. Sighing he rose from his chair and walked over to the coffee machine. Normally anyone with some sense of mind would avoid the dirt flavored station coffee but he needed the caffeine now and he didn’t feel like waiting around for the next coffee run.

With a resigned sigh he lifted the coffee holder up off the hot plate and filled his mug. Setting the holder down, he turned and was startled by the sudden figure of his captain standing behind him, his eyes unreadable as always. As a result his hand had jerked and most of his coffee had gone sloshing over the rim and onto his hand and clothes, burning him and causing him to blurt out obscenities.

“Son of a bitch!” he muttered at the end, setting the mug down and shaking the remaining drops of coffee off his hand then reaching over and wiping a few sheets of paper towels and patting the remaining coffee off his hand and clothing.

The whole time Sean had remained silent, not saying anything, only observing and taking note of the obvious bags under the detective’s eyes and too pale features. He looked like he could keel over at any moment.

“How many hours of sleep have you gotten?” he inquired, concern for the younger man flowing through him.

Nick looked guiltily at his still burning hand, refusing to answer like a petulant child who didn’t want to admit to having done wrong.

“Nick?” he persisted, wanting an answer.

“Maybe 3” he admitted, his eyes finally meeting Sean’s.

Shaking his head Sean reached out and took the mug of coffee from Nick’s grasp, his hand brushing against Nick’s and for a moment a spark of power went through them but vanished in a blink, going by so fast that both were quick to shake it off as nothing more than static shock. Setting the coffee aside he addressed him,

“I’m sending you home. I can’t have one of my best detectives dead on his feet. You can come back in tomorrow after you’ve gotten some rest, and the same goes for your partner” he ordered, the command not one that was given regularly and when it did come it was usually a sign that overtime was not agreeing with you.
Nick shook his head, “I’ll be fine captain, just need to get some caffeine in me and I’ll be alert. I just started making a dent in this case and if I leave now it could pass me by. I can’t just leave now because of lack of sleep” he added at the end.

“I heard about your case, look I understand your need to spend every hour of everyday tracking this individual down, I myself am very concerned about what this could mean, but you’re running yourself ragged and that means your mind is not at its best. So, I’m ordering you to go home and get some sleep. The case will still be here when you get back” he persisted, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Before he could bite his tongue Nick found himself responding, “is that an order?”

Sean’s left eyebrow rose in a challenging manner but his frown remained, “it is. Now go home, I don’t want to see you back here until tomorrow.”

Turning on his heel Sean strode back into his office and pointedly closed his office door behind him. He stood and watched Nick from his window to make sure that he would follow his order.

Growling in frustration Nick stalked back over to his desk and collected his jacket while logging off his computer. Before leaving though he grabbed the rough translation of the message along with a quick printout of the actual picture of the scene then walked out, keeping his head down in order to avoid meeting the eyes of his fellow officers.

He felt like a kid who had been sentenced to the bench during the big game.

Once Nick had left Sean returned to his desk and sat down in his plush chair, the phone almost crawling into his hand as he speed dialed a familiar number.

Waiting for the phone to ring he brought up the crime scene pictures and on hearing the click spoke,

“I need you to look into something.”

~GRIMM~

Going home was the last thing on Nick’s mind. Something was driving him in this case, something primal and all consuming. He didn’t have time to sleep, not when he still had so much work to do.

Pulling up to the side of the trailer he got out of his car and walked over to the door, the key already in his hand. Unlocking the trailer he stepped in and quickly closed the door behind him, not wanting to risk anyone seeing what was inside.

Going over to the desk he shrugged out of his jacket and draped it over the seat before sitting down and pulling a random book over to himself.

There had to be a reference to the message somewhere, obviously the words meant something to the person or persons committing these crimes but all he was seeing right now was a shadowy foreboding of his rapidly darkening future.

Grimacing he put that thought aside and set his mind on scanning the pages before him, on the lookout for any reference to the Endezeichen Grimm.

Getting to the last page of the book he was in he closed the book and moved on to another thick volume that was a faded brown leather that was starting to fall apart from years, maybe even centuries of use.
He could already tell by the time he reached the center of the book that his search wasn’t going to be easy.

~GRIMM~

~Four hours later~

He was currently rifling through what felt to be his 1,000th book, but he was sure was much less having lost count, when his cellphone suddenly shrilled startling him so badly that he almost fell out of his chair.

Shaking his head in exasperation with himself he reached into his jacket pocket and took out the shrilling device and saw that it was Juliet.

Before answering he cleared his throat then accepted the call.

“Hey honey” he greeted, resting his elbow on the old mahogany desk.

“Nick where are you? We’re supposed to have dinner tonight with Beth and Andy, remember?” she inquired, standing in their living room in an elegant green dress that hugged her curves in all the right places.

Shit! He had completely forgotten about that. With the case going on and his darkening thoughts it had completely slipped his mind. They had planned this dinner weeks ago when Juliet learned that her cousin was going to be in town for a brief time with his fiancée. She had really been looking forward to this and had made him promise that he would do his best to be there.

“Right the dinner, um look I’m heading home right now I was just visiting with Monroe and time got away from us but I promise you I will be there on time” he rose from the chair and as he continued speaking slipped into his jacket and grabbed his car keys off the desk but as he was about to head to the door his eyes grazed over the current open book in front of him. He paused his movements as his eyes took in a crude drawing of a hooded individual wearing a mask and written above it harsh black letters was the words: Endeizechen Grimm.

He found himself sitting back down and his eyes roamed over the words that a member of his family had written, but this wasn’t just any family member. He knew this handwriting almost as well as he knew his own.

It was his Aunt Marie’s.

This was the first time he had come across anything that had been written by her and it was like a punch to the gut that the first entry he would find was on such a personal subject: their own origins.

Unable to help himself he traced her distinctive cursive with his fingertip. Conjuring up a picture of what his aunt may have looked like as she wrote this entry.

He was so absorbed with his thoughts that he completely forgot that he was still on the phone with Juliet who by now had grown greatly concerned by his lack of response.

“Nick? Nick! Are you there? What’s going on?”

The sound of her panicked voice brought him back to himself and he forced his gaze away from the book, making an effort to keep all his attention on soothing Juliet’s concerns.

“Sorry, sorry about that, I was just thinking about a case that I’m working on and my mind went
elsewhere. Everything’s fine, I promise” he assured her, feeling like such a jerk for having caused her concern.

Juliet breathed a sigh of relief at his words, though she was still concerned about him. She knew that he was holding back on her, a trait that she had been trying to break him of but was having minimal success.

“Are you sure you’re to okay to drive? Maybe you should call a cab or better yet I could just come pick up?” she suggested, not liking the thought of him driving in the possible state that he was in.

“I’m fine Juliet, all I had was one beer. I’ll be home soon and then you and I will have a nice dinner with your cousin and his fiancée, just like we planned” he assured her, taking a moment he picked up a loose piece of paper and placed it in the corner of the spine that the entry was located at then closed the book.

“Okay, I’ll see you in a little while. I love you” she added, turning to head back up-stairs to finish getting ready.

“Love you too, bye”

“Bye”

Moving quickly he exited and locked the trailer and hurriedly got into his car. Starting the car up he made a U-Turn then drove out of the trailer/storage area.

~GRIMM~

Sitting around the bonfire the leader of the clan was sharpening an antique knife, her eyes drinking in the beauty at how the knife glowed in the moonlight as the blade sharpened.

It wouldn’t do to have a dull knife; that would require more digging than she wanted. For the task it was destined for she wanted the blade to be able to sink into the skin in one single thrust.

Setting the whetstone down she brought the tip to her finger and was easily able to push the very tip of the blade into her thumb. She smiled in satisfaction, the pain nothing more than a bee sting as she brought the bleeding joint to her mouth and sucked the blood up, not stopping until the flow slowed down.

Rising from the log she walked over to an older man who was stirring the contents in a steel pot that was stationed over the fire.

“Is it almost ready?” she questioned, leaning over to take a look into the greenish blue sludge that was bubbling from the heat.

Without stopping his stirring the man responded, “we still need two more not to mention the final ingredient” his voice was thick with a Romanian accent that would have been hard for a person who was not familiar with the accent to understand.

Turning his head he revealed his face. His white hair was thinning and clinging together in strips that were matted to his sweaty head from the heat of the fire. The wrinkles that dominated his features were jagged and deeply grooved but his most defining and startling characteristic was his milky left eye that had once been a chocolate brown but had been irreparably damaged due to a blow to the head in a long ago fight.

She nodded in understanding and stepped back, giving him the space he needed to continue his
“Just make sure that it’s ready in time, we can’t afford to miss it” she ordered, her mind consumed with what could happen if they failed.

“Don’t worry, it shall be ready in time. Have I ever failed you before?” he questioned, meeting her gaze.

A huge part of her wanted to snarl yes but she held back, now wasn’t the time to open old wounds. Things would be righted soon enough.

Gritting her teeth, her eyes dark with evil intent she hissed,

“Get it done” she then stalked off, her hold on the knife in her hand tightening in internal rage that was boiling and steaming beneath her tightly locked mind.
Juliet laughed as she listened to her cousin prattle on about all the pranks he had pulled on her while they were growing up and she playfully smacked his arm when he rubbed her nose in the fact that when the snake had slithered towards her she actually peed her pants.

“You knew that I was terrified of snakes! But I’ll have you know that just two weeks ago one of my patients brought in their fully grown Boa Constrictor and I had no issues whatsoever” she retorted, sticking out her tongue in childlike mockery.

The four laughed and Nick put his arm around Juliet, bringing her in to peck her cheek while continuing to listen to Andy go off about another prank he had pulled on poor Juliet.

As he talked Nick made sure to smile and chuckle at the correct times but internally he was miles away.

He had the message to go on now but he didn’t know what it meant. He would have liked to have been able to talk with Monroe as he had poured over the books, ask him for his opinion and if he had ever seen or heard of anything like it; Monroe was a book all in himself, there were so many random facts that the man knew that most of the time Nick got all the information he needed from just talking to him.

But it looked as though he wasn’t going to be able to meet up with him tonight after all; it was quickly approaching 7:30 and the double date didn’t look like it was going to be ending in the next half hour, considering they had only been seated twenty minutes ago.

The longer the case went on without any leads the more likelihood that the perp. Would strike again, and since this was looking more and more to be an Endezeichen Grimm the “if” turned into a “when”.

Nick was still trying to figure out the purpose of the killings. Was it simply just a way of trying to wipe out the wesen population in Portland?

But if that were the case the Endezeichen Grimm wouldn’t just be killing one at a time, that would take too long. So, was it some kind of message to Nick? Telling him that he wasn’t doing his job as a Grimm and this was an attempt to right his supposed wrongs? That had some plausibility but that didn’t really explain the message. He would put a bookmark in that thought for now.

Before his mind could go onto other possibilities their waiter came with their meals and he thanked the man as he set his order of a steak, mashed potatoes and his side salad in front of him.

The conversations quieted down some as everyone ate, a comment was shared now again about the upcoming wedding and whether or not Juliet and Nick had any upcoming plans.

“Well nothing as exciting as getting married but we have been talking about maybe renting a cabin this month and celebrating a certain someone’s birthday” Juliet gushed, rubbing Nick’s shoulder with affection.

Andy and Beth smiled and Beth went on with Juliet about the place they would be staying in and Juliet asked her about their honeymoon plans.
He was content to let Juliet continue to do all the talking and he would just be an avid listener, but that was soon dashed when Juliet jostled him into a conversation.

“Nick, you’ve hardly talked at all this entire time. What’s going on in that thick beautiful head of yours?” Juliet asked, having an idea that it was probably about a case.

Now being forced into the conversation Nick shrugged out of his focused mind and did his best to delve into the conversation at hand.

“Sorry, I’ve just been working this case and its taking a lot out of me right now. So, you guys were talking about your honeymoon plans?”

At this Beth gushed over their plans to vacation under the sun in Tuscany then travel over to Europe to look at all the museums. And the conversation went from there, Andy putting in his five cents here and there when Beth took a breather. Juliet and Beth went into even further detail than their last discussion.

Nick picked up his glass of wine and was about to take a long drink from it in order to help him escape the scene when his phone chirped in his pocket, offering him an alternative out other than alcohol.

He felt they’re eyes on him as he pulled the singing device out from his pants pocket and looking at the screen, it was Monroe. Looking up he addressed the small group, who were staring at him in question, but Juliet was the one he looked at as he spoke.

“I’m so sorry, it’s my friend Monroe, I’ll just be a minute” he explained, leaning over he pecked Juliet on the lips then excused himself and walked out into the lobby to have some semblance of privacy.

Accepting the call he brought the phone to his ear and spoke, “hey Monroe”

“Where are you? It’s twenty after 8. I thought you said you wanted to do some research tonight?” he asked, his tone was overlain with annoyance but Nick knew that below that was concern, in short showing annoyance was actually his way of saying that he was concerned.

“Yeah, I’m sorry. I completely forgot that Juliet and I were supposed to have dinner with her cousin and his fiancée, I meant to call you but it slipped my mind. Look, how about we meet up instead tomorrow at the trailer, say the same time?” he offered.

There was silence on the other line. And then Monroe’s voice returned, and with it a lecture on responsibility and keeping track of planned meetings.

Before Monroe got too absorbed Nick interrupted him, knowing that if he didn’t he would be listening to Monroe list all the other irresponsible things that Nick had done since he had known him.

“I really am sorry Monroe, how about I make it up to you by buying that brand of microbrew that you like so much?” he offered, hoping that his peace offering would put an end to the lecture.

“Fine, but you better not be late” Monroe hung up and Nick ended the call.

Pocketing the phone Nick couldn’t help but chuckle, sometimes with Monroe it felt like he was juggling two relationships.

Walking back to the table Nick sat back down and the conversation started back up again.
He had been stalking the woman for three hours now, studying her to figure out what type of person she was. So far, it looked as if she was just a regular woman; 42 years old, working full time for an insurance company and had been divorced for the past three years. Gathering the information hadn’t been that hard, it was amazing what information the internet held.

But this woman wasn’t ordinary, far from it. She was something else, a wesen, an abomination that was tainting this world with each breath she stole. It was his job, his destiny, his honor to smite her from this world.

Getting up from his spot on the trunk of his car he casually approached the ‘woman’ who was unloading late night groceries from her car.

Putting on a charming smile he spoke, “excuse me, you wouldn’t happen to have a jack would you?”

~GRIMM~

~The following morning~

Nick entered the precinct, a cup of coffee in one hand a bag of bagels in the other.

Approaching his desk he saw that Hank was already there, looking at something on his computer with great focus.

Noticing his presence Hank greeted him as Nick sat down in his chair and tossed him the bag of bagels.

“Thanks man, and here I am with nothing for you but gruesome crime scene photos” Hank bid, taking a raisin bagel out and biting into it.

Nick snorted and got his own bagel out, “ah, you shouldn’t have” he joked.

Finishing his bite of bagel and swallowing it down with a drink of coffee Hank spoke again, “listen, I heard that the captain had to send you home last night and from what Wu told me-“

“Wu needs to learn how to mind his own fucking business!” he snapped, his eyes glaring into the concerned ones of Hank.

Hank was taken aback by his sudden outburst, the emotional change in his partner giving him whiplash. He leaned back in his chair, his concern for his friend and partner getting worse. Ever since they had been working this case Nick’s state of mind seemed to be getting worse and worse, it was like the evilness that was surrounding the crimes were somehow being absorbed into Nick and Hank was terrified that soon there would be nothing left of the man.

Immediately regretting his words Nick stuttered out an apology, embarrassed and also a little anxious about what was going on with him.

“What is going on with you? I know I’ve already asked you this but seriously man, this case is screwing with your head and each day you seemed to be getting worse” Hank pointed out, his eyes taking in the dullness of his gray eyes and the darkening bags under his eyes.

Nick licked his lips as he tried to come up with a response. Hank had no idea how scared Nick truly was, he felt like he was losing himself, like he was giving into a darkness that had been
brewing in him since the day he had found out about his Grimm heritage.

“I don’t know, but right now we have to focus on solving this case before anyone else gets killed” Hank was about to refute but Nick continued before he could, not wanting to get into any further about his darkening mind.

“I did some research last night while I was here and I managed to get a rough translation of that message at the crime scenes” he divulged, logging into his computer and going to the photos.

Hank remained silent, biting his tongue as he grudgingly allowed Nick to change the subject.

“It’s Romanian, it means ‘all is not what it may seem, for deep inside there is a beast.’ I couldn’t find any connections to literature, movies or anything of the kind. But it has to mean something to our killer or killers” he went on, going back and forth between the same message at the two crime scenes.

Listening Hank inputted his own thoughts, “did you check your aunt’s books? Maybe there’s something in there about it?” he suggested.

“I got through some of the books last night, so far I haven’t found the message in any of them but I did find an entry on the Endezeichen Grimm, it was written by my aunt. I didn’t get a chance to actually go through it though because Juliet called me to remind me about a dinner date we had” Nick explained, his voice showing his annoyance at her call’s interruption.

Hank didn’t miss the change in attitude when he spoke of Juliet, it was hard to miss considering the change came with a subtle but there scowl. He was itching to ask if the two were having problems but held himself back, not wanting to cause Nick to have another outburst.

Instead he asked if he was ok, which he knew he wasn’t but he was hoping that Nick would acknowledge his bad state of mind.

Nick looked down at his desk and took in a deep breath, “no, no I’m about as far from okay as one can possibly get. But my mental state is not what’s important right now, what’s important is putting a stop to these killings” he stated, meeting Hank’s gaze with a deep determination that would take a divine intervention to divert.

Hank’s phone rang, breaking the tension that had suddenly developed between the two.

“Griffin” Nick watched as he listened to whoever was speaking on the other line then watched as he muttered a bye then hung up.

“That was Wu, we have another victim” he reported, his voice low and saddened.

Sighing both rose from their seats and walked out of the bullpen to Hank’s car.

~GRIMM~

Elijah sat in his tent, an open poetry book in his hand as he silently read one of his favorite poems. A passage from Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” There was just something about this poem that spoke to him, not because he fancied himself the insane murderer or even the old man with eyes that vexed the soul. He preferred to think of himself as the thin ray of light that shone forth from his lantern that revealed the truth of the old man’s evil.

There was one particular portion that he was quite fond of and often found himself repeating:
“And so it was impossible to do the work for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his evil eye.”

He couldn’t help but find the beauty in the otherwise dark, demented poem. It was a true illumination of what he believed to be true of the wesen that walked the earth. To an ordinary human they appeared to be as human as can be, nothing to indicate what lay beneath the mask they so cleverly wore.

Grimms could see the truth though, and the ones who were pure in mind and soul of the duties they were destined to uphold had the responsibility of wiping them out.

His thoughts were interrupted when a shadow fell over his book. Looking up he was met with the hollow gaze of his leader.

Marking his place he set the book aside and stood.

“You did a very good job Elijah, and I trust that you left our new message in a spot where it will be found?” she asked, watching him intently as he ran his fingers over the worn book that was resting on the bed.

“I would never let you down, and I can assure you that it will be found” he promised, walking over to her.

She looked up at him and reached up, wiping off a smudge of dried blood on his cheek.

“That’s why I chose you, you’ve never once disappointed me and that’s why I need you to make the final contribution. I don’t trust anyone else to get the job done properly” she praised.

Giving a rare smile he bowed his head, “thank you, I won’t let you down.”

“I know you won’t”

Reaching into the pouch slung to her side she took out a familiar silver ax and rested the weapon in his open hand.

“Make me proud” she whispered.

Curling his fingers around the handle he nodded.

“It will be done by tonight”

Smiling in approval she turned on her heels and walked out of the tent to care of other matters.

Setting the ax down he picked up the book and turned to a random page, he couldn’t help the chuckle that sprang forth at the poem that greeted him; “Alone.” Setting the book back down and the ax back up he exited his tent, and as he walked he spoke to himself.

“From the thunder, and the storm-And the cloud that took the form (When the rest of Heaven was blue) of a demon in my view-“

~GRIMM~

Pulling up to the house Nick and Hank remained in the car, neither one making any indication of getting out.

Nick looked out the window, watching as officers and CSU went in and out of the house, going
about their jobs as usual.

“Are you sure you can handle this?” Hank asked, remembering what had happened at the last two crime scenes.

There was a sharp retort that was building on his tongue, the acidic feel of it making his insides churn but he swallowed it down and grimaced at the aftertaste. Hank didn’t deserve anymore of his malice.

“Yeah, I’ll be fine” taking a calming breath he unbuckled himself and got out of the car, Hank following suit.

The closer they got to the house the slower Nick’s pace became, the aura of evil and horror that the house exuded was wrapping around him, trying to pull him in with a lasso of dark intent but he did his best to fight against it while doing his best to build up a wall that could defend his fragile sanity against the tsunami he was about to face. He prayed the decaying lifeboat he was clinging to would survive.

Walking up the steps Nick and Hank were met by Wu who had been waiting for them by the front door.

Instead of his usual wit Wu merely gave them a blank stare then led them inside, giving insight to how deeply this case was starting to affect him.

“Our victim is Harriet Marlow, 42 years old and works full time as an insurance fraud investigator” Wu told them as they walked through the entryway.

“Who found her?” Nick asked, his eyes roaming the walls, looking for a familiar message.

“A co-worker, got worried when she wasn’t answering her calls and came over to check on her. Got here, found the door unlocked and found her friend like this” Wu answered as they stepped into the living room where the stench of blood and gore coated the air and fried the image of blood, exposed tendons and a chopped off head with clouded eyes into their minds.

Nick slipped on a pair of gloves and squatted down next to the body.

“Have pictures of the body already been taken?” Nick asked, not wanting to touch the body until he had confirmation.

“Yeah, have at it” walking away Wu went back out to the front of the house, likely to get some fresh air.

He could feel Hank’s eyes on the back of his neck as he examined the body, watching him to make sure that he didn’t have a sudden breakdown.

The truth was, he was fighting everything in him not to spend too long looking at the decapitated head that was only inches away from him.

He wouldn’t let the malicious thoughts control him, he was stronger.

Touching the woman’s shoulder he carefully looked over her body for anything the killer may have left behind. But the same as the last two scenes, he couldn’t see anything with the naked eye so rising from the floor he looked around the room.

From the corner of his eye he could see Hank talking to one of the CSUs and he roved his eyes
around the rest of the room, taking in as much detail as he could while at the same time muffling the dark thrill the blood gave him.

It was when he came back to the decapitated head that Nick could no longer help himself, he had to have a closer look.

Walking over to the head he kneeled down and did a quick examination of it, making an effort not to touch. His eyes traveled down the severed neck, the exposed tendons sticking to the floor like demonic roots and his eyes stopped when he saw something in the glazed eyes of the head.

Brows furrowing he followed the line of sight which led him up to the ceiling to the small glass light fixture, but it wasn’t the fixture that had his eyes widening, it was the bloody message that was scrawled over it.

This time though the message was different.

“Pentru a lupta cu sine este de a nega pe tine însuși”

For whatever reason though this message seemed to hit him even harder than the last one, but for the life of him he didn’t know why. He didn’t know what it said but somehow he knew that it was meant for him, and he was beginning to suspect that the other message had been for him as well.

He only wished he could figure out who the sender was.

Taking out his phone he discreetly took a picture of the message then forcing his eyes away from the fixture, he grabbed a nearby CSU and told them to get some pictures of the message on the light.

While the CSU did as he requested he walked over to Hank who had just finished talking to a female officer.

Upon meeting his gaze Hank spoke first, “did you find anything?”

“Yeah, a new message. It was left on the light fixture up there” he pointed to the sole light source in the room and Hank followed his arm to watch as pictures were taken of the message.

Hank met his gaze again, “We need to catch whoever’s doing this” he muttered, shaking his head.

Nick couldn’t agree with him more.

Not knowing what else to say Hank offered a next step, “how about we question the co-worker, she’s waiting outside with some officers” he suggested.

Having no other suggestion of his own he nodded and followed Hank out of his house, keeping his gaze on his shoes the entire time until they were outside.

Approaching the sniffling woman who was taking shaky sips of coffee from a Styrofoam cup they excused a female officer who was keeping her company then introduced themselves.

“Hi ma’am, I’m Detective Hank Griffin and this is my partner Detective Nick Burkhardt. Would it be alright if we asked you some questions?” Hank began.

Nodding in consent she sniffed once more than took a long swallow of the coffee in her hand.

“Thank you, so you were the one who found Ms. Marlow, would you mind telling us what led you to come here to check on your friend?”
Swallowing she started to speak, “after she didn’t come in at her usual time I waited a little while then called her cell, when she didn’t pick up after my third try I sent her a few text messages then called her house phone, and she still didn’t pick up so I left a message on her answering machine, asking her if she was okay”

Nick asked his own question, “Why were you so concerned about her, had she never come in late before?”

She shook her head, “not for as long as I’ve worked with her. She was never late, always exactly on time or early, she is-was a very punctual person, she practically had a watch surgically attached to her wrist. I knew when she didn’t show up at her usual time that something had to be wrong, I just never thought it would be something like this” she choked, she wiped her eyes with the napkin that had been given to her.

“I’m sorry” she whimpered, unable to stop the flow of tears that continued to escape her.

“It’s alright ma’am” Hank assured her.

But it wouldn’t be for long though because while she was crying she lost control and woged into an Eisbiber and unfortunately just as she turned she looked directly into Nick’s eyes.

The change in the atmosphere was instantaneous.

Fear filled her eyes and she shook her head, backing away from them and whimpering in fright.

“Please don’t hurt me, please don’t hurt me! Oh god please, I have a family!” she cried, her voice high pitched and quivering in fright.

Nick stood in place, knowing that if he tried to get any closer to her, her terror would only increase and he didn’t want to make any bigger of a scene than they were already creating.

Hank slowly approached the lady, keeping his hands in plain view as he tried to calm her, assuring her that Nick wasn’t going to hurt her and that all they wanted to do was track down whoever had killed her friend.

Her back hit the railing of the porch and she continued to whimper even as Hank tried to soothe her fears.

Figuring that the only way she was going to calm down was if he left he addressed Hank, “I’m going to head back to the precinct. You can finish up here” with one last reassuring glance at the woman he turned and walked away, hoping that his departure would make her more willing to talk with Hank.

He managed to catch a ride back to the precinct with another officer.

~Break~

Entering the bullpen Nick walked to his desk and sat down, immediately bringing up an English to Romanian translator.

Taking out his phone he brought up the picture of the latest message and typed it in. He developed a slimy lump in his throat at the translation he was given.

“To fight one’s self is to deny thyself”
He leaned back in his seat, the lump starting to develop spikes that were digging into the sensitive pink walls of his throat.

It was becoming more and more apparent that the messages were for him, he felt as though the perpetrator was stating that they believed that Nick was fighting his immoral destiny to become a killer and slay every wesen that he came across, no matter if they had never done anything wrong.

With each day that passed it was becoming more and more difficult to draw the line at where his sanity lie and his ever expanding voyage into the twisted and bloody thoughts that were quickly overpowering him.

Before he could go any deeper his cell rang and seeing that it was Hank he picked up quickly.

“What do you got?”

There was a pause on the other line before Hank spoke, “well, after I got her to calm down and assured her that you weren’t going to hunt her and her family down and kill them she told me that she didn’t see anyone leaving the house or acting suspicious but she did remember the smell of cigarette smoke in the house. She said it was odd because Harriet wasn’t a smoker” he reported.

“Okay so it’s likely that our killer is a smoker but that doesn’t give us any leads as to who this could be. I’ll check to see if any cigarette butts were found but it’s unlikely. Did you happen to ask her if her friend was also wesen?”

“Yeah, she said that she was a…a Genio In-in” he struggled to get through the last word but he didn’t have to, Nick knew what name he was trying to pronounce.

“A Genio Innocuo? So, so far it looks as if all the wesen that have been killed aren’t known for being fighters, are docile which makes them easy to hunt down and kill. I think maybe the Endezeichen Grimm knows this and that is why they were chosen, now the only question is why they’re doing this, it can’t just be because of them being wesen, there has to be a reason” he went off, his thoughts going a million miles an hour as he tried to think up a reason.

He wasn’t sure what Jennifer Miller had been but it was safe to assume that she hadn’t been a volatile wesen.

“What are you thinking?” Hank asked, having no clue as to what they could be planning.

“I don’t know, listen I’m going to the trailer to do some research. You can meet me there and I’ll call Monroe” he suggested, knowing that he wouldn’t be able to figure this out in the precinct.

“Okay, see you in a bit then”

“See ya” both hung up then Nick scrolled through this contacts then selected Monroe’s and brought the phone to his ear.

“Hi Monroe, listen I was hoping that we could bump our meeting up to today, say in about an hour?”

He could hear the groan that Monroe released at this, “you know we really just need to stop putting times on any of our meetings because they never stick, but yeah I’ll meet you down there. By the way, I expect two cases of Duloc Amber” without waiting for a confirmation Monroe hung up, his demand having been made.

Unable to hold back his amuse chuckled he ended the call and pocketed the device.
As he was getting ready to leave Captain Renard’s office door opened and after looking around his eyes landed on Nick and he motioned him over.

Putting his plans to the side for now Nick walked over to him and entered his office.

“You wanted to see me captain?”

“Yes, I want to know how the case is going, do you have any leads?” he asked as he walked back over to his desk and sat down, inviting Nick to sit down in one of the chairs across from him.

Taking the invitation he sat down in one of the chairs and answered his question.

“We don’t have any leads at the moment sir but we did find a new message at the latest scene, it was in Romanian again and it roughly translates to “to fight one’s self is to deny thyself” I haven’t checked yet if it has any significance but I’m guessing that it probably won’t” he updated him.

Sean looked down at his desk and shook his head, “this is not good. We need to put a name to this guy before someone else gets killed. I can’t keep this out of the papers any longer, I’m going to have to give a press conference soon and inform the public that we have a serial killer in Portland” he sighed, hating the very thought of it.

“Is that all sir?” Nick asked, itching to get going.

“Yes, thank you Nick, be sure to report to me again when you get anything new” he ordered, watching as the man got up from the chair and headed for the door.

“Yes sir” exiting the office Nick hurried out of the bullpen before he was stopped again.

Back in Sean’s office the Captain picked up his phone and dialed a familiar number.

“Have you got anything for me?”

“Nothing concrete but I have asked around and there is word of a caravan of Romanian Endezeichen Grimm who were rumored to be heading for your territory” he relayed, his voice lowered so as to not be overheard.

He froze, his posture stiffening at the words that he was hearing.

If a whole clan of Endezeichen Grimm had managed to cross into his territory without his knowledge than that meant that either his watch had become lax or his informants had failed him. Either way, if this was true then Portland was in trouble.

“Sir?”

“Call me when you have something more concrete, but also continue to look into this rumor. I want to know everything about them, where they have been, what they have done and what their plans are” he ordered.

“Of course, I shall report back to you with any new information I get”

“Good, and remember, we never had this conversation” he insisted, not wanting this information to get out.

“As you wish, good day sir”
“Good day”

Both hung up and Sean none too gently slammed his personal phone back into his desk drawer.

Flexing his hand he rose from his chair and paced the room, his mind in chaos from all the implications this could mean. One Endezeichen Grimm had been bad enough but a whole clan of them would be much harder to eliminate, and the cleanup would be hell.

Stopping he slumped back into his chair and turned his computer on, quickly locating the file of crime scene photos that he had ordered be sent to him. He clicked through them until he came to images of the body and the bloody message on the glass light fixture.

His eyes seared into the words, tracing each letter with his eyes as he committed them to memory.

If these Romanian Endezeichen Grimm had dared enter his protectorate and had murdered wesen he was going to make sure that they suffered. No one, not even the feared Endezeichen Grimm would escape his wrath of justice.

He was going to hunt them down and make sure that they paid for each and every drop of blood that had been spilt.

If it was a war they wanted, then it was a war they were going to get.

Chapter End Notes

You guys are definitely going to want to stick around because the next chapter is when things get turned up a notch.
Elijah watched from a safe distance away as his target, Marcus Gene Howard went about his routine; getting up at approximately 5 AM, fixing himself a healthy breakfast of egg whites mixed with chopped vegetables and a glass of orange juice and finally getting in his blue Ford at exactly 6:15 and going on his way to his full time job as a real-estate agent at a newly developed agency.

He had been observing the man for the past three hours now, having followed his every move from leaving his house to arriving at work. Currently, he was just leaving the building to go on his lunch break.

He couldn’t afford to let this one out of his sights, he was the final contribution needed and there wasn’t enough time to track down another. One mistake could cost him and more importantly his clan everything.

Getting into his car he tailed the car from a safe distance, not too close and not too far.

One of the routines that Elijah found most convenient was the fact that he always took his lunch break at home, making it that much easier to get him alone.

Elijah parked two houses down from Marcus’ house and waited and watched as Marcus pulled into his driveway and got out of the car, his cellphone in hand as he talked to someone on the other end.

Waiting for a few minutes until after he had entered the house Elijah got out of his car and did his best to look inconspicuous as he walked towards the house.

The neighborhood that his target lived in was a middle class one, meaning that all the houses weren’t mansions or matching but that they were all relatively well kept, everyone had a full time job that kept them away at this time of the day and if there were children they were all in school.

But it never hurt to be too cautious.

Coming to the front yard he looked around before dashing across the lawn then creeping along the side of the house to the back door.

He watched from outside as his target moved about in the kitchen, making himself a sandwich and watching something on television but it was essentially more background noise than anything to the wesen.

It was when he had finished his sandwich and walked into the dining area that Elijah made his move. Taking out his kit he picked the lock and carefully pushed the door open and stepped inside.

The audio of the television was much clearer now and he could ascertain from the content that it was some kind of talk show. Walking as quietly as he could he took out a medium length piece of fishing wire and wrapped the ends a few times around his gloved fingers.
Walking into the dining room he saw Marcus sitting in his armchair watching television as he dug into his lunch, clueless that he had an intruder.

When he was standing just a few inches behind him he accidentally pressed too hard on the floorboard that groaned beneath his weight. The sound alerted his target and just as he was moving his head to take a look Elijah struck. Lunging forward he wrapped the fishing line over his neck and pulled back with all his strength, the line cutting into Marcus’ Adams Apple and consequently cutting off his oxygen.

Marcus flailed in his chair, his hands desperately clawing at the fishing line in a vain attempt to save himself. His feet bucked and managed to kick over the coffee table along with the lamp that was close by.

His face was rapidly turning purple as his brain and lungs were deprived of oxygen and his eyes were bulging out of his skull. As he continued his struggle his face woged into that of a Mauzhertz.

It was only a few seconds later that his flailing body started to become sluggish as his body started to shut down.

As the world was starting to turn black his face went back to his human guise Marcus had one last thought:

Why did his body and mind feel so numb?

When Marcus lost consciousness he pulled the line away from his throat and pocketed the item so as to not accidentally leave it behind.

Walking around in front of the form he took the silver ax out his black bag and raised it back then rammed the sharpened blade into the Mauzhertz's tilted neck, blood splattered his face and upper body with the blood of the wesen. The head fell backwards and landed with a squish a few inches away from the back of the chair.

Not having time to waste, he quickly covered his fingers in the wesen’s blood and walked over to the overturned coffee table.

Kneeling down he wrote out:

“Întunericul din interiorul este doar Nicholas început”

Rising he calmly pulled out the bloody ax from the head of the armchair, the fabric tearing as he extracted the blade and leaving behind a slash that was painted in blood and gore.

He then pocketed the weapon and exited the home to return to camp.

~GRIMM~

Nick thanked the store clerk and walked out of the convenience store with his purchase of two cases of Duloc Amber. As he walked to his car he looked down at his watch and saw that it was nearing 11:30 and his pace increased, having planned on meeting with Monroe and possibly Hank at the trailer at noon.

Setting the bag on the hood of his car he reached into his jacket and got his keys out, but just as he was going to slide the ridged side into the keyhole his cell rang and he stopped. Sighing he got the device out and immediately answered on seeing Hank’s name.

“Hey Hank” he greeted, shouldering the phone and unlocking the door as he grabbed his bag and
slipped inside.

“Hey, listen we got another one” he informed him, his voice hollow and faint.

At hearing this Nick leaned back in his seat, his semi-good mood harshly stamped out.

“Where?” he asked, putting his car into drive and putting on his seatbelt.

“In the suburbs, 1230 Ashton Avenue” as he gave him the address Nick located his pad of paper and pen and wrote the address down.

Once he had done that he tossed the notepad onto his passenger seat.

“Got it, I’ll be there in a bit” hanging up started the car and pulled out of the nearly vacant parking lot to the latest crime scene.

~Break~

Arriving at the scene Nick got out of his car and walked over to meet Hank who was waiting for him at the door.

“Our latest victim is Marcus Gene Howard, 36 years old and a real-estate agent at Tanning and Jeffries real-estate agency. He apparently went home for lunch at his regular time at 10:30. His neighbor found him at about 11:15 when he came to return a lawnmower and found him like this” he explained.

Without commenting Nick walked past him and followed the sound of activity to the living room and was greeted with a sight that was becoming all too routine.

Sensing Hank’s presence he continued to ignore him as he walked to the body and examined it with empty eyes.

Taking in the blood, the paling skin and the smell of decay setting in Nick found himself to be strangely numb, where before he had been feeling the thrill of each kill that was now being replaced with a dark emptiness that he couldn’t explain.

Looking over the corpse he zeroed in on the remains of the neck and discovered a harsh line that was imbedded into the throat, going all the way around from where each ear would have been. Not finding anything else he rose from the floor and looked around, stopping when he had completely turned around and was looking at the upturned coffee table. Waiting until the CSU had finished taking pictures he got a closer look and was greeted with another message:

“Întunericul din interiorul este doar Nicholas început”

Getting out his phone he took his own picture then pocketed the device and rose from the ground to go and talk with Hank who had likely been observing him the entire time from the entry way into the living room.

He chose to disregard the worry in the man’s eyes as he came to a stop beside him.

“Another new message, and on the body I saw some kind of indentation around his throat, maybe the killer strangled him first and then decapitated him” he theorized.

“Whoever this is doesn’t have a shred of humanity in them, makes you wonder how many others there are going to be” Hank muttered, more than mentally and physically drained of this case.
Nick shook his head, looking around at the destruction that had been left behind.

“I honestly don’t know, I just want to get this case done with and move on. Look, I need you to look up the translation of this new message and call me when you get it. I have to go meet Monroe at the trailer and try to put some semblance of a reason behind all…this” not giving Hank a second glance he walked out of the house and headed straight for his car, ignoring the calls of Wu who was trying to get his attention.

Getting in his car he put the car in drive and drove off, leaving the crime scene behind in his rearview mirror.

~GRIMM~

Elijah entered the camp site and walked straight over to his leader who was waiting for him by the smoking fire pit.

She looked up at him and a small smile lifted her lips as he presented the still slightly bloody ax to her. Accepting the weapon she rose from her seat and walked towards the tent where the ‘collection’ was kept. Elijah followed behind her obediently.

As they walked he observed her taking out a faded rag from her pocket and smearing the remaining blood off onto the material then promptly handing the rag over to a young woman who was standing nearby.

“Give this to Alin” she ordered, watching as the girl obediently nodded and hurried off to locate the old man.

With that done they entered the tent. He watched as she walked over to the chest that was meticulously placed in the very far right corner of the tent. Placed all throughout the room where other various types of weapons that ranged from swords, kanabos, whips, morning stars, castration blades, dopplearmbrust and several other weapons that were cleaned and polished with great dedication.

He kept a respectful distance back so as to not see as she spun the code into the ancient lock and with a hiss the lock disengaged to reveal a keyhole. Yanking the necklace off from around her throat she pulled the hidden key out from behind her clothing. The key was in its self, nothing special, it was a dull silver and had three long separate teeth at the end with a faded engraved design around the loop of the handle.

But the saying of not judging a book by its cover rang true in this case, because this seemingly un-extraordinary key unlocked not only a chest but a world of mystery as well.

With a click the chest was completely unlocked and she pulled the lid up, revealing over twenty to about thirty silver axes along with other trinkets and odd ends. Taking great care she gently placed the latest and last addition to the ‘collection’.

Taking her hand back out she closed and relocked the chest and stood from the ground, turning to look at Elijah who was waiting for his next order.

“You have pleased me greatly. With this final offering we can now move on to our next phase, the procuring of our most important ingredient. Now, I am aware that you are more than capable of bringing him in on your own but I must insist on going with you” she stated, watching his face intently and her voice leaving no room for argument.

Elijah was a little taken aback by her request but it was not his place to question her, he was willing
to do what she requested of him.

“It would be my honor to have you with me” he spoke, real pride in his eyes and voice.

“Good, we shall wait until nightfall and then head out”

~GRIMM~

Arriving at the trailer, Monroe’s antique yellow beetle already there, he got out of his car and got the two cases of lukewarm Duloc Amber out of the backseat.

As he was walking to the door the trailer door opened and revealed Monroe who was wearing his classic annoyed expression.

“You’re late, you know I’m missing a date that I had planned with Rosalee” he commented as he held open the door for Nick then promptly shut it after he was inside.

“I’m sorry Monroe, Hank called me about another body being found just as I was leaving the convenience store with your Duloc Amber” he said as he presented the microbrew to the irritated Blutbad.

Eyeing the brew he begrudgingly accepted the peace offering and set it aside on the old couch in the corner of the room.

“All right, I partially forgive you” he muttered.

Nick raised his eyebrow but made no comment on his partial forgiveness. He didn’t feel like joking around right now, they had a lot of work ahead of them and any humor that Nick may have had had been sucked out of him by the bleakness of the case.

Instead he picked up a heavy book and handed it over to the other man then pointedly chose his own and took a seat behind the desk where he started to flip through the ancient book.

Monroe noticed his dark mindset and instead of letting it go he had to know what was going on in that mind of his.

“Hey man, are you okay? I know that this case has to be getting to you but do you want to talk about it? Get it off your chest so to speak, because I can tell you my grandfather one time had such a-“he cut himself off by the murderous glare that was seared his way, a look that Nick had never given him before and in that moment he had no problem seeing the Grimm that flowed in his veins.

He involuntarily took a step back, almost falling over into the couch behind him when the back of his heels brushed against the slightly rumpled edge of a rug. In Nick’s eyes he saw all the darkness the man was capable of along with his own human reflection that for a split second woged into his Blutbad form then just as quickly reverted back.

As soon as he saw the fright and consequent fear in one of his best friend’s eyes the guilt and shame that flooded his system made him sick to his stomach. He had made a vow to himself shortly after really getting to know the man that he would never put fear in his eyes or any of the innocent wesen that he came across, he was going to be a Grimm that changed everything.

He was going to be good.

Guilt pooling in his eyes he looked away from the terrified man, “I’m so sorry Monroe, I didn’t mean to scare you like that, it’s just this case is really getting to me and I feel like I’m losing
myself in it; Like I’m becoming everything that I’ve tried so hard not to be” he tried to explain himself, finally meeting the other man’s eyes again. His self-hatred was fueled further when he saw the continued unease in his friend’s eyes.

“Yeah, I can tell. Your eyes, I mean I’ve seen them dark before man whenever you see a wesen wege but this time, they were pitch black” he stuttered, the fear still evident in his voice but it was returning to normal as his heart started to settle down.

The guilt getting worse at the man’s words Nick apologized further, “I really am sorry Monroe. You know that I would never hurt you right?” he questioned, even though on the inside the statement didn’t feel as true as it would have a week ago.

“Of course Nick, I think the stress is just getting to you is all. How about we get started, huh?” his eyes still held a bit of fear in them and this only increased the guilt Nick was feeling.

Biting his lip Nick nodded and decided against calling the man out on his continued fright, which was almost as bad as a punch to the face. Monroe was one of his closest friends and to have the man be this frightened of him hurt.

He vowed then and there that as soon as this was all over with he was going to take him and Rosalee out for a nice dinner to make up for all their missed plans and to also thank them for helping him so much in such a short amount of time since meeting him.

It was as they were both settling down to look at the books in front of them that Nick remembered the book that he had marked previously. Setting the book in front of him aside he located the earlier book and brought it over to him, going to the bookmarked page and scanning the entry over again.

The familiarity of the writing hit him again and he was almost overwhelmed by the memories that hit him with such force that he had to take a deep breath to clear his mind. Overcoming that battle, for now, he beckoned Monroe over.

“This is an entry that my aunt wrote, so far it’s the only one I’ve been able to find that’s on the Endezeichen Grimm” he explained as Monroe grabbed a chair and sat down beside him.

“I’m actually kind of shocked that your aunt would write an entry on your ancestors, considering that, you know, it’s your family’s history” he said, going off on a small little ramble at the end.

Nick didn’t respond to his stuttered explanation and instead read over his aunt’s entry:

The Endezeichen Grimm are the incarnate of evil. They hunt wesen down without mercy and without feeling. Around them no type of wesen is safe. Along with being ruthless killers they are perhaps the most unfeeling, demented species to ever taint the pages of these journals.

To Endezeichen Grimm all wesen are abominations that need to be wiped off the face of this earth without mercy.

During their killing rampages they were greatly known for their inhumane brutality while torturing wesen captives and cutting off toes, fingers, arms, legs and even genitals as barbaric trophies.

Nick looked away from the pages at the mention of ‘trophies’, the knot in his stomach worsening with each word. From what he had read so far, he couldn’t help but relate a good chunk of what he had been experiencing so far back to the Endezeichen Grimm and his fear grew.

While Nick took a break Monroe had continued to read, his eyes paying particular attention to the
Their symbol, The Sterbestunde G, which in translation means “the hour of death”, was branded into the skin of all their victims and drawn in the blood of their victims on the doorways of each house in the village where a wesen resided.

Seeing the hand drawn picture of the Sterbestunde G, the terrifying stories his parents used to tell him when he was little came back to him and he took a break from the book as well.

“Wow, I just had a horrible flashback to story time when I was a kid” he commented.

Not commenting on Monroe’s thought Nick went back to reading his aunt’s entry.

*It has long been believed that all Endezeichen Grimm had died out but this could not be further from the truth. They are very much alive and are still continuing to massacre today. Clans have been spread out all over Europe and are known to live Nomadic lifestyles, which can account for their successfulness in remaining in the shadows.*

*If one should ever come across an Endezeichen Grimm, whether they be of wesen descent or human, they should always be weary and if worse comes to worse and you find yourself in their line of sight the only way to survive is to be faster, which I say with great remorse is a very rare occurrence.*

*In today’s world, it is just as hard to discern an Endezeichen Grimm from a regular person. They no longer wear the sacred masks that concealed their identities but instead glorify their own faces in the night. They have no fear of being discovered and would in fact thrive in the openness of what they have done.*

The words beginning to tumble around in his mind, screaming at him he found that he was having difficulty breathing. It felt like his lungs had been closed off and an intense ringing was rattling his brain, distorting his thoughts with flashes of white and pain.

Rising from the desk, his entire body shaking with adrenaline he made for the door, his steps shaky and anxious.

“Nick?” Monroe asked, concerned for his friend as he clearly struggled.

He was barely able to hear Monroe, the whining in his head getting worse the longer he remained in the trailer but he managed to gasp out a response.

“I’m fine, I just need to get some air” not giving Monroe enough time to respond he opened the trailer door and hurried out, slamming the door shut behind him.

Now on his own Monroe looked around at the ancient relics that surrounded him, but instead of feeling the usual giddiness that the history these objects held all he could concentrate on was the clearly shaken Grimm.

Getting up from the chair he walked to the door and opened it, sticking his head out and looked around until he saw Nick walking away.

Just as he was about to go after him a cell phone rang and not recognizing it as his own he stepped back inside and saw the lit up screen of Nick’s phone with Hank’s name flashing. Looking back at Nick who was getting further and further and the flashing phone he tried calling out for Nick but was ignored.

Grinding his teeth he walked back inside and picked up the phone, answering the call.
“Nick, listen man, I just-“

“No it’s Monroe, Nick just walked out to get some air” Monroe explained, standing in the middle of the trailer.

Hank paused for a second before responding, the urgency from before increasing in his voice.

“Look Monroe, I just translated the latest message, and it’s not good man, not good at all”

~break~

Nick continued to walk away from the trailer until he had completely left the storage yard, his feet leading him as far away from the hard truth that he was being faced with. Somehow, for whatever reason, he was losing his battle with the Grimm inside him.

He had promised, while she lay on her death bed in the hospital, that he would only hunt the bad ones but how much longer could he keep his word? Twice already he had come close to hunting down wesen where one admittedly had been a criminal, but still there had been no reason for the brutality that he had shown the man. His thoughts were jumbling together, where they were starting not to make any sense.

Ever since this case had started his mind had become darker and darker. It was like this Endezeichen Grimm was awakening every dark urge in him and it was becoming more and more likely that one day, likely very soon, that he would just burst and no one around him would be safe.

Growling in aggravation, his knuckles whitening with the amount of exertion he was forcing on them, he was just about to lash out at the brick wall that was presented before him when he heard a scream that was nearby.

His fists slightly uncurling he put his intentions aside and followed the sound, his pace increasing the closer the screams became.

Coming to an alley he could see the back of a male and the shadowed face of who he presumed was his female screamer. Figuring that this was an even better way to get rid of some of his anger, that and it was also his job as a Detective he entered the alley and spoke up.

“Freeze, Police!” he shouted, reaching for his sidearm but realizing that he had stupidly forgotten it at his desk.

Luckily though, he had his police and Grimm training to fall back on.

Getting the perp.’s attention the person turned around and approached him, the woman cowering in the corner.

Increasing his pace the perp. met him in the middle and the fight began.

Lashing out at the perp. who he could now see was a man, he managed to land a few well aimed blows to his face and gut but in the process received a good amount of damage to his own face and stomach.

Before he could defend himself the man kicked him in the gut so hard that he bent over gasping for breath and was quickly followed by a punch to the face that made him stumble back into the wall.

Anger building up he pushed himself off the wall and collided with the other man where he rained blow upon blow to as much of the man’s body as he could. Kicking out his legs from under the
man Nick sat down on his chest and continued to hit him until he was bucked off and soon found himself being choked.

He tried to pry the hands off his throat but with the combined weight of the man sitting on his chest and the pressure of the fingers around his throat it was making his efforts nothing more than pathetic slaps.

Darkness was edging in on him and his mind was beginning to shut off. He had no choice as his hands fell to the side and as his battle with consciousness was coming to an end he could vaguely make out a new form coming to join the man who was slowly ending his life.

At long last he was swept away into the darkness not long after the hands were removed from his throat.

The man got up from him and watched as his accomplice kneeled down and checked for a pulse. There was one, but it was sluggish as blood slowly began to return to its normal flow to the brain.

Rising the accomplice turned, “get him in the car and make sure not to leave any evidence behind” with the order given they watched as the unconscious Detective was lugged up into the man’s arms and slowly dragged to the getaway car.

As he was taking care of that the accomplice kneeled down again and gathered the small amount of blood that Nick had left behind.

Spreading the plasma substance over their gloved hand they then rose and walked over to the nearby brick wall.

With practiced ease they drew out the Sterbunstande G.

When that was done with they joined their accomplice who had gotten their prize into the trunk of the car and was waiting for them in the driver’s seat. Getting in, the car took off and disappeared into the night.

~break~

“Well what does it say?” Monroe asked, his gut churning.

“The darkness is only the beginning, Nicholas. They’re targeting Nick!”

With the phone still in hand Monroe ran out of the trailer and ran the same direction that Nick had gone, shouting for the man as he ran but receiving no reply.

By sheer luck he managed to come across the same alley that Nick had been in not two minutes ago, having followed his keen sense of smell. Stepping into the alley he was terrified when he came to a stop in the center of the alley and discovered the dime sized puddle of blood that belonged to Nick.

Turning his eyes widened when he saw the Sterbunstande G drawn in Nick’s blood on the brick wall.

Hank’s muffled voice continued on the other end of the phone, having been trying to get Monroe’s attention for what felt like ages now.

Remembering the phone in his hand he brought the device to his ear.
“We’re too late, they got him”
I am so sorry that this chapter is so short, but hopefully the content will appease you.

Hank pulled up to the busy alleyway; cop cars were lined down the road and police tape had cordoned off the area.
Taking a breath, he got out of his car and approached the scene, his eyes scanning the heads in the crowd until he saw Monroe who was watching him intently as he crossed his line of sight.

Walking over to Wu he ducked under the tape and spoke, “what have we found so far?” he asked, his tone all business, he couldn’t let his worry and fear for his friend and partner get the best of him.

Wu looked surprised to see him here, probably expecting someone else to take the lead on this case considering that it was his partner who was missing.

“We have a set of tire skids leading away from the alley, fuzzy un-useable security video from the pawnshop across the street and the weird symbol drawn in…in blood. CSU also found evidence of a struggle” he added, watching Hank’s face pale a little at the mention of blood.

Swallowing thickly, his jaw clenching up to an almost painful level, nodded his head in thanks and walked past him, intending on seeing the scene for himself.

He purposefully ignored the looks he received as he went deeper into the scene, his eyes scanning every crevasse and scratch in the wall for any signs of evidence that he could use to find Nick.

As his eyes scanned the walls he finally saw the symbol that had been left at all the other scenes, the only difference this time was that there wasn’t a foreign message.

His gut filled with dread and disgust as the still fresh blood glistened in the flashing lights of cameras and revolving red and blue lights from the police cars. He didn’t have to wait for the DNA tests to come back, he knew it would be Nick’s, all the other symbols and messages had been written in the victim’s blood so he didn’t see why this important feature would change now.

All he could hope for right now was that whatever injuries Nick had received weren’t fatal. Then again, he didn’t know what the Endeischen Grimm were planning so maybe, as much as it killed him to think it, death may come as a blessing.

Sean sat in his personal vehicle, his phone at his ear as he impatiently waited for his contact to pick up.

He cursed aloud as he was once again directed to voicemail, this having been his fifth attempt at contact. Hanging up he pocketed the device and got out of his car, slamming the door a little too harshly and causing several sets of his officers’ eyes to go to him, but at seeing the murderous glare in them they quickly averted their eyes, not wanting to get on his bad side.
With slightly shaking fingers he unbuttoned the top two buttons on his dress shirt, the tie having been urgently removed to put an end to its strangulation when he had received the call that informed him of Detective Nick Burkhardt’s apparent abduction by their serial killer.

Stalking over he was immediately recognized and allowed access, all of his officers could feel the rage that was encasing his body and the almost painful vibration that wracked them when they got too close made them back up to catch their breaths.

The police tape was held up for him and he passed under without a word, his eyes zeroing in on Detective Griffin who was staring at the blood drawn Sterbunstande G.

The deeper he walked into the alley the greater the smell of blood, fear and rage became. He could barely contain the growl that wanted to rumble out when he identified the blood as Nick’s, the scent of coffee and honey that he usually associated with Nick had been tainted with the stench of melted copper and burnt rubber. It made him sick to his stomach.

Doing his best to put the scent in the back of his mind he approached the Detective and came to a stop beside him, staring at the bloody drawing with him.

He could see the tension that was ticking the right side of his jawline, his hands clenched at his sides and his posture was so rigid that if he were any tighter he would snap in two. It was clear to anyone with functioning eyesight that he was not coping well.

“Are you sure you should be here Detective?” he inquired, debating on whether or not he should put someone else on the case due to the obvious conflict of interest.

Sean could hear the cracking of Hank’s knuckles as he waged an internal war in his head not to lash out at his Captain.

“I can handle it Captain, he’s my partner and I’m going to do whatever I can to help find him” he said as calmly and evenly as possible, doing his best to keep the growl out of his voice.

Not being able to judge, due to his own state of mind, he let the comment go.

“What do we have so far?” he asked, looking around at the scene some more from the corner of his eyes.

“Nothing really, a fuzzy security video, blood with signs of a struggle and this” he waved his hand at the Sterbunstande G.

Sean looked at the symbol once more, his eyes darkening before he looked away.

“No witnesses?” though in a neighborhood like this he wasn’t expecting any. Snitches and narcs were a rare breed in these parts, too afraid of retaliation from the gangs and criminals that roamed the streets in the twilight.

Hank shook his head, “no, and honestly if there are any they’re not going to come forward for fear of being next” he replied, almost speaking exactly what Sean had just been thinking.

Turning away from the symbolSean looked around at the alley, watching his officers and the CSUs gather evidence. Sean knew though that just like all the other scenes they wouldn’t find anything that would lead back to the clan of Endeischen Grimm, they were far too careful and skilled to allow a meagre strand of hair to be left behind.

This had gone on far too long, they had the crossed the line the moment they had committed their
first murder in his protectorate and had gone downhill ever since but now that they had taken his Grimm he wanted more than just their heads, he wanted to rip them apart with his bare hands.

Coming out his thoughts he walked over to the little yellow identifier that stood next to the drops of blood, the stomach churning stench of Nick’s blood becoming stronger the closer he got. This time he was unable to hold back the growl that rumbled deep within his chest and he was having difficulty keeping his human façade up.

With his mind occupied with rage and well bottled fear he didn’t sense that Hank had followed him and had subsequently heard the growl that rattled from his chest.

It was hard to deny the almost animalistic quality the growl had to it and Hank actually found himself wondering for a split second if the Captain was a wesen himself but quickly shook the thought away. There’s no way, Nick would have told him if that were true. It was probably just his imagination getting away from him and the stress of this case.

Seeing that the Captain was lost in thought Hank deliberately coughed into his hand and a smile almost came to his face when he saw the esteemed Captain Sean Renard almost jump a mile high. The humor quickly faded away though when he remembered why they were here.

“Sorry Captain, didn’t mean to startle you” he apologized, watching as he rose from the ground and dusted off his black slacks.

“I want this solved, this killer or killers have not only killed five of this city’s citizens but now they’ve kidnapped one of my Detectives. Do whatever you have to do to solve this case Detective, every second that we waste standing around is a second too long for Detective Burkhardt. Find me some evidence, and bring whoever this is in.” no longer able to stomach the traumatic scene around him he walked off, his strides purposeful as he headed back to his car, intent on making yet another call to his contact.

Hank watched him go, a little surprised at the Captain’s attitude. This was probably the first time he had ever seen the captain get so emotional over a case, in fact, the Captain was usually stone faced when it came to any and all police matters.

What was going on in the Captain’s head right now?

As Sean walked back to his car his cell suddenly started to ring and he frantically dug the cell phone out of his jacket pocket, immediately answering when he saw that the number was unknown.

“Where have you been?” he demanded, opening his car door and slipping inside, roughly slamming the door after him.

“I am sorry sir, things have been rather chaotic around here what with territory disputes and family grudges and I was unable to get away for privacy” the caller explained, his voice almost a whisper.

Not having time to listen to his excuses Sean continued, “I don’t care, all I need to know is if you have any new information?”

There was silence on the other end and foreboding filled his chest, nothing good ever came of drawn out silence.

“They cover their tracks incredibly well sir, all I have at this moment is the same information I delivered to you last time. I shall continue to make inquiries but I am not very optimistic that I’ll find anything” he answered truthfully, fully knowing that it would greatly anger the
Regnant/Zauberbiest.

Sean gripped the phone in his hand, his hand shaking with adrenaline and it was only a thin line of restraint that was stopping him from crumbling the blasted device to dust.

“They’ve taken the Grimm and they left behind their mark. They obviously want something from him otherwise we would’ve found a body” Sean tried to find a reason in his mind.

He had to continue to believe he was alive and not…not buried in a ditch somewhere.

“What do you want me to do sir?”

Looking up at the roof of his car as if he would miraculously find the answer up there he sighed, “Dig into their history. Find out everything you can about their beliefs, training, anything really. All we can go on right now is the past, in fact I want you to find out if this has happened before, the killings and the abduction of a Grimm have to serve some kind of purpose” he added, praying that he was on the right track.

“I’ll do my best although with everything going on here I may not be able to get back to you so soon” he cautioned, the family drama going on making it even riskier to be caught conversing with the bastard son.

Far from thrilled with the news but having the good sense to know the reason why he assured the man, “fine, just get back to me as soon as you can” without anything else he hung up and dropped the phone into his jacket breast pocket.

Without starting the engine Sean looked back at the scene and saw Hank conversing with one of the officers. He knew of one place where he could do his own research on the Endeischen Grimm but that would require potentially revealing himself to Hank Griffin and that was an exposure that could and would change everything.

But before he could do that, there was something else that he was now obligated to do. Shaking his head he started up the engine and drove off, headed back for the station to go over the little evidence they had at this point and to hold a press conference.

~GRIMM~

When Nick regained consciousness he quickly wished that he hadn’t. With each breath he took his throat and airway retaliated against him with swipes of razors that traveled up and down the sensitive lining of his throat and accompanying the pain was a throbbing ache in his head that pulsed like a heartbeat.

Accidentally inhaling more than his sore throat could handle he set off into a hoarse coughing fit that wracked his entire body, shooting rivers of flaring pain throughout his body that made him bounce on the ground. An uncomfortable tugging sensation that centered around his hands was the only thing that tethered him to the conscious world instead of blacking out.

Once his body had calmed down he did his best to breathe in as carefully as possible, not wanting to cause another attack. The pain still thrumming beneath his skin, now worsened from the trauma, he sat up as slowly as he could, determined to get a better look at his surroundings.

Now that the fit was over his labored breathing filled the room and it wasn’t until the sound of a crack reached his ears that he realized he wasn’t alone.

Eyes widening he looked up and was greeted by the emotionless face of his attacker from the alley.
The man just sat there, staring at him in his completely black attire as he periodically cracked his right knuckle, the sound sharp and chilling.

Seeing that the man had a heavy chain wrapped around his left hand he followed the trail and was none too surprised that the other end was attached to the loop of a manacle around his wrists.

Suddenly standing the man took a few steps until he was standing over him.

“Get up” he ordered, his voice low and harsh.

Meeting the man’s gaze Nick glared, his eyes smoldering with hellish flames with pure hatred and the desire to coat the tent flaps with the man’s blood.

Becoming impatient the man bent down and pulled him up by the manacle, the sharp metal edges cutting into Nick’s skin and drawing blood.

Now that he was standing the man didn’t take long to turn and walk out of the tent, a harsh tug on the chain making him follow.

Once they stepped outside Nick was able to look around. Nighttime had come and the stars and moon had taken their places, watching over the scene that was taking place below as Nick was led through the camp.

Looking around Nick saw at least 30 other people, all wearing similar black attire to the man who was leading him, training with weapons, some of which he recognized from his aunt’s trailer and others were just standing in place, watching him with soulless eyes.

Up ahead a bonfire came into view, the flames popping and crackling up into the sky, embers fluttering in the air a few seconds before snuffing out.

There was only one hooded figure beside the fire, a kettle beside them that they stirred over the fire. The only other people near it were keeping what he guessed to be a respectful but prepared distance, far enough to give privacy but close enough, should the moment arise, to jump in and take action.

Coming to a stop Nick was pulled forward and forced to his knees beside the hooded figure, a hand coming to rest on his shoulders to ensure that he was not to rise.

“We have the final ingredient” the man spoke.

Stopping their stirring the figure turned and Nick could make out an old man, his white thinning hair hanging in his face and his milky eye running over him, as if checking him over to be sure that he was in fact what he had ‘ordered’.

A switch met Nick’s ears and he could only watch as the man who held his lead handed over a dagger, the blade sparkling from the glow of the fire. He watched as the dagger exchanged hands and continued to watch the figure with bated breath, not confident but having an idea of what the dagger was for.

Setting the spoon down the old man grasped his right hand and wordlessly cut into his palm, a sharp sting of pain flared in his hand but he held in the hiss that wanted to come out as blood welled up and filled his palm with warm plasma.

Handing the dagger back, Nick’s hand still in his own he tugged Nick forward and held his bleeding hand over the bubbling kettle, the heat from the flame causing sweat to gather at his
brows and a burning sensation to gather at the palm of his right hand that traveled to the tips of his fingers.

He watched in morbid fascination as a few drops of blood fell into the bubbling concoction, instantaneously disappearing into the blue bubbling sludge. Once the old man had gotten the amount of blood he wanted he released Nick’s hand and handed the dagger back to the man behind him.

With that done Nick was forced up from the ground and led back the way they had come, the old man going back to stirring his concoction but now with more purpose.

Thinking that maybe he was going back to the tent he had woken up in Nick naively started to think that that was all they wanted from him but experience quickly squashed that thought, if it was only blood they could have just taken it from him after killing him in the alley.

His thoughts proved true when he was led past the semi familiar tent and instead headed towards a secluded trailer that was in the shadows of the trees. A flickering light cast shadows in the curtained window, shadowing the few objects that lay on the other side.

Coming to the trailer the man spun him around and detached the chain from the manacle then took out a rag and wrapped it around the cut on his hand, tying it tightly so as to stench the blood flow. He then turned him back around and pushed him inside.

The smell of incense, smoke and flowers made his eyes water and his nose itch.

It was like stepping into his aunt’s trailer. There was a vast assortment of bottles and jars filled with brewed concoctions that could do a number of things to different wesen along with a long shelf of books that traveled along the sides of the roof. A red, faded couch was situated in the corner of the trailer with a small table. An old mahogany desk, much like the one in the trailer was pushed to the right side of the room stacked high with weathered books and pens and papers.

But what really caught his eye was the faded cherry wood wardrobe that stood against the wall beside the door.

Unable to help himself he walked towards the wardrobe, instinctively knowing even before he managed to pry the doors open what was on the other side. Weapons of all kinds lined the inside, weapons that he recognized and some that he was seeing for the first time. He couldn’t contain the thrill he felt as his eyes ghosted over the shining instruments, each one capable of more bloodshed and pain than the last.

He could picture himself running the edge of one of the sharp blades in front of him along the exposed neck of a petrified wesen before pulling back and slicing through its neck, the tendons spraying blood in his face and clothes.

Snapping himself out of the sick inducing dream he slammed the doors closed and turned away from the wardrobe, putting some distance between himself and the furniture while taking in shaky breaths.

He had to get a grip on himself, he couldn’t afford to lose it right now.

Without warning the door suddenly opened and he turned, looking right into their eyes.

“Hello Nicolae”
Next chapter is where things get really interesting, so please stay tuned!
Hank walks under the police tape and heads for his car, making eye contact with Monroe and subtly motioning for him to follow him.

It takes a second for Monroe to figure out what Hank wants of him but he quickly catches on when Hank adds in a jerky point of his thumb towards the man's vehicle. Stepping away from the crowd that he was a part of, he makes his way for the sidewalk, apologizing when he accidentally bumps into a young blond who sends him a scathing glare. He quickly walks to the sidewalk and fast-walks over to Hank, trying and failing to be 'covert'.

Once Monroe is standing next to him he tells the man to get into the passenger seat and after watching him scurry around to the other side and get inside Hank follows suit.

Making no move to start the engine Hank just sits in the car, the tension in the car building with each breath the men take. The worry and fear for their missing friend is like an expanding mound of wax that is piling together in their lungs while melting and expanding outward to the point where it was becoming difficult to breath.

Unable to take another moment of the nerve clenching silence Hank speaks, his sudden voice manages to startle the blutbad that sits beside him.

"Did you and Nick find out anything?" he asks, continuing to stare out the windshield, watching as the officers did their jobs.

The information momentarily leaving him he grasps at mental straws to bring the information Nick and he had found to the forefront of his mind. When the first glimpse of information flashes before his eyes he is too slow to catch it but when the second time comes around he grabs on and responds.

"We found this entry that his aunt wrote, it was more of a warning than anything. It pretty much said that they are what nightmares are made of and to try to avoid them at all costs. There might have been more but Nick had to leave for some air before we could get any further" he explains, looking over at Hank after he finishes.

Coming to some kind of decision Hank jams his key into the ignition and brings the vehicle to life. Monroe quickly snaps on his seatbelt as the detective puts the car in drive and makes a sharp u-turn.

"Uh, where are we going?" he asks, not sure what the Detective is planning on doing.

"The trailer" he gruffly answers, his headlights blaring on as he drives.
Nick can't help the few jittery steps he takes away from the individual, his heart pounding in his chest as his lungs desperately try to fill with oxygen. Panicked and jumbled thoughts splatter the walls of his mind, whipping by his vision then slapping him in the face with the short memories they invoke.

Distorted images of birthday parties, bedtime stories and coos of love blast in his ears at such levels that he is almost brought to his knees by the intense emotions that are evoked deep within his scarred and battered soul.

He knows that voice! He shouldn't be able to but he does!

"H-how? How are you here?" his voice cracks, hoarse with the effort each word takes to get out.

The figure steps towards him, the hood they wear casts their face in shadows and prevents him from seeing their face but he knows who the person before him is.

Reaching up the figure pulls the hood down to reveal their face and if the voice wasn't enough to cost potential cardiac arrest this move is enough of a shove to put him in the morgue.

Though the skin has been weighed down by wrinkles and the eyes are darkened with images and times that were bleak and dangerous along with a scar carved into the left side of their face there is no mistaking who this person is. Even though it has only been through pictures that had been shown to him, the pain of memory in his heart too much to ignore.

"That my dear, sweet Nicolae, is a tale that makes my heart bleed"

Entering the trailer Hank and Monroe take the few steps over to the cluttered desk where Monroe points out the book that contains the entry.

Hank’s eyes quickly read through the passage, slowing down and re-reading the part that describes the meaning and history of the “Sterbunstande G”, the apparent calling card of the Endeischen Grimm. Along with that he is disturbed to find that the characteristics that Nick’s aunt gave to the Endeischen Grimm are scarily reminiscent of Nick since this case had started.

Coming to the bottom of the page Hank continues to read with new rapt attention, the next few paragraphs seeming more personal than the last.

*Endeischen Grimms hold their ancient beliefs close to heart, especially beliefs that speak of opportunities of transforming into more powerful warriors. Many of these ‘beliefs’ are merely fables that are passed down from generation to generation, encouraging more wesen bloodshed in the pursuit of ‘cleansing’ the world and gaining more power.

But there is one fable I fear that is not just a wicked bedtime story, for this tale they speak of holds true and for the life of me I pray it does not come to pass; if it does, I fear that no one will be safe, least of all the wesen of this world.*

That's where the page ends, Hank eagerly flips the page, knowing that there has to be more but what he finds instead is the torn edges of a page that has been ripped from the spine; the words the page contained lost to them.

“Is this all you found?” he asks, looking up at the other man who has been hovering beside him.
“Yeah, so far. I wouldn’t be surprised if that’s all we’re going to find though” he comments, eyeing the book for himself.

“There has to be more, there’s a page missing! She started talking about some kind of belief that the Endeischen Grimm have that Marie believed there was a chance of being true. Did you not read that part?” he questions, the urgency in his voice setting Monroe on edge as well.

In answer to his question Monroe brushes him aside and turns the book over to him, his eyes scan the last few paragraphs that he had missed. His breath catches in his throat when he finishes and sees the torn edge of the next page for himself.

“Maybe the page is around here somewhere” Monroe says as he flips through the book to see if the page had gotten caught in another section and when that doesn't pan out he starts moving the books and papers aside on the desk in a vain attempt at locating the lost paper.

Not knowing what else to do Hank joins him in the search. He walks over to one of the bookshelves and scans the shelves, pulling a book out every now and then and then and flipping through it.

~GRIMM~

Sean enters his office and quickly turns the blinds down, wanting all semblances of privacy that he can get. He then walks over to his desk turns on his desk lamp then sits down.

This whole case was getting out of control. It had been bad enough when the murders seemed the beginning of a serial killer’s spree but things had only grown direr when the true motivations and identity of the killer(s) had been revealed. Wesen deaths had been bad enough but now the Endeischen Grimms had taken not only one of his detectives but Portland’s very own Grimm. And that was an offense that was punishable by death.

However, now it wasn’t only Endeischen Grimms that he had to deal with, he also had to contend with the media as well. As soon as he had gotten back from the scene of Nick’s kidnapping his phone had been ringing nonstop with calls from the local paper and news station for an exclusive on the recent murders and kidnapping of a PPD detective.

He had told the papers and news outlets that they would get all the information he could give them at the conference he was going to be holding at 5 PM tomorrow, which him gave a few hours to prepare his statement.

Putting that thought aside for the moment he turns his attention to the real reason he came in here.

Turning his computer on he types in his password and waits for the system to load.

A few seconds later the system has loaded and he goes to the file that contains the crime scene photos from the murders. It sickens him that he is able to recount everything that is in the pictures even before he zooms in on them, giving clear indication to the fact that he is becoming way too accustomed to looking at the crime scene photos.

He quickly exits out of the file and gets out his phone, dialing in Sgt. Wu’s number and bringing the device to his ear.

“Sgt. Wu”

“This is captain Renard, I need you to instruct the CSUs at the scene of Detective Burkhardt’s abduction to send me the crime scene photos” he instructs, his voice crisp and direct.
Caught a little off by the request Wu takes a moment before he responds, “will do sir, should I tell them to send you hard copies or just through an email?”

“Email’s fine, just be sure to tell them that I need them as soon as possible”

“Yes sir”

Hanging up he walks back to his desk and sits down, his hand hovering over the computer mouse, indecision and doubt clouding his thoughts as he contemplates what his next move should be.

Until his contact got back to him he was really left with nothing but bloody crime scene photos and questions that were piled on with more questions. He hates feeling this useless, this…uncontrolled.

His city is in trouble, and he needs to put a stop to all this before he loses his Grimm to the blood shed that the Endeischen Grimm had ridden into his protectorate

~GRIMM~

Nick stands in silence as she walks past him and over to the wardrobe and reaches in, pulling out a dagger of sorts that has a faded engravement on the handle. He can't take his eyes off of her as she walks the short distance around the inside of the trailer.

“Explain it to me then, because I’m really confused here” he whispers, his body frozen in shock.

She stops then walks towards him, the blade held out in front of her in a manner that could be seen as threatening with the tip of the blade pointed at his abdomen but he can sense that he isn't in any danger of being stabbed.

“I will, eventually I will tell you everything but right now we much have to do and so little time” she answers, her voice soft and placating. That wasn’t going to cut it for him though, he needed answers. Answers to questions that if not answered soon he was sure he would go mad. Like, what is she doing here? Why didn't she come for him sooner? And the most important one, why isn't she dead? The shock and awe that had previously paralyzed him is beginning to thaw from the confusion and anger that he is battling with, with this earth shattering revelation.

“Why are you with them? You’re too at ease to be here against your will so tell me why?” he asks, watching as she plays with the dagger in her hand. Putting the dagger down, she takes the seat behind the desk, the old springs groaning under her weight as she leans back.

“You are very observant Nicolae, you have to be with the line of work you are in but I’m betting that it is the Grimm in you that gives you the edge over the other officers. Am I right?” she inquires, continuing to string him around while acknowledging her diversions but not giving him what he wants.

Growing tired of her games Nick pries his feet from the floor and approaches her, the weapon in her hand in his sights at all times.

“Quit stalling and tell me what I want to know, right now!” he orders.

With a predatory glint in her eyes she meets his gaze head on, her eyes darker than two burning pieces of coal and her mouth is set in a thin line.

“Fine, but I am going to warn you now that what I’m about to tell you will not be easy to understand or accept. All you need to know is that it is the upmost truth and a scar that has haunted me for over a decade” she warns, her dark eyes digging into his own with a well sharpened ice
pick.

Not backing down he leans down so that they are at eye level, “tell me” he hisses, his words bloated with conviction.

~GRIMM~

The inside of the trailer looks like it had been hit by a miniature tornado; books lay open on every available surface, pens and pencils are scattered on the floor and desk and other surfaces in the trailer.

Monroe sits on the couch going over a large volume in his hand while Hank is at the desk analyzing the thick book open before him, his eyes take in every word and edge of the paper, looking for a wedge of paper that doesn't belong.

Sighing out of exhaustion and anger Monroe tosses the book he holds to the side and looks over at Hank who is still knee deep in books, his pace having not let up since they had begun.

“How can there be so many books in such a little space?” he questions, subconsciously reaching over to grab another book. Hank doesn't answer him as he turns another page, tuning out everything but the sounds of the page turning and his own thoughts.

Seeing that he isn't going to be conversing with him anytime soon Monroe returns to his own book, the words clinging to his eyesight with such intensity that they are starting to burn. It doesn't take too long before his vision starts to blur from the constant narrowing that he is soon forced to look away and rub his eyes, the pain starting to relieve after a few moments of rest.

Coming to the end of the book, Hank closes the book and pushes it aside then simultaneously grabs another book, this one much thinner than the last, and tips it open with his fingers.

It is a third way through the book that he begins to realize that he has already gone through this book, he recognizes the blue ink smear on the page that is presented before him.

Growling in aggravation he shoves the book away and collapses in the chair, rubbing his eyes and face vigorously with his hands. Dropping his hands he tilts his head back and sighs.

“This is taking too long, at this rate by the time we find it Nick will be dead” he says, turning his head to look over at the other man.

Unable to hold his tongue Monroe replies, “If there’s anything to be found. For all we know Marie could have ended the sentence there or even destroyed or lost the supposed page that is missing” he doesn't want to believe his words but it is hard not to feel hopeless with all the chaos and fear that surrounds them.

Hank shakes his head, not willing to accept that. No, there has to be something that they were missing. From the brief time he had met the woman he could tell that she loved her nephew deeply and would do anything to protect him and if there was a danger that she thought he could face should would have left him some type of way overcoming it or at least a deeper description.

“No, Marie would have left some kind of way for Nick to defend himself against whatever she was afraid could be coming, we’re just not seeing something!” he insists.

Monroe has no response for this and only watches as Hank rises from the desk, a heavy book finding access to his hand as he makes his way for the door.
“Where are you going?”

“I’ve been in here way too long man, I need some air” as he is going to push the door open he remembers that he has a book in his hand so he drops the book on the antique chest. The moment the book makes impact with the surface a loud pop sounds and soon a thin shoe box length drawer moves out from the chest and displays itself to the two men. A billow of dust flutters in the air from the unexpected release.

Both stand in stunned silence for a few moments before Hank comes back to the world and moves towards the revealed drawer, Monroe follows his lead as he stands beside him and looks down at the inside.

The edges of the drawer are still coated in dust but the inside of the drawer is pristine, having not seen the light of day for who knows how long but judging by the amount of dust that had been released it has been quite a while. Along with being pristine though, folded up in the drawer is an old piece of paper that looks to have been ripped from a book or such.

Unable to keep his hopes from flaring Hank reaches into the drawer and retrieves the piece of paper, his grip delicate as he carefully unfolds the piece of paper. Monroe watches from his side as the words are revealed to them, words that had been written by none other than Marie.

Hank brings the paper to the desk and sits down in the chair, Monroe follows in his footsteps and hovers over him as they both read from the paper.

The legend I speak of is of the Blue Moon, a time in which a power is released from the heavens that is obtainable to all that perform Vârsarea, Effusio, Prolievanja the language does not matter for they all mean the same: The Shedding.

If this ritual is performed correctly their strength will triple along with their sense of sight, hearing and even smell, but one other heightened ability they will gain is their already impeccable ability to see Wesen in their true form, which will only improve so drastically that it is possible for a whole city to be wiped out in a matter of days. In short, they will become the perfect killers.

The reason I am so deeply troubled with the likelihood of this legend coming to pass is because of the predestined moon phases at the time of your birth, and based on that knowledge I say without doubt that on the day of your 33rd birthday, a number which holds great significance, a blue moon will occur.

Be careful Nick, they will come for you and I am fearful that my sickness will have long taken me from you but I pray that you find this message and take all precautions to protect yourself from falling into their hands.

I love you,

Marie Kessler

Hank leans back in the chair and gave his mind a moment to go over everything he has just read.

“Have you ever heard of this ritual, The Shedding?” Hank asks, looking over at Monroe who has taken a seat on the old couch.

Monroe shakes his head, “no, but that doesn’t surprise me really, it’s likely only known by Grimms and consequently Endeischen Grimm. I could ask Rosalee if she knows anything about it” he added, getting out his phone as he spoke.
“Yeah, do that. Meanwhile, I gotta get back to the station and see what if anything useful has been found at the scene. Call me if Rosalee has anything” he says, putting on his jacket as he heads for the door.

“Okay, yeah, sure” he replies as Hank walks out of the trailer, closing the door behind him and leaving Monroe on his own in the history holding trailer.

~GRIMM~

When Hank returns to the station bull pen he is surprised to find Juliette waiting for him at Nick’s desk, a worried look on her face as she stares at her phone, likely waiting for a text or call from Nick.

He shouldn’t be so surprised that she would show up at the station looking for her boyfriend, but contacting her hadn’t even crossed his mind as him and Monroe read book over book looking for information that would help them find and save Nick.

Seeing him approach Juliette puts her phone away and quickly meets him in the middle of the room, “Hank I’ve been trying to call Nick for hours and he isn’t picking up or returning any of my calls. He didn’t come home last night and all these officers are looking at me with pity and it’s got me thinking some really bad things so just tell me what’s going on, right now!” she orders, the frantic wild look in her eyes making him feel all the more guilty for not calling her sooner.

Placing his hands on her shoulders he tries to soothe her, but it was really no use seeing as the news he was about to deliver would only make her already panicked mind explode with anxiety.

“Juliette, Nick…Nick was kidnapped last night by a killer that we’ve been investigating” he delivers, the words caught in his throat like a kernel of popcorn but he somehow manages to cough them out.

As expected his words bring her no relief, only more pain. Tears fill her eyes and she can’t keep in the gasping breaths that escape her, her hand covers her mouth in shock at what she has just heard. She shakes her head, denial and fear coursing through her.

“Oh god” she whimpers, involuntarily collapsing into the chair behind her. Her hands shake as she struggles to accept what she has just been told.

Hank wheels his chair over and sits down across from her, taking her still shaking hands into his own to offer as much comfort as he can. It isn’t much considering what was going on but he could tell she appreciated it by the way she gently squeezes his hands back.

“We’re going to find him Juliette, I promise you” he assures her, hating to see her like this. She can’t help the small scoff that exits her mouth.

“You and I both know what his chances are, especially considering he’s a cop” she retorts, looking away from him and over to the kitchen area where she briefly meets the eyes of some police officers who quickly look away, having been caught in their pitiful staring at the distraught girlfriend of one of their own.

Hank gulps, taking a moment to look down then back up at her.

“We are going to find him” he reiterates. He purposefully leaves out what state that would be in because he honestly doesn’t know and he doesn’t want to voice what they both fear. That when they finally get Nick back, it will be in a body bag.
She nods but the fear and sadness remains in her eyes as she slowly removes her hands from Hank’s and uses the back of her hand to wipe at her eyes, her makeup long since smeared.

Figuring she could definitely use some hands her a box of tissue off his desk and waits in silence as she thanks him then dabs at her eyes and blows her nose a few times. When she is done she wads the tissue up and throws it away in the trash bin beside her.

“Do you have any leads? Anything at all?” she asks, her voice a little raspy from the crying.

Hank bites the inside of his cheek. There were two different routes he could go with this question. The first one was the truth, or at least the truth as far as the police station was concerned, and that was that they had no concrete leads as to the identity of the killer and now kidnapper. The other was the entire truth, the route that converged Nick’s life as a Grimm and the world that had no idea about the supernatural in the world.

If he tells Juliette the second one there was high doubt that she would believe him and could even become angry with him. The chances of her believing him were exponentially low and at a time like this, without any proof at his side, he would likely be doing more harm than good. There was also the matter that it wasn’t his secret to tell, it was Nick’s and consequently every living wesen’s.

No, his best option was to go with the first truth, or rather a half truth.

“At the moment we don’t have much to go on” she inhales sharply, her eyes looking upward towards the light to ward off stinging tears.

“But we are going over every scene with a fine tooth comb and the moment we have anything I promise I will call you” he promises, knowing it isn’t the best but still hoping that she can take some comfort from his words.

“I know you are, I guess it’s just hard to believe that something like this could be happening” inhaling a shaky breath she nervously starts to play with her bracelet, the beads rattling with each move.

Coming to a decision he rises, “how about you head on home, or to a friend’s house maybe and I’ll call you once we have anything new” he suggests, looking down at her.

Seeming to be debating for a moment she slowly stands from the chair and nods, her eyes looking down at the floor as she speaks.

“Yeah, I’ll go stay with my friend Lisa” her voice is small as she sidesteps him and heads for the door, never turning once to look back as she leaves the bullpen for her car.

When she is out of sight Hank breathes a sigh of relief and, wheeling his chair back to his desk, sits down and sighs in exhaustion and dread. He honestly doesn’t know what to do from here other than wait for Monroe’s call to tell him whether or not Rosalee knows anything.

~break~

Sean had watched the discussion between Hank and Juliette in quiet seclusion from his office, his eyes reading their lips as they spoke in hopes of finding out what information, if any, that Hank was going to share which turned out to only be the facts that the police themselves had, so in all nothing useful. Once Juliette had left Sean righted his blinds and went back over to his desk to stand in front of his window, the curtain drawn and the blinds up to show him his city that had died down as nighttime deepened.
Looking down at his wristwatch he sees that it was nearing midnight, the witching hour and his own thought fills him with dread.

It was past time for a lot of his officers to go home, most of their shifts having ended two to three hours ago, especially that of Detective Griffin but just as he is heading for the door his private phone rings from inside his desk drawer.

Putting his plan on hold he bends down and pulls the drawer open, the ring of the phone becoming louder as the muffle of the desk is taken away. Picking the phone up he answers, not bothering to look at the caller id.

“Renard”

“Sir, I have more of the information you requested” his contact answers, his voice echoing as if he is in a subway or something. His attention grabbed Sean sits down in his chair, his ears perked in attention.

“What have you found?” he works to keep his voice neutral, not wanting to show how eager he is at the news, it wouldn’t do to show how anxious he has been even if the person he was communicating with is an ally.

“I looked everywhere and I’m not sure if it’s related but on May 31 1969 a man from a village a little way out from Bucharest went missing during the night and his mother claimed that he was taken by “hooded demons that covered their faces with darkness.” When they finally found him three nights later it was in the woods. He was lying against a tree, both his wrists had been slit, he had a chest wound that was likely from a knife and a G of some sort had been drawn onto his forehead in his blood. Needless to say he was dead and the authorities never caught the murderer or murderers” he relays.

There was very little doubt in his mind that the murderers from that event were Endeizechen Grimm but the information he has been given still doesn’t tell him the reason as to why.

“Did you find out the significance of that day? Moon cycles, star formations, anything like that?” he questions, hopeful that his informant had thought of looking into that.

He could hear the sound of crumpling paper on the other end and waits impatiently for the other man to speak. His fingers impatiently tap against his desk in a spasmodic rhythm, his anxiety building up in coils that clench his every nerve.

“Yes, I thought of that sir and I looked into it and there was a blue moon that night.” Sean’s throat goes dry and he has to readjust his grip on the phone from his sudden death grip that nearly breaks the phone in half.

“You’re sure it was a blue moon?” he demands, not having time for mistakes.

“I’m sure sir, why? Does that mean something to you?”

“I’ll have to call you back, good work” before the man can get another word out, Sean ends the call and drops his phone on his desk. The device skitters a little across the wooden surface before coming to a stop near the edge of the desk.

Following his contracting gut he turns on his computer and goes to his officers’ database where he looks up Nicholas Burkhardt’s personnel file. His eyes immediately dive down to the Grimm’s date of birth.
March 31st 1981. Minimizing the page he went to the internet and looked up the next blue moon date and what he found confirmed his fears.

Not only is there a blue moon due in a few days but it just so happens to land on Nick’s 33rd birthday.

No, no this was not good at all. If his suspicions are correct then Nick was in serious trouble and if he didn’t save him soon then not only Portland would be in trouble but potentially the world as well.

~GRIMM~

She twirls the dagger in her hand, the blade shining each time it hits the stripe of light from the few sources of light in the trailer. “28 years ago I was betrayed by the one person I trusted the most in the world…”

Flashback

In a small smoke filled Romanian bar during what is considered ‘Happy Hour’ men and women laughed as alcohol is passed around. Foreign music plays from a chipped and battered speaker hanging from a rafter behind the bar while clearly inebriated women dance provocatively together on the rotting wooden floor as the drunk men in the bar throw out cat calls and encourage the women in their foreign tongue.

However, behind the loud conversations and consumption of alcohol in a private room in the back a world changing meeting between the world’s oldest and most well respected Clan of Endeischen Grimm is taking place.

(Conversation taking place is spoken in Romanian but I have written it in English to make it easier to read)

"There is no doubt that this is a most joyous occasion but we must remember what has to occur during the coming years” an older man speaks, his voice is raspy but filled with great conviction.

There are murmurs of agreement. No one in doubt that this is true.

“Of course, no one is disagreeing with you but my only concern is whether we should take greater care in hiding the boy until he is of age to be trained. There are many wesen who have the capabilities to become aware of the boy’s destiny and who will hunt him down and kill him to prevent us from fulfilling it” another man, younger than the first interjects as he looks around at the three people who surround him.

"We need to take him underground now. He’s almost at the age where he can start his training, I say the sooner we have him in a secure location the better” a third voice, this time a female adds.

There is a knock at the door and the table goes silent as the second male voice rises from the table and slides the square peephole open to see who the knocker is before sliding the opening shut and opening the door. A young woman carrying a tray of shot glasses silently enters the room and quietly sets the glasses down in front of the room’s occupants then exits without a
The drinks are left untouched as the meeting continues.

“I agree” the final voice, also female and the one who has the greatest stake at this meeting speaks.

The other occupants of the room turn to her, waiting to hear what else she has to say.

“We’ll leave tonight and as soon as he is of age his training will begin” her voice leaves no room for argument and all give their agreements.

A few moments of silence go by before the oldest male speaks again, “then it is decided, young Nicolae will be sent to one of our underground camps until he is of age to start his training. Now, shall we all raise our glasses and toast for the resplendent future of our clan” each pick up a shot glass and raise it in the air before knocking their drinks back.

Having come to a decision the small group stands from the table and files out of the room.

~break~

Arriving home Kelly walks up the steps to her small two bedroom home and takes out her key, the sound of laughter reaches her ears as she opens the door and steps inside, she can smell freshly baked cookies the further she enters the house. She comes to a stop in the entry way to the living room.

She watches in silence as her sister Marie plays with her son on the floor with the train set Marie had gotten him for his 5th birthday. Their laughter brings no smile or even a twitch to her neutral face.

“Marie.”

At hearing her name her sister looks up and meets her sister’s gaze. Marie’s smile immediately wipes off her face at the serious look she finds herself at the receiving end of.

Looking away Marie averts her gaze to her nephew and addresses him, “hey Nicky, I have to talk to your mommy right now but I’ll back in a few minutes, can you be a good boy while we’re busy?”

Receiving a quiet nod Marie rises from the floor and follows Kelly into the kitchen area. A playing Nicky remains in their sights.

“What’s going on?” Marie questions, sensing the unvoiced tension Kelly had entered the house with.

“We’re leaving tonight. I met with the heads and we’ve agreed that it would be best to relocate Nicolae to one of the underground camps until he is of age to be trained” Kelly states, her voice unwavering as she watches her sister’s reaction.

Marie scoffs and shakes her head, unable to believe what she is hearing.

“He’s just a little boy, you can’t just uproot him like this! He won’t understand what’s going on.
Please reconsider!” she pleads, not wanting to see her nephew carted off to some goddamn ‘camp’.

“The decision has been made and it is final. Until he is of age to be trained he cannot defend himself and with his destiny—“

“Destiny? Will you listen to yourself, this is your son we’re talking about not some mythical warrior! He is just a child, your child and yet you talk so easily about sending him away to be molded and broken down in the same ways that we were! You can’t seriously want that for him” Marie’s voice is choked up with unshed tears as wishes and prays with all her heart that her sister would see reason and break out of the unfeeling warrior that she has been crafted into.

Her rant is met with silence, and the stillness is only filled with the breaths that pass between them and the muffled clanking of the toy trains.

Her eyes narrowing Kelly responds, “I am doing this FOR him. How can you stand in the way of his destiny, of this clan’s destiny? Nicolae is meant for greatness and I will see to it that he accomplishes that destiny. I can hardly look at you right now let alone believe that you are truly my sister” her voice is filled with disgust.

Her words hit Marie like a barrage of bullets aimed straight for her heart.

“I am trying to protect him, to protect him from turning into… into THEM, into YOU. That’s why I can’t let you take him. I swear to you with my last dying breath that I will do whatever it takes to stop you. At one point you may have been my sister, but she’s dead, she died the moment you left for your ‘training’” Marie hisses. She makes to move past her but Kelly blocks Marie’s path, her posture rigid and ready to pounce.

“Get out of my way” Marie orders, her voice low and filled with unveiled threat.

“You’re not going anywhere” Kelly retorts, her hands twitching at her side in anticipation.

A breath of silence and rootedness passes, the air filling with the crackling energy that was soon to hit like a sonic boom with the fallout leaving both parties cracked beyond repair.

Both move at the same time, their movements as fluid as water.

Kelly lashes out with her fists but her aim for all Marie’s vulnerable areas are knocked away by Marie’s blocks.

Changing tactics Kelly kicks out with her foot and manages to deliver a staggering blow to the back of Marie’s legs, the force causing her to involuntarily bend forward and be susceptible to the elbow that is harshly delivered to her back that sends her crumpling to the linoleum floor.

Though her attacked muscles are vibrating in pain Marie manages to flip herself around before Kelly can get in another punch and raises her legs to ram her feet into Kelly’s stomach.

With the few seconds that gives her, Marie pulls herself up from the floor and manages a few steps back towards the living room but before she can cross the threshold into the living room she is grabbed from behind. Kelly’s arm wrap around her neck, cutting off her air supply. Not letting her mind panic at the lack of air, Marie’s nails dig into the arm around her throat and
using the limited space, she throws her head back and feels the back of her skull make contact with Kelly’s face. She hears a groan of pain as she’s released from the hold.

Taking a step, continuing to get closer to the door Kelly once again manages to stop her, but this time it is by grabbing ahold of the collar of the shirt Marie wears and yanking Marie back so that Marie’s back smacks into the breakfast bar. Before she can protect herself, Kelly is on her again.

This time her hands wrap around Marie’s throat but instead of trying to choke her to death, Kelly only exerts enough pressure to keep Marie in place as Kelly leans forward and speaks.

“You are not my sister and you are no Endeischen Grimm. You are a disgrace to everything we stand for! Now listen, I am taking my son and we are going to the camp and there is nothing you can do to stop me from fulfilling his destiny” one of her hands remains at Marie’s throat as she reaches into her back pocket and pulls out her pocket knife, the wicked blade whipping out with a flick of her wrist.

Just as she is about to slice Marie’s neck open a voice stops her, “momma?”

Taking advantage of Kelly’s lapse in concentration Marie frantically grapples around the breakfast bar until her hand comes into contact with something. Her fingers curl around it and, using all her strength, she rams the object into the side of Kelly’s face, the glass shattering on impact and gouging into Kelly’s skin in a C formation around her left eye.

Howling in pain Kelly lets Marie go and staggers away, clutching at her bleeding face.

Seeing that she is still standing Marie carries out the final blow with a vicious well-aimed punch to the face that instantaneously knocks Kelly out before she even hits the ground.

End Flashback

“When I woke up both of you were gone. I tracked her movements for months but she was always five steps ahead of me and it wasn’t long before you both just vanished, no trail, no evidence at all that you or her even existed and none of my contacts in all parts of the world could give me anything. It was years before I found her trail again, 2 years ago in fact, right here in Portland. Sure she was going by a different last name now but I knew it was her. Unfortunately by the time I found her she was already dead, taking away my right and privilege to kill her myself” she finishes, the look on her face enough to make Nick’s very soul tremble in unease.

She had been right, it was incredibly hard for Nick to accept what he had just been told. How could he believe that his own mother was willing to send him away to some underground camp where he would be molded and brainwashed into the perfect warrior? Mothers were supposed to protect their child at all cost and love them unconditionally but instead she had muted all of her maternal instincts for the cause of “fulfilling his destiny”.

He doesn’t want to believe that his mother, the woman who had given birth to him would really do that to him, but looking into her eyes and listening to her speak he knows that it is the truth.

“That’s why she moved us around so often, she did it to protect me from you” he whispers.

The puzzle pieces are finally coming together.

She shakes her head, “no, she did it to stop us from going to the next level, from achieving your destiny! That căţea was a traitor to OUR clan. Because of her you were never trained properly, you
were not aware of the sacred destiny that you have to fulfill and it is because of her you are nowhere near ready for what is to come!”

Nick meets her nearly fanatic gaze and tries to speak but the words he wants to express are lodged deep in his throat. He can’t believe that this woman is actually his mother. It frightens and disgusts him that her DNA flows through his veins. That he shares anything with this woman makes his skin crawl and the urge to vomit almost too strong to fight.

“What is to come? What entails my so called ‘destiny?’ Are you going to sacrifice me to some fucked up god?! I mean since I seem to be so important here I think I have the right to know what exactly you plan on doing with me!?” his voice is raw with anger and his manacled hands make violent jerks in her direction, which causes the metal to dig into his wrists and the blood from the still bleeding cut on his palm to drop onto the floor.

“You’ll understand soon enough why this has to happen. Elijah!” she calls out.

He hears the door behind him open and is soon grabbed from behind by whom he guesses to be Elijah who starts to pull him out of the trailer. Nick struggles with everything in him but with his hands bound and the brute strength of Elijah’s arms restraining him all he can accomplish is spastic jerks and kicks.

“Whatever you’re planning, just know this, come hell or high water I swear to God I’ll stop you!” he growls as he is lugged out of the trailer and back to the tent he had woken up in.

The eyes of the Endeizechen Grimm follow him as he is dragged across the camp, their eyes void of emotion as they watch the pairs progress right up until Nick and Elijah disappear into the tent.

Wasting no time, Elijah somehow manages to keep him still long enough to reattach the chain to the manacles but instead of sitting back down in the chair he forces Nick to follow him over to a beam-like structure and tosses the end of the chain over the top of the structure where it lands on the ground on the other side.

Elijah pushed him up against the board then walks around him to pick up the chain and pulls forward, forcing Nick’s arms to raise to a painful height until Nick is on the verge of dislocating his shoulders and only his tiptoes able to touch the ground.

Keeping a grip on the chain Alec picks up the spike that was close by and bending down he places the spike through one of the holes in the chain then picks up a nearby mallet and pounds the spike deep into the ground with three well aimed strikes.

Nick glares at Elijah as he walks back to face him. The smirk on the man’s face increases the extreme hatred that Nick feels for the man.

“You should get some rest, you’re going to need it for tomorrow” with that Elijah turns and walks out of the tent, the amusing sound of Nick cursing him out makes his smirk widen and the thrill of the following days to seem all the sweeter.

Chapter End Notes

Loose translations:
căţea = bitch
I apologize for such a short chapter, and I really did consider combining the next one together with this chapter but I decided that they didn't flow together as well. Sorry!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Elijah walks the short distance back to the trailer and lets himself in, his leader looks up at him as he enters and closes the door behind him to muffle the outside sounds. He watches as she moves around the trailer, her hands playing with the dagger she holds in her hand.

“Have you secured him?” she asks, her movements stopping as she looks over at him.

“Yes, he won’t be going anywhere” he assures her.

Going back to the chair behind the desk she sits down, her hand with the dagger subconsciously raising to go down tip first onto the desk where her fingers twirl the blade back and forth; the point digs into the antique wood.

“He is grossly unprepared, all this could have been avoided if I had just killed Marie the moment I suspected her treachery but instead we have to do deal with this!” she scolds herself, her eyes blazing at the image of Marie that was produced by her mind.

The younger man wisely remains silent, knowing it was best to keep quiet and allow his leader to say what she needs to.

“One thing I can say though, is that he has the potential. It would be one thing to be working on a blank canvas but there is the beginnings of a great masterpiece in the works.” she states.

“What do you need me to do?” he asks, sensing that she would have some duties that need to be performed.

She gives him an almost apologetic look as she rises from the chair and approaches him, “for now, all I need you to do is fetch me Alin and then you may do as you wish” patting him on the cheek, she silently excuses him and sits back down in the chair.

Feeling a small twinge of anger at the rub off he nods then turns and walks out of the trailer, doing his best to close the door as gently as possible so as to not rock the trailer.

~GRIMM~

Walking out of his office Sean marches over to Hank and stops in front of his desk. His appearance goes unnoticed as the Detective stares at something with unwavering focus at whatever is on his computer screen.

“Detective?” Sean voices, waiting for Hank to pry his gaze away from the screen, but he is met by silence. Not even a flicker of recognition.

“Detective Griffin” he tries again, his voice a little louder and more demanding, but same as last
time he receives nothing to even hint that he has gotten past the fog in the man’s head.

Seeing that he doesn’t have much choice, he decides he is going to have to take a more direct approach. Stepping forward he reaches out and turns the monitor off. The effect is almost instantaneous. It takes Hank’s overworked mind a moment to recognize what has just happened and after a moment of sitting in stunned silence he looks up at his Captain with disbelief and un- ignorable annoyance.

Hank is at a loss for words to describe what he is feeling; flabbergasted, confused and angry were among the top few but the rest is just muffled rumbles of wavering emotions.

Before Hank can gather the words Renard speaks, “you’ve been working non-stop for almost twenty hours straight. I should have sent you home hours ago but with your partner’s abduction and everything that has been happening I allowed my mind to slip, so I’m sending you home now to get some sleep and an order to not come back in until the next shift tomorrow” Sean has a moment of déjà vu at his own words, due to the similarity that they had to a conversation he had had with Nick.

Hank’s first initial response is to refuse but he quickly realizes that there is nothing here at the station that can help him save Nick. He’s actually better off if he does as his Captain ordered.

Standing from his seat he nods in consent, “you’re right sir, I’ll see you tomorrow then” getting his jacket he bids his Captain goodnight and walks past him and out of the bull pen.

After Hank is out of view Sean looks back down at Hank and Nick’s work area, his eyes focusing in on Nick’s desk where everything is just as Nick had left it. Case files are sitting in stacks to the side, pens are scattered across the desk and there is still trash left in the wastebasket. As he is about to walk off his eyes catch the reflection of smeared blue ink around the edges of the desk placemat.

Pulling the chair back he steps into the area it had taken up and takes a closer look. It is obviously pen ink, likely from the broken pen that he can see beside the keyboard, but there is something about the scene before him that doesn’t sit right with him.

He recalls the memory of the night he had run into Nick and sees the blue ink that stained Nick’s hands along with the deeply anxious state the Grimm had been in. A small portion of it had been due to lack of sleep but Sean knew that most of it was because this case was affecting Nick down to the very core. Looking away from the desktop he brings his gaze down to the floor where they roam around until landing on the wastebasket. Walking around, he leans down and moves around the few pieces of trash until he finds a rolled up piece of paper that is splattered with dried blue ink. Picking the crumpled paper up, he hides it in his hand as he walks back to his office and closes the door behind him.

~GRIMM~

With some assistance from Elijah, Alin enters the trailer and hobbles over to the padded chair in the corner of the room.

“Thank you Elijah, you’re dismissed” Kelly watches as the younger male leaves the trailer and once he is gone she turns her attention to Alin who is waiting patiently in his chair.

The older man doesn’t meet her gaze, his eyes focused on the beaded crochet cord that he fingers in his hand. He has the air of a man who has seen many horrific tragedies in his lifetime and yet has managed to walk away from each with his mind seemingly still intact. At the venerable age of 81
he has been witness and executioner to the slaughtering of 100s of thousands of wesens along with the plotting and execution of several attacks that harmed wesens as well as humans.

To an outsider, that is one who is 100% human and not aware of the supernatural world, he is just an elderly man who rarely speaks and appears to keep to himself, a grandfatherly type, but to the ones who are aware of what goes on behind the curtain, he is the epitome of a monster.

“I’m assuming you’ve finished the brew, which means that we can move on to the next step: initiation. We don’t have nearly as much time as we would have desired but this needs to be done and soon. Will you be able to put the trials together in time?” she questions, the soft clinking of the beads meets her question.

The silence continues, the only exception being the tinkling of the beads. This continues for what feels like an eternity to Kelly and if this was anyone else she may have shown her annoyance and demanded him to answer her but she holds herself back, internally coaching herself to remain calm and silent until he chooses to answer her.

“I have. As for the trials, I will need some assistance in setting everything up, especially with the last trial; I assume you have someone in mind?” he voices, a knowing look filling his eyes at his last words.

A small smile cracks her face and she nods, “I believe I have the perfect ‘assistant’ in mind.”

~GRIMM~

Un-crumpling the paper he carefully smooths it out on his desk then takes a moment to look the ink stained paper over. It doesn’t take more than a second for his eyes to find the jagged Sterbestunde G, the lines a dark blue that shine under the light. This isn’t just a simple drawing that had gotten out of hand, he doesn’t have to analyze it too deeply to see that the artist (Nick) had likely not been intending to draw the subject matter and he would even take a step further to say that he had maybe not been in complete control.

It is obvious that the Endeizechen Grimm had long gotten under Nick’s skin and if this is any indication he can see that Nick’s mind has quickly been unraveling from the moment he had taken on this case. If he had known that this case had centered on a whole clan of Endeizechen Grimm Sean never would have put Nick on this case, in fact he would have handled it solely on his own. But it was too late for that now.

Concentrating back on the here and now he focuses his thoughts on the paper at hand. Nick’s behavior had drastically changed the moment he had taken this case on, his aura, smell, mind and even words had become erratic, bordering on obsessional. His behavior hadn’t been like a cop who had become overly dedicated to solving a case but more along the lines of a stalker watching their victim with every intent of doing their target harm.

Hopeful that maybe some visuals will help him he brings up the pictures from the crime scenes and looks them over again, his eyes cataloguing every inane object and person that had been in the room of the crimes, all with the desire for something to jumpstart his memory. In his mind he lists everything that he sees in the pictures: broken furniture, busted doors, scuff marks, bodies, decapitated heads, blood-wait, the blood!

His thoughts going a thousand miles per minute he looks up the case notes that had been sent to him and what he notes drops a ton of cement in his stomach: every message had been written in the victim’s blood. This is a factor that his mind has bounced over, having been focused more on finding out what the messages were saying when he should have recognized the importance of the
writing material.

There are many dark spells that revolve around the usage of blood, blood magic it is called, and in addition to the many spells that can cause unthinkable pain and torment on the target it is also incredibly addictive. Many casters will go to incredible lengths to obtain blood; from killing animals, stealing from fresh corpses and even moving up to killing those around them until finally they turn on themselves and ultimately cut too deep and die.

This is not to say that this is the end for every blood caster, but those that’s minds are too weak to handle the addictive power it is usually only a matter of time before they lose themselves completely.

He wracks his mind for blood spells that can invoke the type of reaction that Nick has gotten. The itch in his mind becomes worse the more spells he eliminates until finally he recalls a spell that hit every check mark to a T: To mentis obsident, roughly translated, “to obsess one’s mind”. He can’t recollect all of the requirements for this spell on his own but he does know where he can.

Without another thought he vacates his office and heads for his personal vehicle, his mind concentrating on nothing but his destination.

~break~

Arriving at his apartment complex he strides past the security desk, tilting his head in a polite hello at the guard behind the desk and gets into the elevator and presses the button for the 4th floor. The music in the elevator plays in the background, a somber melody that is played by a piano and accompanied by a violin; his mind quickly blocks it out as he waits for the elevator to reach his floor.

Finally coming to his floor the doors open and he quickly exits, his eyes focusing in on his apartment door that is waiting for him across the hall. As he walks he subconsciously takes his keys out and once standing in front of the door his key easily slides into the keyhole and he steps inside, closing the door behind him and making sure to set the deadbolt.

His mind still on the task at hand he sheds his coat along with his suit jacket and walks the short distance into his living room and over to the windows that look out into the city of Portland. Not wanting anyone across the way to see him he carefully pulls the curtains back, making sure that the long expanse of windows are completely covered. It would not do to have a nosy neighbor look over at the wrong time and see what he is doing.

With that taking care of he walks over to the fireplace and stops to stare at the painting that rests above the mantel place. It is an old painting, not one that was painted by Picasso or anyone else well known, it is merely a painting that had been painted and given to him by a very old friend who had long passed away. The painting depicts a forest scene, there is a roaring bear as the center piece with a hunter aiming a rifle at it but if you look in the background, hiding behind the bear, there is a small cowering doe that peers out around the legs of the bear.

He had asked his friend what the significance of the painting was and he would never forget the answer his friend had given him. With a twinkle in his eye and a laugh in his voice he answered, “Anyone and anything can be a hero, all it takes is looking past what is right in front of us and only on the outcome that we wish until it becomes a reality.”

Putting the thought aside he steps closer then reaches up and carefully pulls the painting down to reveal a pristine safe that had been built into the wall. Gently setting the painting down, he moves
over to the keypad and types in the combination. The light turns from red to green and the door hisses open to give him access to the object that lay protected inside.

Reaching in he takes out the delicate package that is carefully wrapped in a faded roll of gray fabric and brings it over to his coffee table. Instead of sitting down when he places the package down he remains standing, his gaze heavy with trepidation as he looks down at the object.

It has been so long since he has laid eyes on it, almost fifteen years in fact, and the thought of seeing it now fills him with dread. There are so many reasons that he has for locking the object up, reasons that continue to haunt his dreams. So many people had been hurt by this object: friends, family and other countless nameless victims and though the bloodshed was not solely on his hands the perpetrators blood bubbles through his veins.

Taking a breath he starts to reach down, hand slightly shaking, but he stops himself midway, his hand jerking itself back in something akin to fright.

He needs to get ahold of himself! He isn’t going to let a mere object put fear in his heart.

Deciding that maybe a drink will calm his nerves he walks around the couch and over to his liquor cabinet and gets out a bottle of scotch and a glass. Taking the bottle and glass with him he walks back to the couch and sits down, setting the bottle and glass down on the table. With practiced ease he uncaps the bottle and pours a more than generous amount of the liquor then sets the bottle aside.

Picking the glass up he slowly brings it to his lips and tips the liquor into his waiting mouth. The silky burn of the scotch as it travels down his throat calms his nerves and the feeling of the scotch settling in his stomach fills him with warmth.

It would be so easy to just down the whole bottle, forget the outside world completely and instead just live in an ignorant bliss of alcohol and dreamless slumber. But he knows that he will have to return to the real world eventually, and with what is going on he needs to put his childish fears aside and do what needs to be done.

Setting the glass down he slowly unravels the rag from what is revealed to be an old, leather bound book that is as thick as an encyclopedia. The leather is bumpy and slick to the touch, the color a deep ruby that is lighter around the edges from where it has been worn from handling.

This book has been passed down for generations, on his mother’s side, and with passing the book has become thicker with each entry made. He can recall a memory of his mother staring at this book for hours, the crinkled pages whispering in the night as she turned the pages, her eyes roving the words that lined the pages and there was hardly a moment where there wasn’t a smile on her face.

She had caught him watching her one night, long past his bedtime, but instead of chastising him and sending him off to bed she had beckoned him over…

**Flashback**

_Huddled behind the door, only half of his small face illuminated by the flickering light of the fire that thrived in the fireplace, is a small five year old child. His eyes watch as his mother sits in her favorite chair and reads ‘the special book’ that he isn’t allowed to touch._

_She treats the book like a holy item, giving it its own special alter area where he will sometimes find her chanting weird words that he doesn’t understand._
He continues to watch for a few more minutes as she turns the pages, her eyes never leaving the book, which make her next move startle him when she suddenly stops reading and addresses him,

“Sean, I know you’re over there. Come on out” she encourages, looking away from the book and over at him.

The little boy hesitates in his spot, afraid that he is about to be scolded. As if sensing his fears she quickly placates him.

“You’re not in trouble, in fact I want to show you something” beckoning him over he slowly peaks out from behind the door and cautiously approaches her, his nerves on high alert as if something is going to jump out and grab him.

Stopping in front of her she pats her lap and receiving one last reassuring smile he climbs onto her lap and she brings the book over to rest on his lap, the large book dwarfs his small lap and legs.

Once he is settled she rests her chin on his shoulder and speaks, “you really should be in bed young man” she states, her words though stern do not hold any malice.

He hangs his head in shame, “I’m sorry mother, I just wanted to see what you were doing” he answers, his voice soft and submissive.

She rubs his back in comfort, pecking a kiss on the side of his head then she replies, “it’s okay, you were just curious and I’m not mad, in fact I think it’s time for you to learn about this family heirloom” her hand pets the leather cover of the book, each stroke filled with adoration.

“This book has been passed down for over fifty generations of my family, our family, and it has seen many changes in the world. This book is our family’s Grimoire, and on its pages hold spells for almost any situation you may find yourself in. There are spells for protection, health, harm and so much more! With this Grimoire, our family has casted great spells and created unimaginable potions that gave them much respect and along with that the means and will to do whatever they had to, to protect themselves and their loved ones” she starts, watching as her son curiously opens the book, his little hands running down the pages in awe.

She continues to watch her son in silence, his hands carefully turning each page, treating it as if it were a newborn baby.

“It is not only Regnant blood that flows through your veins, but you are also a zauberbiest as well, a male hexenbiest essentially, and though those two sides have merged it does not weaken your capabilities to excel at magic, if anything it strengthens it. Someday this Grimoire shall be yours, and when that day comes I need you to promise me that you shall protect this with your life and no matter what, never allow yourself to become something you are not” she finishes, her eyes boring into his own so as to get across how serious she is.

Sensing her gaze still on him he responds, “I promise mother”

Smiling in acknowledgment she takes the book and sets it aside then gently places him down on the floor.
“Good boy, now I believe it’s past someone’s bedtime” holding her hand out she waits until he takes her hand then follows her down the dark hallway to his bedroom.

End Flashback

The memory ends and Sean comes back to himself. That is one of the few memories he has of his mother that doesn’t involve them being on the run, in constant fear of being caught and executed by his father’s family.

No longer able to put it off he warily opens the book and the scent of leather and ink fill his senses, the smell taking him back to when his mother was still alive and he hadn’t yet seen the evil in the world.

Shutting his emotions down, he starts his search, the pages making that familiar crinkling sound with each turn, his eyes quickly scan the pages then move on to the next. His mind vaguely recognizes some of the spells and potions he passes over, mainly from watching and listening to his mother, but there were a few that he had tried himself, for instance a white spell that rid his mind of bad dreams. There are darker spells of course but he purposely blocks those from his memories, for the likelihood of reflecting on them would likely result in an unpleasant reaction.

His hand is on autopilot as he thinks and it is only when he glances down that he stops himself from turning to the next page. Pulling his hand back, his mind alert, he silently reads the passage to himself.

“To mentis obsident” reading the requirements he finds that his earlier suspicions had been correct, this is likely the spell that the Endeizechen Grimm had used. This is a spell that his great-great-great grandmother had obtained while passing through Eastern Europe and it is likely that the original source had been from a member of an Endeizechen Grimm clan.

It is when he reads the ‘ingredients’ that his stomach begins to clench; blood of the sacrificed, a weapon of purity, clear intent and a receiver. There is no question that the receiver was Nick and he had his suspicions on what the ‘intent’ had been. The thing about this spell though is that it isn’t one that a beginner can do, it requires years of experience and a mind and soul that is incapable of feeling love or remorse and that’s what leads him to believe that the clan in his territory has an elder of sorts or rather someone with experience.

Moving forward he continues to read and when he reaches the end of the spell the clench in his stomach turns to a sickening churn that grows progressively worse with the beating of his heart.

If left untreated the spell will continue to worsen and the feelings and or instincts that were passed over will eventually make the victim withdraw into their minds completely or lead them to insanity.

This is the only spell he has to worry about though, there is also the added combination of the shedding ritual and he can only guess what will happen to Nick if he was to undergo the ritual while under the effects of “to mentis obsident.”

His anxiety worsening, he frantically turns the page, looking desperately for the ‘treatment’ that the Grimoire speaks of and as luck would have it there on the following page is the cure. Reading through the ingredients he knows long before he reads off the last one that he has no way of finding the ingredients himself. Though he has the ability to brew the potion finding the right ingredients was a different matter altogether.

There is one place though where he knows he can, but it will require him to drop the mask that he
has long hid behind and reveal his true self to people that will not only look at him differently but without a doubt treat him differently as well.

The Exotic Spice & Tea Shop.

Chapter End Notes

I know that Sean's mom doesn't act like a typical Hexenbiest (or else I don't believe she does) but I did this because I wanted at least one positive mother mentioned in this story.
The mask falls down

He has no idea how long he has been hanging, it has to have been at least a few hours since he can see that the sun is beginning to rise. Another, more painful inclination, is the burning in his shoulders because of the unnatural angle they have been pulled back at for an extended amount of time. And to add to that is the excruciating pain that vibrates down his body.

Nick tries to keep as still as possible. The slightest wrong move rattles his bruised and battered body with ricochets of pain. He can only imagine the sight he makes; arms extended, feet almost dangling with bruises and cuts that permeate blood. He is looking less like a Grimm and more like an animal strung up for slaughter.

What truly shocks him though is that his evident helplessness and impending doom doesn’t bring him a blizzard of icy fear, but instead a tsunami of rage. He isn’t some weak, cowardly human, he is a blood thirsty Grimm!

They never should have been able to get the drop on him. With all of his ruthless training with Monroe and harrowing encounters with violent wesen, he should have anticipated the attack and defended himself better. He had been soft though, he had fallen for their trap perfectly.

His human instincts to help what he perceived as a woman in trouble had warped his Grimm instincts to recognize the threat for what it was. Maybe the best and most logical option for him is to turn those instincts off… He freezes those thoughts in their tracks, his mind internally gagging at what he had been suggesting.

Turn off his humanity? What is happening to him? Without his humanity he would become just like his captors, his own mother, an Eneizechen Grimm, and just the thought of being like them sends shivers down his spine. His walls are trying to crumble, leaving him vulnerable to malicious thoughts, which is exactly what they want. To become like them so that he will willingly take part in their sacrificial plans. He would die before bowing down to them. From behind the wall a deep roar rattles the bricks, some coming loose and falling to the inky blackness of his mind. And riding the roar is a terrible shriek that grates on his eardrums like nails to a chalkboard.

The manacle rubs against the scabbing around his wrists causing the wounds to open and dribble blood down his arms as he grips his hands into knuckles. His blunt nails bite into the flesh of his palm, leaving behind crescent moons. Clenching his eyes shut he does his best to rebuild the wall. Bricks magically start to appear in the places of the missing ones. The roaring and shrieking continues as the wall shakes in seizure like jerks, but it begins to muffle with the more bricks he replaces. The last brick feels like a thousand pounds as he starts to put it into place, the entity behind the wall becoming even more violent the stronger the wall becomes and retaliates with a swipe of agony that rattles his consciousness.

Beginning to lose the fight, he grits his teeth and forcibly slams the brick home. The monster in his head echoes off like a call into a cave. His body and mind want to shut down, thoroughly exhausted from the mental and self-beating it has just endured but he forces his eyes to remain open. The pain he elicits by clenching his hands enough to jolt him awake whenever his eyes start to droop. He is at his weakest when he is unconscious, and he isn’t going to give his captors any more advantage over him. Determined to stay awake, he waits for someone to come.

~GRIMM~

Rosalee passes down another book from the extensive collection to Monroe whose arms are
already loaded with other large volumes. Neither had spoken much as they continue to gather books, idle conversation far from their minds and neither wants to voice their fears about what Nick could possibly be going through. When they do speak it is mainly about what books Monroe has and if he can see a certain title.

Hank had called a few minutes ago and told him that he was on his way, he just had to make a quick stop at the trailer. Reaching up to the very top shelf she sways precariously until Monroe manages to ground her once he put the books down and when she is righted she mutters a quiet ‘thank you’ and easily grabs the book and carefully climbs down from the ladder.

Taking her own pile she walks into the backroom, with Monroe following her, and places the books on the table.

“These are all the books in here that would likely have information on this shedding ritual, but what information we do find, if any, will likely be very few. That’s why, when we find something we are going to bookmark it then keep going, by the end hopefully what we earmarked will blend together seamlessly” Rosalee’s hands never stop moving as she speaks, her nervous energy finding an outlet in the task at hand as she starts to flip through a book, her eyes scanning each word carefully.

Following her lead Monroe grabs his own book and gets started. Lately all he seems to be doing is rifting through dusty books, first with Nick then Hank and now Rosalee.

He is slowly losing his battle against the hopelessness that wants to take root in his thoughts, with each page he turns another blow is delivered to his fragile frame of hope and he fears that soon that frame will fall and shatter.

He can’t help but think back to the first time he had met Nick. It was a story that he was sure to tell his grandchildren (if he got that far in life) about the unexpected and first honest to god morally good Grimm that he had ever encountered. Sure their first meeting had come to literal blows when Nick believed him to be kidnapping and killing innocent young women, but once they teamed up to track down the real blutbad behind the crimes they had progressed from cop and suspect to acquaintances. It took a little time, and a lot of bruises and snark, before they finally reached the friendship they had today and it was quite the journey. Now he had Nick on speed dial, and Nick the same.

His grams would likely drop dead all over again if she were alive to see him being best friends with a Grimm, but hey, that was progress and he is more than happy for this kind of progress to continue. But there is always the downsides to being friends with a Grimm. The constant danger, frantic phone calls for help and ridicule from his fellow wesen friends for even being associated with a Grimm. But he accepts all of this with an open mind. Nick and he make a great team and even better friends, no matter what anyone said he will always value their friendship. The life of a Grimm is always uncertain. From what he had learned and heard from Nick, his books and his own family, is that Grimms tend to die young and violent.

He had known all this when he had become friends with Nick but somehow the man had gotten to him and here they are now, Nick missing, abducted by an insane clan of Endeizechen Grimm to be sacrificed in some ancient ritual. He never pictured his life turning out this way. As soon as they save him (and they were going to save him!) he is going to give the Grimm a grilling lecture on personal safety and how his constant life threatening stunts makes Monroe lose ten years of his life. All this is, is another ‘adventure’ that they are all going to see through and then someday, they are going to laugh about it. That’s what he has to keep telling himself.

A knock at the shop door captures the pair’s attention and both slowly eye each other before
Monroe rises and slowly approaches the door, both of their nerves on edge with the news that a clan of Endeizechen Grimm are nearby and on a wesen murdering rampage.

Turning the corner both breath a silent sigh of relief at the sight of Hank with a small stack of books.

Monroe opens the door and ushers him inside then quickly locking the door behind him and checking to make sure that the close sign is up.

“I brought all the books I could find that even remotely mentioned the ritual” he explains as he sets the three books down. Rosalee quickly picks one up and leafs through it, her face pinched in concentration.

“Well it’s more than we have” she offers as she sits down in a nearby chair and continues to read. Hank looks over the array of books that are scattered on top of the wooden table, his eyebrows slightly rise at the vast number that manage to take up all the space on the antique table.

As Rosalee is busy reading through the book in front of her Monroe approaches Hank who is browsing his own book. Tapping him on the shoulder, he waits until Hank meets his gaze before speaking.

“Have you found any clues about where they might have taken Nick?” he asks, hoping that there is some kind of lead that can point them in the right direction.

Hank sighs and shakes his head, “no, every scene is spotless. They know how to cover their tracks, which means they’ve likely done this before. I think our best chance at finding Nick is to find out what this ritual entails and the kind of seclusion it would require” Hank explains.

Monroe bites his lip and scratches his head, his unease and anxiety about this whole situation clear on his face.

“There are dozens of places for ‘seclusion’ in this area alone! How are we going to narrow it down using only notes from an old book?” he questions, his voice hissing at the end.

The detective does not have an immediate response to the question. The truth of the matter is that he doesn’t know. With the scarce evidence they’ve collected and the looming deadline he is beginning to run out of ideas. But if he is being honest with himself, he has been winging this entire thing from the very start and all he can hope for is that lady luck will take pity on him and throw him a bone.

Just as he is opening his mouth to respond he is interrupted by a loud banging from the shop door, the loud repetitive knocks echo around the cozy interior of the shop.

“Are you expecting someone?” Hank asks instead, looking over at both Rosalee and Monroe.

“No, just you” Rosalee answers, her posture stiff and ready to spring forth at a moment’s notice.

“It could just be a customer?” Monroe suggests, his response coming off as a question at the end.

The knocking stops and the trio stay completely silent, waiting to see if the knocking would resume and after a few moments pass and the silence continues they are about to pass it off as a customer who had given up and moved on until the knocking returns, this time more urgent and louder. Rosalee is about to go answer the door but is stopped by Hank who holds his arm out, his other hand rests on the hilt of his gun as he advances towards the door.
His fingers twitch over his firearm the closer to the door he gets and it is when he sees who the knocker is does he freezes in shock.

Standing on the other side of the door, looking in at him with a face of stone is his police Captain. Monroe and Rosalee peer around the corner of the next room and notice that Hank has frozen a few feet from the door.

“Hank? What’s going on?” Monroe whispers, his blutbad senses coming out to play as a response to the possible attack that could be about to take place.

~GRIMM~

Elijah looks up from the roaring fire as Alin limps towards him. The closer he gets the quieter the entire environment becomes as if aware of the power that this man holds.

He watches as he gingerly sits down on the log beside him.

He waits in silence for the man to speak, having a feeling that it whatever he is about to talk about involves him somehow.

“I need you and four of your guys to go into town and collect the other ‘participants’ for the trials. Here’s the list and the location you can find them at” he says as he hands a folded up piece of paper to him. As he accepts the paper the thought of asking Alin how he had acquired the information doesn’t even cross his mind.

The man has connections all over the world and being able to locate information such as this is as easy as finding dirt in a garden.

“I need the first batch before sundown tonight, do you think you can handle that?” he questions, eyeing the younger man intently.

He meets the old man’s stare, doing his best to keep his expression neutral, “it’ll be done” he assures.

Rising from the log Elijah approaches a group of three men and one woman that are huddled around a table that is topped with sharpened blades.

~GRIMM~

Confused beyond belief Hank stands in front of the closer door with a slightly gaping mouth and words that are tumbling around in his brain like clothes in a laundry machine.

What is his captain doing here? Better yet, what is that book that he’s clutching to his chest so protectively? Monroe hesitantly walks out from behind the doorway and over to the shell shocked detective.

“Uh Hank, who is that?” he asks, having never seen the man before he doesn’t know if Hank is acting this way because he is a perp. that Hank had arrested before or if he was a wesen that had attacked him and Nick before. Either way the sight of the man before him is too much for his brain to process.

Popping his mouth closed he addresses Monroe while continuing to look at Renard,
“he’s my boss, the Captain of the Portland P.D.” he explains, his hand lowering away from his weapon as he takes a few cautious steps towards the door.

Monroe’s eyes nearly bug out of his eye socket at hearing this. The captain of the Portland P.D.? Oh this is just great, next President Obama is sure to waltz on in here too for some chamomile tea!

“Oh, okay, uh another question…what the hell is he doing here?!” he urgently hisses, eyeing the apparent police captain on the other side of the door.

Just because the man is an officer of the law doesn’t mean that he isn’t here to cause destruction and mayhem.

Rosalee had come out from behind the doorway and is now standing beside Monroe, having overheard their conversation she is just as intrigued to find out why the Captain of the P.P.D. would be visiting her shop?

“Oh, only one way to find out” with a calming breath Hank relaxes his posture and opens the door for Renard who quickly steps inside and pushes the door closed behind him.

Monroe and Rosalee take an involuntary step back, their hackles raised at the alarming amount of rage and worry that perforates off the man in hacking clouds.

There is something about the man’s scent that wracks their senses, his scent is more than just human but something else as well. Hank takes no notice of them as he speaks,

“Captain, what are you doing here?” he questions, curious and slightly suspicious at his unexpected arrival.

Captain Renard seems to be having an internal struggle going on inside his mind. His expression is apprehensive and ragged with worry. He plays with the fabric that encases the book in his arms, his fingers chalk white from the death grip he has on the book.

This is it, he is really going to do this. After he did this, there is no going back and he would just have to trust that Hank and the other man and woman in front of him wouldn’t give out his secret. An overwhelming part of him wants to fabricate an elaborate story about how and why he has this information but he knows that would never work.

From what he knows about the three people in this room was that they were no simpletons, they would be able to see through the holes in his story and dig deep enough to find out the real truth. It was better if he just came out with it.

“I have information that you’re going to need if we are to save Nick from the clan of Endeizechen Grimm” he chooses his words carefully, wanting them to know first off that he is well aware of the wesen world and that he is willing to help save Nick.

If Hank was shocked before now he is well over the moon because did his captain really just tell him that 1. He was well versed in the wesen world and 2. That he had information that could potentially save Nick? Somebody pinch him because he must be dreaming.

Monroe steps towards the man and purposefully inhales a large whiff of the man, his eyes close in concentration as he tries to place the scent but comes up empty. It is not a scent that he had ever encountered before; it was static with power, musky with worry and hot with rage.

Knowing that Monroe was trying to figure out what he is he rummages around for the correct way of doing so before speaking, “I am part Regnant and part zauberbiest, but I can assure you that all I
wish to do is help you save Nick before it’s too late” he explains, looking at each of the shocked faces before him.

Rosalee and Monroe’s eyebrows nearly shoot up to the ceiling at the revelation. A royal in Portland? Sure they had heard rumors and stories but they had never believed it to be true. Portland isn’t exactly a kingdom, but it did make sense.

Being the captain of police would give him enough power to control the law in the city but it wouldn’t put him in the spotlight. An even balance. Hank on the other hand has no clue what either a Regnant or zauberbiest is, all he can safely wager is that his Captain was wesen.

The man he had been serving under for almost a decade was something out of one of Nick’s books. He doesn’t know how much more shock his system could take, if he wasn’t careful his head would explode.

“I know that you all have questions, especially you Hank, but they can wait, right now we need to focus on finding Nick” without waiting for agreements he strode past the three into the other room and pushes aside a few books to make room for his own.

Not knowing what else to do the three follow and stand around him as he unwraps the book and opens it up to the page he was looking for.

“Before we can save Nick from the Shedding Ritual, there is another step that we have to take, we have to cure him of “To mentis obsident”, if the shedding ritual is performed while he is still under “To mentis obsident” his mind could invert on itself and there’ll be no helping him then. Thankfully, I know how to make the cure, I just need the ingredients” he explains as he turns to face the group that had converged around him.

Rosalee gasps at the mention of the spell. It is one that she had heard many revenge stories about. People would pay powerful blood casters to cast on their enemies and then slowly they would feed that person such negative emotions and self-hatred that the victim would eventually take their own life. But as far as she knows, no one has ever created a cure for it because the spell is cloaked in powerful dark magic and breaking up the impenetrable structure is nearly impossible.

Hank and Monroe though are clueless about what this spell does exactly and Monroe steps forward and asks as much,

“What exactly does this spell do and how do you know that they casted it on Nick?” Having been expecting this question Sean already has a response planned,

“What this spell basically does is make the victim an antenna for whatever emotions, thoughts etc. that the caster wants to invoke in them, all in order to make the victim do something. In this case the Endeizechen Grimm most likely want Nick to willingly submit to the shedding ritual. And I’m positive that Nick was targeted using this spell because of this” flipping the page over, he points at the ‘ingredients’ for the spell and read them aloud: “Blood of the sacrificed, a weapon of purity, clear intent and a receiver.

"I was looking over the crime scene photos and all scenes had one important element: blood, specifically the victim’s blood and it goes without saying that there was very clear intent for Nick to receive” both Hank and Monroe read the entry for themselves and are considerably paler by the end.

Meanwhile, Rosalee has written down the ingredients for the cure and is hurriedly collecting the ingredients from all around the shop, having to even venture down into the basement when a few
particular ingredients are classified as extremely rare. When she has finally collected the last elusive ingredient her arms are filled to the brim and she has to carefully watch each step she takes.

Seeing that she is struggling Monroe quickly assists her and unburdens her load some as he helps set out the ingredients on a clear table. Sean, notices that the ingredients had been collected and picks up the Grimoire then walked to the table. He decisively takes off his overcoat and rolled up his sleeves in preparation for the work ahead.

“Shouldn’t we wait until we know where Nick is before making this?” Rosalee questions, aware that certain potions are time sensitive.

“No, we need to prepare it now because it takes 12 hours for it to stabilize and over 24 hours before it loses its power and seeing as we only have 4 days, including today, time is not something we have an abundance of” he explains as he picks up a glass jar that is partially filled with crushed white oak and deposits a pinch of it in the pot beside the book.

For the first time since Sean had relayed his knowledge about this spell Hank asks the question that will hopefully move things along. “What do you know about the shedding ritual?”

This is another question that he has been expecting but unlike the last one, the answer does not contain good news.

“I know that it can only occur on a blue moon and with a sacrifice that was born on a blue moon as well. That is rare enough but what makes Nick’s case so dire is that this blue moon will be his 33rd birthday and it is believed that the number three holds significant power in certain circles so with the rare occurrence of a blue moon this could prove to be an incredibly powerful event. If they are successful they’re senses will be incredibly heightened, they’ll be stronger, faster and nearly impossible to stop” he finished, his hands continuing to make the potion as he speaks.

Hank had read something similar in Marie’s entry but to hear it from another source only cements how serious this whole thing is becoming.

“Is there a way to stop it?” he has to know right now if there is any chance of them being able to put a stop to this before the world essentially ended or if they are fighting a losing battle.

Sean stops and meets Hank’s gaze, “the only way to stop it is to get Nick away from them and pray to whatever God you believe in that you got there in time because otherwise you’re up shit creek.”

Silence follows, no one having anything to say after his rather crude and blunt response.

~GRIMM~

Clarissa and her two sisters, Lyla and Bethany say goodbye to their coworkers as they exit the beach shack to take their lunch breaks. “So where do you guys want to go? And don’t you dare say Tony’s because I will slap you” Clarissa threatens, her voice not filled with actual venom but there was a hint of annoyance.

Bethany laughs as Lyla clicks her mouth shut, her eyes giving away that that was exactly what she had been about to suggest.

“How about that little Chinese place by the coffee shop? We haven’t been there in ages” Bethany suggests, her mouth beginning to water at the thought of the number five special. Yes, she is definitely in a Chinese mood.

With her concentration on talking with her sisters,Bethany doesn’t notice the woman walking with
her head down towards her and accidentally bumps into her.

“Oh I’m so sorry, are you alright?” Bethany asks, trying to meet the woman’s eyes.

“I’m fine, sorry.” Before Bethany can respond, the woman walks off.

Bethany, Lyla and Clarissa watch the woman for a moment before turning back to each other.

“Well that was weird.” Lyla comments.

“Well, she’s just shy. Anyway, are we all agreed on The Red Palace?” Clarissa inputs.

Her suggestion is met with murmurs of agreement and all three climb into the car and drive off towards their chosen restaurant.

Up in the passenger seat Lyla is messing with the radio and when it comes to a station that is playing one of her favorite songs she looks back and gives Bethany in the backseat a cheeky grin then turns the volume up to an obnoxious level and begins to sing along word for word. Her voice is as beautiful as ever but her song choice is quickly grating on Clarissa’s nerves.

There is only so much Miley Cyrus that she can handle and Party in the USA has to be at the top of her list of songs that she gladly stab needles in her ears if she never had to listen to it again.

With a scathing glare aimed at Lyla, Clarissa quickly reaches over and turns the radio off, her eyes daring Lyla to try and turn that dreadful song back on. Laughing at her sister’s expense Lyla leans back in her seat and looks out the window as they drive down the street to the restaurant.

As they drive Bethany reaches into her purse and gets out her bottle of water and takes a long gulp, her skin beginning to dry from the exposure to the air. Passing the bottle up front Lyla takes her own gulp from the bottle and passes it over to Clarissa who is eagerly awaiting her turn.

As the water had been passed around they finally arrive at the restaurant but as they are pulling into the parking lot they are dismayed to find that the lot is completely empty.

Clarissa pulls the car to a stop and all look at the building in confusion. The place should have been open. While they hadn’t been here in a while they could still remember the places’ hours and right now should be the lunch rush, so where is everyone?

Getting her seatbelt off Clarissa opens her door, “I’m going to go see what’s going on, maybe their hours changed. I’ll be right back and just to make sure that you don’t try turning that garbage back on, I’m taking the keys” following through she pulls the keys from the ignition and shuts the door behind her as she walks towards the building.

As she approaches the building she can see a piece of paper taped to the inside of the window and she zeroes in on it, trying to read what it says as she approaches.

It is as she is only a few feet from the door that the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end and she stops in place. Her senses try to reach out and distinguish what had alerted her subconscious but all she can hear is the sound of traffic and the occasional bird.

Shaking her paranoia off as nothing more than stress she steps up to the door and finally gets a good look at the writing on the paper, and what she sees makes her blood freeze.

Drawn onto the paper in what looks to be blood is the mark of the Endeizechen Grimm.
Her grip on the paper loosens and the paper flutters to the ground, the wind catching it and causing it to flutter a few inches away before getting caught in the branches of a nearby bush.

As she turns to run she finds herself face to face with a man clad all in black and wearing a stony expression that makes her heart climb into her throat and her feet to melt into the ground. From behind him she hears the sound of whimpering. Looking over his shoulder she is filled with fear and rage at the sight that meets her. Being restrained by two other men is her sisters.

An uncharacteristic growl rumbles in her chest and she suddenly finds the strength to move but she doesn’t get far when the man wraps her head in a chokehold and before she can even start to struggle she feels a painful prick in her neck.

As her vision starts to blur and her muscles turn to rubber she can faintly feel the arms of her attacker holding onto her as darkness begins to overtake her until finally she is out.

If she had managed to stay awake for just a little longer she would have been force to watch as her sisters were treated in the same manner.

When all three are out, each person grabs their own girl and heads for the van that is parked in the alley by the restaurant.

“That was too easy, I thought they would at least have a little more fight in them” one of the men says as he carelessly drops his load into the back of the van and closes the door.

“I’m sure the next batch will be more challenging, after all this is only trial one” another comments, as he leans against the front of the van and watches Elijah survey the scene one last time so as to make sure that no evidence has been left behind.

It hadn’t taken much effort to learn what the girl’s had been planning on doing today. All they had had to do was have Michelle follow them around and ‘accidentally’ bump into them until she learned what their lunch plans were then relay the information to them.

Initially they had been concerned that they were going to face difficulties with abducting them outside the restaurant but upon arriving at the restaurant first they had discovered that the restaurant had gone out of business five months ago and with a quick look around they had found no surveillance equipment.

It seemed as if fate had lined up to fit their plans perfectly.

When Elijah is done he returns to the van and all three pile in, on their way back to camp where Michelle will meet them.

~GRIMM~

As Sean nears the end of his potion Hank, Monroe and Rosalee are still going through the books that has accumulated on the table, looking for any more information that they can possibly glean from the books.

It is still incredibly weird for Hank to fathom that his captain is wesen, and it isn’t so much the fact that he is wesen it is more so of the implications such a revelation brings. For starters, the moment that Hank had his first glimpse into the wesen world he had become, for lack of a better word, unhinged, and he couldn’t distinguish reality from fantasy.

Renard had watched him slowly lose his grip on reality and instead of giving him any hint that he wasn’t losing his mind he had instead sent him to mandatory sessions with the department.
psychologist. If he looked at it logically, he knew that Nick hadn’t immediately told him the truth and had even gone out of his way to make him believe that he was just seeing things but…oh who was he kidding? He is bothered by the Captain’s apparent weseness.

Much like he had done the first time he had met Monroe and learned that he was a blutbad Hank can’t help sneaking glances over at the Captain as he works on the potion, his eyes trying to catch any slip up that may reveal the Captain’s true face. His efforts go unrewarded though because not even a flicker gives away his true self, which surprises Hank immensely due to the obvious tension and emotional ride that this whole thing appears to be taking on the man. He isn’t blind. He can see how badly this is affecting the man.

With the way his eyes never lose their stoniness and his jaw remains clenched but it isn’t only that that gives away the stress the man is under. Part of being a Detective is seeing beneath the surface and from the completely out of character cursing and earlier observations, he has the beginnings of a picture but what really gives the picture shape is the fact that the man is here at all.

While it is true that this is likely the only place that Renard can get the required ingredients for the potion, one factor that cannot be over looked is that he had not only come here in person but that he also told them the truth: what he is, how much he knows and better yet a way to help Nick.

His actions spoke louder than words and the picture that is left on the canvas is that of man who truly cares for the missing Detective. It is unclear though how deep those feelings go but right now isn’t the time to ponder such trivial thoughts, now is the time to concentrate on finding Nick.

The silence of the room is interrupted by the ringing of Hank’s phone which echoes ominously through the air. Everyone turns to look at Hank as he pulls the ringing device from his pocket and answers the call.

“Griffin” he grunts, his ears perking to attention as he listens to the information being relayed relayed.

He can’t help the sigh that escapes him as he listens and when the caller finishes Hank responds, “I’ll be there in a few, just keep civilians back and the area cordoned off” receiving an affirmative Hank hangs up and addresses the others in the room.

“There’s been an abduction, and before you ask, yes I’m positive that the Endeizechen Grimm are involved because at the scene a Germanic G was found drawn onto a piece of paper in blood that has yet to be identified” he says, all shoulders in the room visibly sag at the news.

First they had been savagely murdering wesen and now they appear to be kidnapping them? Just what are the Endeizechen Grimm planning?
Trial by water

As the group is trying to absorb this new information Renard internally panics. He had known this call would come and it is only a matter of time before another one follows and if that happens then it is likely that more would shadow.

Before anyone else can speak Renard voices his own question, “Do they know how many were taken?”

Hank turned to his Captain and answers, “They don’t, no. But the car found at the scene is registered to a Clarissa McBane”

Sean nods, “okay, you go check out the scene and find out everything you can on Clarissa and try to see if she had any passengers in the car with her, if this is what I think it is then this won’t be the only call of kidnapping we receive”

Hank’s brow furrows at his response, what wasn’t he telling them?

Just as he is opening his mouth to ask Monroe beats him to the punch, “what haven’t you told us?” he asks, his voice filled with venom at the thought that the man has been withholding vital information.

With great resignation Sean confesses the other part of the shedding ritual, “it’s called the trials. Before the shedding can officially take place the sacrifice has to prove himself through the successful completion of four trials and in these trials they have to kill three sets of wesen in each environment; three from water, three from earth three from air and three from fire. If Nick completes all three then the shedding will take place and we’ll be out of time to do anything.”

“Wait a minute, you mean they’re basing these trials off of the natural elements? This is just getting weirder by the minute” Monroe mutters, having trouble wrapping his head around this new piece of information.

Rosalee is the next to speak, “if you think about it, it makes sense. The natural elements are universal, even in the wesen world, it’s one of the things that connects our worlds. So it’s probably safe to bet that the wesens that have been taken somehow represent a natural element, not that any of this will help find Nick” she trails off at the end, the hopelessness in her voice unmistakable.

Monroe silently agrees with her and places a comforting hand on her shoulder. Meanwhile Hank continues to silently rack his mind for an answer that can use this new information to find Nick. It’s there, on the tip of his tongue. There is still a way to find Nick he just can’t get the words from his mind to his vocal cords. He is also dealing with the continued struggle with accepting his captain as wesen along with the fact that the man could very well still be waiting for another shoe to drop before revealing another ‘revelation’.

Hank quickly surmises that Renard only seems to give out information if he feels that he has no other choice that much he can tell just by the grimace he forms with each word Renard presses out. He goes back to his earlier musings on why exactly he is helping them at all. Does he only care about finding Nick so that he can manipulate him into becoming his own personal assassin? He doesn’t know anything about what a Regnant or a Zaurberbiest is but from Monroe and Rosalee’s strong reactions, Renard is something powerful and not to messed with.

Maybe he is just reading into things too deeply, letting his frayed nerves go on a joyride and
vandalize his common sense. There is a clear part of Renard that is showing true, genuine concern. Wesen or not the man was still human and he couldn’t detect any malicious intent in the man’s words.

All he did know at this moment is that Renard has answers and solutions to problems that they likely would have never come to on their own, and if they had it would have been too late.

~GRIMM~

When Clarissa awakens her vision is little better than staring through a screen window. Her body feels like all of her bones and tendons had been rusted together and every move she manages makes her gasp from the effort.

For a moment, she has no idea what had happened. All she can remember is her sisters and her taking their lunch break and driving for the Chinese restaurant. She could remember arriving at the empty lot but everything after that was a blur.

As she tries to figure things out her vision drastically improves and she is able to make out the area she has woken up in. It looks to be a tent and from the smell of pine and twittering of birds she guesses that she is somewhere in nature. When she tries to move to investigate further she hisses in pain as the ropes binding her ankles and wrists rub cruelly into her sensitive skin.

What the hell happened?

At her hiss of pain answering groans of pain sound behind her and she turns her head. Her eyes widen when she sees her sisters in the same shape as she is.

The rest of her memories came back to her in waves, the men-no the Grimms that had appeared seemingly out of nowhere and attacked her sisters and her but before that she had come across the calling card of the Endeizechen Grimm.

She had read in the newspapers how a deranged serial killer had been breaking into people’s homes and decapitating them and only for a split second had she had a thought that a Grimm had gone on a rampage but she had foolishly talked herself out of that thought and let the murders go to the back of her mind.

That had been her mistake.

She should have trusted her instincts and gotten her family out of Portland while she still had the chance and now it would seem that they were paying for her error.

Shuffling around the best she can, she scoots closer to her siblings and does her best to try and rouse them. It’s made difficult by the fact that her hands are restrained behind her back but she manages to use her elbow and gently shakes first Bethany then Lyla awake.

Bethany squints as her eyes adjust to the lighting and groans in pain with every twinge her body throws at her. Clutching her rather aching head she forces herself to speak,

“What happened?” she asks, grimacing at the dry, mucusy state of her mouth.

After looking around their environment she comes to the same conclusion as Clarissa: they are in a tent somewhere in nature. The thing she can’t grasp however was how and why until she looked down at her bound feet and it dawns on her along with her memories: they had been kidnapped by Grimms.
Panic fills her as she imagines all the horrible, agonizing and fiendish things that the Grimms were going to do them ranging from swift decapitation to full on torture involving the slow, bloody removal of limbs and appendages. The darker her imagination becomes, the harder it becomes for her to suck in air.

Clarissa sees that her youngest sister panicking and quickly goes into nurturing mode. Getting on her knees the best she can she waddles over to her and places herself directly in front of Beth and does her best to soothe her sister with words of comfort.

“Beth, Beth look at me! You’re having a panic attack, all right? Now listen to me, you need to calm down. I know you’re scared, so am I but I promise you I am going to get us out of here, okay? Beth, I am going to get us out of here and soon we’ll be home and watching bad romance movies and eating burned popcorn.” she does her best to put on a calming smile but she can’t change the powerlessness in her eyes. As for her promise, she doesn’t know if they are going to make it out of here alive, but she has to have faith, otherwise without faith and hope they are already dead.

As Clarissa does her best to calm Beth down Lyla comes to full awareness and takes in the things around her. They were in a tent (obviously) and outside somewhere, now her remaining questions are as followed: 1. Where were they’re captors and 2. What were they planning on doing with them? It is abundantly clear that the Grimms’ intentions were far from pure and she shudders at the thought of the pain that they would soon endure.

Beside her she can hear Clarissa doing her best to calm Beth down who she could see is experiencing a rather massive panic attack by the looks of her heaving chest; But she is slowly coming down from as evidenced by the calmer breaths Beth is taking.

A part of her wants to have a mini freak out as well but her common sense tells her that panicking will only lead to chaotic thoughts and as a result horrible decision making.

One emotion that she can’t keep at bay though, is the rage she feels towards the Grimms that had taken them. Grimms were the boogeymen in the wesen world and induced fear in the mightiest of wesen and while she isn’t 100% calm and collected (understandably) she has enough rage built up inside her that her mindset is only slightly tipped towards complete panic.

Clarissa finally manages to get Beth calmed down and breathes a sigh of relief that that small crisis has been averted, she only wishes their current problem could be solved just as quickly, but she knows that she has a better chance of Elvis Presley popping out of the ground than that happening.

Now that all three of them are awake she can finally try to get some kind of survival plan together.

“Look, I know that things seem impossible right now but we just have to stick together and no matter what, never stop fighting. If we give in to them, allow them to see our fear we are as good as dead.” Clarissa states, meeting the gaze of both of her sisters.

Lyla scoffs at her ‘inspiring’ words and receives a scathing glare from Clarissa.

“That’s a great a plan sis, really awe inspiring but we were ‘as good as dead’ the moment they tranqued us. I know you’re just trying to put on a brave face but come off your heroine high horse and join us back in the real world!” she spits out, her anger at this whole situation getting the best of her.

Bethany whimpers at the reminder and looks down at the ground, her shoulders shaking in silent tears.
Seeing that Beth is getting worked up again Clarissa scoots back over to her and shushes her, murmuring soothing words in her ear as Beth leans into her shoulder all the while sending a death glare at Lyla who continues to sport a pitiless expression.

When she has gotten Beth calmed down (once more) she waits until Beth pulls away from her then scoots over to Lyla.

“Us fighting won’t solve anything. I know that you have this pessimistic attitude when it comes to things that you can’t control but we can and will survive this, I can’t allow myself to believe anything but. So bury all of those negative feelings and concentrate on doing whatever we need to do to get out of here alive.” she whispers, her eyes drilling into Lyla’s with each word she speaks.

Logically Lyla knows that she’s right, but the emotional part of her wants to scream and thrash around in anger, fear and even sadness. She doesn’t want to die, not this way and definitely not before she has even really started her life, and especially not at the hands of immoral, monstrous Grimms!

Clarissa waits impatiently for Lyla to give some kind of cue that she has heard her words and is going to do her best to abide by them.

Growling in aggravation Lyla nods, “fine, I’ll do my best, but don’t expect me to be all sunshine and rainbows.”

It isn’t the response that she was going for but it’s the best she’s going to get.

As she’s opening her mouth to speak again the sound of approaching voices silences her and the three sisters subconsciously huddle together, Beth being herded behind her two older sisters as the voices get closer.

“Remember what I said, stay strong and don’t give in.” Clarissa whispers as she watches with narrowed eyes as the Grimms who had attacked them enters the tent and advances towards them.

They are laughing and trading vulgar jokes, acting like they are just three guys hanging out at a party and not kidnapping, wesen killing Grimm scumbags.

“About time you girls woke up, we were starting to think we might have given you too much.” one speaks, his voice uncaring.

“Ah if that happened we could just go on down to the docks and catch our selves some more, maybe even keep it in the family and go after those sweet little cousins of yours.” the one on the far left cackles.

Clarissa’s eyes widen in shock, her stance from earlier about being brave and not showing weakness now standing on shaky legs. How do they know about their cousins? How do they know anything about their family? Had they been following them? There are so many questions flashing through her mind that she doesn’t even realized that she has been making what can only be described as a keening sound deep within her throat.

Behind her Beth has resumed her whimpering, her body tilting back and forth as she urgently whispers to herself, trying to convince herself that this isn’t happening, that this is all just a dream.

Lyla on the other hand remains in stony silence, no words or sounds needing to be uttered to convey the rage that she feels towards these men. First they had dare kidnapped them for some deranged purpose and now they are threatening their little cousins, they were only teenagers for god sakes!
The one who had subdued Clarissa has remained silent and in the background while his partners taunt them. It’s when the two quiet down that he passes the two and crouches down in front of the sisters, his eyes and face void of expression.

“You three have been chosen to be a part of something historic, and the best part is that you have the chance to save not only your own lives but to take a Grimm’s as well.”

The sisters are beyond shocked at the Grimm’s words. What are they talking about? Historic event? And the most startling being that they are going to have the chance to save their lives somehow and they were even being given the chance to kill one of their fellow Grimms.

He continues to speak without a response from them, confident that they are hanging on his every word,

“All you have to do, is survive long enough to kill the Grimm and when you do, we’ll let you go.” his voice is carefree as he speaks, no obvious traces of dishonesty, but these are Grimms and they can’t be trusted.

With her stony expression still in place Lyla responds to their proposition.

“Why should we believe you? How do we know that if we do manage to kill this Grimm that you’re not just going to kill us anyway?” she questions, malice coating her every word.

The man moves his eyes to look directly into Lyla’s, his expression never changing. “Trust me, if you do manage to kill this Grimm you should be more than capable of getting away from us. Now, my associates and I are going to get you ready for your shining moment.”

With their attention focused on the Grimm speaking to them, one of the men walks around the room to stand behind Beth and before they can stop him he grabs Beth around the waist and lifts her off the ground.

Beth screams in fright and does her best in her restrained condition to flap around in his grasp but his grip remains strong and all she manages to do is contort her body in unimaginable angles and cause herself more pain.

Lyla and Clarissa try to come to her rescue, screaming for them to leave her alone, but before they can even get within an inch of her they find themselves swept up by the remaining two. Their bodies copy Beth’s attempt but have just as negative results.

“I’ll kill you, I swear to god I will fucking kill you all!” Lyla shouts, her voice screeching like a banshee as she tries to throw her head back to hit the Grimm holding her.

A sudden ripping sound silences them along with the horrified whimpering of Beth. Lyla and Clarissa simultaneously look, their hearts freeze and the acidic taste of bile rises to the back of their throats at the sight that meets them.

Body trembling, whimpers slipping past her quivering lips Beth squeezes her eyes shut as the Grimm holding her rips through her clothing piece by piece with a pocket knife as he straddles her. Tears run in rivulets down Beth’s cheeks as the violation continues. Her senses becoming hypersensitive to each touch of the blade and skin of the Grimm as he holds her down.

What had she done to deserve this? Had she angered the fates somehow and this was their retribution? She can’t imagine having done anything bad enough though to warrant this atrocious act. What makes it worse though is that her sisters are being subjected to watch as she is forced
into an even more vulnerable and open state of mind and physical being and all they can do is watch in horrified submission.

When the last of her clothing has been ripped off the chill of the morning air nips at her skin and the chilled dew on the grass that lay beneath them clings to her skin, bringing further chills to her body without the relieve that any source of water usually brings her. For the first time she finds herself trying to pull away from the dampness.

Following his example the other Grimms place the wriggling sisters back down on the ground and quickly halt their attempt at escape by straddling their hips and whipping out their own blades.

Lyla continues to shout obscenities as her clothes are torn from her body and shallow cuts are made on her skin as a result of her struggling form but she doesn’t care, all she cares about is making these monsters pay.

Clarissa on the other hand remains silent, all her words of bravado earlier leaving her as she submits to the Grimm above her, her mind void of all thought and emotion. She virtually becomes little more than a lifeless doll.

Soon all three are naked and shivering on the cold grass beneath the men still straddling them. Hoisting themselves up the men each grab a girl and hoist them over their shoulders in a fireman’s lift. Their naked bodies press up against the rough material of their holder’s clothing and chaffing their skin. Their brows and noses scrunge up in irritation at the musky smell the men reek of as they are carried from the tent and pass through what looks to be a campsite filled with other Grimms who are watch their procession in rapt attention.

They have never felt more weak and vulnerable in this point of time then they did right now and they can’t help the grim thoughts that rampage their minds as they are put on display for all the Grimms to see.

The morning sky illuminates their chilled skin as they are carried to their unknown destination for god knows what purpose.

It is when the familiar scent of crisp air and the aroma of Marsh Marigolds fill their senses that for a split second they are put at ease. The comforting aroma of the water calms their anxieties like the loving hug of a mother to her distressed child.

But that comforting place is snatched away from them as they are carelessly dropped to the damp ground before two new people, one a haggard old man with cold steel for eyes and plaster for skin while the second is an older woman with almost demonic black eyes and a crescent scar that nearly dominates the left side of her face.

The woman kneels down to their level and looks them over, her eyes glinting in glee at the sight they make. Looking up the woman addresses the three men who had carried them, “Good work gentlemen, very good work indeed. Now, Elijah I’m going to need you to go fetch our last participant.”

With a last glance at the three girls the now named Elijah walks away from the group and heads back towards the camp to ‘fetch’ whoever else they’re holding captive. Or maybe it’s the Grimm that they are going to be forced to try and kill to save their lives, Lyla’s best guess is on the latter.

“I’m sure Elijah has explained to you that this is basically survival of the fittest: if you manage to
kill the Grimm we’ll let you go, otherwise…I’d get out your goodbyes now.”

~break~

Nick’s posture stiffens in defiance as Elijah enters the tent, his cold eyes and scowl zeroing in on him as he comes towards Nick.

“It’s time for you to prove yourself.” he says as he walks around to the back of the post and releases the chain from the ground causing Nick to collapse none too gently to the cold ground. The air in his lungs comes out in a wheezy gasp from the shock of the sudden drop.

Now that he is no longer hanging all the blood begins to flow back into his arms, bringing with it a tingling sensation that travels from the tips of his fingers to his shoulders. Along with that is the stiffness that had been set in the muscles of his neck and with the first move a loud crack can be heard which sounded painful but actually results in a groan of relief from Nick.

Before he can even begin to appreciate being down on actual ground he is jerked up from the grass and forced to take staggering steps forward that are painful and the complete opposite of nimble. It’s no surprise really that he’s having this much difficulty with walking seeing as he had been hanging by a chain for what had to be several hours and he hasn’t eaten since he’d been taken.

With a jerk on the chain he involuntary moves along by Elijah and out of the tent. Having learned from past experience along with being just too damned tired he doesn’t even put up a fight as he’s dragged through the camp towards the more woodsly part of the area.

The feeling of foreboding becomes greater the further they get from the camp. The sun in the sky has come into full position, its light glistening against the drying dew on the leaves and grass, saying goodbye to the luminous diamonds until tomorrow.

It’s when he can finally make out figures standing near what looks to be the edge of a cliff that he fully realizes that whatever is going on is not going to have anything to do with leisure, at least to him, what they find fun is likely completely out of left field for him.

Forcing him to a stop Nick meets his mother’s gaze with a glare as Elijah releases the chain and drops it to the grass with a dull ‘thud’.

His full attention is focused on his mother, not giving the others that surround them a second glance. Whatever she’s planning he’s going to get through it with a blank expression and absolutely no holding back.

“Now Nicolae, you have made it quite clear that you’re not going to willingly help us in our endeavors but I am sure that your attitude will change after this first trial.” she states, her voice as smooth as honey but spiked with arsenic.

“What trials?” he asks, unable to contain his curiosity.

She smiles, “Before you are ready to go through with The Shedding you must first prove your worthiness by successfully completing four trials and once you have, you will be ready for the ritual.”

“And just what do these trials entail?” having an idea of the evil that this woman and her entire coven of Endeizechen Grimm are capable of he has no doubt that these trials will be nothing short of atrocious and brutal.

“All you need to know, is that in order to get through it you just have to survive. But you should
know, that your contenders have the same goal in mind so I would be sure to get a strategy together.” she suggests with a sly and challenging look in her eyes.

He’s shocked when he suddenly feels tugging in his wrists and when he looks down he finds that the manacles around his wrists have been removed revealing raw, scabbing skin in thin strips around his wrists that are sensitive to the touch. It takes all his effort not to rub the area in order to get some relief from the strained appendage but all that’ll accomplish is reopening scabbed over areas.

“I’m not going to do it” he states, showing her once again that he isn’t going to bow down to her and jump at her beck and call. He has a mind of his own, a mind that is filled with morals, love, compassion and the knowledge between right and wrong.

“Well that’s just fine, but I’m sure your opinion will change when you meet your opponents.” before he can firmly plant his feet he finds himself being manhandled to the very edge of the cliff that looks over the small lake that flows beneath them with its waters lapping along the edges.

“I hope you’re a good swimmer.” is all he hears before he’s shoved over the edge.

As soon as he breaks the surface of the water he is instantly overcome with the glacial coldness of the water and with the shock that the temperature brings he accidentally inhales a good amount of water that causes him to choke. With the non-existing oxygen and the burn in his lungs his vision starts to darken.

He needs to break the surface, if he doesn’t he’s as good as dead.

With a great amount of strength he manages to move his stiff muscles enough to lift his body towards the surface, the light from the sun becoming brighter the closer he gets until finally his head emerges from the water and he gasps in lungful after lungful of air. His eyes sting from the onslaught of light and his throat is on fire from inhaling the unbelievably cold water but he doesn’t care because he’s breathing in oxygen again.

Looking up at the ledge he’s met with the looks of his mother, the old man, Elijah and two other men that he doesn’t know the names of. They are watching with great anticipation, they’re gazes never wavering from him. They’re the definition of a captivated audience, all they’re missing is a bowl of popcorn.

Well he isn’t going to give them a show. He refuses to be they’re puppet.

Just as he is about to swim for shore he can’t help the cry of pain that escapes him as what feels to be a blade wraps around his left ankle and before he can even get in one last inhale of breath he’s pulled back under. The onslaught of water is just as cold as the last time.

But unlike last time the water isn’t completely black, coming from beneath him is a bluish green glow that would have been beautiful if its source wasn’t the wesen attacking him.

Her long hair flows around her head and her eyes are unnaturally blue while her naked body looks to be as creamy as milk. But this isn’t any ordinary woman, he recognizes her for the wesen she is, a Naiad. She couldn’t be anything but with the obvious glowing gills that move with each breath that she takes along with her fin like hands and feet that glow the same eerie blue as her eyes.

What he had taken for a knife is actually her very sharp nails that are tinged with his blood that clouds around her head as she tries to pull him deeper under the water, doing her best to weaken him enough from lack of oxygen so that it would be easy to kill him.
His Grimm instincts though will not let him be killed so easily.

Using strength that is made so much harder to accumulate by the weight of the water around him, he kicks out with his feet and manages to strike her hard enough in the chest to make her release him with a grunt of pain. A fog of blood erupts from her nose and she hisses in outrage as he attempts to kick his way back to the surface but before he can get very far another Naiad blocks his path and strikes him across the face, her sharp nails leaving three distinct slashes across his cheek.

The attack does not stop there though, from behind him a pair of arms wrap around his torso and keep him in place as another drapes around his legs, forcing him to descend deeper into the lake.

By now his vision is spotty at best and his chest feels like it’s on fire. His body wants to shut down, to give in to the darkness that’s trying to pull him under but there is a force in him, a consciousness that snarls at the dark and pushes it back with great force.

As if by a will of god, strength returns to him along with a will to live and to fight another day. It’s like a switch has been pulled as he lashes out at the arms that weigh him down, his fist and legs colliding with every surface of his attackers he can reach.

With one well aimed punch at the closest Naiad’s face he gains some momentum from the punch and maneuvers his body around enough to force the other two to release him. Now that he’s free he kicks with everything he has and turns on his attackers and swiftly latches on to the nearest one and effectively snaps her neck.

For what feels to be an eternity the two remaining Naiads watch in utter horror as their dead little sister floats lifelessly to the bottom of the lake, her body slowly coming to a complete rest on the sandy floor with her hair fluttering around her head and the light that glows within her extinguishing out.

As one the Naiads turned to him and shriek at such a decibel that Nick swears the water vibrates around them. Their fury combines and both torpedo towards him with a furious fire in their eyes.

Out of the corner of his eye he sees something glittering in the sand and, following his instincts, he manages to miss their bodies colliding into his own by mere seconds as he swims down and grabs the object and turns his body around. With the new object out in front of him he is just in time for a Naiad to crash into him but instead of an attack they are abruptly shocked in silence.

Looking down Nick sees that the object he holds is a knife and it’s now deeply embedded in the chest of the Naiad that had gotten to him first.

And then there was one.

Both make eye contact. Nick’s eyes are filled with exhaustion and determination while hers are filled with rage.

As the second dead Naiad continues to float to the bottom of the lake Nick lunges forward and rips the knife from her chest at the same time as the last Naiad races towards him with death in her eyes.

Meeting her head on Nick engages her in a short battle of punches, kicks and scratches before he finally manages to pin her down on the sand and sink the blade into her heart. Her face morphing into a look of shock, not believing or understanding what is going on.

Slowly her eyes flutter close and just like her two sisters the blue glow that makes up her being flutters out, leaving behind a cold, lifeless corpse.
Kicking with all his might he’s finally able to reach the surface again and gasp in sweet air. Following his basic survival instinct he swims for shore, not caring that his mother, the old man, Elijah and the two unnamed Grimms are waiting for him as he crawls up onto shore, chest heaving and his muscles screaming out in agony.

With a satisfied smile on her face his mother kneels down beside him. Her hand caresses the side of his face and he would have flinched away from her touch but he’s too exhausted after fighting for his life.

“Elijah, make sure they’re dead.” she orders, her hand continuing to gently pet him.

Throwing off his coat Elijah dives into the lake and disappears below the surface, presumably to find the dead bodies that are floating at the bottom of the lake. In a matter of seconds Elijah pops back into view and swims back for shore, his strokes strong and powerful until he finally reaches the shore and pulls himself up.

“They’re dead.” he informs her.

Accepting his answer with glee she looks back down at Nick, “I knew you could do it, your Grimm instincts wouldn’t allow you to do anything but. You see, you can try and fight it all you want but in the end you are destined to be an Endeizechen Grimm.”

He glares up at her, and god he wants to scream that she’s wrong, that there’s not a fiber of his being that wants to be an Endeizechen Grimm but the force that had come forth while he was under water makes another appearance, growling deep within his mind and effectively rattles his stance.

As scared and even as disgusted as it makes him feel to admit, he’s starting to believe that she’s right, his destiny does lay in darkness.

“One trial down, three more to go.” she adds, the smile never leaving her face.

Pulling him up from the ground he’s led back to the camp to wait until the time comes for the second trial.
An interlude of revelations

Chapter Notes

I would like to dedicate this chapter to shadowolfhunter who has been giving me endless amounts of encouragement with this story so thank you so much! Also, sorry the last chapter had that incredibly dark moment and made anyone feel uncomfortable.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Instead of being hung back up like he expected, Nick is more than surprised to find himself being carried into the tent and set down on the chair that Isaiah had been sitting in when he had woken up.

He watches as a silent girl, he calls her a girl because she can’t be older than 15, 16 tops, enters the tent with what looks to be a first aid kit.

Stopping in front of him, she sets her supplies down and gets to work. As she is getting what she needs Nick feels the distinct wrapping of rope around his wrists from behind him and soon finds himself being bound to the chair.

Elijah and the three unnamed Grimms remain in the room as the girl works on the injuries he had sustained during the first trial, starting with the rather impressive gouges on his cheek.

He flinches away as she dabs at the slashes with antiseptic. Blood stains the cotton ball she’s using as she cleans the area. His hiss of pain doesn’t seem to faze her as she continues to treat him in silence, her gaze never leaves her work and only the sound of her breathing gives any indication that she’s alive and not just a lifeless machine.

After she finishes with that she quickly slathers an antibiotic cream on the injuries then sticks a gauze band aid over the area. Finished with that she notices the blood seeping out from the punctures around his ankle. Rolling the jean leg up, she inspects the area with a well trained eye then applies some antibiotic ointment to the gashes around his ankle and completes her first aid by wrapping a roll of gauze around the ankle.

Once done she packs up the kit, rises from the ground and leaves just as silently as she had entered.

Following the girl’s example Elijah and his two lackeys move to exit the tent but before they get more than a few feet away, Nick can no longer hold his tongue, his need to know and the guilt eating at him becoming too strong to keep in.

“Who were they?” he asks, his voice low and filled with loathsome regret.

Elijah stops and turns to face him, his expression exasperated as he takes a step back towards Nick.

“It doesn’t matter” Elijah responds, his voice giving clear indication that he truly doesn’t want to share another word with the likes of him.

“It matters to me!” he retorts, anger fueling his words at the callous way he is speaking of the three dead girls that Nick had murdered. There is no other word he can think of to describe what he had done, because in his eyes it wasn’t self-defense. Those girls had been taken away from their lives
into this nightmarish hell and forced to take part in a demented trial while being stripped of their dignities.

Shaking his head Elijah takes the last few steps to stand in front of him, “all you need to know is that they were Naiads that had no purpose in life other than forcing themselves on men in order to spawn more Naiads. In a way we gave them a chance to be part of something that is bigger than themselves, bigger than all of us! A chance to be more than filthy, disgusting whores.”

Deep swelling rage builds up from the very core of Nick’s soul and ratchets out of him in thundering waves.

“You took them away from their lives, from their families! They didn’t ask to be born wesen okay? They didn’t ask for any of this! You treat them like they are filth but you know who the real scum of the earth is? You! You know what I wish? I wish that one of these trials has me killing you!” he spits out.

From the pulsing of the vein on the side of Elijah’s head and the almost audible graveling of his teeth it’s clear that Nick’s words are getting to the Endezeichen Grimm. He feels a slight thrill at the prospect that his words are affecting the other man so deeply. Riding the adrenaline high Nick continues to spew out insults.

“You are nothing but a bunch of cowards that sneak up in the night and strike down innocent wesen while they’re backs are turned! A real warrior would choose an opponent who was on the same level as them and would at least have the sportsmanship to face them head on and make it a fair fight! All of you are nothing more than spineless, immoral scumbags!” from the moment the words leaves his lips he knows there will be serious retribution but he is just so tired of hearing him spew the same filth again and again, reciting it like some damn scripture.

Using speed that’s too fast for his rattled mind to comprehend, Elijah lashes out and wraps his hands around his throat, his blunt nails digging into his neck and effectively cutting off his oxygen. Nick’s legs thrash around for purchase and his restrained hands twitch uselessly behind him.

Elijah hisses hateful remarks at Nick but with blood rapidly filling his ears he’s unable to hear them and his vision is starting to darken. Briefly he can make out the two other Endeizechen Grimms doing their best to pull Elijah off of him.

Right before he’s about to black out from lack of oxygen, Elijah’s hands are finally pried off of him and with the sudden release Nick finds the world around him tilting until he crashes onto the ground with a painful groan. His head collides with the somewhat hard ground resulting in him seeing stars for a second.

Before he can grow use to his new position he’s suddenly pulled upright and it takes a moment for his mind to reorient himself. Once he does he watches with bitter amusement as Elijah is dragged out of the tent, continuing to snarl vows of making Nick bleed like a pig.

A breathy chuckle escapes his lips which he quickly regrets when pain lances his throat and leads to a throbbing coughing fit.

Taking a moment, he does his best to ride through the cough until it ends and he is able to take in easy breaths so as to not aggravate his throat further.

Even though it had led to moments of eye watering pain it had been worth it to finally shatter that stone mask of Elijah’s and prove that beneath all his talk and brute strength was a sniveling, short tempered joke.
Next time Elijah takes him on though, it will probably be a good idea to not be tied down.

Now that he’s alone though it his mind is allowed to wander.

Since being in captivity he has been bombarded with talks of destiny, sacrifice and so called “loyalty” along with emotionally draining, physically grueling bouts of violence that’s battered his rapidly crumbling psyche and left him feeling like a decomposing zombie.

His mother had said that there are three more trials he has to endure and then this so called ‘ritual’ will take place and while he isn’t entirely sure what this ritual involves he knows that it will be life altering, and not just for him.

He doesn’t know how much longer he can grasp on to his fragile mind. He can feel his morals gradually being consumed by the beast that lurks inside of him, each swipe and gnashing of teeth bring his buried instincts closer to the surface. Not only is his flimsy mind in peril but he is rapidly losing strength from lack of nutrition, from being used as a punching bag by Elijah and most recently as a scratching post for Naiads.

The only way he can think of to stop himself going insane is to dip into the strength that the Grimm lurking inside him contains but he feared that once he does that there will be no going back and the man he once was would be gone forever.

~break~

Hank exits his vehicle and approaches Wu who is waiting for him by the abandoned vehicle, his expression is surprisingly its usual sardonic look as he greets Hank.

“Do you ever get the feeling that fate is laughing at us?” Wu asks as he holds up the police tape for Hank the closer he gets to him.

Hank can’t help the confused look he gives the man. The comment is a little too philosophical for the usual snarky officer which gives clear indication that the back and forth cases and no clear resolution in sight is getting to the man and Hank can only wish that all of this is solved soon.

Noticing the look Wu elaborates, “What? With all of these unsolved murders, now a kidnapping and Nick’s abduction…it just seems like lady fate has a sick sense of humor.” he shakes his head as he lets go of the tape and walks in step with Hank as the Detective looks over the vehicle.

Ideally a good portion of the department would be working on finding Nick but with all the recent wesen murders and now a kidnapping of a PPD detective they’re resources are stretched thin. And since Nick had been taken by the same people who have been committing the murders it should have been relatively easier to find evidence as to who and where the Endeizechen Grimms are but instead the feat is actually a lot harder. Especially given that the suspects are well trained assassins.

“Were there any witnesses?” Hank asks, being careful not to step on any of the broken glass as CSUs continue to take pictures of the vehicle.

“A homeless guy who was sleeping across the street but he only saw the back of their heads. He described three guys wearing all black, he couldn’t make out any distinguishable traits though so all we have now is three guys wearing all black in the middle of the day.” Wu read off, flipping his notepad shut.

Being careful, Hank opens the passenger side door and looks around at the interior, his eyes and mind cataloguing all the miniscule items. He stops when his eyes land on a purse that’s squeezed
in between the driver’s seat and the center console.

Snatching a pair of gloves off a CSU he gently pulls the purse out and sets it on the hood of the car as he rifles through its contents. It’s filled with the usual items: wallet, chapstick, a ziplock filled with make-up, hand cream, pack of gum and a key ring. But what he finds that truly catches his attention is the picture inside the wallet. It looks to be have been taken recently if the condition of it is anything to go by. The subjects in the picture are three young woman, all ranging somewhere in their 20s standing around a dock with charming smiles on their faces.

Putting the wallet down he deposits the purse and wallet in an evidence bag and places the picture in a separate bag, hoping to use it for reference for later.

Going back into the car he finishes up in the front of the car then slides the back door open. What latches onto his attention first is the impeccable cleanliness of the vehicle as a whole, not a single piece of trash litters the floor and all of the seats have been well taken care of. It is due to this cleanliness that the two empty water bottles resting beneath the driver’s seat quickly stands out to him.

Reaching over he pulls the bottles out. The bottles themselves are not overly suspicious and when he uncaps the bottles he can’t detect any alcohol so there was nothing suggesting that the girls had been intoxicated and possibly only wandered off.

Setting the bottles back down he decides to investigate the vehicle further. Squatting down he examines the floor more closely, his eyes on the lookout for anything else that stands out. On the first sweep he doesn’t see any more loose bottles but it’s while he’s taking a second sweep that he sees the small red ice box that resting in the trunk of the car.

Standing up he walks around to the trunk of the car and tries to open the trunk but finds it locked. Walking around to the driver’s side he pops the trunk then returns to the trunk and lifts it open to pull the ice box towards him; the temperature of the box is only a few degrees above room temperature.

Opening the lid he looks inside but instead of finding anything gorey like in so many horror movie moments he’s relieved to find that the ice box is actually being used for its intended purposes because what he finds lining the inside of the ice box are chilled water bottles.

An idea coming to mind he closes the lid and walks back to the bagged purse and wallet. Rifling through it he locates the wallet and takes a moment to scan Clarissa McBane’s ID before coming to her residence.

A houseboat in McCuddy’s Marina.

A moment of familiarity washes over him but he can’t make the fuzzy memory clear.

Taking out his phone he goes through his contacts until he comes to Monroe’s name. Hitting the speed dial he waits for the man to pick up.

“Hank? Did you find something?”

“Yeah, maybe. Listen I need you to meet me down at McCuddy’s Marina. I have an idea about something but I need to see this place to jog my memory and I’m hoping that maybe you could… give me some perspective on what kind of wesen these girls may have been.” he struggles to get out, the words sounding better in his head than exiting his mouth.

There’s silence on the other line and Hank gets the distinct impression that Monroe is struggling
for words as well.

“You mean you want me to ‘smell’ what kind of wesen they are, don’t you?” he gets out, his voice a little insulted but not put off by the idea.

Hank sighs, “Yeah, I just figured that you could maybe identify what kind of wesen they are with Nick being…gone and all.” he explains.

Silence greets him again and for a moment Hank thinks the call has been dropped but before he can check Monroe responds.

“Okay, I’ll meet you down there. What time?”

“I’m going to head down there as soon as I finish up here to talk to the girls’ aunt which should just take another five minutes, so I guess now?” he suggests.

“Now is fine, I’ll see you in a few then.”

Both hang up and Hank returns to the scene.

~GRIMM~

Elijah enters the trailer and closes the door behind him, he closes the door a little more aggressive than he intends which causes his leader to give him an amused glance while Alin remains his usual stoic self.

“Problems Elijah?” she questions, not even trying to hide the amusement in her voice.

He grinds his teeth and curls his hands into fist, the audible popping of his knuckles ring throughout the room.

Straightening himself out, he meets her gaze, “nothing that the Shedding won’t solve.”

Nodding in approval she tears off a piece of paper and holds it out for him to take.

“I want them here before tomorrow morning. I’m giving you the rest of the day to accomplish this seeing as how ‘acquiring’ them may be a little harder than the Naiads” she instructs, watching as he looks over the information she has written on the paper.

Reading the information he can see why she’s giving him the rest of the day to collect the new participants. Just to be sure that everything goes as planned he decides that it would be a smart move to take a few extra guys with him.

Pocketing the paper Elijah leaves the trailer and heads for the group of Endeizechen Grimm that are huddled together in a group around a campfire.

“Come on, we got a new assignment.”

Stopping their conversation the group of five men wordlessly follow him, their loyalties so devoted to the cause that they don’t even question the man as to what the assignment entails.

~GRIMM~

Arriving at McCuddy’s Marina Hank turns off his engine and leans back in his seat, the radio is turned off and the only sound coming from the car is the hissing of his air conditioner.
Now that he’s on his own his mind can finally trail off and focus on all the crap that has taken place in the short course of 24 hrs. It’s still hard to believe that Nick isn’t sitting next to him right now, voicing his opinions and sharing jokes as they work to solve a case and put another criminal behind bars.

More often than not lately he has to catch himself from turning and asking a question to his partner before remembering that Nick isn’t there because he is being held captive by a bunch of deranged Endeizechen Grimms who want to sacrifice him in some ancient ritual.

Before he can muse further Monroe’s yellow beetle pulls to a stop behind him and both get out of their vehicles at about the same time.

“So have you found out anything since we talked last?” Monroe asks, his eyes taking in the scenery around them. His sense of smell is able to pick up all the distinct scents of wildflowers and the salty tint of the air.

“No, these guys’ knack of cleanliness is really starting to piss me off. You’d think that at least once they would screw up somehow.” he vents, his frustrations getting the better of him.

Monroe is about to open his mouth to reply that ‘it’s still early’ but thinks better of it and sensibly keeps his mouth shut.

“Okay, you see that houseboat over there? That’s where the sisters live.” Monroe follows his outstretched hand and spots the described boat floating beside the dock, and nods his head in acknowledgement then returns his attention to Hank.

“While I’m speaking with the aunt I want you to go into the houseboat and try to get a read on what, if any, type of wesen that they might be. I’ll send you a text when we’re done and that will be your signal to get out of there.” he instructs.

Eyeing the houseboat again Monroe speaks, “well, good luck to the both of us then.” doing his best to act ‘casual’ Monroe makes his way to the houseboat, his eyes looking all around the closer he comes to the property until finally he boards the boat and ducks inside.

With Monroe in the houseboat Hank walks toward Isabelle McBane’s modest one story house that’s situated a little ways down from her nieces’ houseboat.

~break~

Entering the houseboat Monroe is overcome with the fruity tang of perfume and citrusy vanilla body wash. He has to stick his head a window for a moment to get some semblance of fresh air and to get rid of the noisy buildup developing in his senses.

Once his senses are more level Monroe starts his investigation. His nostrils inhale all the different scents that the occupants’ make up. Mentally putting the perfume and body wash scents aside he’s able to pick up on other individual scents in the cramped environment. One such scent is the unmistakable smell of fish, specifically dead fish.

Walking into the kitchen area he sniffs along the countertops and sink area and when he reaches the fridge the scent becomes a little stronger. Bracing himself he pulls the door open and is assaulted by the eye watering smell of fish. Unprepared for the intensity he has to close the door and back away for a second, his eyes watering from the overpowering odor of what he can now describe as spoiled fish because that fish has taken a turn for the worse.

Physically shaking the smell from his nose he turns away from the kitchen area and with a quick
look around decides to scope out the sleeping quarters.

He feels an immediate sense of invasion of privacy as he enters the area with the pictures of family on the walls, strewn about clothing on the floor, loose papers and an unfinished puzzle that sits on a desk in the corner. This is someone’s home that he’s invading, their personal items and secrets out in the open and here he is, uninvited, snooping around like some creep. He has to keep reminding himself that he is not only trying to help Nick but these girls as well, because just maybe they can still be saved.

It’s when he approaches the three separate beds that the smell hits him. It is earthy yet contains sea salt and if he analyzes deep enough he can even make out a trace of boiled seaweed in the background.

There is no mistaking the smell anywhere, it is definitely the scent of a Naiad. Going around the three beds and smelling each he finds the same smell coats each.

These girls are definitely Naiad.

When he thinks about it, it makes sense. They live on the water so they have easy access to it, they are all women and from the large fish orientated food in the fridge are without a doubt born of the sea.

As he is making to leave, approaching voices catch his attention and he freezes, waiting to see if they are coming directly towards the boat or passing by. He has his answer when the boat sways slightly as someone boards and Monroe is quick to make a dash for the nearest closet and quietly closes the door.

He leaves the door open a crack to watch as a man, probably in his late twenties, heads for the bedroom, his phone to his ear as he walks.

“Yeah, I’ll be there in a few minutes. I’m just picking up my lighter that I left here last week.” he says as he enters the bedroom and looks around.

~break~

Hank thanks the aunt for the cup of coffee that she hands him and takes a quick sip before setting the cup down on a coaster.

“Now you said before that you can’t remember anyone in particular that was here in the last few days that seemed out of place, but what about vehicles? Were there any parked for long periods of time but no one seemed to emerge from them?” he asks, hoping that maybe if she had she can give him a plate to run through the system.

She thinks it over, her brows scrounge together as she mulls over her memories of the last few days. Flashes of memory from the last few days run through her mind, each one faint in color and quick in succession. Nothing stands out to her though and she gives all her attention back to the detective.

“I’m sorry Detective, things have been so hectic here at home that I’ve barely left the house let alone looked out the window. I wish there was more that I could do to help. I wish there was more that I could do to help. What with my brother’s death a few years ago and the girls’ mother passing away a year before him, I just don’t know what I would do if my nieces were gone too…” her eyes began to mist and she shakily jerks a tissue from the box beside her and wipes her eyes, her breath catching in her throat as she tries to calm herself.
He gives her a few moments to try and compose herself, his eyes and face filled with the compassion he feels for the woman who very well could have already lost the last of her family.

“It’s quite alright Ms. McBane, I can only imagine how you must be feeling right now and I can assure you that I am going to do everything I can to find your nieces.” He purposefully leaves out the state they may be in, not wanting to give any false hope to the woman and have it come back and bite him in the ass if and when that turns out to be false.

“Thank you Detective, and please keep me updated? I want to know the minute you find them…no matter what.” she stutters on the last bit.

He nods and rises from the chair as he senses that now is the best time to leave.

As he walked to the door he digs into his wallet and takes out one of his cards then hands it to her.

“If you think of anything else, please feel free to call me at this number.” He requests, stepping out the door as she opens it for him.

“I’ll be sure to do that, thank you again Detective.” with a sad smile she gently closes the door.

Taking his phone out his pocket he types out a quick text to Monroe then walks back over to his truck to wait for the other man to join him.

~break~

The man seems to be taking his sweet time looking for his lighter, going so far as to even take a moment to browse the kitchen area and grab a snack from one of the cupboards then take a rest on the couch situated in the corner of the room.

“I told you once already I don’t remember what happened that night! I was so smashed that when I woke up my pants were in the fridge and I still haven’t found my right boot. Look, I’m gonna hang up now and I’ll meet you at your house in twenty minutes…yeah…see ya, bye.” hanging up the man gets ready to leave the houseboat but just as Monroe is getting ready to breathe a sigh of relief his phone suddenly starts to vibrate. The device gives off a low hum that squirms around in his jacket pocket.

In his head he lets out a torrent of obscenities as he desperately scrambles around in his many pockets for his phone, his body thrumming with anxiety the closer the man gets to the closet.

Finally locating the blasted device he brings it out and sees that a text from Hank. Not even contemplating looking at what the message says he quickly shuts the device off and looks up just in time to see that the man is now standing in front of the closet. The man’s hand hovers over the doorknob and just as is about to fling the door open and discover Monroe another male voice rings out.

“Mitch, c’mon man, we gotta get going! By the time we get there Bill will have drunk all the beer and the game will have started!” the voice complains.

Appearing torn Mitch looks between the closet and the door, indecision written all over his creased brow. Coming to a decision Mitch takes a step away from the closet, his eyes staying on the door as he slowly backs away until finally he slips out of the houseboat and back onto the dock.

Monroe holds back a few minutes before retreating from his hiding place, not willing to risk that the man is trying to wait him out.
As soon as he is out of the closet he shoots out of the houseboat like a bat out of hell and fast walks to his parked car, seeing Hank resting against the trunk of his own car.

Not even trying to hide his irritation with the man he stalks over to him and glowers at him with enough heat to melt metal.

Hank, being thrown off by the unexpected hostility, takes a step away from the angry Blutbad.

“Are you okay?”

Monroe’s lips twitch with unspoken words, his right eye seems to be twitching as well but with a few inhales of relaxing breath Monroe manages to calm himself down some.

“I was nearly discovered by a man who entered the houseboat shortly after I did when you texted me and my phone vibrated so loudly that the dead were sure to have heard it!” it’s mainly his nerves talking. He isn’t really mad at Hank but with everything going on it’s understandable that at some point his carefully crafted walls were going to crack.

His reason for being so unusually angry starting to make sense Hank is quick to apologize,

“I’m so sorry Monroe, are you okay?” he asks, feeling bad that he had almost been the reason that Monroe had nearly been discovered.

Taking a calming few breaths Monroe replies. “No, it’s okay just no more texts or calls when we’re essentially breaking and entering. By the way, I managed to get a scent on the three girls and I can say with nary a doubt that they are Naiads. I swear, walking through that place was like entering a fish market.”

The word Naiad immediately strikes a chord in Hank’s recollection and memories of a past case that Nick and he worked a while ago. From what he remembers Naiads are a mermaid-type of wesen that’s main goal seems to be to repopulate with other males, because male Naiads are infertile.

All of the water bottles in the ice box suddenly makes sense now and looking around at the docks he wants to slap himself silly. The docks! The first time they had investigated a Naiad case they had also visited the docks several times and in the end the final showdown was there as well.

“Good work Monroe, hopefully we can use this information now to get a little closer to finding out where Nick is being kept. How about you get back to the Spice shop and fill Rosalee and Renard in and I’m going to head back to the station and work on this case some more.” patting the man on the shoulder Hank walks the few steps to his car and got in then sped off, leaving Monroe stranding there for a few minutes before getting in his yellow beetle and driving off as well.

~GRIMM~

Exiting the bar the three inebriated friends stagger out of the Junkyard Dog Bar. Their feet only just manage to not trip over one another as they head for the road, their keys having been confiscated by Tony the bartender.

“I say, ‘e ‘ead on over to ’uinns ‘ouse and keep ‘is buzz going!” Tim slurs, depositing all his weight on the less drunk of the three which almost causes the both of them to topple over.

“Buzz? Dude, e’re already ‘itfaced!”

At this all three burst out into uncontrollable laughter, tears actually coming to their eyes at what
they thought to be the funniest observation they had ever heard.

Will suddenly stops and clumsily digs around in his coat pocket. His unexpected stop causes the other two to teeter forward and almost face plant into the concrete.

“’hat’s the ‘ig ‘dea?” Quinn rounds on Will, his attempt at being serious failing due to the slurness of his speech and the fact that gravity seems to be only affecting him on his left side.

Finally finding what he’s looking for he takes out his phone and squints to make out the impossibly small words in the harsh light of the cellphone. As he searches for a particular number he completely ignores his friend’s question until he finally finds the number he’s looking for and a drunken grin stretches across his face.

“I ‘otta call ‘heila, she ‘old ‘e to call if I ‘as ‘oing to ‘e late” he garbles, his finger is about to send the call through but the phone is suddenly ripped from his hand by Quinn who holds it away from him. He gives the culprit, his friend Quinn an inebriated expression of disbelief.

“’ude, you ‘an’t call ‘er, ‘ou’re ‘unk, she’ll ‘e able to ‘ell and ‘hen ‘e’ll ‘e ‘issed” Quinn rationalizes, his warning, though garbled, does manage to translate into understandable speech in Will’s mind and he finds himself agreeing. His sloshed mind easy to manipulate in their current state.

“You’re ‘ight, I ‘now, I’ll ‘ext ‘er, ‘hen she’ll ‘ever know” snatching the phone out of Quinn’s limp hold Will flips the phone open and types out a short text. He reads it aloud as he does so, so that the others know what he is typing.

“’aby, ‘orking ‘ate, ‘on’t ‘e ‘ome until ‘orning, ‘ove ‘ou, ‘ill” sending the text he looks at his friends and carefully pockets the phone, a satisfied smile on his face as he looks at his companions.

For a moment the other two are silent before both burst into drunken rounds of applause, telling him how Sheila will never know what he was really up to tonight.

Will suggests that they call for a cab but with a quick pat down of their wallets they all find that they had blown all their money on booze, which is just as well seeing as they can’t decide where to go to deal with their impending hangovers.

In the end they decide to just walk around town until a destination comes to mind.

As they walks they belt out a mangled, out of tune version of Metallica’s “Enter Sandman” and even do mock guitar and drum solos as they stagger down the street. People open their windows and shout at them to shut up, of which they respond by singing even louder.

It is when they turn a corner down a street that only has one working streetlight that the drunken, care-free atmosphere turns ominous.

Out of the shadows comes a man dressed all in black. The air around him reeks of ill intent and even in their inebriated states they can tell sense the in danger they are in and as a result their wesen side comes out, their faces woging into that of blutbaden.

”Ah now, save those faces for the big event.” the shadowed individual scolds. His eyes are illuminated by the scarce light for a moment and if his words weren’t enough, his eyes give away his status as a Grimm.

The liquor in their bloodstream seamlesly leaves the three in one breath. Preparing to rip into the Grimm they stupidly allow all their senses to be focused on the Grimm in front of them which
leads them to fail to sense the three Grimms that approach behind them.

Growls rumbling forth they are suddenly stifled by black bags that are thrown over their heads. A cacophony of blows are delivered to their heads and various body parts. Each Blutbaden manages to get in a few blinded hits of their own but with three well aimed whacks to the backs of their heads they are snatched out of consciousness and into the land of darkness.

A nondescript black van pulls up beside them and the back door slides open. Another man waits for them on the other side to help assist in lugging their cargo into the back while the final member is behind the wheel.

In as quickly a fashion as possible, not at all concerned with handling their cargo preciously the Grimms instead just toss the Blutbaden in the back of the van like a bag of laundry. Once their prizes are in, the rest of the gang jumps inside and slides the door home, the van immediately drives off, leaving behind nothing but some drops of blood and an Endeizechen Grimm crudely drawn with blood into the brick wall.

~GRIMM~

Sean carries the cauldron like pot over to the now lit fireplace and sets it up in the cradle above the flames to heat up.

Rosalee watches him expectantly as he rubs at his tired eyes and stretches his strained muscles, a noticeable amount of stress leaves his body at the movement but a fair amount is still left behind in his eyes and muscles.

“Now we wait until the potion is ready and hopefully by then we know where Nick is and have a plan on getting him back.” he speaks.

Looking over at the fuchsbau Sean notes the question floating through her mind and glowing in her eyes. Her top teeth chew on her bottom lip as she does her best to keep her question at bay.

She likely doesn’t want to voice her question, possibly due to the fact that she is fearful of insulting or angering The Guardian of Portland but he sees no reason to make her grovel at his feet and in all honesty he wants-no needs her trust and so if being able to ask him personal questions is what it takes he is more than willing to answer her questions.

“I can tell that there is something you wish to ask Ms. Calvert” he utters, his voice calm and non-threatening.

Her eyes widen at the prompt and she looks down at the ground. The chewing off her bottom lip becomes almost gnawing like. She takes a few deep breaths to brace herself for what she is about to ask.

Now that Monroe and Hank are both gone it is now just the Guardian of Portland and herself. She tries reasoning with her mind that he is also the Captain of Portland P.D. and Nick’s boss but the devil on her shoulder whispers that the man has the power to make her disappear for good and no one would ever question her sudden disappearance, Monroe, Hank and Nick would but besides them he could make it seem like she had simply packed up and left Portland.

Sensing that she is still having difficulties, Sean slowly rises from the chair he had seated himself in and cautiously approaches her. His steps slow and purposeful while making sure to keep his hands within sight. He is aware that he’s treating her like a frightened animal but with the way she’s acting it seems like the best route to go.
“I can assure you Ms. Calvert that I mean you no harm. I simply want to rescue Nick and bring him home safely. You can ask whatever it is and I will do my best to answer, within reason of course” he can’t very well give her an answer if she asks about certain ways that he rules the area or the things he has done to ensure that his authority is not be questioned.

Coming to a decision Rosalee looks up at him and takes one last deep breath before voicing her question.

“I know you told us that you only wish to help save Nick, but I guess I’m just having trouble getting past the fact that you’re here at all I mean…he’s a Grimm! I thought you of all people would want him out of your territory or working for you at the least. I’m just…I guess what I’m trying to ask is, if there is another reason that you’re doing this?” she finally gets out, her voice a little higher pitched than usual and a little breathy as she works to get the words out.

Coming to a stop a foot away from the woman Sean mulls her question over. In truth, he hadn’t been expecting that question. In truth he had only had a vague idea of the type of question she would ask but the actual question itself surprised him.

Taking a moment to collect the right words together, he runs a hand through his short cropped hair before responding,

“All I am concerned about is getting Nick out of the Endeizechen Grimms’ hands and making sure that nothing like this ever happens again” he states, conviction coating each word and his stance is rigid with intimidating strength.

Rosalee knows she should drop the question then and there. The menacing aura that the man is giving off in troves is enough to make her hackles rise. Her Fucshbau instincts are begging for her to back away from the possible confrontation about to take place. And those instincts are almost too strong to overcome but she manages to plant her feet and keep her chin held high.

She can tell not only from his open stance and expression but also the longing, fear and even a little sorrow she can sense in his words and scent that truly convinces her that he’s telling the truth about his intentions to only wanting to save Nick.

But while she can understand the fear that accompanies his scent it is the longing and sorrow that confuses her.

“I know that, believe me your highness I do, but I can just sense that there’s another reason that your withholding” she placates him, not wanting to bring on the Guardian’s wrath. She hopes that that by addressing him by his status it will pacify his rumbling instincts to punish her for her tongue.

Quickly realizing that he is starting to scare her he steps back and takes a few soothing breaths in an attempt to be somewhat more calm before speaking again. He can’t allow her words to get to him. Showing that kind of weakness is weak and to be weak is against everything that he is. He is a strong, powerful and deadly Guardian of Portland. He is a royal bastard son and a Zauberbiest all rolled up into one!

Rosalee watches as he composes himself, his body almost vibrates with the compressed stress swimming beneath his skin which is concealed only by the lax hold of his will and the powerful aura which speaks volumes of the power the man can wield.

Getting himself somewhat under control he looks back at her and sighs, unused to showing this much weakness in front of anyone.
“I do care for him, but-“

Before he can finish the door to the shop opens and he abruptly shuts his mouth, silently thanking the universe for the break from Rosalee’s prying and his almost confession.

Meanwhile Rosalee silently fumes that just as she is about to hear something vital Monroe has to come in and ruin it. While she does care deeply for her boyfriend sometimes he has a way of interrupting at the most inopportune time, like now for instance.

Accepting the peck on the cheek with a closed mouth smile she asks how it went.

“Well, I looked around the missing sisters’ houseboat and they are definitely Naiads” he notices the pot resting over the fireplace and walks over to examine it. His eyes watch as slimy blue and green bubbles morph and pop from the heat of the flames.

“Then the trials have started, and it’s only a matter of time until another group of wesen that represents earth are snatched” Sean states, his voice grave and ominous giving indication of the troubles that lay ahead.

Looking away from the potion Monroe meets the concerned gaze of Rosalee as Sean walks over to a nearby chair and sits down.

“Maybe we can send out a mass warning and tell every wesen to stay indoors or maybe even leave town! That way the Endeizechen Grimm won’t be able to get them.” Monroe suggests but is met with similar looks of regret from both Sean and Rosalee, the latter of which he is surprised at.

“While that is a grand idea it would only hold off the inevitable of them simply going to another city or nearby town and getting wesen there. They have shown that they have skills to take people without anyone noticing and leaving little to no evidence behind and also the fact that they know when and where to strike. We can only assume that acquiring the information on where and who are wesen extends beyond the Portland area” Sean reasons.

Monroe looks over at Rosalee, waiting for her to explain her thoughts.

“I agree with Renard, but also because not every wesen has an ear to the community. There are a lot of ones that live in isolation and even if the message did reach them there’s no guarantee that they would heed the warning” she adds, her voice and eyes apologetic.

Monroe wants to argue further but the words are lodged in his throat and looking at the other two occupants of the room he knows that he would only be wasting his breath.

“This is just great! We’re no closer to saving anyone then we were when we started!” he rants, his hands annunciating his aggravation.

The room lapses into silence.

~GRIMM~

Nick’s arms have long since lost feeling and he knows it won’t be long until his legs follow. For a while he had tried using brute strength to attempt to loosen the rope around his wrists but all that had accomplished was rope burn and wasted strength.

The blood on his face and ankles has long since dried and is now sticking to his skin like paint with bits flaking off and leaving behind patches that itch like hell and irritate his already traumatized skin.
Night is beginning to take the sun and the chill in the air is coming to a full breeze that rattles his teeth.

A few hours ago his thirst and hunger had been abated by the visit of the girl who had mended his injuries. This time she had brought him a bowl of a stew and a plastic cup of water. Knowing that he would need his strength for the next trial he graciously accepted the mouthfuls of stew; the meat and vegetables tasting like heaven and the water that followed felt like a sensual experience.

As he was fed a guard stood in the background, watching him eat with unblinking eyes. By now he had become accustomed to the constant looks and could now put them away at the back of his mind while still being able to pinpoint their exact location.

He wonders what the next trial will bring. What kind of wesen he will be forced to fight and if it will be the last thing he ever does. He isn’t naïve enough to believe that he’s going to survive this. It’s only a matter of time before he dies and that is only made clearer with the fact that if he does manage to complete these trials he is going to be sacrificed for some ultimate power.

A huge part of him has accepted this as his fate. His hope that he will ever see his loved ones again has faded to almost nothing and the small part that does care is surely being swallowed whole by hopelessness.

It strikes him then that not once in the time that he has been here has he thought once about Juliette. He would like to think that it’s his mind’s way of protecting itself from further demolition but he knows that the reason runs deeper than that and has been festering for a while now.

Ever since he had become a Grimm he has found himself pulling away from her. The thoughts he used to have of her being his wife someday and them starting a family has been pushed to the back burners, slowly cooking until someday soon he is sure they will finally burn and crumble to chalky charbroiled remains.

But now is definitely not the time to ponder such trivial things. Right now he has to concentrate on staying strong and maybe making it through the next trial.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed this update and please, please please if you liked it leave a kudos or if you really, really liked it or want to offer some recommendations or just want to leave a :) face please do. I want to hear if you guys like, love, hate etc. this story.
Trial by Earth

Chapter Summary

The trials continue and Nick attempts to make an ally while Sean, Monroe, Hank and Rosalee make what they hope will be a breakthrough to rescuing Nick.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is coming so late, school has been really hectic. I hope you enjoy this update. Also, I am really bummed about the turn Sean has taken in the show, c'mon Renard be good please! I know you are doing this for your daughter but please, come back to the light side (we have cupcakes!).

Also, this chapter contains a lot of bloodshed.

Will comes to when a geyser of ice cold water is dumped over his face. His breath comes out in sputtering gasps and his skin is chilled to the bone from the shower of cold water that brought him out of a deep sleep.

Shaking his head, much like a wet dog after a bath; droplets of water spray around the room which leaves his body and hair not completely dry but drier than it had been and sticking up in places.

The onslaught of light burns his retinas and he quickly slams them shut again. His head screeches at him in anger as rods of pain vibrate in his skull. He groans in agony at the chill that sweeps through his body; in the background he can make out echoing groans of pain but he’s too concerned about his own pain to care.

“Rise and shine ladies, you got a big day ahead of you!”

At this his eyes shoot open and he looks up to meet cold, steel eyes. The voice triggers his memories and he flashes back to last night where his friends and he had been walking back from the bar and had been attacked by the man and unseen assailants. But these aren’t ordinary men, they’re Grimms!

Snarling in rage, Will tries to lunge at the owner of the steely eyes but he can only manage a pitiful bounce before colliding once more with the frozen ground. Looking down he sees that his ankles have been bound with clear zip ties and with a quick jerk of his arms he makes a safe bet that his wrists are bound as well.

The Grimm cackles at his display and squats down in front of him, the condescending smile never leaving the Grimm’s face as he looks Will over.

“This one’s got quite the spirit” the Grimm comments, looking over his shoulder at the other group of Grimms in the corner.
When the Grimm looks back, Will spits a good sized wad of spit at his face. The glob connects directly with the Grimm’s forehead.

He knows it was childish but he gives a Cheshire grin that speaks of his glee at the stunt.

Wiping the glob off the Grimm shakes the disgusting wad off his hand before meeting Will’s gaze once more.

“Spitting? Really? You, a supposed ruthless blutbad and here you are spitting like a little bitch” The Grimm looks back at the group in the corner.

“He’s gonna have to do a hell of lot more than schoolyard bullying to survive this, won’t he boys?”

He receives boisterous rounds of agreement then turns back to Will.

All humor vanishes from the Grimm’s face and the men behind him almost instinctively quiet down, as if in sync with his thoughts.

“In order to walk out of here alive, you’re going to have to dig deep inside your blutbaden instincts and show us all the monsters you really are.” he states, the Grimm’s dark eyes burrowing deep into Will’s.

“What the ‘ell is going on?” Quinn groans, his lids peeling open like plaster on a rotting house.

Will remains silent, his eyes never leaving the Grimm’s before him. To look away would be a sign of submission and no way in hell is he going to show his neck to a shit stain of a Grimm.

Tim starts to come to as well and he awkwardly rolls around on the grass, his eyes still shut as he voices his own thoughts, “That is the last time I drink vodka, my head feels like it was split open with a damn two-by-four.”

The Grimms remain silent, as if waiting for the two blutbads to discover on their own the nightmare that they’ve woken up to.

Both Tim and Quinn’s senses clear up at about the same time and as soon as they get a whiff of fear, anger and glee their eyes snap open and they meet the eyes of three men that are standing and kneeling around them. It only takes looking into their eyes for them to see that they are in the company of Grimms.

Out of instinct they try to stampede the Grimms but they can only manage spastic jerks. Looking down they see that they’ve been bound with zip ties and it is then that they know they are truly at the mercy of the Grimms.

“Now that you’re all awake, we can discuss what is going to happen” the same Grimm speaks, his tone similar to a teacher scolding a class before getting on with today’s lesson.

“We already know what’s going to happen, you’re going to string us up like pigs, cut us open and watch us bleed to death!” Quinn interrupts, his face woges into his blutbad form as he mercilessly tugs and strains against the zip ties. A howl of rage escapes him when the ties hold.

Thoroughly exhausting his-self after about five minutes of his attempt to escape, Quinn collapses to the ground, his face returning to that of his human form.

“Probably should have told you beforehand that those ties are hexed to be indestructible to all types of wesen and only an Endeizechen Grimm can remove them” a taunting grin dominates the
Grimm’s face, his eyes continuing to maintain a screen of ill intent.

Letting that information sink in the Endeizechen Grimm continues.

“As I was saying before, now that you’re all awake we can discuss what’s going to happen. The three of you are going to use all those blutbaden instincts and strength to attempt to kill a Grimm. If you succeed we’ll let you go on your merry way, but, and this goes without saying, you fail the only place you’ll be going is in the ground.”

The three blutbads exchange distrustful but also curious glances before looking back at the Endeizechen Grimm.

“It’s not as if we have much choice” Will grounds out, a seething glare in his eyes.

The Grimm, who Will labels as the leader, gives a short chuckle before rising from the ground.

“No, you don’t. But think of it this way, how many chances are you going to get to kill a Grimm? It’s well known that you of all wesens have a special loathing in your hearts for us, and I assure you the feeling is mutual.” motioning to his crew they come forward and each grab one of the struggling blutbads who snap and growl at them in defiant rage as they are dragged from the tent and brought outside to the wilderness and apparent campsite that surrounds them.

Cutting through a brush infested path they are led to an opening in the middle of the forest that is framed by towering firs that shade the sun in patches, only allowing strips of light to spotlight the ground.

Waiting around what looks to be an etched out rectangle in the dirt is an older woman and an elderly man. There is no question in the blutbadens’ minds that though the two may seem harmless they are really just as, if not more, dangerous than the three Endeizechen Grimms that are forcing them along.

Coming to a stop in front of the pair they are held in place as the woman steps forward and practically sneers as she addresses them.

“Good morning gentlemen, I trust you slept well? Yes? Good. Now, in a moment you are going to enter into a fight that will test every ability that you possess. Fail, you die, succeed and you’ll live to breathe another day. Good luck, you’re going to need it.”

Being turned around their bonds are efficiently cut but before they can strike back all three are unceremoniously shoved into the rectangular arena. As they pass through, a magnetic force seems to travel through them from the tips of their toes to the crowns of their heads.

Turning back around, they all turn their eyes on the retreating forms of the Grimms that had abducted them until they are completely out of sight and once that occurs their attention returns to the older woman and the elderly man.

“No one leaves the arena until the Grimm or all three of you are dead. I would advise letting the big bad wolves out to play, otherwise it’s going to be a real bloodbath” she advises.

~break~

Nick is just on the verge of sleep when Elijah and his goons burst into the tent and head straight for him. While the three walk behind him Elijah bends down in front of him, his face craning in towards him as he is released from the chair.
“We got a real treat for you this time, a classic if you will” he taunts, spit flying from his mouth and landing in blotches all over Nick’s face.

His taunt though is met with silence. Nick knows that Elijah is only trying to get a rise out of him which, if Nick reacts, will only give Elijah an excuse to hit him again. And though he does enjoy getting in a few descriptive words of his own about the man he is more than aware that any strength he wastes on the bastard will leave him weakened for the fast approaching trial.

The sawed rope drops to the ground and Elijah takes out his pocketknife and flips it open, the blade recently sharpened and glinting in the early morning sun.

Not even a flicker of thought about attacking Elijah or any of the other men crosses his mind, the resulting pain and loss of strength wouldn’t be worth it in the long run. His Grimm instincts are clawing him from the inside, growling and practically drooling at the coming trial that will lead to bloodshed and ultimately death.

Rising from the chair of his own free will, Elijah keeps the blade in full view, his grip ready to swipe out and slash him open if he so much as breathes wrong.

His moment of freedom is quickly extinguished when he feels the bruising grips of the three men behind him grab him by the arms and force him forward. The whole routine has become almost routine he finds as he completely zones out as he is led from the tent and to wherever the second trial is taking place.

Brushing past prickly branches that scratch at his exposed skin he is finally brought into a clearing in the woods that is lined with trees that reach into the heavens. But it isn’t the beautiful sight that catches his attention, it’s the three snarling, fully woged blutdbads circling inside what looks to be a drawn out rectangle in the dirt. On the outside of the rectangle is his mother and the old man that he still hasn’t gotten a name for but that information is the furthest thing from his worries at the moment. They are both watching the snapping and snarling blutdbads with silent glee, seeming to become even more excited when one or all three try to step out of the arena and are consequently zapped by whatever invisible force surrounds the arena.

Noticing his arrival his mother and the old man approach him, both are sporting identical menacing stares that are devoid of emotion and yet are filled with malicious intent. Stopping in front of him she takes the last step that takes up the space between them and takes his chin into her hand, turning it right and left as she inspects the slightly bloody bandaging on his cheek.

“Theresa did wonderful work as always, I knew there was a reason I assigned her to you” she comments as she drops his chin and takes a small step back.

Theresa that’s the young girl’s name. He files that information away for later, just so in case he makes it through this trial he may be able to try and connect with the young girl by using her name. It’s a long shot, especially given the fact that she’s more than likely been brainwashed into being a willing servant to his mother.

“The rules are the same as the last, successfully kill the three wesen and you will move on to the next trial. Fail, and be a feast for the blutdbads to bathe in” she recites, her eyes as stony as ever.

Without adding another dark comment about his bleak situation he is abruptly turned and roughly shoved into the arena with the three murderous blutdbads who are rearing to tear him limb from limb.

Eyeing their rather sharp teeth Nick only has one thought that goes through his mind: He is so
screwed.

Taking a step back from the advancing pack Nick quickly eyes the ground around him, looking for a rock or even a sharp stick that he can use to defend himself with. Taking down one blutbad without a weapon is life threatening enough but throw in two more and he’s basically facing an execution.

They come at him as one. Their sharp teeth aiming for his jugular and it is only by pure reflex that he manages to duck out of the way and received only a minor cut across his throat from one of their sharp canines.

Landing on the hard ground he quickly picks himself up and takes an unsteady step back, doing his best to try and put as much distance between him and them as possible.

“Look we don’t have to do this! We can work together and stop them from kidnapping and killing anyone else!” he tries to reason, praying that they will see that they all have a better chance of making it out alive if they work together instead of trying to kill one another.

They stop their advancement, each exchanging a glance with another before looking back at him with distrust and malice clear in their eyes. The middle one steps away from the group and returns to his human state, a suspicious glare dominates his features as he looks Nick over.

“Why should we trust you? You’re a Grimm, just like them! All your kind does is kill our kind and turn us into our monsters in your fairytales! Because of your ancestors blutbaden are looked at as monsters and the big bad wolf in stories that humans tell their children as bedtime stories. I say, it’s time for the real monster to be portrayed as you really are and for the big bad wolves to get their happy ending!”

Woging back into his wesen form the pack jump him, their teeth and sharpened nails digging and slicing into his skin. Blood gushes from the wounds that are reopened and the new ones that they’re attacks create.

Nick does his best to defend himself, his hands and arms doing their best to cover the fragile and exposed parts of his body but he is outnumbered.

All he can hear is the snarling of the blutbaden attacking him mercilessly and the sound of his own heavy breathing and grunting with each blow dealt.

The human part of Nick wants to just close his eyes and wait for the final blow that will take him away from this world of hurt and misery but the Grimm inside him is roaring and thrashing around in his mind and soul, its teeth pulled back in a bloodthirsty scowl. Even the thought of giving in to the mongrels is enough to rile his inner Grimm instincts which see surrender as an affront and sacrilege to everything it is.

His Grimm strength coils around his nerves and muscle like a blanket of power, rumbling like lighting in a storm as Nick sneers up at the blutdaben. Their attacks falter for a moment at the sudden change in atmosphere that seems to ripple around the Grimm.

Using their stunned phases against them Nick pulls his arm back and punches the closest face. The sudden blow causes the blutbad to stumble back from the sheer force behind the hit. When the other two try to go back to their earlier attack Nick transfers all of his strength to his legs and kicks out at the pair, the blows both making an impact in their guts.

Quickly rising from the ground Nick plants his feet on the ground then jumps into the air and
tackles the three to the ground, raining blow upon blow to the struggling faces and body parts beneath him.

Gaining some leverage one of the blutbaden manage to deliver a swift kick to his chest that sends him flying back and Nick consequently lands with an ‘oomph’ on the hard ground.

The cheers and taunts of Elijah and his gang are background noise as the fighters in the ring pull themselves together and eye their opponents up.

Spitting out blood Nick charges the group and attempts to incapacitate them long enough to deal the fatal blows needed to end this. But the group are strong and whenever a weakness is uncovered the blutbads are quick to remedy it.

The strength he receives from his Grimm continues to fill him. The rage and thrill that encompasses his being powerful enough to make him fill a sick pleasure every time one of his hits draws blood.

Reaching out Nick clamps his hand around the throat of a blutbad and with strength he never knew he could possibly possess pulls back with a vicious jerk and rips the blutbad’s jugular clear open. Blood gushes from the exposed area, bone and muscle exposed to the sky as the blutbad gurgles and claws futilely at his throat before dropping to the ground, dead.

The unexpected death causes the remaining blutbads to freeze, their senses taking in the scene before them until the rage takes over and their efforts to kill the Grimm triple.

Now covered from spattered with blood Nick looks like a scene from a horror movie as each move he makes causes droplets of blood to rain down around him.

Instinct drives his every move and decision now. Nick Burkhardt, a Portland P.D. Detective is gone now, cowering away in the very back of the Grimm’s mind as the ferocious entity that lurks inside him takes control.

Leaping into the air like a jack rabbit The Grimm attaches himself to a blutbad and cuts his airway off with his hand which causes the blutbad to panic and slash at the Grimm’s exposed arms.

Putting all his weight into the lower part of his body, the Grimm forces the blutbad to the ground and as soon as the Grimm is touching grass, he delivers blow after blow the blutbad’s face and vulnerable areas all over his body. The Grimm can feel the other blutbad attempting to rip him away but the Grimm manages to keep him at bay long enough for his feet to stampede down upon the blutbad’s face to the point where brain matter seeps from the blutbad’s ears as his shoe crunches down onto the skull.

Pulling his shoe out from the gunky oozing mess the Grimm turns his attention to the last remaining blutbad who is just as cut up as the Grimm but lacks the brain matter and blood shower that the Grimm had been treated to.

Neither took a moment to halt their movements, the adrenal coursing through them both too much to work against. The blutbad is now fighting for not only his freedom but for all blutbads while the Grimm is merely fighting to sate his bloodlust.

Like a bullet out of hell, both lunge at one another and collapse to the ground. They roll around on the ground and deliver swipes and punches at every roll until finally the Grimm gets the upper hand and manages to pin the blutbad to the ground. His body hovers over the snarling and snapping beast.
The Grimm’s hands wrap around the blutbad’s throat and squeeze until it looks as though the blutbad’s eyes are going to pop out of his skull until finally the Grimm turns the blutbad’s head to an unnatural angle and hears the satisfying crack and crunch of the bones as the blutbad’s neck snaps clean off the spine.

Dropping the lifeless body the Grimm rises from the ground and like an anvil all the strength and the influence of his Grimm powers that had been pumping through him leaves him and he collapses back onto the ground like a sack of rocks. His muscles and bones scream at him in outrage at the abuse they had been subjected to.

He barely has the strength to keep his eyes open as his mother, the elderly man, Elijah and his group step through the barrier and over to him. His mother is sporting a pleased smile at him while the others remain in stoic silence as they take in the carnage around them.

“You did an excellent job Nicolae, just like I knew you would. As for your attempt at creating an alliance with these abominations I should think that you have learned your lesson. No wesen will ever align itself with you, not while their own lives are on the line. Elijah, take him back to his tent and make sure that his wounds are tended to, it’ll do us no good for him to die of an infection” turning her back on him she turns to watch as one of Elijah’s lackeys set to work on disposing of the dead bodies.

Nick is roughly jerked from the ground and his arm is slung over the shoulder of Elijah as he is actually dragged back to his tent. His feet trail behind him and his eyes are barely able to stay open the further they get from his mother and the blutbads that he had killed.

~GRIMM~

A few hours earlier

Hank had been working throughout the night, only stopping to take short cat naps when the sandbags on his eyes became too much.

Even though he has barely slept and seldom moved his eyes and mind away from the case at hand Hank is still scarcely an inch into figuring out a way to save Nick and put an end to what the Endeizechen Grimms are planning. One of the major steps that he knows needs to be taken is to locate where exactly Nick is being held but there are just too many possibilities and not enough time to go through them all.

It has gotten to the point where Hank is seriously considering asking if there is such a thing as a magic looking glass because that seems to be the only way they are ever going to move forward in this seemingly hopeless endeavor.

He had called Juliet to update her on the case and hearing the choked sobs in her voice and the too long breaks in between broke his heart. She doesn’t deserve this and he wishes that he could sit her down and tell her everything that was going on, but he can’t because once again it isn’t his secret to tell. He felt sick to his stomach after he hung up with her and the sour taste has remained in his mouth ever since as he turned back to the maps and evidence in front of him.

To make matters worse, today was also the day of the Captain’s press conference.

Renard’s speech to the press had gone as well as it could have, considering the fact that all of the information they did have couldn’t be spoken about outside of a select few. It had been painful for the entire station to watch as their Captain was bombarded by questions of the police’s competency to protect the people of Portland.
Luckily however, the Captain has had years of experience with dealing with the press and was able to answer the questions and accusations respectfully before ending the conference and retreating back to the Spice and Tea Shop.

Just as he is getting ready to head back to the Spice Shop himself Wu sidles up to him and hands him a slip of paper, a look of regret on his face as he waits for Hank to read it.

Going over the brief message Hank has to bite his tongue from letting out a handful of obscenities. Wu gives him a look of understanding, not even attempting to lighten the air with a sarcastic or witty remark.

“Has all the evidence been collected?” he asks, his voice low and worn with exhaustion.

Wu nods, “yeah, it’s waiting for you in the evidence locker room. We got something else this time though, along with the usual blood written G there was also a wallet from one of the victims; a William Bernstein” he reads the name off his notepad.

“We’re sure it was three victims?” he knows the chances that this is just a copycat are extremely low, what with the insignia the ‘killer’ leaves behind being withheld from the public and newspapers, but he is hoping that he isn’t going to have to deal with more trial victims.

“A witness who was walking her dog said that she saw three drunk men being attacked by four individuals wearing all black then being dragged into a nondescript black van and the same as always, she couldn’t get a look at their faces” Wu is really getting tired of that one, who were these guys? Freaking ninjas?

“What about a license plate?”

“According to our witness there wasn’t one, which means that it was likely stolen and is probably nothing but scrap metal now.” Hank sighs and pockets the piece of paper, patting Wu on the back as he picks up his jacket and heads for the evidence locker room. As he walks he gets out his phone and speed dials Monroe. He picks up on the second ring.

“There are three more victims. They were taken over an hour ago. Right now we only have a name on one of them, William Bernstein” he relays, nodding to a few passing officers. There was silence on the other end, the ominous lack of sound causes Hank to pause.

“Monroe?”

A clear shaky intake of breath is taken before Hank receives a response, “I know him. He’s in my support group. Granted he doesn’t really come to them frequently but oh my god, this is just… wow” he trails off, his shock of knowing one of the latest victims getting the better of him.

“What kind of support group?”

“It’s a support group for wieder wesen, which is basically a sort of born again Christian type of deal in which we try to control our ‘bad habits’” he quickly explains, catching the attention of Rosalee who is watching Renard stir the pot over the fire.

She walks over to him and mouths, “What’s wrong?”

“What kind of wesen is he?” Hank asks, lowering his voice as he walks into an empty interrogation room.

“A blutbad, like me or rather a wieder blutbad. Are you sure it’s him?” he asks, still in disbelief
over this news.

“We’re pretty sure, found his wallet at the scene. Did you ever talk about your friendship with Nick, about what he is?” he asks, wanting to get as much information on Bernstein’s knowledge of the local Grimm.

“No, I never told anyone in the group about Nick, for their own safety and Nick’s.”

Hank nods to himself, “okay, then that means that Bernstein won’t know that Nick isn’t the kill first ask questions later type of Grimm which isn’t so great right now. So since Bernstein is a blutbad then it’s a pretty safe bet that the other two victims are as well.”

“Are you coming back to the shop?” Monroe asks.

“I was then this hit and it looks like I’m going to have to stick around the station for a while. I’ll go over the little evidence collected from this latest scene along with the others and see if there’s anything we missed. I’ll call you when I’m done and heading over there.”

“We’ll see you then.” Both hang up and Hank exits the interrogation room and continues on his way to the evidence locker room.

~short break~

Rosalee watches as Monroe ends the call and waits impatiently for him to say something. Having overheard his end of the conversation she is anxious to learn what is going on now.

“There’s been another kidnapping, and this time I know one of them, William Bernstein. He’s a wieder blutbad like me, I know him from my support group” Monroe relays, pocketing his phone as he turns to look down at Rosalee.

“Oh god” Rosalee rubs his back sympathetically, knowing how hard this one is hitting him.

Sean had heard everything from his place at the fireplace and once Monroe and Rosalee are done talking he voices his thoughts.

“I’m sorry about your friend, but we can use this new information to try and pin down a location that they could be holding Nick at.” The pair turn to him.

Rosalee maintains contact with Monroe as the pair approach the Zauberbiest.

“How? All we have is six missing wesen, all of which are probably dead now, a potion that won’t be ready for another 10 hours and absolutely no idea on where to even start looking!” Monroe rants, the added knowledge of knowing one of the newest victims grating on his last nerve.

“That’s where you’re wrong.”

“What do you mean by that? Are you holding back information again?” Monroe knows that the man before him is one of, if not the, most powerful wesen in Portland but this would be the second time that the man had held back information that could have helped them earlier.

Sean shakes his head, the move not completely placating Monroe’s anger as he is quick to respond.

“As horrible and time consuming as it sounds, there is a way to figure out a possible location that these trials could be taking place. As of now, we know that they have used Naiads for the water trial and since water must be incorporated into the trial itself we can assume that they have used a
body of water which means we’re likely looking for somewhere with a lake or pond. Now that we know they’ve taken blutbaden they have their earth element so we’re also looking for somewhere with a lot of trees. If we combine this information we should be able to put together a model of where they are.”

Catching on to what he is getting at Rosalee continues his train of thought.

“Of course! We can look at it geographically, I have some maps in the cupboard” she hurried over to a faded wood cupboard and starts pulling out maps and miscellaneous items that get in her way.

“There are over 200 parks and natural areas in Portland alone, who’s to say that they’re even in Portland?” Monroe doesn’t want to tear down this potential opportunity to finally track Nick but with everything that has happened he isn’t feeling particularly optimistic.

“We don’t, not for sure, but it’s a chance that we need to take because otherwise all we’re doing is sitting here waiting for my ‘potion’ to be ready” Renard responds, going over to the maps that Rosalee had laid out.

Monroe opens his mouth to say more but with one look at Rosalee’s pleading eyes he shuts his mouth and joins the search.

~GRIMM~

Present Time

Nick is none too gently dropped onto the ground where a weak cough escapes him, his chest rattling around like a bag full of marbles. His body is jerked around some more as his wrists and ankles are zip tied then once that is done his body is left alone.

“Take care of his wounds, we can’t have him dying on us” Elijah addresses the younger girl waiting in the corner of the tent, watching in silence as her ‘patient’ is brought to her.

Waiting until she nods in understanding Elijah and the man who had followed him then leaves the tent and heads back towards their leader who is making sure that the bodies are disposed of properly.

Once they are gone the girl approaches Nick, a first aid kit cradled in her hands as she kneels down beside him and opens the kit. Her mind is on autopilot as she picks up the needed instrument and sets to work.

Surveying the mess in front of her she is quick to carefully unbutton his shirt, remaining silent as she gets out a small bottle of hydrogen peroxide and applies it the bleeding wounds on his chest. As soon as the solution makes contact with his wounds the clear liquid turns into a white fizzing concoction of pain that brings Nick right out of his drowsy state.

He tries to move but the girl holds him down, her grip surprisingly strong as she puts the peroxide down and lifts a clean towel to wipe the foam off. The pain beginning to fade he watches as the girl picks up an already threaded needle from the kit and begins to sew the deeper lacerations close.

Looking around the tent, the best he can he is surprised to find that they are alone, making this the perfect opportunity to try and make an ally of her or at the very least get some kind of information on their location.

“Theresa” his voice is quiet and non-threatening. He doesn’t want her to perceive him as a threat.
She freezes, the needle paused mid stitch.

Seeing that he has her attention he continues, not wanting to give her enough time to pull back into herself.

“That’s your name isn’t it? Theresa? So tell me, why are you with them? All I’ve seen them make you do so far is play nurse, is there a reason for that?” he asks, doing his best to not move his body and invoke more pain.

Averting her eyes back to the task at hand she continues to sew him up. Her jaw is visibly clenched as if to stop herself from opening it.

“They told you not to talk to me right? Or are you not allowed to talk at all? You know, taking away the ability to speak is a way of maintaining control over another human being. You believe yourself beneath them, don’t you? Am I right?” he continues, doing his best to remember the psychology class he had taken in high school along with the most effective ways of interrogating a suspect.

He can see that his words are having an impact on her. Her once steady hand is shaking just slightly enough for the stitches to not be as neat as before. Venturing deeper Nick continues, hoping to pry his way even further into her psyche.

“I’ve seen the way they speak to you, ordering you around like you’re some obedient child who doesn’t have a mind of your own. They’re the ones who get to go out, prove what strong warriors they are while you’re stuck here, being their lap dog. I bet that gets to you, that you want just one chance to prove that you’re just as good as them, just as worthy as they are” he doesn’t know where the this is coming from, but the words keep flowing like a fountain of water and he just hopes that they didn’t stop.

He likes to think that it’s from all the lectures he had had to listen to while in his psych. 101 class, his memory in this time of panic rifling through the memories of that time, desperately looking for a way to profile why this outwardly innocent girl is with these monsters. But he knows that there was a very different reason behind his sudden speech confidence.

It is said that in times of great stress that your memory can be impaired but recently, with his Grimm heritage coming to light Nick’s memory capacity and ability to recall had greatly enhanced and now he can recite the smallest fact, whether it be something from his own life or a random fact, with great ease.

Like with his mother and his own experiences as a cop and Grimm, he is all too aware that faces could be deceiving. That there are wolves in sheep’s clothing that walk among the decent and pure. This girl could be just as cold hearted as the rest of the clan but he is going to trust his instincts on this one and encourage his desperate belief that he wasn’t completely surrounded by mission driven killers.

No longer able to hold her tongue Theresa puts the needle down and in a faint, almost submissive voice, speaks.

“I am a disgrace to this clan, I don’t even deserve to breathe the same air as them.” tears try to gather in her eyes and she quickly wipes them away, but more rapidly take their place.

Finally getting somewhere Nick thinks up a response, wanting to keep the dialogue going.

“Why do you think that? What did you supposedly do that was so bad that you can’t even look
them in the eye?” he asks, his voice gaining strength the longer he remains conscious.

Theresa shakes her head, not making eye contact with him as she does her best to finish the task of tending to his wounds.

“I’m not supposed to talk to you” she states, but her quivering voice shows that she isn’t as strong willed as she wants him to believe. She is going to crack, and all Nick has to do is continue to hit the right buttons.

“No one else is around, and I can tell that you really want to open up to someone. They’re going to kill me soon enough anyway, no matter what I do, might as well lend an ear to another dying soul, right?” he tries, watching as she finishes up the wound and moves on to another.

For a few minutes she works on him in silent, eventually finishing up his chest and abdomen area then moving on to the reopened slashes on his cheek that are weeping blood.

Looking the wound over she reaches for an antiseptic wipe and dabs at the blood around the wounds then moves on to apply some antibiotic cream. She then finishes with a fresh gauze wrap.

“I guess if you’re not going to talk, you wouldn’t mind if I do?” he receives no response, which is no surprise to him.

“You probably don’t know this, but I used to love my mother. From the memories I have of her she was this angel that would kiss me goodnight, read me bedtime stories and always tell me how much she loved me. Now I’m starting to wonder if my mind didn’t just make all that up to protect itself from the truth. That she is a distant, unloving, hateful woman who only cares about me fulfilling some stupid prophecy.”

Putting her supplies away she rises from the ground and heads for the door. Her head down the whole time.

Just as Nick is about to call his attempt at connecting with the girl a failure she suddenly stops and ever so slightly cranes her head back at him.

“I couldn’t kill him.” she whispers, her voice shaking with restrained emotion.

“Kill who?”

It looks as if she is debating on whether or not she should just leave now. As her body twitches with indecision, Nick watches her in bated silence, not wanting to say a word and affect her decision negatively. Finally though, it seems that she has come to a decision because she turns and walks back to him, a surprising ounce of determination lights her usually submissive aura.

Coming to a stop when she is standing beside him she responds, her voice, though still as faint as a baby’s coo has gained some strength.

“His name was Terrance and he was my friend. He was the only who saw past me being a Grimm and didn’t run away in fear. He used to always bring me a flower from his father’s shop. We would always meet in secret, because if Leader found out she would have gone into a rage and demanded his death. I wanted to protect from him that, shield him from the evil that surrounded us.” she starts, taking a seat beside him.

“He was wesen.” he guesses, the way she spoke of their time making it obvious that her situation is comparable to the love of Romeo and Juliet, only this time instead of feuding households it was actually feuding races. Wesen and Grimms.
She nods, “a fuchsbau. We thought we were being so careful. But one day I went to our secret place in the garden outside the village and who I found instead was Elijah with a message: kill the abomination you dare associate with, or forever be known as a traitor to your kind. After he left I desperately looked for him, and when I found him he had been severely beaten and hanging from a tree. I was sure he was dead but then he started to cough and I quickly cut him down. We tried to run, we even got so far as three towns over but it wasn’t long before they found us, and I’ll never forget what they did to him…”

*Flashback*

Theresa and Terrance had just finished collecting firewood and were setting about making dinner when the door to their modest cabin is kicked in and standing in the doorway is the scowling face of Leader and on either side of her are Elijah and Michael.

“Leader please!” she begs, taking a stand in front of Terrance who is trying to protect her as well, his face woging into that of his fuchsbau form.

There isn’t an ounce of sympathy in her eyes as her Leader steps into the cabin and approached the two, her hands behind her back as she assesses the cabin around her. Her eyes take in the stacks of firewood and the smell of baking bread.

“You have not only disgraced your family’s name but this clan as well. It sickens me to see you embrace with this…abomination! I gave you a chance to redeem yourself and instead you defy me and run away with a wesen. Now, I am forced to kill it myself” before they even have time to blink Elijah and Michael grab ahold of her and force her away from Terrance who is doing his best not to show fear but is failing miserably at it.

Removing one of her hands from her back, Leader reveals a dagger with an engraving of the Sterbestunde G on the handle and in one swift move rams the blade into his heart all the way up to the hilt.

“No!” Theresa screams, kicking and clawing at the men that hold her back.

All she can do is watch as Terrence slowly slides down the wall, a trail of blood slithering down the wood as he returns to his human form and his skin was rapidly loses color. Using up what little strength he can from his deteriorating supply he turns his head to spend his last remaining moments looking at Theresa. He tries to open his mouth, maybe to comfort her but with a cold heart Leader savagely rips the dagger from his heart.

That move is the scissor that cuts through his strand of life.

The light leaves his eyes, leaving behind an empty corpse.

No longer having any reason to hold her back Elijah and Michael drop the traitor to the ground and watch in rueful silence as Theresa drags herself to the side of her dead friend.

“Elijah, Michael, take Theresa, I’ll deal with the body this time.” Leader says as she wipes her bloody dagger off on her coat. Her eyes only travel to the weeping Theresa for a split second before returning to the dagger in her hand as she cleans the precious metal off.

Theresa tries her best to shake the arms off but in her grief she isn’t strong enough and can
only scream in protest as she is carried from the cabin to the rundown car that is waiting for them. She watches as their leader steps out from the cabin, the canister of lighter fluid at her side, and dumps the remaining fluid out before taking out a lighter and with a swipe of her thumb ignites the flame. With a careless toss the house is soon being eaten by flames and the arsonist heads their way, her face as impenetrable as stone.

Once their leader is in the car Elijah starts the engine and drives off. The only sound being Theresa’s sobs and questions of why?

With burning hatred in her voice, Leader addresses her, “until the time comes where you can have a chance to redeem yourself, your only purpose in life shall be to serve those around you. No matter the task, no matter the time, when you are told to do something, you shall do it. If you dare refuse, you’ll wish that you had been killed tonight as well.”

Theresa wants to refuse, to stand up to her but the words get lodged in her throat and instead she finds herself nodding in acceptance.

From the rearview mirror she watches as the cabin that she had almost called home with Terrance goes up in flames, taking with it any chance of happiness and the only person who ever truly understood her.

End Flashback

“I tried returning there a few times but Elijah was always waiting for me and after a while I just stopped trying altogether. I still think about him sometimes but I know now that we would have never worked out. In a way I learned that I should be grateful that Leader put a stop to it before I fell too deep. She always says that a closed heart and an iron mind makes a warrior that cannot be struck down...I was wrong to think otherwise.” her voice became hardened at the end, the pure grief that once encased her had thawed out.

After she had finished her tale Nick was left silenced. For some reason he couldn’t help but feel some type of connection to the young girl. He had felt a connection to her before but now it had only been strengthened by her powerful story of love, hatred and powerlessness. He knew without a doubt that his mother had been the one to take the life of the Fuchsbau and it both sickened him and cemented his hatred for the woman who had given him life. He could only imagine what other horrors his mother had committed to maintain the ‘purity’ of her clan over the years.

Though the girl had tried to appear determined and resolved in her last statement but Nick only has to look at her trembling hands and faraway eyes to know that her words are nothing more than a fading mantra. Underneath the hidden thoughts though is self-doubt and a well ingrained need to please the one she calls Leader, to make amends for the fact that she had fallen in love with a wesen.

It’s going to take a hell of a lot longer to undo all the psychological and certainly physical damage that had been inflicted on her over the years. But he can only hope that he has made enough of an impact on the girl with the few times they’ve interacted for her to view him as someone she could confide in. Which the odds were looking increasingly more likely because of her opening up about her wesen lover.

Now he just had to hope that their growing trust would lead to her coming to his side and helping him escape, however those odds were incredibly slim seeing as she had a cult like mindset when it came to his mother. Before he can think up another question, Theresa has already risen from her
spot on the ground and is making her way for the exit.

In his mind he quickly goes over everything she had described about the attack on Terrance; the way she felt about him and everything in-between.

It is when she is just about to step foot out the door that a question he should have asked long ago came tumbling from his lips.

“Wait, Theresa can you tell me where we are? Or even what day it is? Please, I feel like I’m going through an endless loop with no way of getting off. I can’t take much more of this and I’m pretty sure my mother doesn’t want me completely losing my mind yet” he looks at her imploringly, hoping that maybe she’ll take pity on him and tell him such a trivial thing as a date.

If he knew the date or time then maybe he can keep track of how long he has been here. He has been trying to keep track by the rising and setting of the sun but with his recent habit of losing consciousness his attempt at time keeping was shoddy at best.

She stops and it almost looks like she is going to answer but before she can the Endeizechen Grimm that has assisted Elijah in dragging Nick into the tent reappears and Theresa quickly clamps her mouth shut; her emotionless mask goes back into place as she scurries out of the tent, never once looking back at Nick even as he shouted at her, pleading for her to answer him.

For his efforts he receives a well-aimed punch to the head that knocks him unconscious.

And the habit continues, hopefully if he makes it out of this alive he doesn’t suffer from any brain trauma.
Trial by Air

Chapter Summary

Nick’s will to live continues to crumble and in doing so opens the door even further for his inner Grimm to come out.

Elijah enters his Leader’s tent and approaches the older woman. Her eyes practically shine over the blade she holds in her hand as she runs a sharpening stone along the body, stoning the deadly tool to a skin piercing point.

“We need to move things along, doing one trial a day is no longer viable. This area is under protection of a Royal, and Alin’s sources have informed him that my dear Nicolae is under his protection. It’s only a matter of time until he manages to track us down and I intend to be quite the adversary when we meet. The third trial will take place tonight.” not looking up at him she sets the now sharpened blade down and picks up a folded piece of paper, her hand flicking out to hand it to him.

Taking the paper he looks it over, “For this one you’re going to have to be a little more creative in your capturing, especially considering their place of employment.” pocketing the paper he nods respectfully at her and steps out of the tent.

Already with an idea of who he’s going to take, Elijah motions over the chosen members and leads them to the inconspicuous black van parked behind some brush.

Once everyone has gathered he turns to face them, his expression as clear as stone.

“The plans have changed. Leader wants us to have this group of wesen before nightfall and from what I’ve learned this group is going to be our hardest one yet. No one makes a move without my say so and if any one of you manages to fuck this up, I will rip your head off and drain you dry.”

For their efforts none of the men he gathered show any physical reactions of fear but internally is a different story. They may be mighty, murderous Endeizechen Grimms but none had shed as much blood as Elijah.

Instinctively knowing that they understand Elijah unlocks the van and the group piles inside. When everyone is in he starts the van and drives off towards Providence Medical Center.

~break~

Eliza Turner walks through the door and into the private parking lot. Her focus on the phone in her hand as she reads a text she’d been sent by an associate.

We found a donor. Meet at location in 3 hours.

A cruel smile lights up her features beneath the sickly yellow lights as she walks to her car, her keys jingle in her hand the closer she gets to the vehicle.

Pocketing the phone she goes to unlock her vehicle but stops when the lights above her suddenly shut off, leaving her in complete darkness.
A regular woman would have quickly gotten into their car and driven away but she’s no ordinary woman and has no intention of showing any fear at the unknown.

From behind her she can hear footsteps approaching and she stays perfectly still, bidding her time until the perfect time to strike presents itself. If this person dares to attack her she’s going to make sure that she leaves them in tatters and smears of blood.

The footsteps get closer and adrenaline pumps through her blood, her control over her instincts slipping the longer she waits but she won’t reveal herself, not yet, not until she can look into their eyes and revel in the fear her true self evokes. Not to mention the added bonus of more organs to harvest.

When it sounds like her possible attacker is only a few steps away she whirls around and is surprised to find no one and the footsteps she had heard before have mysteriously silenced. Taking out a pen light from her purse she takes a cursory look around at the still dark parking lot, the small light barely manages to light the ground beneath her.

Still on edge she takes a step forward, not entirely convinced that she had been imaging things. Something or someone had to have turned the lights off because they couldn’t have just shorted out at the exact same time.

A soft thud behind her grabs her attention and when she turns around she is met with the darkened sneer of a Grimm.

Releasing a snarl she woges into her Geier form and attacks. Her talon like hands try to slash at his face but he manages to duck and roll and quickly recover to deliver a staggering blow to her legs that leave her unprepared for the torrent of punches aimed at her stomach, chest and face.

Truly pissed off now she throws herself at him and smiles in triumph when she pins the Grimm to the ground and rains blow upon blow to his disgusting face. She feels a huge erotic thrill as the Grimm’s blood stains her sharpened nails. She wants to make him suffer, to experience the torture, pain and fear that his kind have caused wesen for centuries. But she isn’t naïve enough to believe that she can keep this up for much longer, she needs to wipe this puke stain off of the face of the earth.

Her eyes zeroing in on his throat she prepares to crush his windpipe but only a millisecond after the thought crosses her mind she’s blindsided by a sharp pain to the back. She flies over the Grimm and crashes into the side of her car where she is silenced by darkness.

His eyes having adjusted to the dark the Grimm on the ground looks up to meet the scowling face of Elijah holding a metal bat.

“I’m disappointed. Here I give you the chance to prove yourself and you manage to let the Geier get the drop on you. If I hadn’t of intervened you would be dead right now. I almost just let her kill you and then would have taken care of her myself but I’ve decided on a different punishment, one that I think fits quite nicely.” from his back pocket he pulls out a pocketknife and flicks the blade out.

Blood soaks through his shirt, his hands stained red in his effort to keep pressure on the wound as
he limps down the row of parked cars. Droplets of blood are left in his wake like a sick version of a trail of breadcrumbs.

As he reaches for the doorknob of the stairway, the knob turns and opens to show a man and a woman conversing with each other, their coats on and keys in hand. But their conversation quickly ceases when they see the clearly injured man before them.

Before they can move to help, the man collapses to the ground, groaning in pain as he weakly reaches out to them, begging for help until he loses consciousness.

The pair shares a look, a silent conversation going on between the two until they come to an agreement and approach the injured man. The first step the woman takes is to check the wound, her eyes greedily catalogue the blood pumping out of the man beneath her.

She watches as her associate checks the man’s pulse, his mind in concentration as he counts the beats. After a minute he looks back at her.

“He’s dying, and we’re too far away to harvest his organs in time. We might as well just get the mortician down here.”

Sighing in disappointment she shakes her head, “such a waste, from the look of him he couldn’t have been older than 30 and I can’t tell you how much his organs would have gotten us.”

No longer having a reason to deal with the man the woman prepares to call the mortician when a voice makes them take pause and the skin on the back of their necks rise to attention.

“You know for supposed doctors, you two don’t seem very caring for this man’s life. Then again, I guess since you’re Geiers it’s just in your nature to be for lack of a better term, uncaring.”

It takes them all of two seconds to figure out that this man is a Grimm and when they do all pretenses of being human drop and both simultaneously woge into their Geier forms and charge at the lone Grimm, or who they thought was alone.

Rising from the ground, blood continuing to pump from his wound, the injured Grimm takes aim with his tranquilizer gun and, with slightly shaking hands, fires two consecutive darts filled with a sleeping agent into both of the Geiers’ necks.

Grabbing at the dart in shock they pull the small cylindrical object out but it’s too late, the drug is already coursing through their bloodstreams and their grip on consciousness is quickly ebbing away.

Not willing to give in, both do their best to fight. Their taloned hands try to swipe at the suddenly multiplied Grimm in front of them but each time they seem to miss and are rewarded with a condescending laugh.

The woman is the first to lose the battle and crumples to the ground, her face making a sickening thwack as it connects with the concrete and forces her to leave awareness. The man on the other hand is battling the drugs a little better. He has yet to hit the ground and while his vision is increasingly worsening his determination to kill the Grimm drives him on.

Staggering forward he wildly swings his talons at the Grimm triplets and he must have come close or something because the next thing he feels is a harsh punch to the jaw that forces him to the ground on his side. His whole body hurts by this point and darkness is creeping in on him. He no longer has the energy to continue fighting, he couldn’t even if he wanted to because the drug is now doing its job and forcing him under.
As he loses consciousness he can only watch as the Grimm de-multiplies into one who watches him with a silent glare until he is lost in the land of unconsciousness.

Limping over to Elijah the injured Grimm’s labored breathing is the only sound in the quiet private parking lot, each inhale and exhale sounding wet and choppy. The pair hadn’t been wrong, he is dying but he just isn’t as close as they had first thought, but he would be dead soon if he didn’t get help soon, that is if Elijah isn’t planning on leaving him behind. For his mistake of almost costing them their bounty he would accept the punishment as penance for potentially disrupting his clan’s plans.

Looking away from the unconscious Geiers Elijah walks around them and over to the injured Endeizechen Grimm. His eyes look him over, in particular the nasty wound in the fleshy part of his stomach. The wound he had received wasn’t life threatening per se but if left untreated it very well could be.

“You remember what I said before we came here? About what I would do to anyone who fucked with this plan?” Elijah breaths, his voice no louder than a whisper but the venom in his words enough to make it seem like he’s screaming into a microphone.

“Yes sir.”

“For your failure I should very well rip your head off and piss down your neck. I should tear you apart limb by limb then while you’re still alive, barely hanging on to consciousness douse you in gasoline and light you on fire. But you know what? I’m not going to do either, in fact I consider what I’m going to do, the worst punishment of all, I’m going to make you live with the shame that you have brought on yourself, your family and your ancestors. When we get back to camp, after Alin has healed your wounds you are going to confess to Leader about what a miserable embarrassment you are to this clan and maybe, just maybe she will grant you forgiveness. But right now you’re no use to me, so I am ordering you to go the van and tell Lucas that I need his assistance in dragging the bodies back to the van.” Elijah’s eyes sear into his back as the Grimm limps away to do as ordered.

Elijah shakes his head in disgust. And to think that at some point he had believed that the man had shown promise.

Taking the cold shoulder for what it is the injured Endeizechen Grimm limps away with his tail between his legs as he heads to the van to alert Lucas that his assistance is needed. He has no doubt that they will inquire about his sorry state but he just isn’t in the mood to take their spitting insults and looks of hatred.

Looking down at his watch Elijah checks the time. 12:55 PM. He smiles in satisfaction. Things are differently moving along just as he had hoped.

~break~

The black van comes to a stop behind the brush and the occupants quickly pile out, all except the injured Grimm who is noticeably paler and having trouble staying upright. Having difficulties seeing straight he leans all his weight into the side of the van and makes friends with the solidness the van gives him.

But just as he is getting comfortable, he finds himself being tugged away from his friend and he tries to resist but the blood loss has sapped his strength and muffled his reflexes.

Around him he can hear distorted noises that sound like a language but he can’t decipher what they
are trying to tell him. Subconsciously he knows that it is just his fellow Endeizechen Grimms dragging him but in the forefront of his mind all he can concentrate on is that fact that he is being led somewhere against his will by something that speaking in garbled sentences.

He’s surprised when the ground beneath him vanishes and the sky has been replaced by a blanket of sandy waves that swirl across his vision. The sound of bees catch his attention and his eyes wildly search for the coming swarm, not wanting to endure more pain but he is held down by a strong force that spits more garbled barbaric speech at him. He opens his mouth and shouts at the force to let him go along with increasing his struggles in hopes that he can shake off their hold.

His attempt at freedom is quickly brought to an end with a blow to the head that knocks him out.

Elijah looks down at the now unconscious Endeizechen Grimm, his hand flexing from the blow, while his face remains indifferent.

Alin wordlessly checks the man’s pulse, the organ pumping sluggishly under his fingers. If he is going to save this man’s life he’s going to have to start now or else his will be another body to be burned.

Pulling back his hand, Alin walks the short distance to a table and gathered the supplies he would need to treat his new patient.

Returning to the table he sets the supplies down and gets to work.

Seeing that his presence is no longer needed, Elijah leaves the tent and the elder to his work. Right now he has to inform Leader that the next trial could begin.

He felt the eyes of fellow Endeizechen Grimms as he approaches the trailer. As he walk, his mind comes up with what he is going to say to her as he steps into the trailer and gently shuts the door behind him.

“I take it by your presence here that you’ve completed your task?” she inquires, still in the same chair he had left her in. He wouldn’t have be surprised if she hasn’t moved at all since he had left her a mere two hours ago.

“I wouldn’t dare return if I hadn’t. There was an incompetent among my group tonight that managed to get himself gravelly injured but Alin is working on him now so I believe he will pull through. Not that that is a particularly better consolation for the humiliation and embarrassment such a mistake has brought him. As for the Geiers they are being situated as we speak, we’re just waiting on your order to bring them to the site.” he states, staying near the door as he watches her sit in silence.

“It seems like you have everything under control. And I assume this ‘incompetent’ will be coming to see me soon, after this trial of course?” she inquires. If this so called Endeizechen Grimm had almost cost them the chance at performing the Shedding Ritual she wants to make him stand before her in judgment.

“I ordered him as such, and as soon as Alin is done with him he’ll be detained in a separate tent until you say otherwise.” he responds, watching as she rose from the chair and walks towards him.

“Good, things are moving along nicely then. After this only one more trial which will put us that much closer to everything we’ve worked for.” a dark smile lights up her features as she fantasizes about the power that would soon be theirs.

“What are your orders?”
Stopping in front of him she answers, “We wait until Alin is done and then the trial will proceed.”

Taking a step back he opens the door for her and waits until she has stepped out before following and closing the door behind him.

~break~

Wiping the remaining blood off the torso in front of him Alin calmly puts away the items he had been using to heal the injured man. His movements as quiet as air and his mind completely on the task at hand.

The whole process hadn’t taken that long, all he had had to do was clean the wound, sew the man up then apply his healing salve. Now all that was left to do was wait until he woke up.

Of course, all his work could be for nothing when the man went before Kelly, whom would show him no mercy. He was more than happy to lead her to the conclusion that the boy should pay with his life but the whole matter was of little consequence to him so he would defer to her decision.

His main concern at the moment though is making sure that the potion for the shedding ritual remained potent and was not breaking apart, for if that were to happen they would have to start all over and there just wasn’t time for that.

From behind him he can hear footsteps approaching but he bids the newcomer no notice, not feeling at all obliged to acknowledge their presence until he deems it necessary.

“I see that you’ve worked miracles again Alin, it’s a shame though that your work could be for nothing” Kelly states, her eyes running over the pale unconscious body on the table.

With his back still turned Alin responds, his voice light, “are you planning on handing down the most severe punishment?”

“Until I hear the full story, his fate will remain undecided. All that matters right now is completing the trials and the shedding ritual. By the way, if you are ready I would like to begin the air trial now.” she requests, knowing that the trial could not begin without Alin’s presence.

Turning to face her Alin walks to the other side of the table, both looking across at each other with the injured Endeizechen Grimm lying unaware between them.

“Seeing how this young man won’t be awake for some time I believe that now is the perfect time for a trial. After you.” he beckons her out of the tent and she obliges him, knowing that he will be following close behind as they make their way to the cave that had been picked out for this exact trial.

It hadn’t been easy to find a cave that was secluded enough so as to not bring attention to it but also large enough to accommodate the activities that would be taking place. Luckily though they had found such a place that was only two miles away from where they had set up camp.

As they walk, out of the corners of their eyes they see a small group of Elijah’s men exit the tent the Geirs had been held in with the drugged up wesen slung over their shoulders. The Geiers’ hands and head hit the back of the Endeizechen Grimm carrying them.

With Kelly leading the parade they enter the forested area. No one speaks the entire duration of their journey.

Animals immediately go into hiding upon catching a glimpse of the intruders in their realm, and if
it were possible not even the wind speaks, as if fearful that harm will come to it.

The deeper they walk into the forest, the more the trees camouflage the sun, making the air noticeably cooler. The dirt beneath their feet starts to go uphill and has been overtaken with moss and grass from the moisture in the ground. You would think that with the extra padding on the ground that this would greatly quiet their footsteps but it has the opposite effect and instead each step is like a harmony of drums playing out of sync.

Finally, after nearly an hour of hiking they arrive at the cave and set to work on getting the stage ready for the coming act.

~break~

When Nick comes to after an unforgiving blow to the head he finds that the zip ties around his ankles and wrists are still restraining him. The only consolation is that he didn’t wake up to find himself chained up like an animal (again), which in of itself wasn’t much better than being chained down.

With a look outside he sees that it’s still light out, meaning that he couldn’t have been out for more than an hour, two at the most.

He recalls the conversation he had had with Theresa before he had been knocked unconscious. The nagging feeling that had they not been interrupted by the guard he could have delved deeper into gaining the girl’s trust and possibly getting her to aide him in his escape, but instinct told him that his chances of that happening now were greatly decreased. He had gotten his one chance to make an ally and he had failed.

Experience from past interrogations tells him that the next time he sees her she’s going to be enclosed in her shell and the key will be buried beneath a thousand pounds of cement.

Sure he can hope for a miracle but so far the only miracle he has been granted is that he hasn’t died from an infection or blood loss.

His body has never felt so stiff in all his life, and that was saying something considering the past few year’s events. He’s just lucky that he is still able to move at all considering all the abuse his body has suffered in such a short amount of time.

But in all honesty it won’t really matter soon seeing as he is going to be sacrificed and hence won’t need the ability to move.

It’s too dangerous a feat to contemplate what the possible shedding ritual will entail, but he is incapable of completely shutting those kinds of thoughts out of his mind. Will it be a swift death? Like a lightbulb shorting out or will it be slow and agonizing? Like skin being peeled back layer by layer?

To be honest, he’s starting to care less and less whether he lives or dies. With all the blood he has shed and the moments where his Grimm has taken over his instincts he is sure to be plagued by nightmares for years to come. But since it’s looking less and less likely that he’s going to survive this maybe he will be spared that. Maybe being the keyword, considering that he didn’t know what the afterlife will bring him.

Situating himself into a sitting position, with his legs out in front of him, he can’t avoid looking down at the dried blood smeared on his hands and a good length of his arms. Before this, he would have felt some kind of horror or disgust at the sight but with recent events he doesn’t feel anything
but numbness. He supposes it’s the deteriorating humanity in him that trying to protect itself from further assault, urgently salvaging and locking away the morals he had been raised and taught to believe in.

In time though, he’s positive that the principles he has been clinging to so desperately as of late will be ripped away from him and instead his mind will be ruled by the instincts and mentality of an Endeizechen Grimm.

Not wanting his mind to go there he tries to lead his thoughts elsewhere. But that is like not thinking of a pink elephant—once the suggestion is planted, it’s nearly impossible not to see it!

He tries picking at the grass around him, the blades gathering in his hand before he releases them into the gentle breeze that drifts into the tent, sending the blades fluttering through the air for a second before scattering themselves back onto the ground.

Nick longed to be able to float away too.

He can’t help the dark chuckle that rattles his chest. It would seem that since his time in captivity he is becoming quite the poet. It won’t be long before he’s comparing the blood that coats his hands to the biblical time where blood ran through the Nile.

With a final scoff he does his best to lead his thoughts elsewhere and with a slight pull in his torso he recalls the stitches in his chest and takes a curious glance down to take in the mess the area has become. He can already tell that if (and that is a humongous if) he survives this he is sure to have quite the collection of scars. Not that he really cares all that much about his looks, it’s just going to be harder to get people to trust him if he goes around looking like a dangerous thug.

Before he can further contemplate the aesthetic changes his body is compiling Elijah enters the tent and swiftly lifts him from the ground and drags him from the tent. Nick’s feet drag behind him as he’s led once again through the camp to the next trial.

On the edge of the forested area he is only momentarily surprised when they abruptly stop and Elijah swoops down and slices through the zip ties around his ankles. Before he can enjoy the slight freedom Elijah grips his arm in a bruising manner and forces him to walk with him into the forested area.

~GRIMM~

Hank arrives at the latest crime scene and nods in tired acknowledgement at one of the officers as he walks over to Wu who is finishing up talking to a patrol officer who had responded to the call.

When Wu finishes he turns to Hank and gives him a tight lipped smile. There are bags under his eyes and the humor that used to play as a backdrop in his dark eyes has shriveled up and left behind a dark hole that is slowly caving in.

“I just talked to the responding officer and he told me that the call came in about an hour ago. The lady who called it in, a Patricia Weller an employee here, had been on her way to her vehicle for her lunch break when she noticed the puddles of blood that were scattered around this area not to mention the sizeable dent in the trunk of the car next to hers,” he reads off, pointing at the car in question where the dent he spoke of is hard to miss.

Returning his attention to Wu, he asks the question he already knows the answer to.

“Were there any witnesses?”
Wu gave him ‘what-do-you-think?’ look that promptly answers his question.

“Our guys apparently cut the fuse and obscured the security cameras with black spray paint while somehow managing to stay out of sight the entire time. You know between you and me, I’m surprised the Captain hasn’t called in the FBI yet, which reminds me, have you seen our illustrious leader lately?” he questions, his voice lowering at the mention of the FBI.

Wu hates calling in the feds just as much as anyone in the force but these killings have been getting way out of hand and with the extreme lack of evidence and piling bodies a part of him is surprised the FBI hadn’t called in a request to be involved.

Hank takes pause at his question. Sure he knows that the correct path to take is to say that he has no knowledge of where the Captain could be but for some reason his tongue seems to have swelled in size and his thoughts are a mile a minute. He knows that he can’t tell Wu that the captain is currently in a spice and tea shop putting together a potion to help Nick but at the same time he can’t come up with any excuse to give the man.

Wu gives him an expectant look, waiting for Hank to give him some kind of answer.

Knowing that he’s running out of time Hank unlocks his jaw and lets the first thing that comes to mind crawl out of his mouth.

“I haven’t seen him since yesterday.” well that was sort of anticlimactic. All that drama over answering a simple question for nothing.

Taking his answer at face value, Wu nods and continues to debrief him on the rest of the gathered information.

“So far we aren’t sure who was taken, we didn’t find any ID that was left behind and we can’t rely on the blood to be in the system so our only option really is seeing who picks up their phones.” Wu states, his voice resigned as he thinks about the hours it’s going to take to track everyone down.

Just as Hank is about to ask a question a smartly dressed woman walks up and interrupts them.

“I’m sorry to interrupt but I think I know the people who are missing. Dr. Sasha Morella, Dr. Jonathon Smith and Dr. Eliza Turner were supposed to return from their lunch breaks two hours ago and I haven’t been able to get in touch with them.” she speaks, her voice clouded with worry.

Wu is quick to write the names down and Hank takes the woman aside, intending to get as much information from her as possible.

“Do you know what time they left? It will really help us to figure out a timeframe.” he insists, taking out his notepad to write down her answers.

She furrows her brow in thought, “I believe that Dr. Turner left for her lunch break at about 12:30 and Dr. Morella and Smith usually take their lunch breaks together and that was at about 12:45ish? Dr. Turner was supposed to be back at 1 and Dr. Morella and Smith at 1:30. Please, tell me you’re going to find them?” she begs, her tone bordering on hysterics.

“I promise you we’re going to do everything in our power to find them. Now, is there anything else you can tell me?” he asks, doing his best to both comfort the hysterical woman and move the questioning along.

Receiving the negative Hank thanks her for her help and coaxes her on her way. He then puts all his attention to looking over the crime scene.
Elijah drags Nick to the cave’s entrance and holds him in place as his mother and the old man walk up to meet them. The same smug look is on her face as she lays eyes on him and Nick finds himself desiring to rip that smug look off her face.

“You’ll be happy to know Nicolae, that after this there’s only one trial left and I have a feeling that you’re going to excel at this one. The rules are the same as always, no one leaves the arena until you or your opponents are dead. Make me proud son.” she smiles as Elijah shoves him into the mouth of the cave. As he passes through the opening, the familiar tingle from the last trial shoots through him, leading him to realize that the entrance to the cave has a shield surrounding it to prevent anyone inside from escaping.

Knowing that there’s no use in trying to talk to them, Nick straightens his posture and walks deeper into the cave. His senses are on high alert as his eyes quickly adjust to the darkening area around him and his hearing is able to pinpoint the slightest breath.

The deeper he walks into the cave the colder the air becomes and the walls seem to be moving in towards him, like the sides are being squeezed together from either side. His nerves are on edge the further he walks. He finds himself briefly wondering just how big this cave is when a force pushes him from behind and he finds himself plowing face first into a wall of the cave.

Turning himself around he just barely manages to avoid the sharp talon aimed for his jugular and instead rakes across the wall, causing a line of sparks to shower into the air.

Regaining his footing Nick tackles what he now perceives as a Geier to the ground and proceeds to hit and kick him in every vulnerable place he can reach. But as expected he’s interrupted by another Geier who hooks their taloned hand into his shoulder and flings him back into the cave wall. His back grates against the sharp uneven terrain of the cave wall until he slumps onto the cold dirt ground.

He is momentarily stunned and isn’t prepared for the blitz attack that converges on him. The two Geiers have multiplied into three and are now gaining up on him, raking their claws against his already ravished skin and coating the wall and dirt around him in his blood.

Growing more enraged by the second, Nick allows his overpowering instincts to take over and before he can fully comprehend what he’s doing he finds himself rising against the trio. When the male Geier goes to punch him, Nick grabs his arm and twists it around until the bone audibly snaps and causes the Geier to screech in pain while cradling his arm. With his attention momentarily distracted Nick once again grabs the Geier’s broken arm and manipulates the appendage around where he then rams the taloned hand directly into the Geier’s heart.

The kill takes less than three seconds before he turns on the remaining Geiers, two females his mind supplies that shriek in outrage before trying to converge on him once more. This time though, their attack is less successful.

Allowing his instincts to drive him the man that Nick is on a daily basis takes a backseat and the Grimm that is always a passenger slips into the driver’s seat.

It feels like he’s watching a movie as he watches himself mercilessly attack the pair. His hits never seem to miss and each assault appears to get more brutal with each assault. Blood splatters against the wall and the skin on his knuckles have long since cracked and blood has seeped down his knuckles and painted his opponents skin with his blood.
The satisfying crunch of bone in one of the Geier’s face brings a bloody smile to his face but the hits aren’t enough anymore. The Grimm wants more.

Managing to stun one of the Geiers long enough with a kick to the head that throws them to the ground Nick takes the opportunity to force the standing Geier to the ground and force all his weight onto her body. And with a sadistic glee that will later physically sicken him, he digs his thumbs into her eyes.

The body beneath him desperately tries to buck him off, her screeches of rage and fear almost make his ears bleed but he keeps up the pressure until he feels the satisfying squish of her eyes popping and the juices dribble down his hands. The Geier’s body stills and in a matter of moments she returns to her human form.

Before he can take in what he has just done the remaining Geier jumps onto his back and viciously jams her taloned hands into his back. The deadly talons twist in ruthless directions as he tries to force her off him. Seeing no other choice he aims and continuously rams his back into the cave wall, each successful impact elicits a pained grunt from the Geier.

With one last ram he’s left satisfied as the weight rolls off him but he knows that he can’t let his guard down yet. Putting his remaining strength to use, Nick pulls the Geier up from the ground and wraps his arm around her throat, effectively cutting off her air supply. The Geier’s body jerks and kicks, doing everything in her power to survive but as expected her kicks and jerks soon become nothing more than twitches until finally all her movements cease and the last bit of breath in her lungs is used up.

Dropping the deceased Geier to the ground Nick stumbles back towards the direction he had come from and once he sees the light his pace increases until he’s standing at the entrance of the cave.

The shield around the cave is still up, preventing him from leaving.

The light stings his eyes so he reflexively holds his hand up to shade his adjusting irises. His scratched and bloody hands and arms glisten in the afternoon sun.

“Elijah, make sure that the job’s done.” he hears his mother order, and judging by the forceful brush that almost makes him lose his footing Elijah is following the order. Finding his balance once more after his eyes have adjusted to the natural lighting Nick refuses to meet the satisfied look he knows his mother is sporting as Elijah quickly returns and reports that the Geiers all dead.

Out of the corner of his eye Nick can see the old man bend down and scratch out one of the runes that line the cave entrance. Before Nick can successfully inhale a single breath Elijah drags him from the cave and out to stand before his mother once more. No doubt to give him yet another congratulatory speech.

And of course, she doesn’t disappoint.

“I knew you could do it son, just like I know that you’re going to make me even prouder when you complete the last trial.” she turns her attention to Elijah who maintains an overly good grip on Nick’s upper arm, so much so that Nick can swear that his hold is cutting off the blood flow.

“Take him back to the tent, and be sure to get Theresa to tend to him, some of these cuts look awfully deep.” nodding his head in acknowledgement Elijah jerks him forward and leads him back to the camp.

A few minutes after Elijah drags Nick away three of Elijah’s lackeys arrive and promptly walk into the cave to collect the dead. Not long after the three return, carrying the bloody, mutilated corpses
of the Geiers leaving behind drops of blood as they pass their leader and the elder of the clan.

“Take them to the pile and burn them, I don’t want a single bone left.” she orders.

Nodding in understanding the group makes their way back to camp. Soon after Kelly and Alin follow behind them, already putting into plan the final trial.
Kelly demonstrates to Nick the power she holds over her clan and the final trial takes place.

The sun has just set when they arrive back at the tent and upon entering Nick finds himself once more restrained by zip ties. He complacently allows himself to be laid down on the cold ground, and briefly shivers at the cold that seeps into his ragged shirt that’s about as covering as a piece of rag. He’s surprised the shirt has managed to last this long.

As he lays, his mind inevitably travels to what he has done and his stomach churns; he can feel the bile traveling up his throat, wanting an exit, but he forces the acidic soup back down, wincing at the accompanying burn his action supplies. He can’t keep the image of that last kill out of his mind. The way she struggled in his arms, fighting for her last breath. The way she clawed at his arms, digging her talons into his arms until he bled and doing her best to make killing her a grueling effort. What truly stuck with him though was her final few twitches as her body shut down on her, and the life that was once set out for her was taken away, never to be fulfilled.

Even though he knows that they had been Geiers and it was more than likely that all three had been involved in unsavory activities he can’t help the sickening guilt he feels at having ended their lives. He would have much rather taken them into custody as a police officer than as the murderous Grimm these trials were turning him into.

The first time he had ever encountered a Geier was during the case that introduced him to the immoral black market that was involved in the wesen world. Thankfully the spice shop had officially stopped being a doorway for the black market but that didn’t mean that another shop hadn’t opened its doors, eager to take on the flow of money that came with the involvement.

He had taken no pleasure in killing the Geier that had tried to kill him after he had raided their makeshift medical center. He had in fact tried to save her from falling to her death, but for his efforts she had died anyway.

Unfortunately he doesn’t have the same excuse as he did last time. He hadn’t tried to save the Geiers that had attacked him nor did he come across them harvesting human organs for profit. He could try to reason that it had been self-defense. That all his kills thus far had been in order to save his own life but he has to remind himself that the wesen he has fought had been doing the same thing.

But it just so happens that, in the end, Nick has been the victor all three times.

The scars that mar his body will serve as a permanent reminder to the murders he has committed and even after the blood that blemishes his skin has long been washed away, he will never really feel clean again. He won’t allow himself to ever forget what he has done, even if that is only for the short amount of time he still has left before he’s sacrificed.
He’s so far in his own thoughts that he actually jumps when he feels the probing hands of Theresa on his back, no doubt inspecting the impressive gouges that stand out on his skin.

Waiting until he has settled down Theresa then sets to work on disinfecting the gouges and once that’s done she threads a needle and begins to sew the wounds closed.

Nick remains silent the entire time, not only not having the emotional capability to try and engage the young woman in conversation but also because of Elijah who stands beside the opening of the tent, watching in heated silence as Theresa tends to Nick’s latest injuries.

The tugging of the thread as it enters his skin feels strangely therapeutic, like with each stitch that is made the broken pieces of his soul are slowly being mended and it also makes him feel more connected to the world around him. He isn’t lost yet, the man he was before he had been taken is still inside him somewhere, hiding out of sight so as to not come across the monster he can feel coiling beneath his skin.

After about twenty minutes the tugging stops and a brief flash of sorrow passes through him, longing for the rope that connects him to reality to return. His sorrows are soothed however when he feels the familiar sting of antiseptic to the gash on his shoulder followed by the enticing tugging he associates with the needle and thread.

He remains silent throughout the entire process, sensing that it will do him no good to speak, especially since he is sure to receive some kind of punishment from Elijah who he can feel glaring at him.

All too soon Theresa finishes sewing him up and packs up the small first aid kit she is always seen with.

Bowing her head respectively at Elijah, Theresa quickly flees the tent, not wanting to be in the way for whatever it is Elijah plans to do.

As soon as the young woman has left, Elijah is upon Nick. He none too gently hauls him up from the ground and over to the wooden chair that sits in the middle of the room. Pushing him into the chair Nick almost topples over from the awkward angle he is forced to sit in.

He looks up at the other man as he walks outside the tent for a brief moment before returning a moment later with another wooden chair. Walking back over to Nick, he sets the chair in front of Nick and sits down, leaning forward as he does so.

They both sit in silence for a moment, both simply staring at the other.

Finally, Elijah breaks the silence.

“T’im going to be honest, you’ve lasted a lot longer than I thought you would. Granted, due to the circumstances I should be rooting for you to kill every last wesen we throw at you, but I just can’t help but relish in the moments where they’ve got you pinned and close to bleeding like a pig” he watches Nick’s facial features, looking for any sign that his words are having an impact but he’s disappointed to find that Nick’s feature remain in stone.

Shaking his head, Elijah continues the one-sided conversation.

“What’s the matter Nick? Geier got your tongue?” he snidely remarks.

Nick continues to remain silence. Not having the energy to engage in the verbal fight he knows Elijah is looking for.
He just doesn’t care anymore.

One of Elijah’s lackeys enters the tent and walks to Elijah’s side where he leans down and whispers something in Elijah’s ear.

A smile flashes across Elijah’s features and he dismisses the messenger. He turns his attention back to Nick.

“Well, as much fun as I’m having talking to myself I have other matters to attend to. In fact, why don’t you come along.” without waiting for a response, Elijah forces Nick up from the chair and quickly cuts through the zip ties on his feet before dragging him out of the tent and over to the crowd that has gathered.

When they are only a foot away the crowd parts to let Nick and Elijah pass to the front where Nick is promptly forced to his knees and enforced to remain down by the hand that grips his shoulder.

In the middle of the gathered group is a small circular stage with two metal loops soldered into the small surface.

Kelly emerges from the trailer and heads for the group that surrounds the fire pit. Her face, as always, is void of emotion as she stops before them.

She looks around at the group before her and her gaze stops on Nick who refuses to return her scrutiny.

“My fellow Endeizechen Grimm, we gather here for the judgement, of Travis Holt.”

Two men emerge from a tent, dragging Travis, who struggles to raise his head as his feet drag behind him.

The chains attached to the manacles around his wrists jingle with each step the men take and soon Travis is lifted up onto the stage and forced to kneel as he’s shackled to the stage. He keeps his head down.

Kelly steps up onto the stage and stands beside the kneeling man.

“Travis Holt, you stand on trial for not only the failure of capturing a Geier but for putting this Clan’s destiny of fulfilling the great prophecy in jeopardy. How do you plead?” Kelly looks down at Travis who finally lifts his head to look out at the gathered crowd and then turns and looks at Kelly.

Nick can’t help but watch the proceeding. Even with the intuition that this trial is not going to end like the common courtroom cases and instead be more medieval in the conclusion, he can’t look away.

“Guilty.” Travis states, no hesitation in his voice.

There is no surprise in Kelly’s expression as she looks back out at the crowd.

“Travis Holt, I hereby find you of guilty and sentence you to death.” Theresa walks up onto the stage, carrying an axe.

Nick watches the handoff to Kelly who grips the wooden handle in her hands as if it were a golden scepter. Theresa scurries off the stage and out of sight.
The two men that had escorted Travis onto the stage return but this time one of them is carrying a stump. Travis’ head is forcibly raised and placed onto the top of the stump placed in front of him.

Kelly walks to the right side of the stump and raises the axe above her head.

“Fie ca Dumnezeu să te ierte.” Nick cannot look away as Kelly brings the axe down and slices into Travis’ neck. The bones crunch but the neck is still intact and Travis’ body twitches as blood oozes down his neck and pools the surface of the stump, dribbling down the sides. A sickening squishing is heard as she tugs the blade out of the neck and promptly brings the blade back down, this time successfully severing the head from the body. Now no longer attached, the head tumbles off the stump and rolls off the stage and onto the grass. It comes to a stop a few feet away from Nick who is chilled to the bone by the glassy eyed stare looking up at him. He can’t help but feel like the eyes are searing into his soul, cataloging and judging the damage he is sure has been done to the vital essence that makes him who he is. He wonders what his soul might look like; would there be evidence of irreparable corruption that stains his soul black and is infected with puss filled spores that weep down the sides. Or is there still a shimmering white glimmer of hope for him, hidden among the oozing black tar that clouds his soul?  With his attention on the head Kelly steps down from the stage, still holding the axe and approaches Nick. With a dark smile she squats down in front of him. “All that has happened and all that will occur, is in the name of fulfilling the destiny that was mapped out for you long before you were born.” she reaches out and touches his cheek. For the first time though, he does not flinch, he doesn’t even register her touch. All he can concentrate on are the glassy eyes. Her words a mere background noise that barely dents the thickening fog encasing his mind. Kelly rises from the grass and picks up the head by the root of the hairs.

She raises the head above her head and gazes around the crowd behind Nick.

“This is what happens to those who would dare fail this clan! There will be no mercy for any of you if you get in the way of fulfilling the prophecy!” the crowd bows their heads and keep them down as she lowers the head and turns to toss it to one of the men standing on the stage. He catches it effortlessly and steps off the stage and approaches her.

“Burn the body and the head.” the man nods and waits until the man on the stage has gathered the rest of the body off the stage before walking with the man towards the wooded area.

Kelly looks at Elijah and takes a piece of paper out of her coat pocket.

“This is the final trial and I trust you wouldn’t dare fail me on this last errand.” he unfolds the paper and studies the names and the location written in cursive writing.

“You have nothing to worry about, they’ll be here within a few hours.”

“See that you don’t. The full moon is tonight and we can’t afford anymore screw-ups.” she warns, giving him one last warning glare before walking off towards her trailer.

Pocketing the paper, Elijah forces Nick up from the ground and drags him back to the tent he had come from.

~GRIMM~

Hank sits impatiently at his desk, looking at his computer as the fingerprint goes through the criminal database, several mugshots flash across his screen.

At the latest crime scene fingerprints had been found along with a good amount of blood that Hank
is hoping belongs to one of the perpetrators. Realistically he knows that there is a chance that both the blood and the fingerprints found belong to the victims but this is the first actual piece of evidence they have found. He just needs something, anything that can help him track down the people that have taken Nick.

He doesn’t have much hope that the DNA found at the scene will be identified very soon, considering that they have nothing to compare it to so for now, he is placing all his hope in the fingerprints.

His eyes beginning to sting, he determinedly scrubs his hands against his eyes, doing his best to clear his vision that is starting to blur before dropping his hands and leaning back in his chair.

“Still nothing huh?”

Hank just barely stops himself from jumping at Wu’s voice and turns his head to glare at Wu’s amused face but unable to ignore the Styrofoam cup of coffee the man holds in his hand.

“Not yet, but right now it’s all the evidence we have. Let’s just hope these guys finally slipped up.” Hank returns his gaze to the screen.

Out of the corner of his eye he watches as Wu sets the cup of coffee beside Hank who mutters a quick thanks. Wu nods in acknowledgement as Hank picks up the cup and takes a drink, he would have chugged the whole drink down but common sense warns him that all that will accomplish is a burnt tongue.

Setting the cup down Hank looks up at Wu who has become enamored by the changing mugshots on the screen. No doubt anxious to see which (if any) will match up with the fingerprints found at the scene.

“Times like this make me wish that results came as fast as they do on television. There’s no telling what these guys are planning to do next. And while we sit here waiting for results that may or may not lead us to at least one of these guys, more people could be killed, including Nick.” Wu states, his gaze locked on the screen.

Hank can’t think of a response to Wu’s statement. Maybe it’s because there isn’t a hint of sarcasm in his voice like there usually is, even in the darkest of cases, but Hank believes that it’s likely because Wu has summed up exactly what Hank is feeling and has been feeling since he first joined the police force.

This truth though, seems to hit so much harder though due to the fact that his partner and close friend is a victim. And while he has an inkling that Nick is still alive, due only to the fact that only three sets of victims have been kidnapped, he can only imagine the condition he is in at this point.

Nick is a strong, morally guided Grimm who has faced many enemies and situations that would make even the strongest, war hardened soldier cower in fear. Hank himself often found his heart skipping a beat when confronted by a woged wesen. But when he looks at Nick all he sees is determination, hardly ever a trace of fear. Maybe it’s the Grimm in him that gives him such confidence, assured in the knowledge that his strengthening Grimm instincts will protect him and lead him to victory. Or maybe he’s just a really good actor and in fact is mentally shaking in his boots. He doubts that last one though.

“I’ve been thinking the same thing, but I can’t stop believing that Nick is still alive and kicking, giving his captors hell. Truthfully, I can’t say the same about the other victims, but I can hope that I’m wrong.” Hank takes another drink from his coffee then sets the cup down.
The moment is interrupted when Hank’s cellphone beeps. With one glance at the screen he sees that the caller is Monroe.

Not wanting to accidentally give anything away to Wu, Hank rises from his chair and grabs the ringing phone off his desk.

“I’ve got to take this, call me if a match comes up.” he states.

Wu nods and sits down in Hank’s vacated seat.

Answering the call Hank walks towards the security and privacy of an empty interrogation room.

~GRIMM~

Scott Wilkins, an average height white male with stunning blue eyes, straw colored hair and a muscular physique that spoke of years of weightlifting exits a gym. Walking beside him is his two best friends Alex Larkin, a black man with a buzz cut and a muscular body, along with Peter Toles, a white male with brown hair and green eyes with a just as muscular figure as his friends.

The rays from the sun highlight the water from their showers and the trio walk with an air of exhilaration from their invigorating workout.

“Man I kicked your ass in the ring today! Where was your head at?” Alex asks Scott as they jog across the street to the park.

Reaching the other side the three step onto the grass and continue to walk through the park, which is almost completely empty aside from a couple having a picnic under a tree and a few children playing on the playground as their parents watch.

“You got lucky, besides I have bigger things on my mind than pounding you into the matt.” Scott defends, increasing his speed and turning around so that he’s facing them while walking backwards.

“Dude, what’s going on with you? Every time I look at you I can see stars in your eyes!” Peter asks, keeping in step with Alex as they follow Scott.

Scott stops in place and Alex and Peter quickly follow, watching him in growing curiosity as he unzips his gym bag and digs around for a second before pulling out a small velvet red jewelry box.

With a smile he opens the box to reveal a modest silver engagement ring with a single white crystal in the center of the band.

“I’m gonna ask Michelle to marry me.” he beams, laughing with happiness.

Alex and Peter stand in stunned silence, their mouths open in shock and eyes as big as quarters.

Peter is the first to come out of his shock and give his own smile as he steps forward and engulfs Scott in a hug.

“Congrats dude! But, as a married man myself I should forewarn you, that soon, you’re going to find out who really wears the pants in the relationship!” he laughs as he pulls away with one last clap on the back but continues to maintain a close proximity to Scott.

Coming out of his shock Alex puts on his own smile and steps up to Scott, “never thought I’d see the day where you would throw in the towel. Guess that makes me the last bachelor in this little
“Pride” he gave Scott a good natured pat on the back.

“I’m not throwing in the towel man, I’m in love!” he bellows out the last part, throwing his head back with theatrics.

In response several of the other park inhabitants turn to look at them with odd looks.

Clapping his arm around Scott’s back Alex pushed him forward and the trio continued to walk deeper into the park.

“Oh, c’mon Romeo. I’m pretty sure half of Portland now knows how much you love my sister. How about we get ourselves home before we get arrested for disturbing the peace?” Alex jokes.

The trio continues to trek deeper into the park, and soon they are entering a denser part of the park and are out of sight of the other park inhabitants.

With their focus on the dirt path before them and the discussion about who the best man will be, they are not aware that they are being followed.

Under the covering of tree branches Elijah emerges from behind a tree, a tranq. Gun in his hand as he approaches the trio from behind who are oblivious to the threat that is stalking them.

Up ahead on the he manmade trail, one of Elijah’s men walks out onto the trail and blocks the trio’s path, a blank look on his face as he eyes the men in front of him.

The gun he holds in his hand does not go unnoticed by the trio.

Scott comes to a halt and his friends follow suit, they’re stances rigid in preparation of the violence they can sense is looming.

Taking the initiative Scott drops his gym bag and steps forward, his arms remaining at his side as he takes a few steps towards the unknown man.

“Buddy, you picked the wrong guys to try to rob.” Scott informs him and is quickly joined by Alex and Peter who look just as determined for a fight. Their muscles quiver under their skin and their fists are clenched at their sides.

A clicking sound from behind them causes the trio to turn around and they are met with Elijah who is aiming a tranq. Gun at them.

“I can assure you gentlemen, this isn’t a robbery. In fact, it’s something much worse.” he clarifies, taking a step towards the trio.

A closer look into the strange man’s eyes and Scott recoils.

“Grimm.” Scott’s voice stretches into a growl as he woges into a Lowen.

Alex and Peter quickly follow suit and roar in rage and disdain at the now labeled Grimm.

With the speed of being fired out of a cannon Scott lunges for Elijah and attempts to pin him to the ground but Elijah sidesteps him and delivers a punch to his gut that forces him to stagger back.

Taking advantage of the opportunity Elijah fires two tranquilizers into Scott’s chest but instead of succumbing to the drug’s effects the Lowen yanks the darts out and tosses them to the side. His eyes blazing with fury, Scott resumes his initial attack.
Meanwhile behind him Alex and Scott have gained up on the other Grimm, their combined efforts are proving to be quite effective, if the amount of blood the Grimm has shed says anything.

But just when they have the Grimm pinned on the ground, Alex preparing to rip his heart out he is ripped off the Grimm and hurled into a tree, his vision swimming before him from the impact.

Peter doesn’t fare much better, and instead is assaulted with blow after blow to the face and then delivered a final blow to the gut that forces him to the ground. Peter looks up at the Grimm as the man stands above him, a similar tranq. Gun as the other Grimm in his hand aimed at his chest.

Before Peter has time to react the Grimm unloads three tranquilizers into his chest. It doesn’t take long for his vision to darken and all the muscles in his body to liquify until finally he loses all consciousness.

His movements sluggish from the impact to the tree, Alex staggers back to the fight and almost trips over his friend’s unconscious body but manages to stop himself. Only his safety is taken from him by a punch to the face that successfully brings him to the ground where his vision shoots in and out of darkness.

Vaguely he can make out the sound of clicking followed by a compressed whistle that results in a numbing effect that travels from his chest to the rest of his body. Soon he is out completely.

Blood gushes from Elijah’s nose as he does his best to fend off the staggering blows the Lowen delivers. His body thrumming with adrenaline and statical shocks of pain, Elijah transfers all his strength into his legs and kicks the Lowen off of him.

Scott flies through the air and makes impact onto the ground, dust from the ground clouds up around him.

Elijah rises from the ground and futilely wipes at his bleeding nose, a scowl on his face as he bends down and picks up his tranq. Gun that had escaped his hand during the beating.

He approaches the downed Lowen and calmly inserts more tranquilizers into the barrel. From behind him he can hear the footsteps of his partner Joseph approaching.

“See, I told you we only needed the two of us” as he speaks he empties the whole clip into the Lowen who quickly succumbs to the tranquilizers’ effects.

Elijah spit out the blood accumulating in his mouth and feels some satisfaction as the glob lands on the Lowen’s face.

“Come on, we got to get these guys back to camp before nightfall.”

Bending down, Elijah grabs the Lowen and puts him in a fireman’s carry. His partner follows suit and using almost unimaginable strength manages to lift the other two Lowen into his arms and toss them over his shoulders.

The two men walked down the path that lead to their waiting van.

~GRIMM~

Nick sits in his tent, a now cold bowl of stew in front of him that hasn’t been touched. His mind too consumed with the image of the glazed over eyes that stared up at him to even take note of his body’s need of nourishment.
He knows that his time is coming to an end. That the final trial will bring his death. Not for the first time he wonders how death will come. He has no allusions that it will be fast and painless, that wouldn’t do for a ritual like this. A part of him, if he is honest a large part of him, wants it to hurt.

Just like with the pain he experienced while Theresa had sewn him up, he wants that brief time before his death to be filled with pain, so as to give him one last kiss of the humanity that has steadily been leaving him. Connecting him to a part of himself that hasn’t been innocent for many years.

Subconsciously his hand travels up his body and fingers the stitches that hold the skin around his collarbone together.

Maybe this time he won’t fight back, he’ll allow whatever wesen he’s facing to slash his throat out or rip him to shreds. Commit the ultimate sacrifice so as to prevent the Shedding Ritual from coming to pass.

His blunt nail slips through a loose thread and starts to tug, a sharp sting of pain momentarily pulls him from his thoughts but he is quickly brought back in. He doesn’t notice that a small trail of blood has started to leak down his chest beneath his ragged shirt.

Or maybe just like last time, the Grimm that lurks inside him would take over and bathe itself in the blood that would undoubtedly flood out of the victims. Just the thought makes the Grimm inside him salivate with lust.

More blood trickles from the wound as another blunt nail joins in on the digging and soon a good portion of the stitches has unraveled, accompanied by pain that brings an almost relieved smile to his face.

He may be losing his sense of humanity but at least he can still feel, he isn’t completely numb yet.

But no matter how much he prays or applies pain, the part of himself that he has desperately been trying to bury is being exhumed bit by bit. This is the part of himself that is void of emotion and a slave to his Grimm instincts.

Only on a subconscious level does he realize that he has been joined by someone who is hurriedly attending to the wound he has reopened. But he is so deep in his mind that it’s only when the person forcibly pries his fingers out of the wound that he comes back to himself and looks into the panicked eyes of Theresa.

“Theresa…what are you doing?” his voice is almost hoarse and completely emotionless.

She doesn’t answer him as she opens the kit she had brought with her and starts to fix the damage he’s caused himself.

Not able to stand her silence any longer he grabs her hand, but she shakes him off, her eyes never making contact with his own.

“You should just let me bleed out, say that you came in here to check on me and found me dead. Please, I don’t want to kill anymore” he begs, wincing at the almost throbbing stab of pain his plea causes. No doubt caused by his inner Grimm.

Her movements falter but she maintains her silence, a noticeable sheen coming to her eyes as she threads a needle and begins to repair the damage.
His body thrums with joy as the needle pierces his skin, his thoughts from earlier coming back to him as the pain once again grounds him to humanity. Reminding him of what he is steadily losing.

A few minutes later she finishes up and packs her modest sized kit up. He doesn’t bother trying to stop her as she quickly flees the tent, no doubt off to perform more chores for his demonic mother.

Not long after, Elijah enters the tent, and Nick can’t help the smile that blooms across his face at the noticeable blood and bruises that mar the man’s face. Obviously someone has used his face as a punching bag and Nick longs to shake the hand of the person responsible for the work of art on Elijah’s face.

Without a witty remark, which is a first for Elijah, Nick is forced from the tent and dragged through the camp towards the crowd gathered around an area with unlit torches staked into the ground. As he gets closer to the man-made arena he can smell the distinct stench of gasoline but he can’t pinpoint the exact source.

Before he can properly brace himself, Nick is suddenly pushed into the arena and none too gracefully collapses to his knees, his vision momentarily swimming from the unexpected momentum.

Elijah stands at attention as he is joined by Kelly who watches as Nick raises himself from the ground and works out his stiff muscles, the joints popping out of their rusted cogs.

Approaching voices are heard as Nick readies himself for the impending fight.

“Let go of me you sonofabitch!”

“I am going to rip your fucking eyes out!”

“You’re dead, all of you Grimms are fucking dead!”

The crowd parts to allow the cursing and struggling men through as each are forcibly led by a chain wrapped around their necks by an Endeizechen Grimm.

The men are brought to a halt with their backs turned to Nick as Elijah steps forward and aims a gun at the men as another Endeizechen Grimm quickly unwraps the chains.

Before the men can even contemplate lunging at their captors the trio are shoved into the arena and greeted with more guns being aimed at them as they right their footing.

“The rules are simple, kill the Grimm and we let you go, fail and the consequence is obvious. But don’t worry boys, even if you do fail at least you get to go out doing the sport that you lot practically sired. Good luck.” Kelly produces a matchbook from her pocket and rips out a match.

Her stare never wavering from the three men in front of her, she strikes the match and tosses it to the ground. As soon as the flame touches the ground a whoosh fills the air as flames rise to life, the fiery tips licking at the slightly darkened sky.

The flames travel in a complete square around the arena, kept in place only by a strategically placed mound of dirt that lines the arena.

As soon as the flames burst to life the three men quickly back away from the flames and are only alerted to Nick’s presence behind them by the cracking of his knuckles.

They turn and watch as Nick goes about cracking his other knuckle, his gray eyes void of emotion
as he lowers his hands and addresses them.

“I just want you to know something, whatever happens, I’m sorry.”

The three men exchange glances with one another and in a breath woge into their Lowen forms. Each roar in rage and warning as they barrel towards Nick. But Nick is prepared for this.

Bracing himself Nick uses his clenched fist and punches one of the Lowen’s in the esophagus, who in turn chokes as they stumble away. One of the remaining two manages to rake his impressively sharp nails across his right arm before Nick pushes him away with a kick to the stomach.

The final Lowen wraps his arms around Nick’s body and uses brute strength to place Nick in a position that seems to be squeezing all of Nick’s vital organs. It’s as if the Lowen is trying to squeeze out his insides through the top of his head, like a tube of toothpaste. His arms are pinned at his sides and his legs are lifted off the ground but unable he’s to make contact with the Lowen holding him.

Blood rapidly gushes in his ears and his lungs feel like they’re being sanded against each other.

The Lowen he kicked in the stomach rights himself and walks up to Nick to quickly deliver an array of gut punches and a few punches to his face. With each punch Nick can feel the Grimm in him snarling and ripping him apart from his insides, its talons digging into his already battered organs with each hit that goes unreturned.

Soon the Lowen he punched in the esophagus joins the assault and repays Nick with three punches to his chest, leaving Nick gasping for air.

“This is what the fate of every goddamn Grimm should be. To die bloody and in pain, without an ounce of dignity!” the one hitting him spits in his face as he accompanies each word with a punch.

“You’re going to burn in hell mother fucker! And you know what, I’m not sorry one bit for what we’re going to do to you!”

The blows being delivered suddenly become muffled, the Lowen’s taunts sizzling down to nothing more than background noise.

The familiar pulling sensation fills him as the Grimm that has been making more and more appearances springs out of its deteriorating cage and thrusts itself onto the attacking Lowen.

He barely feels the vicious nails that gouge into his side as he uses his legs to kick the head of the Lowen in front of him then uses the momentum to force the Lowen holding him to the ground. Once that happens Nick finds his arms free so he immediately turns around and repeatedly punches the Lowen’s head in until it is an unrecognizable mess of blood and flesh.

Rising from the ground Nick takes no time in grabbing the closet Lowen and delivering a round of blows that forces the Lowen to the ground. The assault continues as Nick stands over the Lowen and uses his foot to bash the Lowen’s head in, the skull crushing like a watermelon as bits of brain and blood gush from the top of his skull.

The remaining Lowen struggles to get to his legs as Nick stalks towards him. Nick’s gray eyes are ablaze with the flames that surround them.

“I’m going to enjoy this” Nick states.

Before the Lowen can properly defend himself, Nick grabs him by the throat and forces him to
walk backwards towards the flames. The Lowen’s hands desperately grapple with Nick’s hands as he struggles to get in air.

Coming to a stop in front of a line of flames Nick takes the moment to look into the Lowen’s eyes. He can see the pain the Lowen’s eyes along with the fear but there is also a small amount of defiance in the Lowen’s eyes. As if the ingrained instincts of the Lowen is unwilling to accept that this was how it’s going to die.

At the hands of a Grimm.

With a glare Nick forces the Lowen’s head into the flames and watches as the Lowen screams in agony and flails about, doing everything he can to escape the licking flames that sears his flesh.

Nick can faintly feel the heat on his face and hands as he roasts the Lowen’s head, but the pain is nowhere near unbearable. It’s more like sitting a little too closely to a heater in the dead of winter.

The Lowen’s head begins to shrivel up like heated plastic and bubbles like a vat of heated lard. By this point the Lowen’s hair has sizzled away into cord like strings that twist up at the top of his head and his screams begin to quiet as his body begins to recognize that it is dying.

Soon all movement and sound from the Lowen ceases and Nick drops the burnt and lifeless body to the ground which quickly reverts back to human form.

As Nick stands staring down at the gruesome remains, one of the Endeizechen Grimm uses a shovel and a nearby pile of dirt to put the fire out, which only takes a matter of a few minutes.

Nick doesn’t register the voice speaking to him, his gaze cemented on the gorey image that he has created.

It isn’t until Nick finds himself being led away that he comes back to himself along with all the pain that his body has sustained in the fight. Each breath he takes feels like a needle piercing his esophagus and his chest feels like a pin cushion. Along with that, each step vibrates pain throughout his entire body and all he wants to do is collapse to the cold ground and die.

But he can’t. Not yet.

The closer he gets to the tent that has been his home for what he is has been a few days, Nick notices that he only has one guard escorting him back, and it isn’t one he’s seen before. A quick survey of the man’s body reveals that he isn’t wearing a weapon and there is also the added bonus that no restraints have been put on Nick.

A plan quickly formulating in his mind, Nick does his best to compartmentalize the excruciating pain afflicting his body and puts his plan into action.

Putting all his weight in his legs, Nick drops his body to the ground and groans in pain, his head lowering to the ground as he curls his hands protectively around his stomach.

The Endeizechen Grimm holding him tries to get him to stand up but when that fails the man lowers his body and starts to wrap his hand around Nick’s waist but is thrown off balance by a punch to the face that sends him to the ground.

Knowing he only has seconds before he is restrained by a dozen other Endeizechen Grimms Nick forces himself to his feet and shakily dashes off into the forested area.
Rosalee looks up from the maps spread out in front of her.

“Okay, we’ve completely excluded any of the local parks so we are now down to three State Parks: White River Falls, Deschutes River State Recreation Area, and Milo McIver” she reads off the list she has written out.

Monroe walks around to her left side and examines the map. Sean takes up the opening on the right side of her.

“White River Falls is a two hour drive from Portland and I doubt that they would want to risk the mileage and Deschutes has road construction going on that goes on for five miles, no one can get into the area.” Sean states.

“So that just leaves Milo McIver State Park” Rosalee states, circling the name.

“And it’s only a 45 minute drive” Monroe inputs.

Sean’s watch goes off and he looks down at the time.

With a smile he walks to the fireplace and, using a thick pot holder, picks up the steaming cauldron and carries it to the table.

Rosalee and Monroe walk to the table and watch as he lifts the small lid off the cauldron and the smoke that had been billowing from the sides, changes direction and tunnels up into the air.

Waving the smoke away Sean locates a vial and carefully uses a ladle to transfer the bubbling foggy green potion into the vial. Once the vial is nearly filled he caps it with a small cork.

“Is it ready?” Monroe asks, eyeing the vial in the man’s hand.

“Almost, all that’s left is one final ingredient: the DNA of the intended, more precisely Nick’s DNA” Renard replies, looking over at the pair.

Monroe at this point is barely restraining himself from throttling the Regnant. It’s like the man gets off on holding back vital information, only to divulge later on in the most dramatic of ways.

“Why didn’t you say anything earlier? We could have gotten that hours ago!” Monroe rants.

Renard sighs and shakes his head, as if dealing with an impatient, borderline incompetent student.

“Due to the nature of this potion, the DNA needs to be fresh, otherwise it will not work. Now, I would advise one of you calling Hank to inform him that we have a possible location for Nick and to meet us there” walking past the gobsmacked pair Sean heads for the shop’s door.

Behind him Monroe takes out his cellphone and speed dials Hank’s cellphone.

Chapter End Notes

You’re gonna want to read the next one folks because it’s Sean and gang to the rescue, but will they make it in time? Stay tuned!
As Kelly is busy talking to Alin about the preparations for the ritual, out of the corner of her eye she watched as a guard escorted Nick back to his tent.

Her eyes counting each step that the pair took and counting down in her head as they approach the tent. She smirks when Nick collapses to the ground.

Within the blink of an eye Nick punches the guard across the face and dashes off into the forested area.

Nick’s escape hasn’t gone unnoticed but no one chases after him. Instead, they gather around Kelly as she maintains her care-free attitude.

“When we started this, you were all fully grown and yet still possessed the heart of children, looking to me for guidance and purpose.” she looks at Elijah who has edged closer to her side.

“Several of you have already proven yourself worthy of being called an Endezeichen Grimm, but there are some of you who have thus far failed to rise above the rank of a child. This is your test, your chance to prove to me that you wish to be a part of this clan, a part of this moment in history. Your test is this: track down and bring me back my son, alive of course” she looks around at the people standing around her, anxiety clear in their eyes as they wonder who has yet to prove their worthiness.

“The hunters are as followed: Abel, Dorin, Joana, Eugen, Tatiana, Ivan and Theresa.”

As their names are called the individual steps forward and when Theresa hears her name her eyes widen in shock but she swallows her anxiety and joins the line of people that had been called upon.

“Whoever delivers him to me will be greatly rewarded. Happy hunting.”

Immediately following her words the pack of ‘hunters’ dash off into the woods, but Theresa’s movements are less enthusiastic, her thoughts still confused about the chance she is being given.

Before she crosses into the forested area Theresa looks back at Kelly who watches her closely.
Kelly nods once and taking it as a blessing of sorts, crosses the threshold and joins the hunt.

She can hear the others crashing through the foliage, whooping in glee at the rush the chase gives them. She does not feel the same giddiness however.

While she is pleased that Leader has given her a chance to redeem herself she can’t help but wish that she had done so another way.

During the brief time she had come to know Nick, she has grown to care for him, seeing him as a kindred spirit of sorts. Both of them have been desperately clinging to a part of themselves that has long rotted away and both want nothing but the best for the people they care about.

When he had asked her for help in escaping she had been greatly tempted to do so. Looking into his deep gray eyes she could see herself reflected back at her, and though she was aware that he was older than her she couldn’t help but see him as a scared, wounded child in that moment. Begging her to help him like a child would their mother.

Only in this case, his mother is the one doing the harm.

She has no allusions that Leader is some holy person who cares for all members in the clan, but she does believe in the cause that they are working towards. She does understand that her defiance to kill Terrence was an insult to not only the clan but her family as well, and she had been prepared to live out her days as a shameful lesson to those around her.

But now that she has been given the chance to wash away the smear that has haunted her for years she can’t let this chance slip her by.

Boxing away all the negative emotions she focuses solely on the task ahead and takes one step forward and starts to sprint.

Nick gasps for breath as he stumbles through a bush. His foot catches on a branch and causes him to fall to the hard dirt floor. His chest aches from the impact and breath wheezes out of him in a slow painful hiss.

As he pushes himself up, a burning ache vibrates in his side and his vision flashes white. The sudden onslaught of pain and blindness saps all the strength from his arms and he collapses back to the ground. He chokes as he accidentally inhales a cloud of dirt.

Knowing that he can’t lay there forever he fights through the pain and forces himself to his feet. His body shaking with the exertion his actions causes even as he stands fully upright.

He looks down at the source of the pain and is only mildly surprised to find that the lower right side of his shirt is damp with blood and through the shredded shirt he can see the damage that had been done. The four gouges in his side weep blood and he can quickly tell that if he doesn’t get some attention for it soon there’s a huge possibility that he could bleed out.

From behind him he can hear the sounds of fast approaching feet and he knows that his time of rest is over. As he is getting ready to start running again he’s stopped by a drop of water that splashes onto his arm.

Looking up into the sky he can see that the sky is almost completely black and storm clouds have begun to take over the night sky. Another drop joins the one on his hand and soon a sheet of rain begins to fall from the sky, rapidly soaking the forest floor.
At the urging of his frantic mind and the barbaric war cry he can hear in the distance, Nick forces himself onward.

~GRIMM~

Hank jogs out of the precinct and takes the steps two at a time as he zeroes in on his car parked across the street.

After getting off the phone with Monroe and learning that they had found a possible location for Nick he almost sagged with relief those words brought him. They were finally on track to finding Nick. Even though he knows that it isn’t a sure thing, he can’t help but believe that this is where they’re going to find Nick.

Sliding into his car he closes the door and starts the engine.

Monroe had given him the address of where they were headed and he told him that he would meet them there.

As Hank had quickly thrown his jacket on he had almost sprinted past Wu who had asked him where the fire was but all Hank could manage to get through his wired mind was that there was a lead in the case and he had to follow it. Wu had tried to get him to go into more detail, even offering to go with him, but Hank had ignored him and fled the office.

He’s looking at about an hour drive and he knows that the entire drive up there will be filled with anxiety. Anxieties about the state he’ll find his partner in and the fear that they had been too late.

~GRIMM~

As Sean’s car speeds down the street he can’t help but think back on all the events that had led up to this moment.

From the moment the first Sterbestunde G had been discovered Sean had known that darkness was descending upon Portland and that the fight to protect his city was going to be brutal. Lives would certainly be lost and the city would never be the same again. He would never be the same again.

He hates to think it, but he knows that he has grown lax in some measures of his rule. That was made quite clear when a whole clan of Endeizechen Grimm had managed to enter his territory without his knowledge. It’s not only him that is paying for that laxness but the wesen under his rule. Though they may not know him by name or face, the wesen of Portland know that the area of Portland is under protection by a Guardian, and many are placated by this fact, believing in his rule to protect them from intruders such as Endeizechen Grimms.

But it isn’t only the wesen of Portland that he had failed, he had also failed Nick. Though the man was likely not aware of the Guardian that ruled Portland, Sean still likes to think that the Grimm somehow felt that he was not alone in his crusade to protect Portland. That another silent source was looking out for his well-being as well, not just his close group of friends.

Trouble seemed to follow Nick like the attraction between two magnets. And this fact could not have come into play at a worse time. Especially when Sean began to see the pattern growing between the wesen kidnappings. It was only by his hunch that the kidnappings weren’t random that he discovered the true reason behind them, but his discovery had come far too late to save Nick.

He’s working to correct that mistake. He needs to correct that mistake or else he knows that Nick would be taken from him and he’ll never be able to tell him the truth.
“I was thinking that maybe we should drop by Marie’s trailer to pick up some weapons. I mean, these are Endeizechen Grimms that we’re going up against and while I know that we could probably hold our own in a fight it would probably be a good idea to have some weapons just in case” Rosalee suggests from the back, her eyes traveling between the two men up front.

Monroe looks back at her and lowers his voice as he speaks, even though he knows that there was no chance that Sean wouldn’t hear him.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea? I mean this is THE trailer we’re talking about. I’m not so sure that Nick would approve of an outsider entering the trailer without his permission” he questions.

Rosalee shakes her head and leans forward, not bothering to lower her voice at all.

“I’m sure that Nick would be okay with it, and besides I think Captain Renard has proven himself enough with helping us get this far. We need his help Monroe and we really need the extra manpower. So yes, I do think that we can show him the trailer” she gives him a pointed look, daring him to argue, then draws back.

Monroe had no comeback for her words and instead relents.

“You’re gonna want to make a left up here” Monroe instructs, pointing towards the mentioned turn.

Sean turns the wheel and drives down the street, his eyes scan the street.

“Up ahead is the storage park, that’s where the trailer is.” Nodding his head Sean locates the storage park and drives through the opened gate. He’s silent as he waits for Monroe to tell him to stop and when the time comes he steps on the break and turns the engine off.

The trio exits the car and Sean takes a moment to take in the trailer that he knows possesses generations of knowledge and well used weapons. It’s almost surreal to see it in person now. The outer shell of the trailer is made from metal and the rickety steps that lead up to the door look like they are only a few more steps away from collapsing. But he knows that appearances can be deceiving and that the contents inside the trailer are almost as holy as the Ark of the Covenant.

He watches as Monroe digs into his coat pocket and produces a ring of keys. Rosalee and he keep back as the man sticks the key in the keyhole and opens the door. After Monroe steps inside, Rosalee and he enter after him, a light is switched on as soon as they enter.

The inside of the trailer is a sight to behold. Old leather bound books litter a desk and there’s a bed in the corner along with a whole counter dedicated to potions. But what truly catches his eye, is the antique wardrobe that sits in the middle of the wall.

Sean approaches the wardrobe and pulls the double doors open. His eyes quickly takes in all the weapons that are presented to him.

The Zauberbeist in him rumbles in disdain at the thought of all the wesen blood that had been shed with these weapons but the Regnant in him is practically purring with pleasure at the potential these weapons hold.

Getting a grip on himself Sean reaches into the wardrobe and picks up an impressive knife that has a skull engraved into the handle. He moves aside as Monroe grabs a knife along with a mace that hangs in the back. After a moment of hesitation Monroe grabs another weapon, this one a smaller but still deadly dagger, and hands it to Rosalee who accepts it with a nod.
“We need to get moving, the Blue Moon will be in position soon.” Sean states as he walks away from the wardrobe and exits the trailer, knowing that Monroe and Rosalee will follow him.

As Monroe locks up the trailer Sean and Rosalee climb back into the car and Sean turns the ignition, the car comes to life as they wait for Monroe to get in the passenger seat.

When Monroe enters the car, Sean barely waits until Monroe has buckled in before turning the car around and driving out of the storage lot.

After they have been driving for a few minutes, Rosalee breaks the silence.

“So, what exactly can we expect when we get up there? What should our plan of attack be?”

Without looking away from the road Sean answers her, his mouth set in a firm line.

“I can only guess the number of Endeizechen Grimm that we’ll encounter, but as I’m sure you know they are vicious, blood hungry killers who will do whatever they have to, to accomplish their goal. As for a plan of attack, all I can suggest is that we stick together and defend ourselves to the best of our abilities. Our goal, is to save Nick and get him out of there before the ritual can be completed” he finishes, turning onto the exit that will take them out of the city.

“What are we going to do if we’re too late?” Monroe asks, the words getting caught in his throat. He doesn’t even want to think about the possibility that they will arrive too late to save him. But there is no shaking the fact that they have to be prepared for whatever transpires.

Sean struggles with his answer, the very thought of not being able to save Nick makes both his human side and wesen side growl in fear and rage.

It’s Rosalee who finally answers after a few silent moments have gone by.

“We do our best to take out every last one of them.”

~GRIMM~

~back to the prologue~

Theresa has somehow managed to run ahead of Nick and is waiting behind a tree for him to approach. She forces herself to take calming breaths as she struggles to maintain a grip on the branch that she is holding back, her arms shaking from the exertion.

Rain has completely soaked through her clothing but she can’t blame all the shaking of her body on the cold. A lot of it has to do with the fact that she is on the cusp of being accepted back into the clan, but the cost of it has her mind locked in war. Is Nick’s life really worth the good graces of Leader? That thought is followed up by another which is, is his life worth the redemption of not only herself but her family as well?

But that’s the deciding factor isn’t it? The love of her family means everything to her and when she had disobeyed Leader’s orders and instead ran off with Terrence she had become a stain of shit to her family that they could barely stand to look at, let alone acknowledge any relation.

A chilling cackle rips her from her thoughts and she refocuses her attention on the here and now.

She readies herself when she hears footsteps approaching, the soles of her feet dig into the muddy ground.

She holds her breath as Nick comes stumbling through the brush, his right hand clutches his side as
he limps forward. When he’s just about to pass her she releases the branch and winces in sympathy as the branch collides with his gut and throws him back onto the ground.

As Nick lays groaning and coughing on the ground Theresa steps out from behind the tree and approaches him, her steps slow and cautious. She comes to a stop when she is standing over him, her eyes take in his ghostly pale skin that shimmers with raindrops and his gray eyes match the storm clouds in the night sky.

A cracking of a branch alerts her to another presence and she takes an involuntary step back as she lays eyes on Elijah who walks towards her, his eyes locked on Nick’s shivering body. When he reaches Nick he squats down above his head and a dark smile lights up his features as he addresses him.

"You can never escape us Nick, we'll always find you."

It’s then that Nick loses consciousness. Looking him over for a brief moment Elijah rises from the ground and finally acknowledges Theresa whose gaze is still on Nick.

“You did very well Theresa, Leader will be quite pleased.”

Bringing her gaze away from Nick, Theresa meets Elijah’s dark gaze.

“It was my honor to complete this test.”

The other ‘hunters’ emerge from the brush and when they lay eyes on Nick, similar looks of jealousy and defeat cross over their faces as they stop before the group.

Without saying a word Elijah bends down and pulls Nick up from the ground, he maneuvers Nick’s arm around his neck then looks at Theresa who watches in silence.

“Grab his other side, I don’t want to drop him before we get back to camp.” he orders, hefting Nick’s dead weight back up as he speaks.

Hurrying forward Theresa goes to the other side of Nick and swings his arm around her neck and adds extra support by wrapping her free arm around Nick's waist.

Once they both have a good grip on Nick the pair start forward and head back to camp, the others follow closely behind. The hoots and hollers from the hunt a faint echo to the now blank looks and quiet breathing that emit from them now.

She visibly winces in disgust when she can feel blood weeping from Nick’s side begin to stick to her arm that’s wrapped around his side. Being extremely careful about not aggravating the wound she does her best to not apply too much pressure.

When they arrive back at camp an altar made of wood has been set up in place of the stage. The obscured rays of the moon are steadily revealed as the storm cloud that hit earlier shifts away.

As quick as the storm had come the showers that had drenched the earth patter to a stop until all that remains behind is a soaked earth and the last lingering clouds.

People are lighting torches that are staked into the ground around the altar along with black candles that are being strategically placed around and on the altar but are unlit.

Kelly and Alin exit her trailer, talking quietly as they walk and when Kelly notices their return and Nick’s unconscious form, a smile graces her features. She leads Alin to the group and comes to a
stop before them, her eyes seeming to never leave that of Nick from the moment she laid eyes on him.

“And who was our victor?” Kelly asks, finally pulling her eyes away from Nick as she addresses Elijah.

“Theresa.”

Theresa is surprised to see that there’s no surprise on Kelly’s face, as if she had been expecting her to come back victorious.

“Well done, you have truly redeemed yourself. I welcome you back to the clan” in an act that nearly causes her to jump, Kelly steps forward and gives her three kisses on both cheeks and the forehead before stepping back next to Alin.

“We need to sew that wound up, we can’t afford to have him bleed out” she turns to Alin who instantly understands that she is talking to him and ushers Theresa and Elijah to follow him back to his tent.

Entering the tent Elijah and Theresa manage to lift Nick up onto the table in the middle of the tent and step back as Alin walks to the table and sets down a sewing kit and a pair of old metal scissors.

Theresa and Elijah stand back in silence as Alin uses the scissors to cut through the ragged shirt starting from the bottom and cutting all the way through the middle to the collar. Once the shirt is cut in half Alin eases Nick’s arms out of the sleeves then discards the rag.

As Alin threads the needle he addresses his silent audience.

“Elijah, you and Theresa may wait outside, I’ll call for you when I’ve finished.” his hand hovers over the open wound as he calmly waits for them to follow his subdued order. Sighing Elijah grabs Theresa by the arm and drags her out of the tent, his blunt nails digging into her skin so hard that she knows there will be bruises.

Once the pair has vacated the tent Alin begins the process of stitching his side up.

As Alin works Nick occasionally winces and groans in pain, but he never wakes up, which speaks greatly of the pain and abuse his body has endured over the past few days.

Reaching out Alin gently rests his free hand on Nick’s forehead, his thumb draws lazy circles into his scalp. “Don’t worry copil de luna, your suffering will end soon.” taking his hand back Alin goes back to his stitches and is soon finished.

Setting the needle and excess thread aside Alin fetches Elijah and Theresa who reenter the tent and carefully pull Nick off the table and back into the original position they had him in around their necks.

The pair carry Nick back to the altar and at Kelly’s instruction lift him back first onto the altar then step back as Kelly walks around to the opposite side of the altar and looks down at Nick who’s still, somehow unconscious.

After a few moments had gone by Kelly goes about binding Nick’s hands and feet with pieces of rope that is attached to stakes that had been pounded into the ground. When she’s finished, Nick’s hands and legs are stretched up to the sides, making his body into the shape of an X.

In the night sky the moon is almost fully uncovered, its pearly gray surface becoming brighter the
more the cloud moves away from it.

Kelly looks up into the sky and lays eyes on the emerging moon then looks back down at Nick. She lays a gentle hand against his cheek and lovingly strokes his skin, the moment would have been tender if it wasn’t for the fact that she’s about to sacrifice her son.

“It’s almost time Nicolae, the blue moon is nearly upon us.”

~GRIMM~

Hank has already arrived when Sean, Monroe and Rosalee pull up to the state park’s entrance. He’s leaning against his car by the side of the road, his hand going to his gun in his holster at their car’s initial approach. His hand falls away from his gun when he recognizes his Captain is driving the car.

Sean, Monroe and Rosalee, each carrying their own weapons pile out of the car and meet Hank halfway between the two vehicles.

“We don’t have any time to waste. Let’s get moving.” Sean states, moving past Hank and entering the park.

~GRIMM~

All the members of the clan are present and wearing long black hooded cloaks with the hoods pulled down. A clan member dressed in the same attire as the others walks among the crowd gathered before the altar with a medium sized open black chest in his arms. Every now and then he stops before a clan member and the member would reach into the chest and retrieve a black mask that covers the upper part of their face and resembles a human skull.

Alin exits his tent carrying a wooden bowl with the contents from the brew he had been working on for the past few days. He is wearing the same black cloak as the other members but has his hood on.

The old man walks to Kelly’s side and presents her the bowl, which she accepts with a slight bow of the head. After handing over the bowl Alin steps away but remains close by.

Kelly sets the bowl down then turns to the left and assists in dressing in her own black cloak. When the cloak is on she accepts her own black mask then returns her attention to the crowd in front of her.

The moon is almost completely free of the cloud covering and in only a few more minutes will be clear of the cloud completely.

“The time has come, the time that we cement ourselves in Endeizechen history!” she lifts the mask to her face and secures the back then lowers her hands. The mask only adds to the malevolent aura that permeates off of her like the stench of rancid meat.

The other members follow suit, along with Alin who watches in silence.

~GRIMM~

Monroe walks in front of the group, his attention focused solely on the scent he is following. They had been walking for about fifteen minutes now and Monroe had come across Nick’s scent a few minutes into their walk, he said the scent was still strong which meant that Nick had to have been here not too long ago.
Sean’s gaze however is focused entirely on the moon that illuminates the night sky.

Monroe suddenly comes to a stop when he comes across a small puddle of blood under the shading of a tree in the manmade trail. The others stand around him as he gets down on one knee and kneels down to take a closer whiff. He quickly jerks his head back and stands up on shaky legs. Rosalee goes to his side and places a steadying hand on his shoulder.

“It’s Nick’s blood.” he states, looking at Hank and Monroe. Hank quietly lets out a string of curses while Rosalee and Monroe take comfort in each other’s arms. Sean though stands in angry silence. His skin seems to wrinkle across his face and his mouth is set in a firm line with his eyes blazing with rage.

Without speaking Sean forces himself forward and taking their cue from him the others follow.

~GRIMM~

The moon finally separates from its cloud covering and illuminates Nick and Kelly.

Picking the wooden bowl back up Kelly dips her index finger into the shimmering blue concoction. Kelly moves her hand to Nick’s forehead and goes about drawing a small Sterbustande G in the center of his forehead.

As she pulls away Nick’s eyes slowly flutter open, his eyes move in and out of focus as he stares up at the Blue Moon which is progressively coming into focus.

His hearing comes back to him with a pop and he flinches at the onslaught of pain that flares in his head. He can hear Kelly speaking above him and he tries to move but can do little more than flinch due to the four separate restraints on his wrists and ankles.

His dire situation slams into him as he takes a few shaky breaths as he strained himself to listen to what Kelly is saying.

“Mother Moon, we offer you the blood of our most sacred child. The child that entered this world under your heavenly rays and kissed his head with starry tears. Bless us tonight as we ascend him to you” she picks up the wooden bowl again as Elijah and another clan member grip him by the shoulders.

Cupping her hand under his head she cranes his neck and brings the lip of the bowl to his lips. She forces his mouth open and starts to pour the concoction into his mouth. He does his best to struggle, bucking his head around in an attempt to get her to drop the bowl but Elijah, Kelly and the other member hold on tight.

The liquid that sloshes down his throat has a distinct flavoring of copper but it’s the chunky slimy bits that slither down his throat that make him gag and try to spit the vile substance out. His attempts are unsuccessful though because Kelly dumps the last of the concoction down his throat then holds her hand over his mouth to force him to swallow.

He thrashes his head about, doing everything he can to dislodge her hand but her hold only increases. The longer he is denied breath, the more unbearable the burning sensation in his throat becomes and tears spring from his eyes.

When his need for breath becomes too strong he involuntarily swallows and the concoction slides down his throat.

Seeing that he has swallowed all of it Kelly removes her hand and Nick takes the freedom to gasp
in breaths of air, a lot of which ends up being coughed back out from the stress that had been put on
his lungs.

If Nick thinks the pain is over, he can’t have been more wrong. The pain seems to build up from
the very core of his brain then expands out and consumes his entire body. His body thrashes about
and if it hadn’t of been for the restraints he surely would have flung himself off the altar.

Though his eyes are open and he is clearly awake Nick feels as though he is being subjected to the
most horrific nightmare he has ever experienced. A nightmare that would make even the most
coldblooded, bloodthirsty killer curl in on themselves with fright.

Blood drenched images of terrified people flashes before his eyes, their screams piercing his
eardrums with ice picks. He’s forced to watch as countless people are slain in such heinous
fashions that he would puke if he could and the blood is so palpable that he swears he can smell
and feel it on his skin.

While he’s locked in a blood drenched nightmare, Kelly begins to chant.

“Sânge de apă, sânge de pământ, sânge de aer și sânge de foc. Va oferim aceste modificări. Dă -ne
puterea de a curăţa ţara tuturor fiinţelor care se ascund feţele lor” as she chants the candles that are
set up on the altar light themselves.

Kelly is handed a familiar dagger and she accepts it. Turning back to Nick she raises the dagger
and holds it over Nick’s chest.

~GRIMM~

Monroe, Hank, Rosalee and Sean venture deeper into the park and quicken their paces when they
can hear noises up ahead.

Soon they could see flames flickering through the trees and one loud commanding voice that
echoes through the air. The closer they get the better they are able to hear what’s being said and
quickly find that it’s in a foreign language which Sean quickly translates as Romanian but what’s
worse is that the speaker is already halfway done with the spell.

Completely forgetting about the others Sean barrels through the trees and sprints through to the
campsite on the other side.

Immediately his presence is noticed and what could have passed for an army of Endeizechen
Grimm come running at him. Their black skull masks and scowling faces make them all the more
demonic in person.

His instincts going into hyper drive, Sean woges into his Zauberbiest form and roars before
grabbing the nearest two Grimms and bashing their skulls together until their heads are nothing but
misshapen globs of flesh.

Sean uses the dead weight of the corpses to push his way through the mass before hurling the
bodies back at them and causing several of the Grimms to fall to the ground.

From behind him he can hear the grunts and gunfire from Monroe, Rosalee and Hank as they
follow close behind him, each quickly becoming spattered with blood of the Grimms they bash and
fire their weapons into.

As the battle goes on, Kelly continues the spell. Her voice grows louder with each word.
“Dă-ne putere luna atotputernică. Acceptați sângele acestui copil sacru și dotarea ne cu darurile voastre puternice.”

Bloody and beaten bodies are quickly piling up on the ground as the group progresses closer to the altar. Sean’s gaze zeroes in on Nick’s form.

He roars in rage at the pain that shoots up his arm and he Whirls around to face a masked Grimm who is holding a bloody knife. Before the Grimm can get another slash in, Sean lunges towards him and wraps his hands around his neck then quickly snaps it nearly off his body. With no remorse Sean drops the body to the ground and resumes his stalk to the altar.

“Lună sacră. Iluminator de noapte. Ascultați motiv tău, și să dea acest clan puterea căutăm!”

Just as Kelly is about to slam the dagger into Nick’s chest, Sean grabs her arm and ruthlessly bends it until an audible snap breaks the air. Kelly only grunts before using her other hand to lash out at him and deliver a blow to his face that causes him to stagger back into the arms of another Grimm.

It doesn’t take long for Sean to wrestle free of the man’s hold and shove him off the altar where he lands with a dull thud.

Kelly desperately searches the ground for the dagger, her movements slow and sluggish from the pain flaring in her arm.

Sean takes a step towards her but is quickly blocked by an old man who is staring at him with dead black eyes. Flexing his muscles Sean attempts to punch the man across the face but is blocked and instead the old man punches him once in the face and twice in the gut. The old man’s swift and deadly movements momentarily surprise Sean but he quickly gets over that when he narrowly avoids a kick that would have caved in his nose. Grabbing his foot, Sean flips him in the air and watches with satisfaction as the old man collapses onto the ground.

Knowing that he can’t let the man live, Sean takes out the knife from his coat pocket and in one fluid motion brings the blade down to the man’s chest where he embeds the knife up to the hilt.

Blood pools from the man’s mouth and wound and with one last wheeze filled breath his eyes glass over.

Leaving the knife in the old man’s chest Sean practically pounces on top of Kelly and takes great delight in assaulting her body with kicks and punches.

Kelly manages to get her feet grounded and, using all her strength, kick him off of her and while he is standing back up, she rises from the ground and delivers a round of punches to his face and chest.

The dagger that Kelly had been searching for is suddenly picked up from the ground and brought over to where Nick continue to lay, oblivious to the bloody battle ensuing around him.

By now Kelly and Sean have taken their fight off the altar and have both done a considerable amount of damage to each other. It’s when Kelly loses her footing over the uneven ground that Sean gets the upper hand and, curling his hand into a fist, lashes out and encases his hand into her chest. With his back to the altar Sean takes a twisted amount of pleasure in watching Kelly slowly start to die.

Her movements still and she looks up at him, in shock as he grips her heart. But there is also still a defiant fire in her eyes as she manages to look past Sean and see a sight that brings a cruel smile to her face.
With blood beginning to gurgle down her chin and her speech stilted she speaks her final words.

“Suntem încă victorios.” after these words leave her lips the last bit of air in her lungs escapes her lips and she goes limp in his arms, her dark heartless eyes remain open as he carelessly drops her to the ground.

As he looks down at her lifeless body her words come back to him and when he translates them his eyes widened. He whips his head around just in time to see a young woman whose mask has fallen off bring the dagger down into Nick’s heart.

He can’t be sure but Sean is sure that he screams in rage and sorrow as he sprints to the young woman and quickly disposes of her by ripping the knife out of the old man and repeatedly embedding it in the girl’s gut and chest until he throws her aside.

His ears are filled with cotton as he sags against the altar. Tears pool from his eyes as he takes in Nick’s stilled body and ashen face as blood trails down his exposed chest.

Lifting his head towards the moon he howls in sorrow and hate. As the last line of his howl tapers off, his face returns to human form but the sorrow remains.

Body vibrating with grief Sean reaches out and wraps his hand around the handle of the dagger. Taking a steadying breath Sean slowly pulls the dagger out of Nick’s chest and tosses the damned weapon away.

Knowing that he has little time to waste, Sean digs into his coat pocket and produces the capped vial. Pulling the cap off Sean dips his fingers into Nick’s blood and allows a few drops to fall into the vial.

Before he can move on to the next step he finds himself panicking when Nick’s eyes shoot open.

Chapter End Notes

Translations for those of you who are curious, keep in mind that these are rough translations that I used through Google translate.

Translation of Alin’s term of endearment for Nick during stitching of his wound: “Child of the moon”

The Shedding Ritual spell: “Blood of water, blood of earth, blood of air and blood of fire. We offer these to you. Give us power to cleanse the land of all the beings who hide their faces. Give us the power almighty moon. Accept the blood of this sacred child and endow us with your mighty gifts. Sacred moon. Illuminator of the night. Hear thy plea, and give this clan the power we seek!”

Translation of Kelly’s final words: “We are still victorious.”
The race is on to save Nick from the clutches of his own mind.

Sorry for such the long wait. I'm dealing with finals right now.

Nick’s usual empathetic, crystalline gray eyes had hardened into dark, emotionless pools of arsenic and when those eyes turn on Sean, he feels like he has been scorched by the flames of hell.

With as much effort as treading calm water, Nick breaks free of his restraints, sits up and swings his legs over the side of the altar towards Sean. The emotionless expression remains on his face as he hops down and stands in front of Sean who does his best to stay in place.

He watches in morbid fascination as the silver dollar sized hole in Nick’s chest knits itself closed and his already pale skin bordering on albino shines under the beams of the moon. Nick looks like a demonic entity sent to smite the earth. The black stitches that litter his torso disintegrate, leaving behind thick white scars that make the demonic allusion all the more real.

Neither man makes any indication of moving.

The power he can feel emulating off of Nick makes his Zauberbiest hackles rise, snarling at the clear threat that Nick presents, but the Regnant in him is even more attracted to the younger man than before. His instincts tell him that the being in front of him is more than just a worthy mate, he is also a worthy partner to have rule Portland beside him.

Reigning those thoughts in, Sean addresses Nick, making sure to never let his eyes divert from Nick’s. To look away would be giving Nick full dominance, like a snarling dog guarding its turf and in this moment that would be like signing his own death certificate.

“Nick, I know that right now trying to reach you, the real you, is about as easy as catching air with a net. But I need you to trust me when I say that I can help you.” he insists, knowing his words won’t reach their intended target but he has to try regardless.

By now Monroe, Hank and Rosalee have finished killing off the few remaining members of the clan, that being their only choice due to the fact that no prison cell would be able to hold them.

With blood glistening on their skin and clothing they stand in stunned silence as they watch the interaction between Sean and Nick. Their faces etched in distress at the ungodly sight that Nick presents. Because even though they are part of a supernatural world there were still some things that go against nature on both sides, like the fact that the dead do not walk.

They had all watched in horror as the dagger was plunged into Nick’s chest and they had all been sure that Nick was dead and gone. But the moment he had sat up there had been a moment where
they were all bursting with happiness, thrilled that their close friend was still with them. That moment was broken however when they saw the hole in his chest close itself up and the dead eyes replace his once warm emotional gray ones.

Nick, as expected, does not respond to his plea and instead lashes out and wraps his hand around his throat, steadily applying more pressure as he easily lifts Sean off the ground. Still holding the open vial in his hand Sean can only do so much to try and free himself from Nick’s hold. But even to the best of his ability some of the potion manages to spill out of the vial and he’s still desperately trying to get air into his lungs.

Quickly recognizing that Renard is in trouble Hank fires two warning shots into the air, in the hope that the sound of the shots will distract Nick or even make him let Renard go altogether, but Nick doesn’t appear to take any notice of the shots and continues to choke Renard.

Realizing that Nick is clearly not in his right mind and that physically trying to stop him will likely only result in injuring himself, Hank is forced to raise his weapon and fire a shot into Nick’s shoulder. This time, he does receive a response.

Lowering his weapon, Hank watches as the bleeding bullet wound in Nick’s left shoulder quickly sews itself closed. Dropping Renard to the ground, Nick turns to sear his emotionless eyes on Hank and he knows that Nick’s silent wrath is about to be turned on him.

Renard hacks a few times as he brings air back into his lungs, his throat stings with each breath until the pain resides. He checks the vial that is still miraculously in his hand to be sure that he hadn’t lost too much of the potion and is glad to see that a fair amount still remains.

As he shakily rises to his feet Nick walks off the altar and stalks towards Hank who has his gun trained on his approaching partner but has no intention of firing off a shot. He can’t bring himself to fatally shoot his friend and partner, even though it would appear that Nick could easily heal himself. It wasn’t right.

Monroe tries to stop Nick’s approach by wrapping his arms around Nick’s arms and middle but that only lasts for a few seconds before Nick breaks free and punches Monroe so hard across the face that the man flies a good few feet before hitting the ground, knocking him out cold.

“Monroe!” Rosalee screams as she runs to Monroe’s side and frantically checks him over. Her hands tremble as she checks for a pulse and she practically sags in relief when she finds one.

Meanwhile, Hank cautiously backs away from Nick, his gun still aimed on him.

“Nick, please don’t do this man, I’m your partner. This isn’t who you are. You can fight this!” he pleads, his finger quivering on the trigger when Nick is only a few feet away from him and Hank quickly finds himself running out of space to back away.

Not wanting to risk taking his eyes off of Nick, Hank doesn’t notice the log behind him so as a result he loses his footing when the back of his heels hit the log. For a moment the world is shooting over him before he makes impact with the ground, knocking him out cold.

“Monroe!” Rosalee screams as she runs to Monroe’s side and frantically checks him over. Her hands tremble as she checks for a pulse and she practically sags in relief when she finds one.

Before Hank can properly defend himself Nick is on him. Squatting down on Hank’s chest, Nick lays into him with multiple blows to the head and chest that rattle his brain and scramble his lungs. He can feel blood pumping down his face in rivulets and he is fairly certain that his nose is broken if the numbing pain and avalanche of blood down his mouth and chin is any indication.
“Nick…stop…please….,” The beating doesn’t let up and Nick’s cold gray eyes continue to stare down at him.

Suddenly above Nick’s form, Hank sees Rosalee pounce on Nick’s back and begin to punch his back and scratch any exposed skin she can get her hands on. Her attack is short lived however when Nick grabs her by the back of her neck and flings her off his back where she collides into a tree. She collapses in a heap on the ground, unconscious.

Finally able to breathe properly Sean uses his index finger to collect some of the blood from the wound on his arm and shakes some drops off into the vial. Without hesitation he then brings the vial to his lips and drinks half of the remaining potion.

He can feel the effects of the potion starting to set in. His body feels like millions of ants are marching beneath his skin and white noise sizzles in the back of his mind, like a dead TV channel.

Shaking his head to clear it somewhat Sean steps off the altar and rushes over to forcibly haul Nick off of Hank and toss him to the side, giving Hank enough time to sluggishly scramble to his feet and stumble over to check on Rosalee.

Nick pulls himself up from the ground and runs towards Sean but before he can get a hit in Sean grips Nick’s throat and hefts him into the air then propels his body down onto the ground. Before Nick can get back up, Sean presses his knee down onto Nick’s chest and grips his chin, forcing Nick’s mouth open then dumps the potion down his throat. He covers Nick’s mouth with his hand.

Nick puts up a good fight, bucking his body and thrashing his head but Sean’s grip remains strong, not willing to be thrown off before Nick swallows every last drop.

Finally Sean feels and sees Nick’s throat convulse and his Adam’s apple move up and down as the potion travels down his throat. Taking his hand off, Sean quickly and regretfully blindsides Nick with a quick punch to the head that knocks him out like a light.

Standing up Sean takes a moment to make sure that Nick isn’t going to be getting up any time soon then runs over to check on Monroe who is slowly coming around.

“What happened?” Monroe asks, his voice groggy from being unconscious for so long. There is a developing goose egg on the side of his forehead that’s turning an impressive purple and red.

“My guess is that Nick knocked you out” he answers, helping the man to his feet. A sudden head rush would have toppled him back to the ground but Sean recognizes the cloudiness in his eyes and quickly wraps an arm around Monroe’s back and swings Monroe’s arm around his neck.

With his vision slowly righting Monroe asks another question as Sean slowly carries him over to where Hank is rousing Rosalee.

“Where’s Rosalee? Is she okay?”

Sean watches as Rosalee slowly comes to and looks around in confusion, her eyes a little dilated and he can also see that she’s having difficulties keeping her eyes open. A clear indication that she could have a concussion.

“She’s right here and relatively fine. A little banged up but alive.” he assures the blutbad as he carefully sets him down next to Rosalee.

Hank stands from the ground and turns to his Captain.
“We need to get them to a hospital.” he states, doing his best to wipe away the blood still pumping from his nose. A fact that doesn’t go unnoticed by Sean.

“You all do. Look, I’ll drop Monroe and Rosalee off at the hospital then I’m going to take Nick back to the Spice Shop. I need you to call this in, tell them…just come up with a believable story that doesn’t involve what really went on here” he said, his eyes traveling to Nick’s prone body every few seconds.

As Hank takes out his phone he continues the conversation.

“Shouldn’t Nick be examined at a hospital too?” he questions, holding the phone in his hand but not dialing any numbers.

“Not yet. I managed to give Nick the potion but since the ritual has been performed I’ve had to alter the potion and because of that I need a secure place where I can work. The Spice Shop more than likely has all the ingredients I’ll need and a place to keep Nick under control.” he explains, his nerves vibrating beneath his skin like guitar strings.

“What are you going to do?” Hank questions, his voice low and rough with restrained emotion.

“I’m going to try to bring Nick back. Right now his mind is…walled off, completely adrift in a place that you and I could never fully comprehend. The being we saw tonight was not Nick, it’s the Grimm that resides inside him that has been infused with the powers that the Shedding released. If I don’t free Nick from the prison he’s being held in, the Nick we know will be gone forever. Make the call Hank.” bending down, Sean offers Monroe his hand but Monroe refuses and instead wraps his arm around Rosalee’s waist and slowly rises from the ground, his legs shake from the exertion but eventually Rosalee and him are fully standing.

With Monroe helping Rosalee, Sean takes a few steps toward Nick but stops and walks back to Hank who is looking around at the dead bodies that litter the ground. Under the light of the moon, their blood glistens on the dead and dying grass along with the occasional cracked tooth that had been knocked out of a killer’s skull.

Hank eyes each and every body, his eyes thoroughly tracking for any movement as his hand rests on his gun.

“I need your cuffs.” Sean states, stopping a foot away and holding his hand out.

“I thought they were all dead?” he asks as he hands the cuffs over, his eyes once again going over the bodies. Trying to see if he had missed something.

“They are. The cuffs are for Nick.” he says as he walks back to Nick and squats down in front of him and turns him on his stomach.

With practiced ease, Sean slips the cuffs around his wrists then clicks them close, regretfully making them tight enough that they pinch Nick’s skin.

Hank watches as Renard hefts Nick over his shoulder and follows Monroe and Rosalee, his movements as fluid as if he was merely carrying a bag of feathers.

Taking out his cellphone, Hank calls the station, telling them that he has located Detective Burkhardt who is alive and all the suspects are dead.

~break~
Sean holds the door open for Monroe and Rosalee as the pair huddle into the backseat where Rosalee takes Monroe’s hand and grips it lovingly, her still somewhat cloudy eyes moving to look out the window.

Closing the door Sean walks to the back of the car and opens the trunk then lowers Nick into the enclosed space. He takes a moment to examine Nick, his eyes taking in the pale beauty that is Nick Burkhardt. Unable to help himself Sean reaches out and wipes the bangs away from Nick’s closed eyes.

The moment their skins make contact his mind is bombarded with violent flashes of decaying bodies that are piled among the rubble of a burning city in the background. Before he can even begin to try and orient himself he is mentally assaulted by shots of pain that rattle his mind but the worst is the feelings of sorrow and fear that brings him to his knees.

Gravity is pushing down on him, forcing him deeper into the gravel. He doesn’t feel the sharp jagged rocks biting into his knees or the resulting blood that stains the material of his pants.

The continued rampage of the horrific images and raw emotions feel so personal that he would swear they were his own, entrap him in his mind, making him a prisoner to the violent and demonizing emotions and images.

A surge of staticky darkness plows straight at him and he falls on his back, his eyes widening in fright.

“Help me!” a voice echoes through his ears and though it’s faded and distorted there is no mistaking it, the voice belongs to Nick.

For a brief moment he sees a sweaty, trembling image of Nick curled in on himself, muttering inaudibly but the image is ripped from him as an outside force yanks Sean back into the real world.

Gasping for air, he looks up into the worried eyes of Monroe who stands above him, his hand dropping the hold he has on Sean’s arm and takes a step away from him.

It takes everything in Monroe not to woge at the sight that Sean makes with his Zauberbiest glowering up at him and an unearthly glow in his eyes.

“Captain Renard?” Monroe asks, his voice soft and nonthreatening.

Slowly Sean’s mind cements itself back in the real world and he forces himself to return to his human form. The process is not as fluid as it usually is due to the extreme duress his body and mind is under.

Monroe watches in silence as Sean rises from the ground and composes himself, his usually steady hands shake slightly as they straighten his collar and fixes his askew tie.

Without speaking Sean walks past Monroe and stops in front of the trunk. His eyes roam over Nick’s form for only a moment before he reaches up and closes the trunk and locking it.

“I’ll drop you and Rosalee off at the hospital and then I’ll take Nick back to the Spice Shop” he states as he walks to the driver’s side door.

“Are you sure that’s such a good idea? Maybe Nick and you should get checked out as well” Monroe suggests, limping to the car and standing on the other side.

Sean opens the driver side door but doesn’t get in, instead he grips the doorframe with his left hand
and looks down at the ground. His eyes refuse to meet Monroe’s.

“It’s too dangerous, Nick isn’t in control right now and I can only guess what the Grimm will do if it is surrounded by that many potential victims. No, since the initial spell I was going to perform will no longer work I’m going to have to improvise and by doing that it’s going to require someplace with equipment that will not only help me restrain him but cure him as well.” with that Sean gets in the car and closes the door. The engine turns on but remains in idle.

Unable to come up with any response Monroe gets into the car and closes the door. He instinctively checks on Rosalee who is thankfully still conscious then buckles both of them in.

Sean puts the car in drive then pulls out onto the road and heads back to the city.

Aside from Monroe quietly speaking to Rosalee the ride to the hospital is spent in silence.

~short break~

Sean holds the back door open for Monroe and Rosalee as the pair gingerly exit the vehicle. He walks to the hospital entrance and holds it open for them as they walk inside but as soon as Sean turns to leave Monroe stops him.

“If you’re going to the Spice Shop, you’ll need these.” reaching into his coat pocket, he hands over the ring of keys which holds an inexact number of rusted gold keys on a scratched metal loop.

Accepting the keys Sean quietly thanks him then gets back into his car and drives off.

~GRIMM~

Hank watches from the sidelines as the coroner and his assistants’ bag the bodies, their expressions blank as they seal in the bloody corpses that litter the ground. Their experience on the job making them somewhat hardened to the bleakness of collecting bodies; leaving behind only imprints and flecks of blood.

Wu finishes talking to a fellow officer and walks over to Hank. His hand digs into his pocket as he walks and produces a package of travel sized Kleenexes.

“You look like you just lost a round with Mike Tyson.” he comments as he wordlessly hands the Kleenexes over and stands beside Hank.

Hank grunts in reply as he opens the packaging and pulls out three of the tissues. He holds them to his still slightly bleeding nose. There’s a decent sized cut in the center of the bridge of his nose. He winces in pain at the pressure but sucks it up and does his best to soak up the remaining blood.

Wu noticeably takes a step closer to get a better look at him and Hank scrunches his brow in confusion.

“What are you doing?” he asks, slightly annoyed by Wu overstepping his personal space.

“My mistake, you still have a full ear. I guess I should have just gone with you look like crap.” he amends, pulling back with a blank expression as he returns his attention to the scene in front of them.

“Thanks Wu, you sure have a way with words.” Hank dryly returns, his voice muffled from the tissue pressing against his nose and mouth.
The pair watch as another body is piled into the back of the coroner’s van and follows the coroner’s assistants as they walk back to collect another body.

“I’m still kind of in disbelief that you managed to survive all of this. Now you said when you got here a fight had broken out between the members? Do you know what about?” Wu asks, his mind still having trouble accepting Hank’s retelling.

The blood having finally stopped, Hank pockets the tissue.

“I already gave my statement Wu, and no I don’t know what the fight was about. I just look at it as a blessing in disguise because it gave Nick a chance to release himself and get to safety. Speaking of Nick I should really go see how he’s doing, I called the Captain to come take him to the hospital and I haven’t received any updates.” he states as took a few steps away from Wu.

His mind still full of questions Wu follows after Hank, his mouth opening with another question.

“Why the Captain? I mean I know that he was taking Nick’s kidnapping just as personally as the rest of us but wouldn’t it have been smarter to wait for us to arrive so that he could get on sight medical attention?” he questions, his mouth a gateway for unanswerable questions.

Stopping in place Hanks turns on the slightly shorter Asian officer.

“I called the Captain because I could tell just by looking at Nick that his mind was nowhere near intact enough to handle any questioning. Nick had been traumatized enough with whatever went down here and I wasn’t going to risk frying what little hold on sanity he currently has. He may be a Detective who has seen a lot of darkness on the job but something like this can leave a man a drooling mess. That’s why I called the Captain, because I needed someone who wouldn’t try to interrogate him and bury his mind so deep in memories that it could push him to do something drastic.” breathing heavily Hank turns his back on a stunned Wu and briskly walks away.

He knows that later on he will regret his harsh words but for the moment he doesn’t really care about civility. Nick still isn’t 100% saved yet because the battle for his mind has only just begun.

~GRIMM~

Having finally located the correct key, Sean hurries back to the trunk of his car and after taking a quick look around pops the trunk and reveals Nick to thankfully still be unconscious. As he reaches out to grab Nick, he pauses then pulls back and digs around in his coat pocket and produces his leather gloves which he slips on.

Grabbing onto Nick’s arms, Sean pulls Nick out of the trunk and puts him in a fireman’s carry as he walks back to the open door and shuffles inside. His foot kicks the door closed behind him.

Jostling Nick around on his shoulder he locates the light switch and the main light situated in the ceiling flares on with a shaky hum before steadying off into silence.

Stepping further into the shop he scans the area, his eyes land on a faded wooden door behind the front desk. Steeling his eyes, he carries Nick to the door that he believes leads down to the basement and pushes it open.

The rusted hinges on the door squeak as it opens and sways from side to side as it settles against the wall. Light from the upstairs does a crappy job of illuminating the stairs and as he steps under the doorway and looks down he feels like he is looking down an endless well, echoes and all.

Using his right hand he feels along the wall until he locates the light switch which activates a harsh
yellow light at the bottom of the stairs but it does its job of lighting the stone walled room.

Pinpointing the first step Sean continues down the steps with Nick still unconscious on his shoulder. The aged wooden floorboards groan with each step but he’s unfazed with the notion that the steps are likely a good decade older than himself and thus could give out at any moment.

Finally reaching the floor, Sean lays eyes on the faded leather doctor’s examination chair situated in a corner of the basement with its own separate bare bulb hanging above it. Walking to the chair he carefully deposits Nick on it then uses pulls the restraints of the chair over Nick’s wrists, ankles and upper torso.

He doesn’t know how much longer the Grimm would be unconscious so he’ll have to work quickly.

With his mind focused he dashes back upstairs and goes to his mother’s Grimoir on the table in the back room. He flips through the pages until he finds the spell he needs.

Memorizing the few ingredients he’ll need he hurries around the shop collecting the jars and bags off the shelves. Thankfully the items are common enough that he has no doubt the Spice Shop will have them but it’s still a relief nonetheless to locate the final ingredient and grab the Grimoir off the table along with a bowl. He flies back down the stairs to the Grimm who is beginning to come around.

Setting the Grimoir down, Sean scans the short spell to memory then opens the five different ingredients and pours a liberal amount of each into the bowl. He stirs the contents with his hand until the ingredients have mixed together into a gravel like paste.

By now the Grimm has mostly shaken out the cotton in his head but there’s still enough fuzziness for Sean to recite the spell.

“Scutum est in tenebras vigore hic retinere. Qui castitatem tueri incarceratur!” As soon as he says the final word, the paste in the bowl shimmers green then returns to its pale sea foam color.

While the Grimm sluggishly begins to tug at his restraints, Sean rips off his gloves and sets them aside then picks up the bowl and dips his hand in it. He turns around and draws a line down the middle of each of the restraints. The paste shimmers green before vanishing into the material.

Just as he finishes putting the paste on the final restraint, the fog that had encased the Grimm’s mind lifts and upon laying eyes on Sean, the Grimm tries to lunge at him but can only manage a spastic jerk.

The Grimm looks down at itself and sees the restraints. It then looks back at Sean who is still holding the bowl. It tilts its head, as if curious to see what he plans to do.

What unnerves Sean the most however, is the cold gray eyes that look up at him with absolutely no emotion whatsoever. He knows that if he doesn’t look away soon he is sure to be sucked into the dark abyss that houses the being before him, forced to endure the same hell that Nick is surely experiencing.

Forcing himself to look away, Sean sets the bowl down and takes out his cellphone, his fingers scroll through the contact list until he comes to the name he’s looking for. Pressing speed dial he brings the phone to his ear and looks down at the floor as he waits for the individual to pick up.

“What is it now?” the individual asks, annoyance in their voice.
“I require your assistance at the Spice Shop and I won’t take no for an answer. I expect you to be here within the hour.” before the person can object, he hangs up the phone.

He looks back at the Grimm and is once again met with its emotionless eyes as it sits almost calmly in the chair, its eyes following his every subtle move. Taking a shaky breath he locates the lone office chair in the room and pulls the squeaking chair over then sits down in front of the Grimm. Contempt to wait for his assistance to arrive.

~break~

Upon hearing the knocking on the door, Sean walks back up to the steps and goes open the shop entrance.

On the other side stands the small but still dangerous figure of Adalind Schade. She’s dressed in one of her usual black pencil skirts with a tailored black jacket and white blouse with matching black closed end high heels.

Stepping aside he allows her entrance and closes the door behind her.

“What is so urgent that you made me leave a very important dinner with a client?” she demands, her arms crossed in front of her chest and her eyes hardened with restrained anger. Restrained because she still understands that the man before her is essentially her boss and could kill her with the most miniscule of movements.

“As I’m sure you’re more than aware, Nick was kidnapped by a clan of Endeizechen Grimm but what you may not know is that all the wesen killings and his kidnapping was to fulfill The Shedding Ritual. Unfortunately I got to him too late and the ritual was complete, luckily though the Endeizechen Grimms were all killed so the power couldn’t spread past Nick. All I’ve managed to do right now is create a connection between Nick and myself that I’m hoping will lead me to freeing Nick’s mind from the prison he’s being held in. Basically what I need you to do is act as a guard while I’m inside his mind and make sure that nothing goes wrong.” He states, taking her by the arm and practically dragging her to the door leading downstairs.

Before he can lead her downstairs, Adalind shakes him off and takes a step back from the door. “You’re telling me that a full blown, juiced up Grimm is downstairs and you’re planning on going into its mind? Do you know how dangerous that is? What spell are you using?” she asks, needing to have all the information before going into this.

Becoming anxious and somewhat angry he has to control himself from forcibly hauling her downstairs. His hands clench and unclench at his sides as he paces in front of the door.

“Originally I was going to use mens mundabis but since the ritual was performed I’ve had to
improvise and alter the spell.” he admits, his voice gruff with anticipation of the coming storm.

“Alter it how?” dread grows in the pit of her stomach the longer Sean holds out on answering her.

Swallowing thickly he answers, “Sangue a mente.”

Adalind’s eyes widen in shock at his words and she shakes her head in disbelief.

“Are you insane or just stupid? That is the most dangerous form of the spell and has the highest risk of death not only for you but the receiver as well!” she rants, her hands flailing at her sides.

“I don’t have a choice! If I don’t do this now Nick will be gone forever and I’ll to have to be the one to put him down! Now are you going to help me or not?” his chest is heaving up and down by the time he finishes and when she looks into his eyes she momentarily loses her breath at the anguish and fear she sees swirling around in his bottomless brown eyes.

Having to look away before she’s pulled in she sighs. She knew before he had even finished his rant what her answer would be but the emotion she sees in his eyes is what cements her decision.

“Fine, I’ll help you but don’t expect me to stick around after this is over with. Grimms aren’t exactly my favorite kind of people.” brushing past him, she pushes open the door and descends the stairs with Sean following closely behind her.

Reaching the floor, Adalind cautiously approaches the restrained Grimm, her steps slow and deliberate as she eyes the Grimm.

“How long has he been like this?” she asks, her eyes never wavering from the Grimm who is staring at her with eyes completely void of emotion.

Sean walks to stand beside her, his eyes also trained on Nick.

“A little over an hour, that’s why I have to work quickly.” he states.

She nods and watches as Sean sits down on a nearby chair.

“If I fail and the Grimm tries to escape, do whatever you have to, to ensure the safety of the city and yourself.” he orders, his underlying words obvious to the Hexenbiest: if he dies kill the Grimm.

Unable to articulate words she nods in understanding and watches with bated breath as Sean wheels the chair closer to the Grimm and sits down. Taking a steadying breath he reaches out and lowers his hand onto the Grimm’s head.

As soon as their skins makes contact a strong electrical current travels through his body and centers in on the wiring of his brain.

Just like the last time he had made contact with the Grimm’s skin, he’s assaulted with violent flashes of blood and corpses that leave him tasting copper in the back of his throat but unlike the last time Sean is forced deeper into the visions. The safety net of being pulled back is no longer present.

The images cave in on themselves and in the process consume Sean in darkness.

He doesn’t realize that he’s screaming nor the fear that his screams are instilling in Adalind who can do nothing but watch him go to his potential death. In contrast the Grimm has closed its eyes and is laying completely still, so still that it’s bordering on unnatural.
She finds herself actually startled when Sean’s screams abruptly cut off and what she can only describe as a long drawn out keen whispers past his lips before all sounds cease. The only assurance she has that he isn’t dead is the steady rise and fall of his chest as air passes through his nose and lips.

~short break~

When Sean opens his eyes he finds himself surrounded by tendrils of misty black clouds that slither around him. But what figuratively and literally sends shivers down his spine is the bone deep coldness that clings to his insides like a sweater made of tar.

Each breath that he takes results in a tentacle of smoky air leaving his lips which causes his body to feel 10 Degrees cooler.

“Nick?” he shouts, his voice seems to echo off the endless snakes of smoke and back to him.

After a few moments has gone by and he hasn’t received a response, Sean forces his body forward and can’t control the cough that rips from his throat when one of the clouds manages to bypass his lips and momentarily block his airways.

Desperate for air he slaps his chest in an attempt to dislodge the blockage and with the continued denial of air black spots start to dance across his vision causing him to his footing which sends him falling to what he perceives to be the ground.

With a final bruising hit to his chest the cloud is expelled and he greedily sucks in air which steadily banishes the spots from his eyes along with returning his balance.

Rising from the ground, he stands in place for a moment as he reorients himself before continuing his original plan of moving forward in search of Nick.

~break~

Sean has been walking for what feels like hours but really could have only been a few minutes what with the continued whisps of black smoke that surrounds him and the lack of any light aside from the occasional white spark from the smoke.

His throat is nearly hoarse from the amount of time he has spent screaming Nick’s name, anxious to locate him and get them both out of here before they became prisoners for all of eternity, a plaything for the dark entity that is the Grimm.

The bone deep chill that punctures his skin has been his constant companion as he navigates through the never ending tunnel of darkness and smoke. But he draws no comfort from it, how could he when all he can think of is the resemblance the feeling has to a corpse?

He is unprepared for the loud shrilling scream that pierces his ears after the extended confines of silence he has endured for what feels like an eternity. Out of self-protective reflex his hands shoot to his ears and presses into his skull, his eyes squeezing as he desperately prays for the scream to end.

Not soon enough the shrieking scream ends and he slowly lowers his hands only now realizing as he looks down that he was on his knees. Rising from the ground he looks around in a vain attempt to locate where the inhuman scream had come from but as expected all he sees is smoke and darkness.

Pushing the scream to the back of his mind, he continues walking, his eyes continuing to search the
darkness for any sign of Nick.

There was no way that he could have prepared himself for the wall that he rams into, the darkness completely camouflaging the first solid end he has come across. Using his hands he feels along the wall as he moves further into the tunnel of darkness, hoping that he’s getting closer to finding Nick.

Hope flares in his soul when up ahead he can make out a faint gray light. Not able to contain his excitement, he quickens his pace and is soon standing before the source of light that to him is like the heavenly lights themselves.

The light is coming from the bottom opening of a painted black door, the only color on the door being the red handle.

A sense of foreboding fills him as he reaches out and grasps the handle. The cold of the handle bites into his already chilled skin but he fights through the dread that tries to dominate him and pulls the door open. As he does so the gray light builds until he is nearly blinded by the overpowering element.

Still partially blinded by the light he mistakenly takes a step past the doorway and is wholly unprepared for the lack of flooring he finds on the other side. He can only go along for the ride as he tumbles down for what has to be at least 20 feet before coming to a stop at the bottom. He lands in a coarse gritty pile of what he can only describe as black sand. The gray light fills the endless room of black sand.

As Sean struggles to stand up from the pile he loses his footing and finds himself once more falling onto the sandy floor beneath him. Growling in annoyance he pushes himself up from the sand and manages to balance himself on the uneven terrain.

Slowly his eyes adjust to the light and he begins a slow careful walk through the sand, every once in a while almost losing his step but managing to right himself.

He almost misses it when out of the corner of his eye he notices the outline of a figure haphazardly buried in a pile of black sand. Unable to help the burst of hope that fires through him he shoots forward and hightails it to the pile of sand. Coming to the pile he drops to his knees and feverishly begins to dig when he confirms that the individual is in fact Nick.

The more sand he removes the better he is able to see Nick’s face and what he sees causes his heart to palpitate. Just like his appearance on the altar Nick’s skin is deathly pale, almost translucent and he fears that he is too late. But his mind keeps him from stopping, needing to have absolute proof before he goes down that path so he keeps digging. His arms throb with exertion but he doesn’t stop.

Sand whips past his face with each swipe and when the upper part of Nick’s body is uncovered he shakily reaches out and feels for a pulse. A heart stopping flare of fear hits him when he can’t immediately locate a pulse but his fears are abolished when he finally locates a thready but still present thrumming heart beat beneath his fingers.

Unable to relax, he finishes digging Nick out of the sand and once Nick is completely free he does his best to restrain himself from bodily shaking Nick into consciousness and instead gently taps his cheeks, not relenting until his eyes slowly open.

Upon seeing those magnificent gray eyes Sean can’t help himself as he breathes a sigh of relief and
cradles Nick’s face in his hands as his thumb caresses his cheeks.

“Nick? Can you hear me?” he questions, the relief of finding Nick evident in his voice as he continues to maintain tender physical contact with Nick.

Finally Nick responds to his probing question.

“Sean?” though his voice is no better than a whisper the immense relief that rushes through Sean brings a teary smile to his face as he confirms that it is him and he’s going to get him out of here.

What the two don’t notice however is the spiked, whispy black tentacle that parts through the black sand a few feet away from the pair before disappearing.

Chapter End Notes

Very loose translations.
Sean’s spell (Latin): Enforce this shield and keep in the darkness that resides in here.
Protect the purity of the one who is imprisoned.
Name of spell: cleanse the mind
Name of alteration to spell: Blood to mind
Confessions and Confrontations

Chapter Summary

Truths are revealed and an enemy comes out to play.

Chapter Notes

There are a lot of things I love about this chapter but there are also some things I don't like but hopefully the good outweigh the bad.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sean swipes away a few more inches of the black sand and grabbed Nick’s arms, his body never stops moving as he encourages Nick to move.

“C’mon Nick, we have to get out of here” he states as he pulls Nick up into a seated position. Tiny grains of sand sliding off Nick’s completely black attire of jeans and a T-shirt.

Sand is spattered on his face like a peeling mud mask and Sean instinctively does his best to rub the coating of sand away, the grains transferring to Sean’s fingers and lazily falling to the pile they kneel on.

When most of the sand is off, Sean grabs hold of Nick’s arms again and helps ease him to his feet. Nick’s legs shake with the exertion but he remains standing with the help of Sean.

Nick sags into Sean’s chest, his arms flopping to his sides like wet pasta, as Sean supports his weight. Sean wraps his arms around Nick, the limbs tighten around Nick’s lightly muscled torso, and Sean takes a moment to appreciate the feeling of Nick in his arms.

A pleasure of warmth spreads through him, from the tips of his toes to the crown of his head and his mind sings in ecstasy at having found and making such intimate contact with the man that means so much to him.

He never wants to let this man out of his arms, just the thought of losing him (again) makes him growl possessively and tighten his hold. He wouldn’t be surprised if his eyes are glowing red with rage nor if his skin is rippling from the Zauberbiest and Regnant prowling beneath his skin.

He’s torn from his possessive and keening thoughts by Nick’s whimpering and trembling that breaks his heart but at the same time infuriates him. Here is the man who Sean always associated with strength, both mental and physical, cunning instincts that could lead him to answers no one else could have ever guessed and a will to seek justice for those who had been harmed. Now, Nick is a trembling mess of his former self and that enrages Sean all the more because the people (if they could even be called that) are already dead. He wants to rip their souls back from the underworld and torture them mercilessly until nothing is left but a stain on the blood soaked grass.

Sean tries to lift Nick’s chin so as to look him in the eye but Nick jerks away and struggles in his
arms, his whimpers intensify when he fails to break Sean’s hold. Terrified unintelligible nonsense flows from his mouth as Nick continues to try and escape, the sounds much like a distressed animal, struggling to escape death.

“Nick, Nick what’s wrong? Talk to me!” he urges, doing his best to keep him in place.

His question goes answered with fists hammering on his chest, high pitched screams and wild eyes that swirl with untapped fear. Distracted by the struggling and screams, Sean is unprepared for the fist that flies at his face and knocks him off balance and consequently causes him to lose his hold on Nick.

As soon as Sean’s hold has left him, Nick darts off in the opposite direction. His feet kick up the sand behind him in waves of grittiness and projectiles. Pushing to his feet, Sean shoots off after him, his feet slip around the uneven terrain but that doesn’t prevent him from quickly catching up with Nick and tackling him to the ground.

Sean digs his fingers into Nick’s skin as he struggles to keep Nick in place beneath him who wiggles and jerks his body around in such fast motions that Sean’s sure he’s going to break something. All while this is happening Nick is screaming and whimpering the longer he is prevented from escaping. It tears at Sean’s heart to be the reason for Nick’s fear but he can’t allow him to run off, he may never find him again if that were to occur.

He feels before he realizes what Nick is going to do as Nick manages to wrap his legs around Sean’s waist and flip them around so that Nick is now on top and Sean is pinned beneath him. Both Sean and Nick’s chests heave in sync as they stare into the other’s eyes. Nick’s screams have silenced and Sean is having trouble forming words. The only sound that passes between the pair, is their heavy pants.

“Nick, I only want to help you” he pleads, his breathing beginning to calm down.

Nick’s eyes dart around them, his body jerks at the sound caused by every rustle of sand that Sean’s body causes to move.

Instead of answering, Nick starts to rise off of him but Sean lashes out and wraps his hand around Nick’s arm, stilling his movements but not the fear that was plain to see in Nick’s body language and eyes. Nick is terrified of something and Sean’s determined to find out the cause.

“Talk to me, what has you so scared?” Sean pleads, his eyes trying to catch Nick’s flickering ones with little success.

Nick tries to shake his arm off but Sean only tightens his grip and pulls him down closer to him.

“I’m not letting go, not until you tell me what’s going on” he states, his eyes pleading for Nick to answer him.

Nick tries once again to free his arm but his efforts are not as strong as last time and he continues to refuse to make direct eye contact with Sean.

Sean’s hope flares when Nick starts to open his mouth but ice water fills his chest with horror when a thin black tentacle with knife like talons encircles Nick’s throat. Nick’s eyes widen in sheer terror. Before Sean can properly react Nick is thrown on his back and being dragged away at such an accelerating rate that by the time Sean pushes himself to his feet and scrambles after him there is already a daunting amount of distance between them.

“Nick!” he screams as he desperately tries to reach him, the wheezing gasps he can hear seizing his
heart and mangling his nerves.

It’s hard to focus on where the tentacle begins and ends but from what he can guess this thing is longer than a python and certainly larger than a firetruck’s hose so it’s hiding place could extend the entire length of this field of sand.

His feet are moving so fast that they’re almost invisible as he fights his way through the sand that threatens to bring him down with each move that he makes. It feels like his heart has made a permanent home in his throat when he gets close enough to see blood dribbling down Nick’s neck from where the spikes have bitten into his skin. Closing the last few feet that separates them, Sean leaps and grabs onto his right leg. But even with his added weight Nick continues to be dragged.

Sean does his best to dig his toes into the rapidly passing sand and once he gets enough leverage, he jerks his body back into a squatting position as the soles of his feet dig into the sand. Thankfully this is enough to slow the tentacle like thing down.

However, this also causes its hold to increase and leave Nick with long jagged cuts down his neck and lips that are quickly turning blue from the lack of oxygen. He knows that Nick will not last much longer and so he locks his arms around Nick’s legs and proceeds to roll his body to the left and mercifully this is enough to release the tentacle’s hold on Nick and slither back under the sand.

He jumps to his feet and skids to a stop beside Nick who lays on his stomach and his body convulses painfully with each lung rattling cough that leaves his abused lungs. He carefully moves Nick onto his back and looks over the damage that has been inflicted upon him.

Now that the tentacle is gone, Sean’s able to make out more of the damage that has been wrought upon Nick’s neck. At first glance, it isn’t good. Jagged cuts crisscross all around his neck and blood continues to sluggishly leak out of him. Splotchy purple, red and blue bruises are already beginning to bloom from where the tentacle had pressed into his pale skin and each time Nick’s throat expands with air the cuts rip open even more.

Thinking quickly Sean rips one of his long white sleeves off and gently lifts Nick’s head off the ground, shushing his whimpers of pain as he wraps the material around his neck twice before tying it off in the back.

“Can you still breathe?” he asks, not wanting to choke the injured man.

“Yeah” Nick’s voice is barely above a whisper and results in a bone rattling, wheezy cough to attack his body with tears from oxygen deprivation and pain trickling down his cheeks.

Sean rubs his chest and waits for the fit to ride out before speaking.

“Let’s get you up and then we’ll look for a way out of here” he states as he gets to his feet and bends down to offer Nick his hand. Nick takes his offered hand and after a few false starts, with the help of Sean, pushes himself off the ground right into Sean’s arms.

Situating him around to his side, Sean wraps an arm around his waist and encourages Nick to lean into him as they walk forward.

~GRIMM~

Hank thanks the medic after she finishes bandaging the bridge of his nose and examining his other injuries then hops off the back of the ambulance and heads for his car.

By now all of the bodies have been collected and CSU is busy bagging and tagging the remaining
weapons so all that’s left for him to do is file his report as quickly and efficiently as possible then
go check on Nick.

He isn’t entirely sure what Renard plans on doing but from just looking in his eyes and hearing the
fear in his voice, Hank knows it isn’t good, dangerous even.

The being that he saw rise from the dead was not Nick. The evil he could feel emulating off the
being was like static in the air. The memory of it pinning him to the ground and raining blows
down on him with no emotion, spins in his mind like an insect trapped in a spider’s web.

Never again does he want to feel that kind of terror, specifically at the hands of the one man who
he had to trust to have his back every day on the job. He’s sure that he’ll never forget the cold
heartlessness he saw in its eyes nor the feeling of its flesh hitting his face with such brute force.

Hank knows that none of what happened is Nick’s fault, but realistically he knows that once Nick
is back and learns what happened, he would blame himself. As a result of this he would pull away
from them while his mind hammers itself with words of self-hate and reminders of fault concerning
the various injuries that Monroe, Rosalee, Renard and Hank had acquired. But no matter how
arduously they would assure Nick that none of it was his fault, he wouldn’t believe them; it was too
ingrained in his being from losing his parents at such a young age to have trouble seeing past all
the negatives in life. It’ll take a lot of effort to get through to Nick but he has no doubt that they’ll
do whatever it takes to convince him otherwise.

As much as it pains him to think it though, all of this is hypothetical. He doesn’t even know if
Renard will be able to save Nick. Their initial plan had failed so why should this one fare any
better? Especially given the fact that Renard is basically improvising at this point.

As he passes through the brush and out onto the road he can make out a familiar voice arguing with
someone nearby. Following the voice he’s more surprised than he should be to see Juliette
standing behind the yellow tape, her hands waving at her sides and front as she argues with the
uniformed officer to let her pass.

He hurries over to the pair and intervenes before the wild look in Juliette’s eyes comes out in
physical blows.

“I got this” he assures the officer as he turns to face a clearly upset Juliette.

The officer doesn’t immediately move and instead asks him if he’s sure.

“I’m sure. This is Detective Burkhardt’s girlfriend, Juliette Silverton, so yes, I assure you I can
handle this” he stares the officer down until the man finally relents and walks off, leaving Hank
standing in uncomfortable silence with Juliette. But the silence doesn’t last long for Juliette quickly
turns her panic on Hank.

“What’s going on Hank? I went to the station to see you but was told you were out here at a crime
scene. I asked him if you found Nick but he wouldn’t tell me anything! Did you find him? Is he
okay?” she rambles, her eyes changing from swirls of fury to mists of anxiety.

Hank steps under the tape and places comforting hands on her shaking shoulders as she does her
best to keep back the tears building in her eyes.

One of the most important things he had forgotten to do was call Juliette the moment they had
rescued Nick, but with everything going on he had completely forgotten. Now he’s paying for that
mistake.
“We did find him and he’s alive but until we know for sure if all his attackers are either dead or tracked down and arrested he’ll be staying in a safe house under police surveillance” he holds up his hand to silence her as she makes to respond.

“No I can’t tell you where he is or the number to reach him at. At this point he is under complete radio silence in case any of his attackers escaped and are listening in. I can tell you that he did sustain some injuries, nothing serious, and that as soon as this is over with I will take you to him” he promises, eternally grateful for his quick thinking but also damning it as well. When had it gotten to the point where he could whip out a lie at the drop of the hat? Probably around the time that Nick had pulled back the curtain and assured him that he wasn’t losing his mind.

All of the fight seems to gush out of her as her shoulders sag and her eyes focus on the ground. When the first tear falls it is quickly succeeded by a dozen more which quickly smear her makeup and redden her eyes and skin.

Hesitating only momentarily, Hank embraces her and after much debate starts to rub her back in soothing motions. His bruised body protests the movement and pressure but he concentrates through the pain.

“He’s going to be alright Juliette” he’s about to add ‘I promise’ at the end but he swallows those words. His promise would quickly become a lie if Renard failed in whatever he was attempting to do and the anguish he knew he would see in Juliette’s eyes as he told her that Nick was dead would certainly make him consider retiring from the force. Nick is not only his partner, but his best friend and without him there by his side he honestly doesn’t think that he would be able to ever trust another person to have his back. And not only that but it would just feel wrong to see someone else other than Nick sitting at the desk beside his or in the passenger seat of his car.

Juliette continues to cry in his arms for another few minutes before pulling back and doing her best to compose herself as she reaches into her purse and pulls out a tissue to shakily dab at her eyes and nose.

“Promise me you’ll take care of him, Hank? I need to know someone I trust will be there for him” she pleads, her voice a little hoarse from the crying.

Hank nods, “of course and I’m sorry about not calling you after we found him, so much was going on that…it slipped my mind.”

She gives him a teary smile and sniffs.

“It’s okay, I understand, really. Just get this done with as soon as possible so that he can come home.”

“I’ll do my best” he promises, because that’s all he can do at this point. Renard is the one who is really working on the potential way to save Nick. But Hank’ll play his role as the diversion until Renard completes whatever it is he’s working on.

Juliette pats him on the shoulder then turns and walks back to her parked car that is a few feet behind a police cruiser. He watches as she gets in her car then drives off and it isn’t until he can no longer see her vehicle that he moves to his own car.

Just as he is about to drive away his phone rings and he quickly answers upon seeing Monroe’s name flashing on the screen.

“How are you and Rosalee doing?” he immediately asks, recalling the state he had last seen them
“Rosalee has a slight concussion along with a few lacerations on her back and the back of her head. It’s a miracle considering the force she was likely thrown with into that tree. I on the other hand was lucky enough to only have one hell of a headache and the beginnings of a pretty impressive goose egg on my head. What about you? Last time I saw you, you had a pretty impressive amount of blood gushing from your nose” Monroe inquires from the other end.

“I’m fine, really. The blood was mainly coming from a gash on the bridge of my nose but that stopped a while ago and an EMT bandaged it up. The rest is really just a bunch of bruises that are going to ache for the next few weeks.” he answers, leaning back in his seat as he leaves the car in idle.

“Have you heard anything about Nick?” Monroe asks, the trepidation in his voice obvious even over the phone.

“Not yet, but I’m planning on dropping by the Spice Shop after I finish filing my report to see how much progress Renard has made” he answers, scratching at the dried blood that has stained the left sleeve of his jacket.

In the background Hank can hear Rosalee saying something to Monroe.

“I gotta go, our cab is here. We’re planning on going to the Spice Shop too so we’ll see you there” he states but before he can say goodbye and hang up Hank interrupts him.

“Are you sure that’s such a good idea? I mean, didn’t you just finish telling me that Rosalee has a concussion, shouldn’t she be taking it easy?” he questions, concerned that the woman may overexert her already fragile state.

“The doctor said the same thing but she’s insisting that she can rest at the Spice Shop where she can be the most productive” Monroe explains and judging by the weariness in his voice it is an argument that has been going on for a while now.

Knowing that there isn’t anything left to say, Hank bids him goodbye and Monroe does the same then they both hang up.

~GRIMM~

Adalind is standing beside Sean when she notices the cuts that are appearing on Nick’s skin and the trails of blood that weep down his neck.

Cursing she dashes upstairs then returns not more than a few seconds later with a towel but when she hurries back to Nick’s side she is stunned to find that the cuts have healed and only the drying blood remains. If it wasn’t for the blood that stains Nick’s collarbone she would think that she had merely been seeing things.

She sets the towel down and resumes her position beside the two unconscious men. She knows what the instantaneous healing means, it means that something (more than likely the Grimm) has attacked Nick and since the two share a body both had been affected. Only the Grimm currently has possession of Nick’s physical body and thus is able to heal itself while Nick on the other hand is left to suffer the mental equivalent of it which in itself was equally, if not more, life threatening. The body needs the mind to survive and without it, the body will follow in death as well only in this case, only Nick’s consciousness would die and the Grimm’s would live on.

Somehow, Sean is going to have to find a way to undo the damage that the Shedding Ritual has
done to the Grimm that lives inside of Nick but without killing it. If the Grimm were to die then Nick would not last long after, no matter how inconceivable it may seem, the two are linked and without the other life is not possible.

Nick had been born with the Grimm intertwined in his soul and even though those traits hadn’t been activated until Marie Kessler, his aunt, had died and Nick’s Grimm had been triggered, there was never a moment when the pair weren’t together. But there had always been a fine line between them, Nick’s soul, the human part, was always the dominant side, and the Grimm, the non-human (almost wesen in a way) was the submissive, always on the sidelines waiting to be called on. The Shedding had more than reversed those roles, Nick was now even less than the submissive side, he is a toy for the Grimm’s sick pleasure and the Grimm is leash less.

Adalind has her doubts that Sean will be able to save Nick but she hadn’t dared voice them to his face, that didn’t stop her however from making the confession to his unconscious body.

Locating an old wooden chair she sits down beside Sean and begins to speak.

“I know that you can’t hear me, which makes saying this all the more easier. Then again, the situation isn’t exactly ideal but I’ll take what I can get” she takes a breath and grabs hold of his nearest hand.

“Ever since the Grimm joined your precinct everything about you has changed. You used to be this unfeeling, control driven man who only cared about protecting this city and taking out anyone who would dare do it harm. But now you’re putting yourself in constant danger to protect the one man, a Grimm that by instinct alone should have driven you to run him out of the city or kill him, but you didn’t. You let him live and thrive, becoming stronger each day. I used to question your decision, pondered whether you had gone mad and if I shouldn’t call the Royal family to have you taken care of, but as you’ve probably guessed I didn’t. I guess in a way, the love I feel for you wouldn’t let me condemn you to such a brutal punishment that would likely result in your death” she quietly sniffs and wipes away an errant tear before she continues.

“From the moment I first laid eyes on you I felt this instant connection, like you were the missing piece of my soul. I used to dream of you wrapping me up in your strong arms and kissing your lips as we made love…but I know now, that that will never happen because you love the Grimm. Don’t get me wrong, I can see the attraction…” she looks over at the Grimm as she continues.

“He’s handsome, uniquely powerful and is destined for greatness. What more could you ask for in a mate? I want to hate him, I really do because why should the one being who should repulse you get everything that I wish I could have? But then I look into your eyes and I see a light in them that was never there before, a light that is filled with love and I know that he’s the reason for it.” She turns back to Sean and rubs the skin on his hand with her thumb.

“I know how badly you want to save him, but one of us has to be the realist and realize that his chances are not good. The Grimm inside of him is powerful and immoral and the lengths it will go to maintain the power it has been infused with is endless. You told me to kill the Grimm if you were to fail, well I must confess, if I sense at any point that you are dying I will pull you out and kill the Grimm. You will likely hate me, kill me even for forcing you to live in a world without him, but I will die with the only regret that I didn’t have the courage to tell you that I love you when you were capable of speaking back” leaning forward she kisses his unmoving lips and lingers for a moment before prying her lips away. With only a breath separating them she speaks once more.

“I love you Sean and I truly do hope that you can save him.”
Sean’s legs are screaming at him as he forces himself to take another step, making sure that his grip on Nick never wavers and that the younger man is still conscious. It wouldn’t be beneficial at all if he were to pass out now, especially not with that monstrous tentacle prowling beneath the sand, and having dead weight dragging him down would doom them both.

They have been walking now for what he guesses to be more than a few miles and the scenery hadn’t changed at all, just miles and miles of sand, when he sees it. A black door with a red handle. Hope similar to when he had found Nick energizes him as he increases his hold on Nick and quickens his pace as he jogs towards the door. He encourages Nick to keep moving and thankfully he listens as they arrive at the door in under two minutes.

With Nick still leaning into his side Sean wraps his hand around the handle but when he tries to turn the handle it doesn’t budge. A knife twists in the pit of his stomach as he frantically rattles the handle, subconsciously knowing that it won’t help but doing it regardless for the next minute before dropping his hand and stepping back.

“Shit! Nick I’m going to have to set you down for a bit” he receives a soft ‘okay’ then he carefully helps Nick slide down the wall until he is sitting on the black sand.

He is more than concerned that Nick has only been giving him one-word responses but he knows he has to put that concern aside until he gets them back into reality.

His hands now free, Sean positions himself in front of the door then takes a step back. It only takes him a moment to woge into his Zauberbiest form and with the enhanced strength flowing through him he tenses his muscles and rams his shoulder into the door.

His body vibrates from the impact as he stumbles back a few steps, the door remaining stubbornly closed which surprises Sean seeing as it usually doesn’t require a lot of effort on his part to open a door like this. He mentally notes however that the rules are different in here.

Bracing his body once more, Sean applies more force with his entire left side and this time he is pleased to hear and feel the cracking of wood against his side. He backs away from the door again and rams his body into the door once and he continues this ritual until the door finally caves in and with the momentum his body was moving at he ends up barreling through the cracked opening.

Much like his first trip through the mysterious door, he lands face first on the other side, only this time instead of black sand coating the floor he’s nose to nose with a blinding white floor that makes him squint in pain. He pushes himself up and feels his face return to human form as he shakes the stars from his vision and turns around to be met with a solid white wall, a wall where the door once stood.

His body numbly moves forward as he pleadingly chants out no, begging for the door to return. He presses his hands against the wall, his nails digging into the solid matter as if he could just scratch deep enough he could unearth the door. The sound his blunt nails make as they screech down the wall resemble rain pattering on the sidewalk but the usual soothing sound does nothing to soothe his rattled emotions, in fact the sound doesn’t even register to him.

Gripping his hands into fists a growl reverberates from his chest until drawing out into a full on roar as he pounds his fists into the wall. His Zauberbiest explodes to the surface as his roar echoes around him, interrupted only momentarily by desperate calls of Nick’s name. It doesn’t take long for his skin to break and blood to weep to the surface which is left behind in long streaks across the
wall and drops on the floor.

Eventually it isn’t the thrumming pain that forces him to stop but rather the emotional exhaustion that slams into him like a freight train. He crumbles to his knees and gasps in air, his swelling and bleeding hands twitching at his sides like the attraction between two magnets. The sweat that has been building on his brow drops in rivulets to the ground as his head cranes down at the floor, his eyes following the growing drops of blood at his sides.

“Nick….” Not expecting an answer, he is completely thrown off guard by the hoarse but still clear as day response he receives.

“Sean, help me.”

Not daring to believe he slowly raises his head and his eyes widens when he lays eyes on Nick standing not three feet from him. His skin is shockingly pale and blood continues to weep through the makeshift bandage around his throat.

He jumps to his feet and dashes towards him but when he reaches Nick and attempts to wrap his arms around the younger man he is stopped by the clear wall that separates them. Unwilling to accept this Sean violently and desperately punches and kicks the wall until his body is vibrating with pain. But for all his effort not even a small crack appears in the wall.

Nick just gives him a sympathetic look as Sean rests his hand against the wall, his chest heaving with each breath he forces in and out.

Catching his breath Sean speaks. “How did you get over here?” as soon as he asks he knows it’s a stupid question. With the way Nick’s mind is currently set up and the added spell Nick magically appearing behind a glass wall should be the least shocking event to occur thus far.

Nick opens his mouth to answer but stops when his eyes widen and his body practically vibrates with fear as he looks at something over Sean’s shoulder.

The hairs on the back of his neck rise as he cautiously turns around and is met with the emotionless gray eyes of the Grimm.

~GRIMM~

Hank enters the Spice Shop using the spare key that Monroe had told him about and makes sure to close and lock the door behind him. It is eerily quiet in the store and he can’t help the sense of foreboding that slithers through him. Going by a Cop’s mentality he releases his gun from the holster on his belt and takes off the safety as he cautiously stakes out the room, his eyes looking for the slightest bit of movement.

When he clears each room upstairs he moves on to the doorway that he guesses leads down to the basement. He has never been down there which puts him at a disadvantage if there is anyone waiting to strike but he’ll keep his senses on high alert.

Pushing the door open, he finds that the light is already on and he winces when his first step groans so loudly that he’s sure it could wake the dead. He stands in place as he listens to the approaching footsteps which sound suspiciously like high heels…

His eyebrows nearly fly to the ceiling when Adalind Schade walks around the corner and stops in front of the stairs to look up at him.

“Hello Detective Griffin, it’s been awhile” she greets, an infuriatingly sly half smile on her face.
The hate he holds for this woman fuels his movements as he aims the weapon at her and pointedly rests his finger against the trigger. The only thing holding him back from firing is his need for answers.

“What are you doing here and where is Captain Renard?” he doesn’t dare mention Nick in case she isn’t aware of the vulnerable state he is currently in.

She sighs exasperatedly and halfheartedly raises her hands in the air.

“Sean called me to help with the Grimm” she states, her voice hardening at the mere mention of the being that has hunted her kind for centuries.

Hank slowly descends the stairs as he replies.

“Why would you possibly want to help Nick? As I seem to recall the two of you aren’t exactly friends” he finally reaches the bottom and Adalind, with her hands still raised takes a step away from him.

A dark chuckle escapes her lips as she shakes her head.

“Oh believe me, I am all too aware of the history the Grimm and I share but I’m not here for him, I’m here for Sean. You may not believe this, but I do have feelings and I do care about Sean. He needed me so I came, granted he didn’t tell me that the Grimm would be involved which would have greatly affected my decision to come, but regardless here I am helping him. Now, would you mind lowering that weapon? We both know you won’t use it” she flippantly adds at the end.

He keeps the gun aimed at her for another moment before internally growling and putting the safety back on then holstering the weapon.

She lowers her arms and flexes her hands at her side to circulate the blood back into them.

Hank looks around the room and his eyes zoom in on his unconscious partner and Captain in a corner of the room. His feet lead him over to the pair and his eyes take in their conditions. He can see dried blood spattered around Nick's neck and collarbone but there is no sign of the injury or injuries that caused the bloodshed while Renard has gauze wrapped around his hands that are slightly bloodstained. Apart from that, there doesn’t seem to be anything physically wrong with them but he’s sure that just because he can’t see any injuries doesn’t mean that something isn’t wrong.

The clicking of her heels is what alerts Hank to her approach and he waits until the steps stop behind him to turn around and address her.

“What’s going on here?” he questions, unable to come up with any explanation on his own.

She rests her hand on his shoulder and looks down at the unconscious pair.

“The suicidal measures of a man in love” she says so quietly that Hank has to strain to hear her but he believes that her words aren’t necessarily for him.

“What? Look, I’m not in the mood for riddles or whatever shit you’re trying to pull. Just tell me what is going on here?” he restates, his eyes drilling holes into the side of her face.

She looks away from Renard and looks at Hank, unfazed by the steel she can see in his eyes.

“Essentially, Sean has entered Nick’s mind in order to free him from the prison that the Grimm has
imprisoned Nick in. However, due to the circumstances Sean has greatly heightened the risks involved in this type of spell and now both of their lives are on the line” she finishes, summing up what has transpired since her arrival.

Hank has to take a moment to digest what she has just told him and when he has fully grasped her words he continues his interrogation.

“And what exactly is your job here? To babysit?” he questions, feeling that she isn’t telling him everything.

She gives him a stony look that puts him on edge, his suspicions of her withholding something growing stronger the longer his question goes unanswered. He knows that if Sean had only needed someone to watch over them he could have just called Hank who would have gladly rushed down here from the crime scene. No, she’s here for another reason and he intends to find out what that purpose is even though his gut tells him that he isn’t going to like the answer.

“If Sean fails and the Grimm destroys every trace of Nick then I’ve been instructed to kill the Grimm before it can go on a killing spree” she states point blank, knowing that it’s wiser to get straight to the point then droning on, especially concerning the hot temper Hank is known to have.

Hank stares at her in shock, unwilling to believe the words that have left her mouth. He can feel his mouth opening and closing but he can’t come up with a single sentence to express the utter disbelief he’s experiencing.

“This is only a last resort, believe me I am actually hoping that Sean succeeds because at least with a sane Grimm the wesen and humans of Portland won’t have to worry about a psychotic Grimm murdering them and drenching the city in blood. But unfortunately that chance is extremely low and Sean needed someone who he knows will be able to kill the Grimm without emotions getting in the way” she reasons, seeing that her words have deeply shaken the Detective.

“You’re talking about murdering my partner!” he rants, his words coming out in a ragged shout.

She actually rolls her eyes at his rather dramatic explosion but her retort is anything but flippant.

“It wouldn’t be your partner anymore, okay? Nick would already be dead and the thing riding his body would be a monster whose only goal in existence is shedding blood and causing fear!”

Moving on pure rage he whips his gun back out of his holster and fluidly flips the safety off as he takes a step forward and presses the muzzle into the center of her forehead.

“You’ve just been waiting for an excuse to kill him and now that one has practically landed in your lap you can’t wait to execute him! Admit it, even if Renard hadn’t of given you the go ahead you would have done it anyway” he digs the muzzle into her skin but with her pain but she has the pain tolerance to not even flinch at the pressure.

She looks up into his eyes, her eyes maintaining a calmness that Hank is eons away from feeling himself.

“I won’t even waste a breath trying to tell you otherwise but believe me, this isn’t the way I imagined killing him. Besides, even if I had tried before all this I would be facing some major obstacles that are more grueling than is worth the effort. But go ahead, shoot me, you’ll be doing us both a favor” she finishes, her voice as hard as steel.

The pair stand in tense silence as Hank continues to press the gun into her head and she maintains her emotionless expression.
The groaning of the floorboards is the slap that pushes them out of the silence and Hank’s head whips towards the sound, the gun staying in place as he lays eyes on Monroe and Rosalee as the couple freeze in surprise at the scene they’ve just stumbled upon.

Adalind’s presence doesn’t go unnoticed by the couple and they can definitely not help the fact that their gazes linger on the gun in Hank’s hand that is digging into her skin. Not to mention the unconscious forms of Captain Renard and Nick who have a scary resemblance to corpses.

“Um, not to interrupt but…what the hell is going on!?!” Monroe nearly shouts.

Chapter End Notes

If you liked this please leave a kudos or if you have also liked it and have the time please leave a comment, I really appreciate hearing from you guys.
Monroe pointedly places Rosalee behind him while taking a few cautious steps towards the pair, his eyes traveling between the cocked gun in Hank’s hand and the stony face of Adalind.

The stench of rage is overwhelming and almost brings tears to his eyes from the assault his sensitive noise is taking.

“Hank, I can understand wanting to punish Adalind for what she did to you, but you’re a police officer okay? You can’t kill her!” Monroe tries to reason, his gaze completely focused on Hank as he comes to a stop a few steps away from the pair.

Adalind rolls her eyes.

“She’s going to kill Nick” Hank states, his voice biting with rage. Monroe’s eyes widen and he turns on Adalind, his eyes hardening. From behind him Rosalee, while still suffering from a mild concussion, has heard Hank’s words and is also preparing to take down Adalind.

“No one is killing anyone, at least not yet. Sean instructed me to watch over Nick and him while he tries to bring Nick back. But he made me promise that if he failed I would kill the Grimm.”

“Is that true Hank?” Monroe asks, his distrustful gaze still on Adalind.

Rosalee cautiously steps around the showdown and examines Renard and Nick’s conditions. Her head is still a little cloudy from the concussion so she sits down on the stool.

“We’re going on her word here and we can all agree that our track record with her is nothing but negative” Hank responds, adjusting his sweaty grip on his gun.

Adalind laughs bitterly.

“I’ve helped your dear Grimm more often than you know. How do you think it is that Nick’s
managed to avoid lawsuits for the countless damage he’s caused wesen and Kehrseite’s properties? Or who handles all the wesen cases that you guys solve? A ‘normal’ lawyer would be buried beneath all the fabricated statements and such that Nick and you come up with.” She states with a smug look on her face.

The fire that had been in Monroe’s eyes has lost some of its heat and he steps out of his fighting stance.

“Why would you do that?” Monroe asks, genuinely curious about her motives.

Adalind looks at Monroe, her eyes have softened slightly.

“How do you think it’s possible that Sean is able to maintain his rule in Portland? It’s because he has what you could call employees under his command. For every influential source of authority in this city like the fire department, hospitals and courthouses you can guarantee that at least two or more people employed there are at Sean’s beck and call” she elaborates, feeling a tinge of relief at the belief she sees in Monroe.

“I always wondered how he did it” Monroe voices, his voice almost awe-filled.

Hank however is not awed and instead twists the muzzle of the gun deeper into her skin.

She re-averts her gaze to Hank and her expression hardens into a cold stare.

“So basically all you are is a lackey working under the king of Portland and that’s supposed to make me feel better?” Hank growls.

Adalind glares in response.

“At least I’ve never pissed myself in public like a little bitch” she taunts, smiling cruelly at him.

Hank actually growls and for a brief moment Monroe almost expects him to woge into a fellow blutbad. He pushes himself out of that thought when he sees Hank’s finger start to squeeze down on the trigger.

Rushing forward, Monroe grabs hold of Hank’s gun hand and uses the rest of his body to force Hank back into a wall.

Hank spews insult after colorful insult at Adalind in-between demands that Monroe let him go so he can put a bullet in the “hexenbitch’s head.”

Monroe’s restraint only increases.

Adalind watches in silent amusement as the Detective struggles futilely in the blutbad’s restraint.

“Hank, you need to calm down, okay? I’m not asking for you two to become BFFs but myself and I’m sure Rosalee would greatly appreciate it if there wasn’t any bloodshed or murders occurring in the Spice Shop tonight. So, all I’m asking is that you put your gun away, stop with the insults and just…tolerate each other, at least for tonight.”

Hank and Adalind silently watch each other, both of their expressions as clear as stone. Monroe’s eyes goes back and forth between the pair, while he maintains a strong hold on Hank whose chest is pressed so close to Monroe’s chest that one would think that Monroe was trying to hug the man to death. If that person were to overlook the gun in said Detective’s hand, of course.
Adalind breaks the tension first. She fixes her mused up hair, smooths down the wrinkles in her blouse and skirt, school’s her features into one of calmness but determination and takes a few steps towards Monroe and Hank. She keeps a step of distance between them when she comes to a complete stop.

“I’m willing to put aside our ‘differences’ for the sake of Sean…and Nick, at least for tonight” it doesn’t escape anyone’s notice her struggle to say Nick’s name. But no one comments on it, not even Hank.

Hank remains silent for several moments, his cold expression wavering between hatred and blankness before melting into a strange combination that leaves identifying his emotions possible but difficult.

“Fine, but let’s just get something clear: After this is all over, know that I have a bullet waiting with your name on it if you ever come near me again or hurt anyone I care about” he states, his hatred for the woman coating the underbelly of his words like the flames of hell licking at the heels of a sinner.

“It’s a deal.”

After a moment passes Monroe cautiously releases his hold on Hank and steps to the side, his senses still tracking Hank and Adalind for any signs that the pair are going to attack each other.

Hank slowly lowers his hand with the gun and pointedly puts the safety back on and sticks it in his holster.

Monroe smiles nervously and claps his hands together, as if trying to expel the thick cloud of tension that has descended upon the basement.

“Great! Now that we’ve settled that how about we concentrate on Nick and Captain Renard?” Monroe steps around Adalind and walks over to Rosalee who is quietly watching over the unconscious forms of Nick and Sean.

Adalind and Hank soon join them and stand at an arm’s length apart.

“How long have they been like this?” Rosalee asks, her slightly dilated eyes having trouble focusing on Adalind.

Adalind steps towards Rosalee and answers.

“Sean went into Nick’s mind about an hour ago. At one point Nick started to bleed around his neck but I turned my back for a second to get a towel but when I looked again the wounds had healed…the physical ones at least” she corrected, looking over at Nick.

Rosalee starts to shake her head but stops when the room starts to spin. Monroe, seeing that she is close to passing out puts a hand on her shoulder to steady her.

“Maybe I should take you upstairs so you can sit down someplace more comfy” Monroe suggests, hating to see her this way.

Rosalee rests her hand over Monroe’s and gives it a gentle squeeze. She smiles.

“It’s better if I’m down here that way I can help care for Nick and Renard. But I would really love it if you could make me up some Schizandra smelling salt? There should already be a bag of dried up ones in the kitchen area and all you have to do is follow the recipe.” Rosalee asks, doing her
best to look up at Monroe.

Monroe frowns and looks between Hank and Adalind, indecision over whether or not he could trust Hank and Adalind to keep their words about getting along. He didn’t want to go upstairs and have a fight break out especially if Rosalee wasn’t able to properly defend herself.

As if sensing his fears Adalind speaks.

“Go ahead Monroe, I promise that Hank and I will be on our best behaviors” she gives him a reassuring smile.

Indecision continues to war across Monroe’s face before Rosalee gives his hand another reassuring squeeze. Monroe seems to have come to a decision when he gives Hank and Adalind a warning look before turning his back on them and walks back up the stairs.

“Is there anything you can do for them Rosalee?” Hank asks, the gaze he throws at Rosalee one of complete hope.

Rosalee gives his gaze an answering frown.

“I’m afraid all we can do is watch over them and pray that Renard can save Nick” she answers.

~GRIMM~

Sean takes a few guarded steps towards the Grimm. From behind him he can hear Nick’s muffled urges to get away from it but Nick’s warnings go unheeded.

“I won’t let you have him” he states, coming to a stop.

The Grimm looks at him with its emotionless gray eyes and remains silent.

Before Sean can properly react the Grimm lashes out and wraps its hand around his neck. It lifts Sean a good foot from the ground and stares up at Sean as he grapples at the Grimm’s hand. His legs kick out beneath him, desperately trying to get some purchase but failing miserably.

As the Grimm’s unnatural strength exerts itself over Sean his skin darkens to match a ripe tomato and his struggles begin to weaken.

~GRIMM~

Renard’s body thrashes on the chair but his hand somehow manages to stay attached to Nick’s and his face darkens to a sunburned red.

In a desperate bid to stop Renard from hurting himself, Hank and Adalind desperately try to keep him in place but only manage to give themselves bruises.

Rosalee stands a safe distance away, feeling completely useless since in her condition she would be more of a hindrance than a help.

“What the hell’s happening to him?” Hank asks Rosalee, his hands struggle to remain on the Captain’s thrashing body and succeeds more in collecting bruises than restraining Renard.

Rosalee shrugs helplessly and continues to watch as the Captain’s body flaps around like a fish out of water.

Monroe comes tromping down the stairs with a corked vial of Schizandra smelling salt in hand and
a wild look in his eyes at the chaos happening in front of him.

“What’s going on down here?” Monroe asks, going to Rosalee’s side and instinctively checking her over before watching the erratic movements of Renard.

“I don’t know. I think a safe bet would be that Renard’s being attacked by something in Nick’s mind” Rosalee answers as she rests her head against Monroe’s shoulder, her energy level continuing to go down.

Monroe notices Rosalee’s increasing fatigue and quickly uncorks the vial and holds it under her nose. Almost immediately Rosalee’s posture straightens and her eyes widen in alertness.

Renard’s erratic movements drastically decrease and his lips have started to turn a noticeable shade of blue.

Adalind leans over and checks Renard’s pulse, her fingers move along his carotid artery, desperately tracking the faint beat beneath her fingers.

“I can barely get a pulse” she reports, the stress and fear evident in her voice.

Rosalee eyes the vial in Monroe’s hand and snatches it out of his hand before speeding over to Renard’s form. She waves the vial under his nose and hopes that somehow her efforts at giving Renard a punch of energy will help him.

~GRIMM~

Sean’s vision is quickly becoming as foggy as pond water polluted with trash and the noise around him is muffled snow on the television screen.

Just as his eyes begin to close his senses are sent into overdrive after a woody scent catapults up his sinuses. His eyes shoot open and as if all the energy that had been stripped from him was shocked back into him he finds the strength to raise a hand and pry the Grimm’s hand off of his neck.

Before the Grimm can recalculate a new plan of attack Sean kicks out its legs and slams the soles of his feet into the Grimm’s chest. The Grimm flies backward and collapses to the ground for nearly a second before getting to its feet and charging at Sean.

Sean barely has time to catch his breath before he is under siege by the Grimm’s fists and kicks that are aimed at the most sensitive parts of his body. Sean luckily manages to block most of the hits but the few that do get past rattle a good portion of the bones in his body.

As soon as he sees an opportunity to strike back Sean woges into his Zauberbiest form and lunges at the Grimm, his chest rumbles with the roar that rips out from deep within his soul.

He lets loose like a rabid lion on the Grimm. His fists and kicks are nothing more than distorted colors as he wails on the Grimm’s emotionless face and rigid body.

However, each time one of Sean’s hits manages to cause blood to leak out, the wound immediately sews itself shut.

Sean’s attack only lasts for a few minutes before the Grimm regains the upper hand and kicks Sean off of him. Sean flies a good few feet in the air before making contact with the ground.

The Grimm quickly erupts itself and is immediately back to attacking Sean who doesn’t even have
time to prepare himself for the attack.

~Break~

Only a few steps away Nick can do nothing but watch the attack. Ever since the attack started he has been frantically pounding at the invisible wall, praying for a sign that his efforts at breaking the wall down has not been in vain. His fears explode when he sees the rapidly bloody state that Sean has descended into.

If Sean’s wounded state wasn’t enough to cause concern it becomes abundantly clear that the older man is sputtering on fumes when a brain rattling punch from the Grimm causes Sean to drop out of his Zauberbiest form.

~Break~

Blood is smeared around Sean like an outline of a body at a crime scene and his limbs can do little more than sway in the air like dead leaves in the fall.

As the Grimm lays into him, Sean finds himself, for the first time ever, terrified of the deep pools of gray that he usually wants to drown himself in. The eyes he looks up at now are filled with nothing but emptiness from the lack of a soul.

A vessel that’s sole purpose is to kill.

His heart argues that the being above him is not Nick but his mind fires back that this is Nick in his truest form.

A killer.

A monster.

A heartless entity.

He doesn’t want to give in. He wants-no needs to save Nick! But his strength is practically nonexistent and what little he does have is being used to keep his eyes slit open. With each hit Sean can feel his body shutting down, both his mental and physical one, and he knows that he is going to die.

At least he can die knowing that he did everything he could to save the man he loves.

With this in mind he lets his eyes close and hands himself over to the Moirai to cut the thread that makes up his life.

~Break~

Nick doesn’t know how but he can sense that Sean is giving up and in response to this a volcanic eruption of fear and rage bursts within him. His body produces a staggering amount of strength that sings through his veins like oxygen on speed.

He sheds the meek, helpless fog that had been choked down his throat the moment he had awoken in this place and dons the persona of a blood thirsty Grimm.

His fisted hands pound into the invisible wall with a loud clang that makes the entire wall vibrate. He continues to slam his fists into the wall and carries on his attack as a spider web of a crack manifests itself in the wall. Drawing his cracked and bleeding fist back Nick delivers a final blow.
and the wall shatters completely.

Moving quickly, before the wall can magically repair itself, Nick shoots into the room and jumps onto the back of the Grimm.

Nick violently punches every area of skin he can reach while applying a death grip to the collar of the Grimm’s shirt as it attempts to rip him off its back.

Relying purely on long ago instincts that humans had long since evolved away from Nick bares his teeth and bites down into the Grimm’s neck.

The Grimm lets out a roar that sounds like a mix between a panther and a lion as it savagely grips Nick’s hair and flips him back first onto the hard ground.

Nick’s entire body feels like it’s been set ablaze and his lungs have filled with smoke as his blood stained mouth coughs up what feels like a lung. He struggles to raise himself up on shaky arms and legs that are more wet noodles than human appendages.

Before he can get back on his feet the Grimm kicks him in the ribs with such force that it causes Nick’s body to do a complete flip in the air then land back on his stomach.

~GRIMM~

Blood runs in rivulets from Renard’s nose and rapidly growing patches of blood bloom all over Renard’s body. His body thrashes around as though he is being executed by a line of machine guns and his expression stays frozen in utter agony.

Adalind and Rosalee do their best to tend to the escalating amount of wounds that Renard is acquiring but their efforts are as effective as pailing water with a strainer. Meanwhile, Hank and Monroe do their best to prevent Renard from toppling over and injuring himself further.

“I don’t understand how he hasn’t succumbed to blood loss yet” Rosalee states, her fluttering hands stained with blood along with spots drying on her clothes as she applies pressure to Renard’s bleeding nose.

Rosalee had never come across a Zauberbiest before, mainly because it was rare that the powers of a Hexenbiest would safely pass on to a male without killing the offspring while it is still in the embryonic period. And so, she was not as familiar with their makeup and abilities as other types of wesen, she was hoping though that Adalind could offer some answers.

Adalind, her hands dripping with blood, answers the panicked Fuchsbau’s question without taking her own fear filled eyes off of the convulsing Captain.

“Part of it is because of his natural resilience as a Zauberbiest but it’s also because of the alteration Sean made to the original spell. When Sean entered Nick’s mind their bodies basically became an electric conductor between each other, only in this case the vast majority of energy is coming from Sean and barely any is transferring to him; Making it so that Sean’s only getting just enough extra ‘power’ to not already be dead. I can assure you though that he’s not going to last much longer, and neither will Nick.”

“But what can we do? There has to be something!” Rosalee demands, her once concussed eyes filled with fright at the prospect of her dear friend Nick dying but Captain Renard as well. She still doesn’t know the man very well but she can see the goodness that was kept under lock and key, but she had been given a glimpse of it as he helped them save Nick from the Clan of Endeizechen Grimm.
Adalind finally looks up and Rosalee’s gut churns with anxiety and dread at the resolved but still determined look on the other woman’s face. A force was building up within the hexenbiest, her emotions flashing in her eyes at the speed of a hand crank film projector, each emotion shuttering by at the speed of a turning page in a person’s favorite book.

The air seems to crackle with the electricity in the air and time was creaking to a standstill like an old record slowly wobbling to a slow after the last song has ended.

Adalind’s voice is strong as steel as she stares directly into Rosalee’s eyes, her focus never wavering.

“I won’t lose him.”

Like a gunshot Adalind raises her hand and using telekinesis pins Rosalee to the wall behind her, it is only by a miracle that Rosalee manages to keep her already sore head from hitting the wall with her.

Monroe woges and roars in rage before attempting to lunge at Adalind but he too finds himself pinned to the wall beside Rosalee leaving only Hank who has since taken his gun back out of his holster and is aiming it directly at Adalind.

“I knew you were nothing more than a backstabbing bitch” his finger presses down on the trigger but Adalind raises her hand once more and forces his hand holding the gun to fire the bullet into the ceiling.

Bits and chunks of wood rain down on Hank and before he can react Adalind flicks her wrist and the gun clatters across the room.

In a split second, Adalind viciously shoves her hand forward and causes Hank to tumble across the floor and collide with a bookcase that promptly collapses on top of him, concealing him from view and ultimately knocking him out.

“Hank!” Rosalee shouts, while beside her Monroe returns to his human state and struggles to move.

Adalind returns to Sean’s side, his erratic movements have died down to chaotic twitches now indicating that his body was on the verge of shutting down completely. She lovingly caresses Sean’s bruising cheek, her bloody finger leaving behind a fan of blood that is vividly stark in comparison to his current unnaturally pale skin.

“We tried it your way Sean, but now it’s my turn. I hope someday, maybe you can forgive me” she removes her hand and stalks over to Nick who has remained motionless the entire time. The only indication that his body is under any sign of duress is the random moments where his body will twitch.

Having overheard her Rosalee begins to plead with her.

“Adalind, you don’t have to do this. There has to be another way to save them, both of them!”

Adalind shakes her head, refusing to look at Rosalee as she focuses all her attention on the Grimm.

“There isn’t, the only way this ends is with one of them or both of them dead. No one wins here today.”

She finally looks up and Rosalee is only a little surprised at the tears she sees filling the
hexenbiest’s eyes and a sad smile cracking her features.

“I’m sorry.” Her voice cracks as tears slowly descend down her cheeks, racing to the finish line located at her chin before dropping onto the floor and quickly being absorbed into the wooden floorboards. Like the tears had never even existed and were only a figment of her imagination.

Her hand trembles with warring emotions as she places it on the Grimm’s chest, directly over his heart. She closes her eyes and starts to chant a chain of words that cling to the molecules of the air and flutter out of earshot.

As she chants her hand starts to glow and a smoky cloud that moves like tentacles in the air rises up from beneath her hand.

The Grimm’s body begins to shake.

Hank, Rosalee and Monroe’s pleas for her to stop fade into the background.

~GRIMM~

The Grimm stalks over to Nick and bends down and grips the roots of Nick’s hair. It pulls his head back until Nick’s neck feels like it’s going to snap in half. The position makes it nearly impossible to breathe and all his attempts to free himself only result in further pain.

Suddenly Nick finds himself free and groaning in both pain and relief as air finally manages to chug its way through his airways and into his lungs.

He looks behind him and is amazed to see a bloody and beaten Sean viciously attacking the unaffected Grimm who hasn’t even broken a sweat.

Nick pushes himself up off the floor but as soon as he’s standing the world starts to tilt and with it his body causing him to collapse back to the floor and his aching body to yell at him for being an idiot and causing more shocks of pain to his overshot system.

His head rests on its side and he can only watch as Sean receives another brutal punch across the face that leaves the older man struggling to stand before he is ultimately grounded by an uppercut to the chin.

Nick can hear Sean’s groans of pain as the Grimm towers over him, staring down at him once more with its cold gray eyes. Only this time, Nick doesn’t have the strength to come to his rescue.

The Grimm raises its foot and presses down on Sean’s windpipe. Sean weakly grabs onto its foot and tries to push it off but has no success.

Just as Sean is sure his windpipe is going to shatter the Grimm’s whole body shutters, like a picture that was taken in the moment of intense action. It steps off of Sean and not wanting to give the Grimm another chance to attack Sean scoots himself away from the Grimm until his back is against the wall.

The Grimm’s whole body continues to shutter as it curiously examines itself, its vacant eyes raking across its form as if it is studying an entire new species. Around its form smoke the color of oil fans off of it as if its body is engulfed in invisible flames.

A scream of pure, unbridled agony echoes through the room and burrows deep into Sean’s soul.

His head turns instinctively towards Nick and what he sees causes a vine of razorblades to sprout in
and around his heart, the blades puncturing the fragile organ and causing it to bleed as the vine squeezes.

Nick’s form shutters and smokes as he lays on the floor, his face contorted as he screams and pleads for the pain to stop.

His pleas are not answered and instead intensify when it feels as if Nick’s body is being burned from the inside out.

Sean knows this spell, intimately in fact. Having been on the receiving end when he had angered a group of Hexenbeists who took exception to some of his ‘rules’ concerning human sacrifices for dark spells.

It was an undoing spell and the most painful one at that. The only reason he had managed to survive was because of Adalind…Adalind!

His eyes narrow as he realizes that Adalind has defied his orders of waiting until his death to enact this type of action.

He is loath to leave Nick here, especially with the Grimm, but there is nothing he can do for him here.

The black smoke has started to completely both Nick and the Grimm’s bodies, the tendrils pooling to the floor like a cloak of death.

With the image of Nick’s anguished expression Sean rests head against the wall and whispers “meque his exsolvite.”

~Break~

It feels like his body is being caressed by a brisk wind as his mind is pulled from Nick’s mind and planted back in his own body. But like a mattress with a broken spring, his body and therefore mind do not feel like comfort but instead like the remnants of a car crash victim.

His eyes snap open and immediately zero in on Adalind who has yet to notice his return.

Fire flames to life in his irises as he rises form the chair, his beaten body registering little more than a twinge of pain at his movements as he moves to Adalind and rips her hand away from Nick’s body.

Adalind’s words are halted with a strangled gasp as she looks into the murderous eyes of Sean who glowers down at her like she is the harbinger of all his hatred. The glow of her hand fades away and the smoke filters out of existence.

With her full attention now on Sean her psychic restraint on Hank, Rosalee and Monroe fall to the ground but quickly right themselves and surround Adalind and Sean. Hank, who has slowly come back to consciousness, digs himself out from under the debris and limps over to join Monroe and Rosalee.

Adalind nor Sean pay the glaring faces any mind. Right now, the trio are not important.

Even with Sean’s hateful look Adalind can’t help the smile of relief that breaks out on her face.

“Sean” she breathes, the words exhaling from her lips as if she has finally taken a drink of water after days of wandering through a vast desert.
Sean’s glare never breaks as his grip on her wrist increases. Adalind gasps in pain and her body instinctively leans into her wrist as a measure to alleviate the pain. This of course doesn’t work, especially when Sean gives her wrist a wicked jerk that grinds the bones together.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Sean hisses, his face only inches from her own.

Adalind boldly meets his glare with a determination that spoke of the feelings she held for the man.

“Saving your life.” She states, not an ounce of regret or fear drips off her words.

Sean’s grip hardens until the sharp crack of her wrist breaking punctures the air. Adalind cries out and cradles the rapidly swelling and appendage to her wrist after it is roughly released by Sean.

Anger rages like toxin through his blood as he turns his back on the shaking Hexenbeist and gives his full attention to Nick’s body.

His eyes take in the sickly pale form and his hand moves of its own accord to grasp one of Nick’s. It’s frighteningly cold but yet Sean can still sense the lively warmth that flickers beneath, struggling to break through the block of ice that cages it.

“Sean…” he stiffens at Adalind’s voice but doesn’t turn around, certain that if he did it would end with her choking to death on her own blood.

“Leave.” he breathes, his voice barely discernable in the tense air.

Adalind stands behind him in silence, her breaths still a little ragged from the vibrations of pain that travel up and down her arm. Her uninjured hand twitches at her side, tempted to reach out and touch the man that is the epicenter of a twister of rage.

She doesn’t move.

Sensing her presence still, Sean woges and turns on her. With a gravely roar he aggressively pushes her towards the stairs. With his emotions fueling his strength the push causes Adalind to skid across the floor until she finally comes to a stop after her back hits the banister.

Tears fall from her already red eyes as she looks desperately at the man that she loves with her entire being. His rejection of her presence but more importantly the love she wishes to shower him with feeling like a funnel of ice directly into her heart.

“I couldn’t watch you die Sean, especially not if there was something that I could do to save your life” she takes a few steps forward, unperturbed by the growling that rumbles forth from Sean.

Her voice quivers with emotion as tears continue to fall down her reddening cheeks.

“You can’t save him Sean. He died the moment his Grimm side took over. This was never going to end the way you wanted it to. Nick isn’t going to wake up and be the Detective or the Grimm that you took under your wing.” She stops in front of him and tries to follow his gaze as he turns his head away from her.

He jerks out of her reach when she suddenly tries to cup his cheeks and force him to look at her. She drops her hands and watches as Sean goes back to holding Nick’s hand.

Unable to stop her heart from connecting with her mind she continues, even though she knows that her next few words put her in risk of being beaten to death.
She comes up behind Sean and watches as he rubs at Nick’s hand with his thumb.

“He may not have realized the gift you are offering him, but I do Sean. I’ve always longed for you to finally realize what has been in front of you this entire time, the love that I can show you if you just give me a chance.”

She reaches out and places her hand on his back. She can feel his skin practically rippling beneath the fabric of his shirt.

“I love you Sean.” She whispers, her hand roaming over his back as if she is wiping away the dust of a dead romance off his shoulders.

As she goes to wrap her arms around him Sean turns to face her, effectively putting an end to her petting and pushes her away from him. There is not nearly as much force behind this assault as the last but it succeeds in putting distance between the pair.

He takes a shaky breath.

“Go home Adalind…” he shakes his head as he slowly turns back to Nick.

“Just go home.”

Adalind stares at him in silence. Her expression is wrecked with sorrow and pain at the dismissal she is being shown. At the clear rejection of her heart on a silver platter.

Even in what is sure to be death, the Grimm…Nick has still won. And what makes the loss even more painful is that Nick wasn’t even aware there was ever a battle for the love of the Ruler of Portland going on.

She sniffs and places a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

She notices Hank, Rosalee and Monroe watching her, the latter two staring at her with what she bitterly sees with pity. She doesn’t need nor want their pity!

Hank on the other hand has a blank expression on his face, his hand casually resting over his holster, as if preparing to shoot her if she doesn’t follow Sean’s order. There’s no need for that though, because she is going for good.

Turning her gaze back on Sean she speaks, her voice for the most strong but unable to run away from the quiver that chases each breath.

“Goodbye Sean.”

After one last long look at the man who for all intents and purposes holds her heart she turns and ascends the stairs.

With purpose in her stride she walks out of the Spice Shop and heads for her parked car, her movements never wavering as she gets in her car and quickly drives away.

Chapter End Notes

Rough Translation:
“meque his exsolvite” (release me, in Latin).
HeavyDirtySoul

Chapter Summary

Can Sean save Nick's HeavyDirtySoul?

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, so I have been a huge twenty one pilots fan for years now (so happy the guys are finally getting the recognition they deserve!) and as such have titled this chapter after one of their songs. I was greatly inspired while listening to this song and I would advise listening to it if not only to show you the awesomeness that is Twenty One Pilots but to also showcase the chaotic beauty of this chapter!

Enjoy!

Here's a link to the song: HeavyDirtySoul by Twenty One Pilots

The fire that once roared in Nick extinguishes away into his bloodstream and the smoke that contorted his body disintegrates into the blaring white floor.

He gasps in shock at the relief of finally having control over his body once more but can’t help the groan of pain that escapes him when he rolls onto his side.

Biting his lip he tips his body to the left until he is sitting and finds himself almost falling forward when he is hit with a severe case of vertigo, however his balance comes in the form of a cold hold on the nape of his neck.

He freezes.

The cold hand’s blunt nails dig into his neck and force him to rise from the ground. He groans in pain as the nails break skin and cause blood to weep down the back of his neck.

Nick reaches behind himself, grasping onto the arm belonging to the hand but quickly regrets his decision when the owner, without a doubt in his mind being the Grimm, uses its other hand to grab his wrist and squeeze. The bones in his wrist grind together until an audible snap fills the air and Nick screams out in agony. His body instinctively tries to pull his arm back but he’s unable to due to the vice-like grip of the Grimm.

In order to defend himself, Nick desperately kicks back and experiences a fleeting moment of satisfaction when he connects with a solid mass but quickly regrets his actions when the Grimm grabs his leg and flips him through the air. He lands on his back with an ‘oomph’ and only just manages to stand up well enough to defend himself from the barrage of blows that the Grimm
Nick does his best to hand out his own punches, while biting back the pain in his clearly broken wrist, and kicks. But his already considerably weakened body is draining of strength quicker than a leak in a balloon while the Grimm continues on completely unaffected.

As Nick continues to do his best to defend himself he finds himself making a fatal error. As he throws out a fist meant to connect with the Grimm’s face, the Grimm sidesteps it and grabs his arm. Their movements seem to go in slow motion as the Grimm, while maintaining its hold on Nick, sends multiple kicks to Nick’s chest that rattle his lungs and organs before delivering an uppercut that lands Nick on his back once more.

The moment Nick’s back hits the floor he coughs up a splatter of blood that fleck his lips and stain his teeth red.

The Grimm looms over him and without hesitation continuous it’s attack. It keeps the same blank expression as it kicks Nick all over his body. At one point its foot manages to deliver a blow so precise to Nick’s ribcage that Nick would swear that he could literally feel the rib crack and crumble away.

Nick’s body instinctively tries to curl itself up in the fetal position but this does not prevent the Grimm from using his head as a football and his back as a blank canvas for blood and bruises.

He can taste the coppery tang of blood in the back of his throat that quickly starts to drown his airways. His body tries to expel the buildup of blood but as quick as he coughs up the blood more takes its place. The black spots that jumped around his vision has quickly exploded into masses that leave little light visible.

He’s dying.

His body is shutting down and there is nothing he can do about it.

He knows that he should be panicking, that he should be doing everything in his power to fight back but he can’t find the will or strength to try anymore.

Is this how Sean felt when the Grimm was assaulting him?

He can clearly remember the look of defeat on the older man’s face as the Grimm delivered blow after blow to his body. The way Sean closed his eyes, as if accepting his death and preparing his body for the eternal sleep it would soon have. He can also clearly remember the rage that had built up inside himself and had given him the strength to destroy the wall that blocked him. But no rage filled him this time.

No, this time he only feels a bone deep tiredness. A tiredness that he has no trouble giving in to.

Not wanting to fight the inevitable any longer Nick lets his eyes close and waits for the final blow that will snuff out his pain and existence forever.

~break~

Sean keeps Nick’s flailing body firmly pinned to the exam table as he takes great care in wiping away the blood from around Nick’s mouth. Nick’s shirt collar is stained with drying blood. The hand he uses to pin Nick down gently caresses Nick’s neck as Sean gazes down at Nick with such devotion that you would think the two have been lovers for decades.
Hank winces as Rosalee applies antiseptic to the shallow reopened cut on his forehead.

“Almost done. Just hold still.” Rosalee tuts as she sets the cotton ball down and picks up a band aid then carefully places it over the cut.

“There, all done.”

As Rosalee puts away the first aid kit Hank rises from the chair and walks over to Sean.

“How is he?” he already knows that Nick’s condition is getting increasingly worse but he is hoping for good news, no matter how unrealistic that hope is.

Another violent tremble runs through Nick’s body followed by a hacking cough that contains more blood with some managing to land on Sean’s face.

Not caring about the blood on his face Sean diligently wipes away the new patches of blood off Nick’s face and neck.

“Not good. His pulse is getting progressively weaker and I don’t have to tell you what the alarming amount of blood he’s coughing up means. At this rate, the Nick we know will be dead in a matter of hours, if not sooner.”

Hank sighs, “Isn’t there anything you can do for him? A spell or-or a potion, something?”

“I wouldn’t risk it. We don’t know the kind of damage that has been done to Nick’s psyche already. For all we know, another spell or potion could weaken his mind further.” Rosalee cuts in, handing the first aid kit over to Monroe who places it away in a cupboard.

“We have to try something! If Nick is already on Death’s door like you’re saying then we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by trying” Hank argues, flabbergasted that the people he thought were Nick’s friends are so easily giving up on saving Nick.

Rosalee approaches Hank and gives him a sympathetic look as she speaks.

“The only spell that had any chance of helping Nick has already been performed. But since Adalind broke it there’s no way for Sean to reenter Nick’s mind without making up the potion again. We don’t have time for that. I don’t want to lose him either Hank, he’s grown to be one of my closest friends and if I could I would give him all of my strength to help him fight off the Grimm, but I can’t. None of us can.”

A contemplative look crosses over Sean’s face, a look that does not get past Hank who has been scrounging his mind for a way to save Nick.

“What? What are you thinking about?”

Without answering, Sean lets go of Nick’s hand and speeds upstairs, ignoring the questions that are being thrown at him. He returns a few minutes later juggling a mixing bowl, a wooden spoon and five glass jars filled with various herbs and liquid concoctions.

His gaze determined, Sean wordlessly walks to the cluttered desk area in the corner of the room and sets his haul down. Maintaining his silence Sean sets to work.

Monroe, Rosalee and Hank exchange confused looks before approaching the intently focused zauberbiest. However, only Hank and Rosalee manage to make it to Sean before Monroe opts to remain by Nick’s side in order to restrain the Grimm when Nick’s body begins to jerk around.
“Sean, what are you doing?” Rosalee asks, her voice cautious as if afraid of him lashing out at her for interrupting him.

His movements a blur Sean surprisingly answers her in a calm collected voice, momentarily surprising Hank and Rosalee.

“I can’t regain access to Nick’s mind but I can transfer some of my strength to him” he explains as he mixes the ingredients together into a thick paste-like substance.

Sean takes the bowl and walks back to Nick. He silently brushes Monroe aside and places a grounding hand on Nick’s chest as he sets the bowl down.

Hank, Monroe and Rosalee watch as Sean dips his fingers into the bowl and paints foreign symbols onto Nick’s forehead and cheeks. He then picks the bowl back up and holds it out towards Rosalee who accepts it in confusion.

“Have you ever heard of the spell fortitudine spiritus?”

Rosalee’s brow creases as she runs the name through her memories but shakes her head when she comes up blank.

Unable to hold back his sigh Sean motions Monroe back over and instructs him to hold Nick down as he walks back over to the desk and quickly searches through the drawers until he finds a pen.

He then locates a relatively blank piece of paper and draws a line of foreign symbols. Dropping the pen he returns to Rosalee and holds up the paper for her to see.

“I need you to draw this symbol on my forehead” he points to one of the three symbols on the paper “and these two on my cheeks, directly under my eyes. They need to be as exact as possible otherwise the spell won’t work correctly.”

Rosalee sets the bowl down on the vacated chair and grabs the paper to examine.

“I can, but you still haven’t told me what this spell will do.”

Not even trying to hold back his aggravation Sean answers, “All you need to know is that if this works, Nick’s chances of survival will triple. Now are you going to keep asking me questions while Nick lays there dying or are you going to trust me to save Nick’s life?” his voice is curt as he levels a glare at the considerably shorter Fuchsbau.

Behind Sean Monroe looks ready to go off on the Captain for speaking so rudely to his girlfriend but Rosalee waves him off.

“I’ll do it, I just hope whatever this is it doesn’t do more harm than good.”

Sean gives her a grim nod as he picks the bowl back up and sits down on the chair.

Rosalee dips her index finger into the paste and proceeds to draw the depicted symbols onto Sean’s forehead and cheeks. When she finishes she sets the paper down and watches as Sean reaches into his pocket and takes out a pocketknife.

“You’ll all want to take a few steps back” he advises as turns the chair to face Nick.

Uncertainty crosses over the threes faces but they do as they are told and step away from Nick and
Sean until there are at least an arm’s length away from the pair.

After the three have done as he advised Sean flicks the knife out of its case and without hesitation digs the sharpened edge across his right palm; his face shows no sign of registering the pain.

He does the same with Nick’s left hand then, setting the pocket knife down, grips the bleeding hand with his own and closes his eyes. He kneels his head down as if in prayer to a beloved and the words that flow from his lips come out so rapidly that not even God himself could understand him.

As he speaks the symbols on Nick and Sean’s faces begin to glow an unnatural white and the thin tendrils of the symbols seem to melt into their skins. The glowing from the symbols flow down their faces to their clasped hands.

The glow of their hands become so overwhelmingly bright that the trio is forced to cover their eyes or else risk burning their irises.

But it isn’t only the glow that is physically noticeable, there is also the unsettling static charge building up in the air along with the deep anxious feeling congealing in their guts, shouting at them that something unnaturally powerful is occurring.

Sean lets out a ground rattling roar and the three watch in stunned silence as he woges into his Zauberbiest form. But instead of the rippling of his skin smoothing out, the ripples continue to wave over his skin. And if that isn’t startling enough the skin on Nick’s face begins to ripple as well.

~break~

Instead of the all-consuming darkness that Nick is sure should have taken him over by now, he instead feels a surge of power course through him, a surge that quickly becomes excruciatingly painful.

His eyes shoot open and instead of them being their usual gray, the irises and whites of the eyes are a full blown black and his face has woged into that of a Zauberbiest.

With the power of the Zauberbiest and the greatly muted powers of his Grimm side, Nick grabs the Grimm’s leg before it can deliver another kick and snaps the limb to the left.

Before the Grimm can orchestrate a new attack plan, Nick snarls and shoves the Grimm away before lunging on top of it and dishing out a beating that puts him mountains away from his humane side and into the realm of a rabid beast.

The Grimm does everything it can to fight back but even when it can get a hit in Nick only snarls and causes further damage to its body.

With its rage growing, the Grimm finally manages to get the upper hand when Nick is going in to punch it across the face by grabbing his wrist and flinging him across the room. Nick lands against the nearest white wall and falls to the equally white floor. He is quick to get to his feet and charge back at the Grimm who has had enough time to get to its feet.

~break~

Monroe, Rosalee and Hank can only watch in stunned horror as Nick’s body arches off the table and his face woges into that of a Zauberbiest. Every nerve and artery in Sean and Nick’s body is lit up like a string of lights as the pair continue to be connected by the grip that a still woged Sean maintains on Nick’s unresponsive hand.
“What the fuck is going on?!” Hank yells, his feet moving him towards the lit pair before his mind can register his rogue body parts.

Rosalee grabs Hank’s arm and swiftly pulls him back. She retains her hold as an anxious and slightly impressed expression takes over her features.

“I wouldn’t get too close if I were you. If I’m right, then a step further and everything that works to keep you alive will be fried” her eyes remain frozen on Renard and Nick.

Hank’s eyes widen and he shares a perplexed look with an as equally confused Monroe.

“So what exactly is Renard doing?” Hank asks, moving his gaze down to the shorter woman.

“I only have a vague idea but if I’m right then he’s conducting a transference of sorts in order to share his power and strength with Nick. Unfortunately I’ve never personally dealt with anything like this so I don’t know exactly the affects this will have on either of them.”

A determined look crosses Hank’s features.

“But if you were to guess do you think it’ll help Nick?”

Rosalee meets Hank’s gaze, her expression is unsure.

“I honestly don’t know. This could either save Nick or kill them both.”

~break~

Nick roars as he punches the Grimm across the face and follows the attack with multiple blows to the Grimm’s chest. The Grimm retaliates by kicking Nick in the chest causing him to stumble back a few feet. Nick snarls and throws himself back at the Grimm. He wraps his legs around the Grimm’s waist and delivers blow after blow to its face and chest.

The Grimm lets out a roar of its own and grabs hold of Nick’s neck and manages to rip Nick off and slam him into the wall. This barely phases Nick however who easily rises from the ground and charges at the Grimm who is waiting for him.

~break~

Sean’s skin is becoming increasingly pale and the once bright glow that emitted from him has become a shallow yellow.

This does not go unnoticed by Rosalee who frowns and almost takes a step forward but she manages to stop herself before the command can go to the limb. Everything in her is screaming at her to do something, to help Sean somehow, but the logic in her reminds her that by getting too close she would likely only cause more harm than good.

Monroe and Hank may not know the precise reason behind Sean’s paling skin and fading light but Rosalee does: Renard is dying. He is sharing a vital part of his physiology with Nick and in doing so is depleting his own life force and like every tank dependent on fuel it will eventually go empty.

She can only hope that Sean’s hair-brained idea actually works.

~break~

Nick puts the Grimm in a chokehold and slams their bodies to the ground. A brief flash of pain radiates through his body but adrenaline quickly kicks in and eradicates the sensation.
His arms remain wrapped around the Grimm’s neck as he applies more pressure which causes the Grimm to triple its efforts in escaping his hold. The Grimm kicks its legs and bucks its body but Nick’s hold stays strong.

The Grimm’s movements start to slow and just as Nick is starting to feel that he’s finally going to win The Grimm curls its right fist and punches him directly in the ear.

Blinding white pain lances through his skull accompanied by the sound of a high pitched drill grating his eardrum into microscopic bits. Nick moans in pain and instinctively clutches his ear and collapses to the ground but in doing so he also releases his hold on the Grimm.

The Grimm quickly jumps on Nick and proceeds to pound into the indisposed Nick who is only capable of sluggishly holding his hands up as pain continues to reverberate in his head. He does his best to try and protect the vital areas of his body over the continued assault in his head but is having little success. The coppery taste of blood bursts forth from the back of his throat as the Grimm continues to pound its fist into his lower abdomen. The cough that has been building up in his throat erupts and results in a painful, wet sounding hack leaving his lips along with an alarming amount of blood that dribbles down his chin.

His already pale skin has become corpse like and his eyes have begun to take on a startling dullness that speaks of the light in him fading out. His previous feeble attempts at protecting himself have shrunk down into the occasional twitch at his sides.

Seeing that its prey is dying, the Grimm stops its current attack and moves on to wrap its hands around Nick’s neck and apply just enough pressure to only leave Nick the barest amount of oxygen.

The barest amount of life flashes in Nick’s eyes as his eyes widen and he instinctively reaches out to grab at the hands around his throat. His legs kick out beneath him in a desperate bid to gain purchase but is met with air.

The Grimm tilts its head as it stares down at Nick, its eyes taking in the grotesque Zauberbiest features. It releases one of its hand, while the remaining hand applies more pressure to Nick’s throat, and runs its hand down the side of Nick’s face in an almost tender manner. However the tenderness is obliterated when the Grimm digs its nails into Nick’s face and rakes across the skin leaving behind jagged cuts that bleed profusely.

With only a minimum amount of oxygen, Nick can only weakly gasp and unsuccessfully try to jerk his head out of its grasp.

The Grimm’s body resembles that of a snake as it leans down and sniffs at the blood slowly dribbling down his cheek. It’s already dull gray eyes seem to become darker as it hovers over his face and licks across the opened wound. Blood drips down its chin as it pulls back and its tongue slips out and licks the blood around its mouth clean.

The Grimm’s eyes slip close and what appears to be an almost pleasurable look crosses its usual blank expression.

Nick tries to use the moment to his advantage by bucking his body but this only results in pissing the Grimm off. The Grimm’s eyes shoot open and Nick is both horrified and stunned to see that the Grimm’s eyes are now a demonic black that encases the entire irises and whites of the eyes.

It releases Nick’s throat giving Nick a momentary moment of aching relief to gasp in a mouthful of air. But, as expected his relief is short lived when the Grimm launches right back into its assault by
curling back its free fist and with ground breaking strength plows its hand directly into Nick’s abdomen.

~break~

A baseball sized hole manifests itself in Nick’s bare abdomen. Blood bursts from the open wound like a geyser with the inner workings of Nick’s abdominal cavity on full display.

Even though the trio has kept a fair amount of distance away from the light show occurring they are able to see into Nick’s open wound. Rosalee’s face turns nearly white as she watches copious amounts of blood slosh around the various visible organs before sloshing over the sides.

As a Detective, Hank has seen his fair share and then some of gruesome crime scenes but never will he get used to the sight of a once living, breathing human being reduced to nothing but decaying flesh. For the longest time Hank was sure that the worse sight he would ever witness was that of a young woman with her head smashed through the windshield, blood running from her open mouth and head wound onto the roof of the floor. Her once blue eyes fogged over and her mouth opened into a silent scream.

But Hank can now safely say that the image of Nick with a gaping hole in his stomach as his insides chug around inside him will forever haunt him with just as much horror as the young woman’s frozen corpse.

It is Monroe however who is having the most severe reaction to the visual however. Even though he has been a faithful wieder blutbad for some time now the scent and visual blood of fresh HUMAN blood is enough to make his feral instincts combat with his Zen like instincts to lunge at the source (Nick) and coat his belly with the delicious meat.

Up until this he had been able to control himself from giving into the instincts when Nick’s skin would be sliced open and blood would consequently flow out. However, those cuts never exposed innards and so the battle against his feral instincts was easier. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case because as soon as his eyes lay upon the exposed organs inside of Nick his eyes flash red and his body jerks forward.

“Monroe!” Rosalee screams as she tries to reach out for him. But her grasp falls short and they can only watch in horror as a blinding flash of white light drops seemingly out of the heavens and catapults Monroe backwards into the rubbles of the a bookshelf. His body crumples to the floor with a dull thud.

The sluggish chugging sound and slimy movement soon ceases and seals itself close leaving behind only a large smear of blood across Nick’s pale torso.

Rosalee rushes to Monroe’s side and hurriedly digs him out from beneath the debris. Monroe groans in pain as he slowly turns himself onto his back.

A teary smile spreads across Rosalee’s face as she gently gathers him in her arms and places brief kisses all over his face and neck. Monroe mumbles that he’s fine as he tries to push himself up from the cold floor.

The room spins like a tilted record and he quickly slumps back into Rosalee’s warm embrace.

“Stay down. You could have a concussion.” Rosalee scolds, placing another kiss on the side of his head.

A shameful look crosses Monroe’s face as he does his best to adjust his kaleidoscope vision.
towards Renard and Nick who are still slightly glowing and unresponsive. All his hard work of controlling his baser instincts had been effectively eradicated in the few seconds it took him to cease to be a wieder and step back into being a feral blutbad.

The thing that sickened him the most though, was that it wasn’t just any blood that had sent him into a frenzy. This was the enticing scent of his best friend and just the thought of what he wanted to do to Nick made his insides churn with unending jabs of guilt.

Recognizing the pained look on Monroe’s face for what it was, Rosalee rubbed his back and, whispered assurances in his ear. She was aware that right now, Monroe was at the mercy of deadly tsunami of guilt that was eating him from the inside out and that her words were as good as paling water on the Titanic. But she couldn’t just let him suffer in silence.

God knows the torment they are already going through and the shit storm that is quickly rolling in.

~break~

Nick’s face immediately reverts back to his human features as he chokes out a fan of blood. He screams in agony as the Grimm roots around in his abdominal cavity, kneading his organs like a cat, as if marking Nick’s organs as its own.

He can feel blood soaking his clothing and staining his skin with the plasma that should still be flowing through his veins.

The Grimm lifts its blood soaked hand out the hole in Nick’s abdomen and with a lecherous grin, lifts the hand to its mouth and licks a long strip from the tip of its index finger to the middle of its arm.

His head feels like it is being pumped full of helium but the string that attaches him to the earth is steadily being pulled down into a pool of cement. The sound of the Grimm slurping up his blood dribbles out into muffled chirps and the pain that once high jacked his entire body is overtaken by an almost peaceful numbness.

He doesn’t register the thump as the back of his head slumps to the ground nor his hands sliding off his soaked chest and slipping into the accumulating puddle of blood beneath him.

The white color of the walls are quickly filling with an inky blackness that rises from the ground like an ocean before a coming storm. It appears calm but the rising waves and escalating winds give notice of the building disaster.

If his mind wasn’t so muffled with the comforting numbness and alluring call of respite from the hell he has endured, he would be fighting harder against the curtain that is being lowered as he takes his last bow. Putting an end to the production of Nicholas Burkhardt.

He could feel the peaceful numbness hijack the muscles that control the movement of his eyelids and systematically untie each rope that is straining to keep his eyes open. With each release, his eyelids droop lower and lower. His vision wavers like a glitch in a video.

His breaths come out in small puffs and the moments between each inhale and exhale grows longer. The blood that once bubbled out of him like a busted pipe has slowed to an occasional gurgle.

Nick no longer registers the Grimm’s excavation of his innards. In fact, he no longer registers anything but the ghostly warmth that shrouds his body like a warm blanket in the middle of a blizzard.
Why was he fighting this in the first place? Surely something that saved him from an assault of brutal pain was good, right? After all he had endured didn’t he deserve a place where pain was nonexistent and could give him salvation?

Just as his eyes are falling shut a familiar voice breaks into his subconscious.

“Don’t give in, Nick. Don’t let it win.” Sean’s voice echoes like a call into a deep cave.

“Sean… I’m so tired….” Each word is a struggle and comes out in a barely audible whisper.

“I know it’s tempting but you can’t exit yet, you have to keep living” Sean implores, his voice twisting around Nick’s eardrums.

He subconsciously licks his drying lips and tastes the ever familiar coppery taste of blood.

“I can’t…” his eyes come dangerously close to closing permanently but he manages to find a little burst of strength to push his lids back open. But the strain quickly returns and weighs down on the fragile skin once more.

Sean’s disembodied voice lets out an aggravated sigh.

“So that’s it then? You’re just going to give up and let that thing win? What happened to the man who stood up for what he believed in? Who dedicated himself to becoming a new type of Grimm that didn’t hunt for sport or hated wesen on principle?”

Nick let out a humorlessly laugh.

“He got abducted and rediscovered his roots.”

A long moment of silence drags out. The already thick air becomes bloated with tension and hopelessness until finally Sean relents and blows the stagnant air away.

“If you really want to die, I won’t stop you. Hell, I don’t even blame you for wanting to end this. What I will do though is leave you with these words: if you give in all the blood it sheds will be because of you.”

As Sean’s voice fades away his parting words leave an ache in his heart that hums with each sluggish beat of his heart. But even with the harsh but no less truthful words, Nick still feels the uncontrollable need to plea for Sean to stay with him. To help fend off the darkness that is trying to devour him.

The warmth of the ghostly shroud that once brought him comfort now only fuels his growing fear as the ghost grips his heart in a vice and inhales all his body’s warmth leaving behind an icy chill.

“Sean…” he gasps, his plea coming out as a shrill, hoarse whine brought about by the putrefying state of his lungs.

His ashen white hand shakily rises from his side and tries to chase after Sean’s voice. His blood coats the left side of his hand like a delicacy thought up by Hannibal Lecter.

“Sean….” He nearly whimpers as the presence of his lifeline vanishes, leaving him behind to battle his own demon alone.

His hand collapses back to his side. His unclenched hand connects with the puddle of blood and sends up a light rain of blood that spatters both Nick and the Grimm.
Just as Nick can feel the last vestiges of life that his body has been clinging to shrivel away the Grimm does something that not only shocks Nick but also enrages him. It laughs.

Nick had thought that the Grimm was incapable of feeling anything but he had been wrong. It could experience emotions but they had been warped towards the perverse.

The Grimm’s laugh sounds like a distorted version of Nick’s own laughter. But there was no warmth or playful mirth in its cold gray eyes as it laughed at Nick’s dying form. Instead, they remained soulless. It knew that it had won, that soon the Grimm would have complete control of Nick’s body and it could then go about bringing hell to earth.

As the Grimm continues to laugh, Nick allows his growing rage to fill him with the adrenaline his body had been stripped of. To help the build-up, Nick conjures up memories of his mother decapitating one of her followers and her retelling of the night Marie fled with him. He thought of the day Monroe had been attacked by fellow wesen for befriending and helping a Grimm. Lastly, he thought of when the Grimm was towering over Sean and was beating the other man to the brink of death.

The memories swirl together like a twister in his mind. The sounds and voices come off as almost demonic like as they blend together into one warped track. Nick embraces the rage that coats his muscles and nerves as he manages to grip his hands and ever so slightly angle his head and upper body off the ground.

Nick can feel his chapped lips split and bleed as his mouth twists into a sneer that would rival the Joker’s. The Grimm’s laugh tapers off at the sudden change and it looks at Nick with a curious-like expression.

Moving with speed and strength that would seem unnatural to even a mythical God, Nick lifts his right arm and catapults his hand into its sternum.

The Grimm tries to pull away from his grip but Nick wraps his fingers around the bottom of its sternum’s bone and keeps it in place.

A vibrant white light interlaced with wisps of electric blue and black erupts from the opening of the Grimm’s wound. The whiteness of the room intensifies but Nick and the Grimm take no notice as the array of colors begins to interlock around Nick’s body.

Unlike last time a strange cloud of power encased his body, Nick feels no pain. Instead, he feels a strong tingle that vibrates throughout his bones. There is also a pulling sensation that originates from the Grimm’s wound and travels all the way down Nick’s arm to his heart.

The Grimm lets out an inhuman screech and desperately thrashes its body around in a feeble attempt to dislodge Nick’s hold on it.

Filled with renewed energy Nick raises his free hand and grips the back of the Grimm’s neck. He pulls the Grimm down to his level until they are face to face.

The Grimm continues to snarl and screech above him, its spit and drops and blood adding onto the mess that already paints Nick’s face.

Both Nick and the Grimm are now fully immersed in the center of the cloud and their bodies have an almost translucent quality to them.

Nick digs his blunt nails into the back of its neck leaving the Grimm only the barest of head movement.
“Obey me!” Nick snarls and, moving on pure instinct, yanks the Grimm forward.

A blinding white light builds around the pair as they’re separate bodies seem to mesh together.

~break~

As Rosalee continues to comfort Monroe, Hank keeps a watchful eye on Nick and Rendard’s motionless forms.

It was taking all of Hank’s will power to not cross the invisible boundary and check on his partner.

For too long now he had had to stand at a distance as his best friend and partner lay dying in front of him with no way for Hank to help him. He was all too aware that among this small group he was, genetically speaking, the weakest. Sure he knew how to handle a firearm and could defend himself in hand-to-hand but while that was all well and dandy for dealing with regular humans, wesen were a whole other matter. For one, unless wesen actually want him to see them, Hank has no idea that he’s dealing with a potential threat until it’s too late or he is saved by Nick in the nick of time. Because of that, more often than not, Hank can’t help but feel like a burden. Which is why whenever he and Nick and sometimes Monroe are investigating a wesen related case he feels like he has to constantly prove his worth.

Needless to say, he’s tired of feeling useless.

Making a monumentally stupid decision, Hank is about to take a step forward when his eyes catch a strange, wispy glow emitting from Nick’s chest.

Following both his seasoned Detective and natural instincts, Hank foregoes his initial plan and cautiously backs up.

The glow grows in intensity.

“Guys….” Hank warns, his widened eyes never straying from the unnatural light.

Hank’s drawn out warning draws Rosalee and Monroe’s eyes to the phenomenon occurring in front of them.

The glow takes the form of a cloud-like structure. A slithering ripple makes rounds around the cloud as it steadily rises above Nick’s body.

Rosalee and Monroe slowly stand and take a few cautious steps of their own back.

They can only watch in stunned astonishment as the cloud ripples and seems to shoot bolts of lightning that wrap around Nick’s body like jungle vines that have a life of their own. But what really gives them pause is the translucent quality to Nick’s skin that has vein like strands of light accenting his paleness.

As Hank is opening his mouth to enquire about what the hell is happening, a ground breaking rumble rocks the earth beneath them.

Monroe, Hank and Rosalee barely make it the stairs before the cloud surrounding Nick quickly shrinks down to the size of a grapefruit.

The orb spins at an incalculable rate. As it spins a high pitched whine emits from the object that is so shrill that all three desperately cover their ears.
Hank can only imagine the agony Rosalee and Monroe must be feeling with their enhanced hearing. But if he’s fighting the urge to tear out his eardrums he would bet that the couple would gladly chop off their own heads.

The Detective’s assessment doesn’t appear that far off seeing as both Monroe and Rosalee have collapsed to the ground; their bodies are nearly on top of each other as they grip their heads with their eyes squeezed shut in agony.

The strangeness continues as, without warning, the whining sound stops. In fact, it almost seems like all noises have ceased entirely which comes as a complete shock to their traumatized eardrums. The abrupt silence is such a shock to Hank’s overstimulated system that he almost topples over but he manages to balance himself by leaning against the stairwell banister.

The shocks keep coming as without preamble the orb suddenly implodes. A fiery ring of fire rockets towards the three, giving Hank only seconds to hit the deck before being incinerated. Pieces of lumbar and plaster shower the huddled trio as waves of smoke obscure the area where Nick and Renard lay.

For once Hank’s genetics give him an advantage as he is the first to recover from the assault on their senses. He shakily rises from the ground and stumbles forward, his mind set on checking on Nick and Renard.

~short break~

Sean’s entire body feels like it has been scavenged by Geiers. Even the slightest twitch of a muscle feels like a sharpened prong is twisting his innards. He fights through the pain and manages to slay the darkness and pry his eyes open. Although the sudden onslaught of light lances through his eye sockets, he refuses to lose consciousness and instead forces his body into an upright position.

Once his brain has come back to a fairly functional mode, Sean immediately notes the state of the basement. Pieces of wood and plaster litter the room along with exposed electrical wires from the long light that used to hang above him. However, instead of the lightbulb, a giant hole now resides above him with a clear view into the main floor of the spice shop.

A cough brings his attention to an approaching Hank whose entire gaze is focused on Nick-Nick!

The memory of Nick’s tormented screams as Adalind’s spell assaults him along with the image of Nick about to surrender to the Grimm returns to him like a sucker punch to the gut.

His eyes shoot over Nick’s prone form and his heart feels like it has been encased in ice. He ignores his body’s pleas for him to remain seated and instead bolts to Nick’s side.

Hank is only a step behind him as Sean gazes over Nick’s prone form.

“Nick?” Sean’s voice comes out as a hoarse whisper as he gently grasps Nick’s unresponsive hand.

“Nick. Nick, please wake up” Sean pleads, his other hand rising to run his fingers through Nick’s sweaty hair.

The hand in Sean’s grip begin to twitch.

Hope explodes inside Sean’s heart as he continues to urge Nick to open his eyes.

A frown etches itself onto Nick’s still too pale face as his breathing picks up.
Sean, sensing Nick’s struggle to rejoin reality, leans forward until his mouth is nearly touching Nick’s ear. He smells the younger man’s natural spicy scent which makes his mouth water. The desire to taste the tantalizing man before him is almost too much to resist. But, he quickly scolds himself for such thoughts and tramples the inappropriate thoughts back into the chest at the very back of his mind.

“The hardest part is over, Nick but the Grimm will still win if you don’t wake up. Your mother and her insane clan will have won. Please, stay with us.”

Monroe and Rosalee slowly hobble over and stand beside Hank. Rosalee, although battling against a wave of vertigo, can easily see Nick’s deathly pallor.

“Oh, God. Please….” Rosalee prays, her hand unconsciously searching out Monroe’s own.

“Come on, man.” Hank murmurs, his entire body rigid from the fear of losing his best friend.

As the others are silently sending pleas and strength towards Nick to wake up, a strange but still familiar sensation travels through Sean’s body. The feeling is redolent to of the effects of sangue a mente only this time he doesn’t receive any flashes of corpses or screams of pain. Instead, he feels a peaceful warmth spread throughout him along with a familiar spicy musk that trails enticingly around his senses.

His eyes slip shut as he basks in the euphoric moment. However, just like sangue a mente there is also the highly uncomfortable aspects as well. His lungs begin to feel as if they are being squeezed and his vision whites out.

Riding the wave of pleasure and pain, Sean doesn’t even try to fight the gut-punch reaction to release an arduous exhale of breath.

Like a dam collapsing, all of the roaring sensations gush from his body. Leaving his body barren of strength. Sean’s hand slips from holding Nick’s and makes a dull thud as it slumps against his thigh while his head tips down in exhaustion.

It isn’t until a startled gasp escapes Rosalee that helps Sean fight through the fatigue to lift his head. What meets him is a sight right out of a fairytale.

Like a coloring book, color slowly spreads over Nick’s body, returning his features to that of his normal healthy self instead of a decomposing corpse.

After all the color has been returned, Nick’s eyes slowly flutter open revealing warm gray eyes that have been sorely missed. Those same eyes, although slightly glazed from exhaustion roll over and meet Sean’s.

In response, Sean reclaims Nick’s hand and gives the appendage a friendly squeeze, as if to show Nick that what he is seeing is real. A ghost of a smile claims Nick’s mouth as the younger man grips back.

“Sean” Nick breathes, his smile seeming to light up his eyes as well.

His voice is like a siren’s song to Sean’s ears. He would gladly plunge into the darkest depths of the sea if it meant he could hear Nick’s voice for the rest of his life. He would even let the murky sea take him for one more utterance of his name.

“Welcome back.” Sean gives Nick a rare smile and bites down on the urge to wrap his arms around Nick and never let him go.
But like all moments, they must eventually come to an end. In this case the curtain is dropped by Hank who steps beside Sean and pats Nick on the leg, averting Nick’s attention to him.

“How many more white hairs are you going to give me, man?” Hank jokes as he subtly checks Nick over. Just because the man has woken up doesn’t mean that he is out of the woods yet. At even the slightest hitch of pain on Nick’s face, he is thrusting him into Rosalee’s capable hands.

Nick chuckles quietly and softly replies, “I hear the salt and pepper look is in right now.”

Hank along with Monroe and Rosalee laugh at his witty retort, glad to see that the Grimm can still crack jokes.

With the four extremely close friends finally reunited, Sean can already feel the walls beginning to shut him out. His usefulness has come to an end and already he can feel his role being reduced to nothing more than a fly on the wall.

As if sensing the decrease in space, Sean’s body subconsciously backs itself away from the four friends, prepared to take back on his role as the man behind the curtain.

His retreat doesn’t go unnoticed however.

Although his full attention seems to be on his three friends hovering around him, Nick quickly picks up on Sean’s retreating form but chooses not to call the older man on it.

With everything that has happened over the last few days Nick barely has the energy to lift his head from the uncomfortable wooden table, much less grapple with the variously confusing emotions trapezing around in his mind.

Instead all Nick can muster is a muted look of...something towards Sean as his friends talk animatedly around him.

Chapter End Notes

Loose translation(s):

fortitudine spiritus: spirit strength

sangue a mente: blood to mind
No Such Thing As A Reprieve

Chapter Summary

The chapter title pretty much explains it.

Chapter Notes

Hola my precious readers, look who managed to finally get this story updated. And all before the New Year! At least on my side of the world! Anyway, I hope this chapter makes up from my absence and that you enjoy this update!

It would take the pits of hell opening up beneath Sean and dragging him in, to get him to even consider taking his eyes off of Nick. He was sure the three other people in the cramped room would concur. But likely at a much lesser extent seeing as they had no problem moving the small muscles in their eyelids.

On the contrary however, Nick would more than likely appreciate the four of them giving him some space; if the way he won’t meet their gazes and his rigid posture is anything to go by. Which is understandable considering what he’s just been through. That and the fact that he hasn’t had a single moment to himself since he woke up, apart from relieving himself in the bathroom. But even then the four of them had been anxiously waiting outside the closed door.

After Nick had woken up and had been hugged and back-slapped to near bruises, Hank and Monroe had helped a still weak Nick up the stairs to the back room of the shop. Only Rosalee noticed the longing in Sean’s gaze as Nick was helped up the stairs. As soon as Nick’s backside had met the soft material of the love seat, Rosalee donned her cape of mother-henning.

A wool afghan was draped over Nick’s shoulders and a steaming cup of chamomile tea appeared in his hands as if by magic. And while Nick did appreciate the tender care she was showing him, he had to draw the line when she tried to get him to lay down in order to tuck him in.

Nick fingers the edges of the cup in his hands. He’s barely drank any of the tea. But the warmth soothes his still chilled body (and mind) so he continues to sip at the sweet drink every now and then.

No one has yet brought up the elephant in the room. Whether that be because to bring it up would mean shattering the peaceful cloud that has settled over them. Or simply because no one can come up with a decent way to approach the topic no one could say.

Nick would love nothing more than to pretend that the past few days never happened. That he never took on the case of the book keeper’s death and subsequent cases that followed. But he’s sure that even if he could travel back in time he wouldn’t be able to change a thing. Those innocent wesens would still die, the allusion of his loving mother would never be put back together and the Grimm would still have shown him a side of himself that was designed to kill.
Fate, no matter how badly fought, is not something that can be escaped.

With that in mind, Nick looks up from the murkey tea and fires a round right into the elephant’s head.

“I killed them. Every last one.”

A fog of ice drops over the group. Sapping up any relief that tries to cling on.

No one responds.

They all know what he is referring to. The wesens that were sacrificed in the trials. Each of those wesens, even the Geiers, had had families that loved them but because of an insane Grimm prophecy those families would never see their loved ones again.

Nick continues, “I tried to fight it at first. Get them to join me and turn on-on Her and her clan. But they never did....” his voice trails off as a deadened glaze settles over Nick’s eyes.

Sean can feel Nick beginnig to close up on them, his dark thoughts trying to draw him back into the hellish hole they had both just narrowly escaped.

His left foot jerks forward, as if going rogue on his body to get to Nick’s side. But before Sean can follow its lead Rosalee darts to Nick’s side and engulfs him in a hug.

“None of it was your fault, Nick. And I won’t hear otherwise.” She states, her hand rubbing soothing circles into his back as she keeps him in a one arm hug.

“She’s right, man. The only villains in this story is that goddamn crazy clan of Grimms” Hank adds. Although he knows, from personal experience, words aren’t going to be enough to vaporize the guilt that is settling around Nick like noxious gas. But he, along with the others, will hammer their words of innocence into him until the nail shoots out the other side.

After a long drawn out beat, Nick bites his bottom lips and nods. They can all see the continued guilt that swims in his eyes. But out of respect, they don’t call him out on it no matter how badly they want to because all it would do is add to Nick’s already wilted state.

“Thanks guys, really. Thank you for everything you did for me.” As he speaks his eyes drift past the others towards Sean who by this point has nearly melted into the wall.

“Thank you” he looks directly into Sean’s eyes as he speaks, his eyes filled with both gratitude and compassion.

Sean wants to open his mouth but his lips don’t cooperate and instead all his can do is audible swallow and offer a shallow nod in return.

Their gazes hold their own conversations. Thank you for saving me. I’m so glad you’re alive. I’m sorry... All the words they can’t seem to breathe into existence.

They hold the gaze for what feels like centuries but is really only a few more seconds before both find the will to look away.

Nick looks back at his other three closest friends and rejoins the conversation. His smile, while more than just tight lipped, still houses a shadow of clinging guilt.

Sean wishes that he had the courage to continue to stand amongst the close knit group and partake
in the celebrations of life. However, just because he is looked upon by most of, if not all of wesen residing in Portland as the powerful, wields with an iron fist Ruler of Portland, he is still a part of the human race. Capable of courageous acts of bravery and compassion but at the same time the cowardly habit of fleeing at the slightest sign of danger.

And so, as the four are consumed in conversation, Sean discretely slips out of the room and exits the shop.

Mere seconds after his departure, Nick looks back at the corner Sean had been standing to find the older man had left.

He chooses to ignore the stab of emotion that erupts in his heart the man’s silent departure causes.

~GRIMM~

Hank and Nick pull up in front of Juliette and Nick’s house. The two story house is almost completely shrouded in darkness save for the flickering front porch light. Nick had been meaning to change the bulb for weeks now but work and common procrastination had gotten in the way. Now he could add being kidnapped by his mother’s insane clan to the reasons that the light would remain flickering.

The older Detective puts the car in park and looks over at his partner.

Nick has been silent the entire ride over, a complete contrast to the usual back and forth banter the two engaged in. Before this case entire shit-storm of a case anyway.

He watches as Nick eyes the house, his eyes uncertain as if sizing up a formidable foe while quaking in his boots.

“What does she know?” Nick asks, his focus still entirely on the house. As if the two are on a stakeout and they are waiting for their perp to make a move.

“Only that you were abducted and that for a while after we found you, we had you laying low in a safe house until we were sure all of the killers were either arrested or dead.”

Nick nods, “Does she know I’m coming?”

Hank shakes his head, “I figured you’d want to handle it.”

“Yeah, that’d probably be best.”

The air seems to fill with the anxious breaths that seep past Nick’s lips as he grips the car handle.

“I know I’ve already said it but I really need to say it again, Hank. Thank you, thank you so much. You could have walked away when I told you about me and the world I was chucked into. But you stayed. Even after all the times you’ve nearly been killed because of my secret and especially after you learned the truth.”

Hank maneuvers around in his seat until he’s facing Nick.

“We’ve already gone over this man, while I was initially pissed off about being kept in the dark I forgave you a long time ago. And as for this recent escapade into the supernatural, I can’t say that it won’t stay with me a for a while. But I can assure you that it’s not going to scare me off. And if crazy ass Grimm clans won’t do it, you can bet your ass that nothing will. You’re stuck with me,
partner.”

A ghost of a smile lights up Nick’s face as the two laugh over the mend that unknowingly needed to be repaired on their friendship.

“I guess I’ll call you later than.”

Hank nods in approval.

Nick takes one last lungful of breath and exhales then opens the door and slips out of the car.

Knowing that he can’t stall any longer Nick slowly approaches the house. He can’t help but feel as if he is headed back into the dark abyss of his mind where the Grimm is waiting to dig it’s talons into his chilled skin.

The floorboards creak beneath his feet as he ascends the stairs and he freezes, his heart attempts to jump from his chest. His pinprick pupils scan the surrounding houses and lawns, waiting for lurking shadows to transform into demonic forms.

His surroundings maintain their regular appearance. No demons proclaim their intent to kill him. The Grimm does not crawl up from hell and tear out of his jugular.

Nick desperately wants to knock himself out so that he doesn’t have to deal with the shame that wrecks within him at that moment. Shame at the fact that after all that he he’s survived he’s jumping at shadows and inanimate sounds.

He knew that his recovery from everything he’s been through wasn’t going to be easy. But he had apparently been naive enough to hope that his own house could be a safe heaven for him. Not a pandora’s box of endless nightmares.

There’s no way that he can just turn around leave, not just noticeably because Hank is still parked outside and would quickly follow after him. But also because Juliette had been through enough already and she didn’t deserve to be left fearing for him any longer. However, what made his feet continue to be glued to the steps was that she also didn’t deserve to have to put up with all the misery and danger that, unknowingly to her, that came with loving a Grimm.

Maybe it would be for the best if he just slunked into the shadows and disappeared completely. Not just from Juliette but Hank, Monroe and Rosalee too. Ever since the three had been indoctrined into his little group of allies they had been in constant danger. He knows however that they would never let him go, they were too stubborn and kind to do that.

And then there was Renard....Sean.....

Nick couldn’t even comprehend the search the older man would conduct if Nick were to up and vanish. The thought shouldn’t have elicited such a warm, feeling deep within his heart.

He was startled out of his thoughts when the front door suddenly opened and he was met with the stunned face of Juliette.

“Nick....”

Without another word Juliette takes his hand and tugs him inside the house. The door closes behind them with an almost ominous thud.

As soon as the lock engages Juliette fully switches to the role of overly concerned
“Do you want something to drink or maybe to eat? I can fix you up some spaghetti real fast?” before he can even open his mouth, Juliette has flitted into the kitchen to begin preparing the meal leaving Nick standing in the middle of the entryway.

The sounds of clattering pans can be heard from the kitchen followed by muffled curses. Nick sighs and walks towards the continued sound of chaos and leans against the kitchen doorway as he watches Juliette scower the cabinets and fridge for the correct ingredients.

“Juliette, I’m fine. Really, you don’t have to make me anything.” He assures her.

Despite his words she continues to hunt, her eyes narrowed and stormy as if she is searching for the most important piece of American History.

Realizing that he’s going to have to be more physical in his assertion, Nick steps fully into the kitchen and gently grasps Juliette by the arm. Her movements abruptly halt as she grips the edge of the cupboard, her eyes slowly cracking out of their hardened chocolate coating.

Like a shattering mirror, tears start to fall from her eyes as a heart wrenching sob creaks out of her causing her body to shutter like a rickety shack in a storm.

Unable to do anything else, Nick wraps his arms around her and plants a kiss on the side of her head.

For a few minutes he simply holds her as she reacquaints herself with his scent, warmth and the feeling of his body against hers. And he takes comfort in the fact that he is able to provide her this comfort.

He doesn’t dare relinquish his hold on her out of fear that she will somehow combust without his steady hold. She swallows thickly and licks her lips as she tilts her head up to meet his gaze. Her eyes are red from the tears that have evacuated her and her skin is a visual representation of the mess that is swirling inside her.

Her pain hits him like a freight and if she hadn’t been holding on to him he’s sure he would have fallen over.

She raises a shaking hand and tentively brushes her fingers down his cheek. His days worth of stubble rasps against her fingertips. He stands in rigid silence as her hand moves down his neck to the top of his chest. Like a knee jerk reaction Nick grabs her hand before it can travel any further.

Juliette’s searching eyes take in his own and what she sees reflected back at her is much like the dog that had been brought in a few days ago after having being hit by a car. Terrified, in pain and seeking a relief that will knock it on its ass.

Slowly, as if she is attempting to soothe a wild animal, Juliette raises her free hand and cups Nick’s face. He flinches, as if burned, but she is not deterred and instead rises up and plants a kiss on his lips.

At first he is unresponsive, his muscles tensing as if bracing for an attack, and his lips remain still and solid. As Juliette prepares to pull away, an apology on the tip of her tongue, Nick surges forward and collides his lips with hers. His breaths come out in sharp gasps as he seemingly attempts to mold their bodies into one.

Nick backs Juliette against a counter and cages her body with his arms as he continues his assault
on her lips. With both hands now free, Juliette wraps her arms around Nick’s neck and enacts her own response.

~GRIMM~

Sean sits silently in his living room. The moon’s rays casting deep contrasting shadows across his face as if taking ownership of half of his identity.

His bottomless black eyes swirl with the flickering of the flames from the fireplace as they click and dance out a demonic jig.

Sean raises a glass of whiskey to his lips and take a long drink, the sharp sting of alcohol as it slithers down his throat barely phases him. His mind and soul too consumed by the lingering pain he feels at having to walk away from Nick. He knows that if he hadn’t, he would have done something unforgiveable, like claim Nick in front of all Nick’s closest friends, and only death would have made him stop.

But that would never happen for it was not his hand that Nick would cling to when the sure storm of nightmares would plague him. No, that duty belonged to Juliette, the one who held Nick’s heart in a gilded cage and wore the key around her neck.

He lifts the glass back to his lips but is annoyed to find that glass is empty. Sighing in annoyance he forces his body to rise from the couch and amble towards the bar area to pour himself some more. Or drink straight from the bottle, his zauberbiest biology definitely had its drawbacks, but his body’s ability to burn alcohol was not one of them. That and it also helped to numb the piercing pain that had taken residence in his heart.

However currently he wished he could get drunk. Maybe then he could get so black out drunk that the mere mention of the Grimm wouldn’t cause him such nerve slicing agony.

He carelessly tosses the lid to the bottle of whiskey and brings the bottle to his lips. The amber liquid coats his throat as he chugs, the burn not even registering which is a shame because it would have been a relief from the fiery pain continuing to burn in his heart.

~GRIMM~

The coats and robes hanging from the hook on the door drop to the floor as Nick pushes the bedroom door open. Juliette clings to his torso like a superglued monkey as she licks and kisses his neck. Nick moans when she rubs her crotch against his clothed member which twitches at the invitation but quickly brushes off the attention.

Growling, whether from arousal or frustration Nick couldn’t tell you, he carries Juliette further into the room and tosses her onto their bed. She lands on her back and bounces for a moment before sitting up. Her pupils are completely blown, the lust pooling in her very bones having come to a complete boil.

As Nick takes in the erotic sight before him, particularly that of Juliette’s almost demonic eyes, an unexpected image flashes in front of his eyes. Sean’s dark eyes and concerned face as he leans over Nick. He can see every fine wrinkle that paints the creases by his eyes and he can practically taste the air that passes between them.

At this his dick comes to full attention in his jeans as if someone had injected Viagra straight into his bloodstream.
Nick almost falls over from the unexpected surge of arousal that shoots through him after the image of Sean has faded away, much to his surprised remorse. But before he can take the embarrassing tumble backwards that his body is steadily reclining towards, Juliette tucks her legs under her body and rises off the bed. She jerks off her ratty t-shirt and tosses it aside leaving her upper body in a lacy black bra.

With a seductive grin on her face, she reaches out and grips his stained and frankly odorous shirt which had been loaned to him by Hank and tugs him towards her.

While Nick’s mind is busy going over the confusing emotions wreaking havoc on his body, Juliette caresses her elegant fingers down his torso to the bottom of his shirt.

Before Nick can even think to stop her, she hikes his shirt up to his chest and the lustful expression she once wore drops and is replaced with a horrified gasp. Silvery scars are painted across Nick’s skin and range out in such mesmerizing crisscrossing patterns that it’s almost as if a spider has claimed his torso as its masterpiece.

Juliette’s gasp brings him out of his rattling thoughts and he quickly jerks his shirt down. His erection quickly dies and the only emotion he feels is fear and rage.

“Oh my god, when did... how did you...?”

He knew exactly what she was looking at. The scars. When he had first seen them as he was slipping into the borrowed shirt he had almost puked. The silvery wisps that now littered his entire torso would forever remain a reminder of the hell he had taken part in. He wasn’t selfish enough to call what he had experienced his own personal hell. Because while he himself had faced brutal atrocities he knows that the wesens who had been forced to engage him in battle were in fact facing their worst fears.

Sickeningly he can’t help but feel that the wesens had gotten off easy. Certainly they felt as much or even more fear than Nick had felt during his time in captivity. But at least their torment had an end. They weren’t forced to live with the haunting echoes of screams or the twisted mobile of vacant eyes that danced around his mind.

They didn’t have to look at their hands and see them coated in the blood of their victims.

As Nick’s subconscious pummels him with self loathing thoughts and images, Juliette rises from the bed and steps to his front.

“Nick?” she cups his face and turns it so that she can look up into his eyes which turns out to be a terrible mistake.

As soon as he looks into her eyes a strangled gasp is wrenched from him because swirling in her brown orbs is the grotesque features of a zauberbiest flexing along his face.

Oblivious to the reason behind Nick's sudden fear, she stands in puzzlement as Nick stumbles away from her hesitant approach.

“Nick, honey what’s wrong?”

Instead of answering Nick dashes into the bathroom and slams the door behind him. Even in his frazzled mind, he knows that Juliette will come after him but he can’t have that. Not now, especially not now.

He locks the door and almost immediately the doorknob tries to turn.
“Nick, please! I’m sorry I don’t... I’m sorry. Please, open the door.”

Her pleas are accompanied by persistent knocking and the doorknob continues to rattle as if beating in time with the pounding of Juliette’s anxious heart.

Nick presses his hands over his ears, applying so much pressure that an outsider would be in fear of him crushing his skull. But no matter how hard he pressed, Juliette’s continued pleas, her banging knocks and the consistent rattling of the doorknob managed to get through. His head feels like a hollow tube being assaulted by an influx of competing marching bands.

Turning away from the door Nick comes face to face with his reflection in the mirror. A gush of relief sweeps over him when he recognizes the petrified face staring back at him as his own. Juliette’s continued pounding fades into white noise as Nick lowers his hands and approaches the sink, his need to confirm the image he sees overriding his instincts.

His relief however freezes over into a glacier of horror as right before his eyes, the skin covering the muscles of his jaw melts away, as if someone had poured acid over it, exposing the bone beneath with only jagged waves of skin connecting his jaw to his face. The horrific effect crosses over to the right side of his face to the area surrounding his eye which goes on to expose various spots of muscle and bone around the fragile organ.

He nearly loses consciousness from shock when his eyes glow a fiery red.

~GRIMM~

The last few sips of liquor glides down his throat and he finally brings the bottle away from his lips. His tongue dips out and greedily laps up any stray drops it can find around his mouth.

He forces himself to set the bottle down and walk away. Because if he doesn’t he knows he would continue to drown himself in alcohol, searching for a solution for a clouded mind and dissected heart. But the only thing he would find is an unending thirst for something to fill the void in his soul.

His eyes stray to the cloth bound book sitting comfortably on his coffee table. He can practically feel its hidden magic singing to his inner zauberbiest. It’s siren lullaby promising salvation from the decaying of his heart. But the frightening and most alluring lyrics are the lines telling him that Juliette may have the key to Nick’s heart but Sean can own the mold.

Sean’s humanity desperately tries to scream above the chorus, pleading with him to turn tail and flee. For once embrace a cowardly mentality or else embark on a path that he will never be able to return from.

His traitorous body defies these pleas and continues to approach the Grimoir, his fingers tingling with anticipation. As if God himself if responding to his verge of inhumanity, Sean’s cell phone begins to ring.

Taking it for the escape it is, Sean locks the tempting thoughts away and walks towards the ringing device. Its shrill tone echoing off his relatively sterile walls. His movements are mechanical as he picks up the phone. But as his eyes check the screen to see whom is calling him, ice fills his veins.

In place of his already naturally dark eyes, are holes of endless darkness that give audience to the darkest pits of hell.

There is no mistaking the eyes glaring back at him.
The eyes of a Grimm. Only these are not just any ordinary Grimm’s, no, these belong to the benevolent Grimm residing in Nick.

Never before has he felt such bone deep fear, not even when his mother and him were on the run from the Royal family.

It almost feels as if the soles of his feet have taken root and the seed that will bloom is making its journey through his throat down to the bottom of his gut.

The phone continues to ring. Its shrill tone ghosting across his eardrums.

Unable to maintain his grip on the phone, the phone slips from his fingers and clatters to the floor. Its protected body slides across the floor and comes to a stop behind his couch.

What little control he thought he had of his body continues to fall apart as he finds himself backing away from the phone as if it was some sort of detonating bomb. His back eventually meets the side of his dinner table. He doesn’t register the sharp sting of pain that slices across his back.

His phone’s answering machine clicks on and after the beep Hank’s slightly faint voice comes on.

“Hey, Captain. It’s Detective Griffin. Just calling to let you know that I’ve dropped Nick off at his house and that for the most part he’s okay. But I’m going to keep an eye on him, just in case... I also wanted to thank you for all that you did. I know you risked a lot and without you I’m not too sure Nick would still be with us. So... thanks. And I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Hank hangs up and after a few clicks the message is saved and his screen turns black.

Sean blindly grapples for a nearby chair, his fingers shakily gripping onto the back of one. Without looking, his body drops into the chair and he hunches over with his hands automatically moving to cover his eyes.

~GRIMM~

Nick’s limbs magically turn numb and his body instinctively senses that he’s in danger of falling, so his legs fold beneath him and he finds sitting on pine scented tiled floor. The coldness seeps through his think jeans but does little more than tickle him as he contends with the horror that his own face has given birth to.

“Nick, you’re scaring me. Please, just open the door and we can talk. Go to bed, whatever you want just... just please, please open the door.”

Juliette’s voice sounds wracked with tears as she continues to pound on the door, her knocks softening with each passing moment. He wishes he could open the door and assure her that he’s fine, that he was just having a momentary flash of pain that he didn’t want her to have to witness. But his body won’t listen to him and remains splayed out on the floor and his lungs try to expand around the compressing walls of his chest.

“Nick, I can’t even imagine what you’ve been through. But I want to help you. You don’t even have to open the door but at least talk to me.”

He would love nothing more than to be able to do just that. To be able to tell her everything, not just about what he endured while being held captive by his own mother but also about the second life he’s been living as a Grimm.

But wishing is for shooting stars and seeing as there are no stars in sight he is left with only one
option: lying.

“If you don’t want to talk to me, then maybe you’ll talk to Hank.”

Never before has he experienced such difficulty with opening his own mouth as he does now. The muscles controlling his lips movement do their best to remain stubbornly locked together.

“No, no I’m—I’m fine. I’ll be out in a minute.” His voice sounds like it was forced out through a meat grinder. Each vowel obliterated to nothing more than slime coated chunks.

His breath feels like tar in his throat as he waits for her response.

“Are you sure?”

He self-consciously lifts his hand to his cheek, jittering nerves expecting to feel the grotesque pumping of blood vessels. Instead all he feels is days old stubble along with small flecks of blood that glitter to the floor.

“Yeah, I promise. In fact, I’m actually a little hungry.” He does his best to put a little levity into his voice but it comes out more like garbled salt.

“Okay, I’ll go make us some pasta then. Shouldn’t take more than a half hour at most.” Her voice is hesitant, no doubt sensing the bull nearby that has just taken a huge stinking pile of shit. He listens as her footsteps retreat and it is only when he can faintly hear the clanging of pots downstairs that he finally breathes a long exhalation of relief. Or what an outsider would call relief. To him, the breath feels more like a countdown to the trouble that is looming ahead.

Apparently since coming into his Grimm abilities, catching a single day to just breath and pretend to be normal is too much to ask.

~break~

Somehow Nick manages to keep down half a plate of pasta. Each bite tastes like wet cardboard and every time he swallows, he feels like his asophegus has shrinked to the size of a coffee stirrer.

He can feel and see Juliette’s attempt of covert gazing on him, her concern for him blaring like a foghorn. She tries to hide her glances in between bites of her own meal but it’s hard to miss being stared at when your putting on your own act as well, gagging each action so as to come across as being okay.

Unable to stomach the sight of the remaining pasta, Nick rises from his seat and puts on a show of stretching his muscles, he even goes as far as to rub at his eyes a few times.

“I think I’m gonna head upstairs and get some sleep.” He picks up his plate and glass, prepared to put them in the sink but before he can, Juliette stands from her chair and grabs the dishes out of his hand.

“I got this. I’ll finish up here and join you soon.” With a soft smile she kisses his cheek then walks to the sink.

Sighing heavily, as if a weight has been taken off his shoulders, Nick leaves the dining room and walks to the stairs.

As soon as he raises his foot to take the first step the room around him seems to tilt, as if the entire house is a part of a funhouse. He barely manages to plant his foot back on mostly solid ground with
only minimal swaying.

His insides feel like they are on a wild rollercoaster ride wherein the exit is his mouth. Luckily he manages to keep his pasta from making a reappearance, but only slightly. He does however gag at the acidic taste that bursts across his tastebuds.

He knew eating had been a bad idea.

Not wanting to be outdone by simple pasta, a meatless one at that, Nick grits his teeth and does his best to fight through the wave of dizziness that does its best to knock him over. Each step he takes makes him feel like he’s wading through cooling lava.

He finally makes it to the top of the staircase what feels like hours later. The achievement he feels at having made it at all speaks volumes about how warped his body is feeling.

Knowing that he doesn’t have long before Juliette joins him, Nick enters the bedroom and walks straight into the bathroom. He promptly shuts and locks the door behind him because the last thing he needs nor wants is Juliette walking in on him.

He can only meet his reflection for a split moment before having to avert his gaze, the fear of seeing his rotting face again too great. Phantom shivers run up his spine as the memory of exposed muscles, trembling along his face returns to him. He squeezes his eyes shut, his fingers dig into his skull as if they are trying to plow the image out of his memory bank.

Only after the image fades, does he open his eyes and pointedly turn his body away from the mirror and promptly turns the showerhead on.

His body moves of its own accord as he strips out of his clothes. He doesn’t give himself the opportunity to stare at his scarred body for more than a brief second before he steps into the shower and pulls the curtain. He has never been more thankful for the fact that the light in the bathroom has never managed to pass through the curtain too well.

The moment the hot, bordering on scalding water, grazes over his skin he sets out on his task to scrub away all the memories of the blood that painted his skin. And the dying breaths of the wesens he was forced to kill.

But no amount of scrubbing will ever cleanse him of the silver scars that now adorn his body. With each vicious scrub across his increasingly reddening skin, he feels a small layer of relief spreading across his frazzled conscious like a soothing balm. Much like the sensation he felt back at the Grimms’ camp as he pulled at the stitches holding his wound together.

Consciously, he knew hurting himself was one of the most unhealthy coping mechanisms there was. But it was the only one that anchored him to the world while at the same time inflicting the punishment he justly deserves.

As he goes to reach for the shampoo an echoing ring picks up in his head. At first it feels like a bee hive has taken residence in his head, the buzzing vibrating in his skull like a compressed out of control jackhammer. But the jackhammer quickly gives way to a high pressurized air horn glued to his eardrum.

His hands clamp over over his ears in a desperate attempt to stifle the agonizing sound but all it manages to do is muffle the noise. Barely.

The water continues to run, the pinging of the droplets hitting the tile little more than white noise in an ocean of pain. The impact of his knees hitting the soaked tile floor doesn’t register above the
agony in his head as he grapples the slick sides of the tub to ground. To give him something to solidify that he is more than just a conduit for pain.

The impact of his knees hitting the soaked tile floor doesn’t register above the agony in his head as he grapples the slick sides of the tub to ground. To give him something to solidify that he is more than just a conduit for pain.

Unawares to him, his body reverts to a fetal position, as if by placing itself in this form his body and mind will be comforted by the soothing beat of his mother’s heart. But with the unmasking of his mother there is no comfort to be had for the beating of her heart would require her to have had one.

Is this his punishment for all that he has done? To forever be entrenched in the pits of blaring sirens. To continuously have his skull drilled into, inch by inch for all of eternity?

The caress of flames searing into his exposed muscles. Needles piercing his eyes and his limbs stretched to severing would be preferable to the orchestra of torture occurring in his head.

If ever there was an occasion for a deal with the Devil, this was it.

The siren zeroes in on his eardrums. The battering demons clanging around his skull like over hyper children after consuming bags of sugar.

For the longest time he had been able to bite his tongue, to keep the piercing scream inside his lungs. But it only takes a single fan of fire into his heart that releases the caged scream. Its spasmic raven wings are lined with pulsing veins which weep blood with each flap. And eyes that drip tears of oil.

As soon as the scream penetrates the air the ceiling light, which houses a single fluorescent bulb, explodes and the mirror above the sink cracks.

Nick doesn’t notice nor taste the blood that seeps from his mouth. And he definitely doesn’t react to Juliette storming the bathroom and whipping open the shower curtain.

He doesn’t feel Juliette’s frantic fingers fluttering across his face or neck as she checks his pulse. And he definitely doesn’t hear her pleading words for him to stay with her, that she loves him.

All he sees and hear is the inky blackness of offered by his closed eyelids and the lulling rumble of his blood surfing through his veins.

~GRIMM~

Even though he had just barely managed to force himself from giving in before, Sean finds himself seated in front of his coffee table flipping through his mother’s Grimoir. His eyes scan each page, lingering on any spell that even vaguely relates to the suspicions roiling around his mind.

He knew that the spell would have repercussions, how could there not be when connecting both physically and mentally with another living soul? But he had prayed that none of them would involve the symptoms he’s been experiencing. That the repercussions wouldn’t lead to a more painful, not to mention psychologically damaging, situation.

Now nearing the end of the book, his hopes of finding the solution are hanging by a thinning thread, when he finally comes across his answer. As he reads the ball of lead that has steadily been traveling down his stomach has now taken permanent residence in the bottom of his gut.
If he doesn’t act now, he knows that his symptoms and that of Nick’s will only get worse.

Knowing that he can’t afford to make a single mistake he rereads the instructions at least three times before marking the page and closing the book. When he rises from the couch he is hit with a sudden bout of vertigo that nearly sends him to the floor. Luckily he manages to collapse back onto the couch and take a moment for a few deep breaths.

Vertigo however is not what this is. Vertigo or even low blood sugar would be preferable to what is actually occurring. No, this was solidifying proof that his fears were correct and he knew that it was only a matter of time before he was hit with soul warping agony.

He doesn’t know how far along Nick’s own symptoms are or if he’s even experienced any. But if Nick hasn’t yet, he soon will and because of their unique differences in physiology, though not by a lot, they will be substantially greater than Sean’s own.

Once the bout of dizziness has abated, Sean stands from his couch once more and gathers the book in hand and collects his thankfully undamaged phone from the floor.

As he goes to dial a newly memorized number, his phone starts to ring. The bright screen displays the caller as Rosalee and immediately a swell of fear rises within him. Even before he accepted the call and brought the phone to his ear, he knew the message he was about to receive.

“What was his condition when he was brought in?”

“He was unconscious and unresponsive. They took him into the back to run some tests but we haven’t heard anything since. Juliette says she found him unconscious in the shower after having heard him from scream from downstairs.”

Sean opens his eyes and heads for the door. He does his best to ignore the buzzing throb taking shape in the base of his skull.

“The doctors won’t be able to help him, but I can. I need you to meet me at the Spice Shop as soon as you can. I’m on my way there now.” He closes and locks the door behind him then practically sprints down the hallway towards the staircase. Waiting for an elevator would only stunt his mission in getting to the Spice Shop.

“Sean, what’s going on?” his feet fly down the stairs, their shape little more than blurs.

“I’ll explain everything to you when I see you. Right now just know that I can help Nick.” He pushes the door open and enters the lobby of his apartment building. The nightguard gives him a sideway glance before returning to watching the security feed connected to his desk.

“Okay, I’ll see you in a bit then.” She hangs up and Sean tucks the phone in his pants pocket.

Spying his parked car in the parking lot he is about to take out his keys and head for it when he is hit by a flare of pain in his head that quickly, but not quickly enough, fades away.

At this point driving would likely lead to him ending up in the hospital as well. And so with that in mind, Sean turns away from the parking lot and heads for the sidewalk. As soon as he sees an approaching cab he lifts his hand and calls out for the cab to stop.
As soon as he is inside the overly warm cab, he gives the address to the Spice Shop.

While the cab driver pulls back onto the street, Sean uses his free hand to rub at his temple. The pain from earlier has returned with a vengeance and Sean knows that it is only a matter time before he will be unable to help Nick or himself.

Chapter End Notes

So freaking sorry for the cliffhanger but it was the best place for the chapter to end. My muse seems to take sick pleasure in writing hurt Nick. Don't worry though, I plan on getting to work on the next chapter right away so hopefully it will be published for you all to read sometime next month.
The Second Tree

Chapter Summary

Sean must play the hero one last time or else lose himself and Nick to their poisonous biology.

Chapter Notes

I am so, so very sorry for the ridiculously long wait. Like it's not even funny how long it took for me to update this story. I could put here all the reasons as to why this took so long but in reality I did have time to get this out sooner but instead I allowed myself to put this on the back burner.

For that, I forced myself to finally finish this chapter and get it out to you guys. Along with that I also made sure that this update was extra long for you, that can either be a blessing or curse. Anyway, I hope you enjoy this much overdue update.

Finally, this story is almost over, like I'm really only imagining two more chapters after this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sean hastily hands the driver a fifty dollar bill and tells him to keep the change, much to the driver's delight.

“Thank you, sir!” the greasy looking man, who looks like he hasn’t bathed in weeks (and smells like it too) gives him a toothy grin. His missing front tooth looks at Sean like a third eye, calculating all the sins Sean has committed.

Instead of responding Sean jerks himself out of the cab and slams the door shut. Before his feet have even fully touched the ground, the cab speeds off, as if the driver is fearful that Sean will change his mind.

Sean swallows down a groan of pain as the jackhammer in his head grinds down to bone, leaving pieces of bone imbedded into the nerves of his brain. Gritting his teeth he does his best to compartmentalize the pain and steps toward the closed Spice Shop.

He prays to a God that he’s not sure he truly believes in to give him enough strength to not pass out.

~GRIMM~

Earlier

Hank, Monroe, Rosalee and Juliette sit quietly in the waiting room, the only sound being the intercom requesting doctors and the jittery thumping of Juliette’s shoes hitting the disinfected tile
of the floor. Her bloodshot eyes stare at the clock, each ticking second that passes by feels like a knife to her heart.

They had been waiting for what felt hours, days even since Nick had been hurried away on a gurney. He had been so still, his chest barely moving and his skin... it had felt like the skin of a corpse.

As Nick was swept away from her she had overheard the doctors words: “Hypertension... thready pulse... non-responsive” with her medical degree she had the unfortunate knowledge of the danger that Nick was in. Especially if the doctors couldn’t figure out and fix whatever was causing this to happen.

She must have been on the verge of actually digging a hole into the ground because she nearly falls into it when Rosalee gently grabs her by the arm.

“Sorry, I thought you might like some water” she holds out a StyroFoam cup, her smile soft as if trying to comfort a small child and not a distraught girlfriend well on her way to a wall-punching breakdown. They both silently knew why Rosalee hadn’t brought her coffee.

Shooting the other woman a grateful smile that just barely manages to chop through the layer of anxiety that coats her face, she accepts the cup. When she takes a tentative sip of the water, all she tastes is the flouride from the city’s pipes.

Now that she has been given the supposedly soothing gift of water, it is expected that Juliette would now sit down and adopt a projection of calm. Of course any sane person knows it’s all an act put on for the benefit of others but no one cares.

Juliette however chooses to against the grain and continue her act of worried girlfriend. By the time she finally stops, she’s determined to be fully informed of Nick’s condition and seated by his side.

Rosalee hates to watch the blatant grief roaring in Juliette’s eyes. What she despises even more however herself. While Juliette is drowning a sea of confusion, Rosalee and the others at least have an idea behind the cause of Nick’s state. At least two different ideas but either one would mean that they had let Nick leave while whatever this was had been brewing inside him.

Wanting to somehow make up for the secrets, Rosalee once agains goes to approach Juliette and offer her... an apology? Comfort? She wasn’t sure but she needed to do something.

But one look at the clock ticking away on the wall reminded her that she needed to meet Renard at the Spice Shop.

Piling on the hate into a self-hatred souffle, she holds her breath as she grabs her purse from the chair beside Monroe.

Keeping her voice low she whispers in his ear that she has to go meet with Sean.

“How do you need me to come with you?” his legs are beneath him before he can even finish his sentence.

Rosalee can’t help the small smile that blooms across her face. It was times like this that she forgot Monroe’s natural predatory instincts.

“I’ll be fine. Call me if anything changes with Nick.” She kisses Monroe on the cheek then with one last regretful look at Juliette, she exits the hospital.
Present

As Rosalee pulls up to the Spice Shop, she could see Renard leaning against the building. His face pinched in pain as he massages his brow and if she wasn’t mistaken, the lights catching off his skin glisten as if he had bathed his face in oil.

Parking Monroe’s car, Rosalee reaches across the seat to get her purse and looks up just in time to witness Renard collapse.

“Sean!” She carelessly tosses her purse aside and practically leaps from the car to Renard’s side. She barely notices the hard concrete biting through the knees of her thin jeans as she checks Renard over.

He bats her concerned hands away “I’m fine.”

Rosalee would have laughed but the sheen of Renard’s skin was way too close to that of porcelain for even the slightest scoff. But even though she was only just getting to really know the other man, the mystery surrounding him bordering on a sandstorm, she could still tell when something was deeply troubling him.

She bites her tongue as Renard struggles to his feet and it is only then that she notices the Grimoir he holds in his hand. The pit of her stomach collapses in on itself.

“What’s happening?”

Renard can only meet her gaze for a moment before he quickly looks away, his body tensing as though preparing for impact. Rosalee furrows her brow in confusion but doesn’t press the issue.

Still avoiding her gaze, Renard jerks his head towards the Spice Shop entrance, “I’ll tell you inside.”

She didn’t think she would ever hear the Guardian of Portland use a voice that resembled that of a starving beggar, pleading for food instead of a strong, powerful Royal Zauberbiest. His voice twists her impulse to continue to ask questions, instead she simply nods and gets out her shop key.

Before she can open the door all the way, Sean slides past her into the darkened shop, his nice dress shoes catch on a nail which causes his already noticeably weak body to nearly take a face plant. Luckily, he manages to catch himself on a sturdy shelf, which only creaks under his weight.

Rosalee’s knowing fingers flick on the light and smoothly enters the shop then shuts and locks the door behind her. Even though she wasn’t expecting any customers to come in, she didn’t want anyone overhearing what Renard was about to tell her.

“What is going on, Sean?”

Sean takes a shaky breath and makes sure to keep his eyes to the ground as he rummages up the best way to explain to Rosalee the consequences of how he helped save Nick.

“There’s a reason that there are no other cases of anyone, hexen or otherwise, performing Il Sengue Mente since the Dark Ages.” He swallows the oily lump in his throat, his stomach churning at the rumbling of grief and stress coiling inside him.

Rosalee has to restrain herself from shaking the words out of Sean.

“And the main reason for that is because those that did all suffered from what is referred to as la
fusione dell'anima, loosely translated it means soul fusion.”

“I don’t like the sound of that….” Rosalee utters.

Sean nods in agreement and continues, “That’s been the sentiment for the past few thousand years. As I’m sure you know, you can’t do something so volatile and…against nature without consequence. And I’d say sharing a body’s essence is about as against nature as you can get.”

Rosalee leaned against the countertop of the checkout desk, “Okay, so what exactly does this… consequence do?” From what Juliette had told her and the obvious fear that Sean’s displaying, she knows that it isn’t going to be a walk in the park.

“In layman’s terms, it means that Nick and my souls are essentially warping together. And as I said before, a body, no matter what species it is, cannot contain two souls especially if they are of different genetics.”

“But there’s a cure, right? Some way to save you both?”

She tries to make eye contact with him again, but like last time he evades her gaze.

“There is but it requires me going back into Nick’s mind.”

Rosalee frowns, “we don’t have time to make up another batch.”

Renard sighs, “I’m not suggesting we attempt another go at il sangue mente. What I’m suggesting is a little more… therapeutic. The spell is called Condividere i sogni, dream sharing.”

Before Rosalee can speak, Renard continues, not having time to listen to the questions she may have.

“I need ash leaves, silene capensis, and mandrake root.” He instructs before brushing past her into the workroom to the side of the shop area.

Just as he reaches the table a whip of pain lances through his skull causing his vision to momentarily swim. He tries his best to orient himself by grasping for the wooden table but all he manages to grasp is air. Luckily, before his body can complete its downward trip, Rosalee grips his arm and holds him up.

Without thinking, Sean turns to face Rosalee and immediately regrets it when as soon as she makes eye contact her concerned expression morphs into fright.

“Your-your eyes…” unable to get handle on her shock, Rosalee can feel herself woge and take an unconscious attack stance.

A foreign force inside of Sean twists his tendons and it takes everything in him not to lunge at Rosalee. He jerks his head away forces his body to stumble to the other side of the room, doing his best to smother the attack instincts building within him.

If the foreign force attacking his insides wasn’t enough to feed the anxiety building within him, there was also the muffled but familiar feeling of his facial features trying to woge. He could feel his Zauberbiest side trying to claw itself out of his skin; the skin around his cheeks and eyes ripples but fails to rip open and expose the beast beneath.

When she finally manages to get a grip on her instincts, Rosalee returns to her human. She cautiously approaches Sean whom has his back turned to her and is gripping the wall as if it is the
only thing holding him up.

“Sean--“

“Please, just get me the ingredients.”

His nails dig into the brick wall as adrenaline fueled shivers ripple through his body. He can feel his Zauberbiest side recoiling in confusion and rage against the foreign Grimm entity blocking it from coming out.

Rosalee wants to offer him comfort and yes, a selfish part of her wants to question him about what is going on but it doesn’t take a genius to ascertain that doing either would result in pain for both parties involved.

Going with the retreat instinct, Rosalee backs away from the distressed man, “okay, but I may have to call my supplier for the silene capensis” she admits.

“Just hurry.” He grits out, a particularly aggressive ripple causes him to almost lose his grip on the wall.

With a silent nod Rosalee hurries from the room and dashes downstairs to scour her shelves for the ingredients that she knows she has.

After a few moments go by, the battle raging inside of Sean gives reprieve and he allows his body to sag to the floor.

“Hurry.” He whispers, already feeling the next bout of internal blows building up for the next round.

~break~

Rosalee returns to the work room carrying a small box of some of the requested ingredients that the spell called for. As she enters the room the box almost slips from her grasp but luckily she is able to readjust her grip in time to stop its fall.

With her focus still on maintaining a secure grip on the box, she walks towards the large table in the middle of the room, “I had to call one of my contacts in town to get the Mandrake Root but- oh my God!”

She nearly trips in her effort to dash to an unconscious Sean whom trembles in the corner of the room.

Her fingers automatically go to check his pulse but before she can so much as tap his skin, her hand is captured which lets out an involuntary shriek from her lips.

Another scream tries to break itself out of her throat but the sound dies in her throat as Sean stares at her with the darkened sight of a ruthless Grimm. The longer she stares into the tunneling gloom the more intense the chilling embrace of death becomes.

Rosalee had purposely never gone into full detail with Nick about what she sees when she looks into his eyes. While she knew that he is aware that wesen see what is essentially death when they look into his eyes, she is not sure that anyone, not even Monroe, has fully explained to Nick how deep that glimpse of death runs.

A simple glance into a Grimm’s eyes can lead a wesen down a swirling and physically draining
journey that transports them to Death’s own realm. They can feel Death’s touch seeping deep into their veins and hear the ticking of their life force slowing down.

The reactions to this experience generally fall into two categories: rage and fear. Predator based wesens, as expected are the ones that are more likely to respond in rage due to their biological need to dominate. Prey based wesens though can also react in rage but they are more likely to offer a more defensive attack before ultimately fleeing.

Rosalee herself is what would be considered a predator based wesen. However, in this moment the expected rage that she felt when she first met Nick, before she became aware that he wasn’t like the Grimms she had learned about growing up, she feels a soul deep sense of fear. Because unlike a normal Grimm, the eyes that she is looking into now not only swirl with the dusk of a Grimm, they also combat with the electric slices of a Zauberbiest.

Two biologically different but still similar predators that her Fuchsbau side recognizes as deadly threats.

Unfortunately, her wesen side isn’t the only one reacting to a perceived threat.

Before she can attempt to take back her hand, Sean’s grip intensifies and his other hand clamps around her throat.

She only has enough oxygen to gasp out a pleading “Sean” before the small funnel of oxygen is cut off leaving her valiantly trying to jerk out of his powerful grip.

Through rapidly clouding vision, she mentally continues to plead for Sean to snap out of whatever hold the Grimm has on him.

For the briefest moment, the raging battle ceases fire on both sides while the aftershocks continue to rock the ground. But the slight respite gives Sean’s mind just a long enough moment of clarity to rip his hands away from Rosalee and slam the rearing battle behind a flimsy cell door.

It won’t hold for long though as he can feel the rusted bolts slowly twisting undone.

Rosalee desperately chokes down oxygen as uncontrollable tears pour from her eyes. Running on adrenaline and instinct, she can’t help but tug her body away from Sean as she struggles to get her breathing under control.

Guilt and fear claws at his insides as he watches Rosalee cough and sluggishly pull her body away from him. He always knew he harbored a monstrous side but it had been sometime since he truly felt like there was no line between himself and his Zauberbiest side.

“Rosalee I’m-I’m so sorry.” He stutters, wishing he could help her but knowing that with the thin grasp he has on his mind and body right now it would be too risky of causing her further harm.

Finally regaining control of her lungs, Rosalee rearranges herself into a splayed out seated position.

“I’m okay” she assures him although the developing bruises around her throat and neck not to mention the cough that soon follows puts a dampener on her words.

She clears her throat and winces slightly at the stinging pain the action causes, “I found most of the ingredients but I had to call a friend to bring me the Mandrake Root. He should be here in about fifteen-twenty minutes.”

With his muscles clenched and mind working on processing her words and maintaining his control,
all Sean can manage to do is nod in response.

Seeing that that’s all she’s going to get, Rosalee pushes herself up from the floor and walks back to the front of the shop to get the ingredients for a natural pain relieving tea remedy.

~break~

Just as she finishes preparing her tea, a rapport of knocks breaks the air.

Setting her steaming mug down she turns her head to see her supplier standing on the other side of the door. He smiles at her and waves a wrapped package in his hand for her to see.

She does her to best to paste on a smile as she opens the door and greets her friend and supplier.

“Hey Matt, thanks so much for bringing this. How much do I owe you?” she asks while plucking her purse from behind the cash register.

“Forty-even, you’re lucky you called when you did, I was just about to close shop for the night.” He replies, his voice ending on a lilting laugh. Rosalee forces out a compatible chuckle as she counts out the money and holds the bills out to him.

“Good thing. Thanks again, Matt I really appreciate it. I’ll be sure to call you at a more appropriate hour to get together some time.” She knows she’s not being very subtle about her desire for him to leave but she has more important things to worry about than hurting her friend’s feelings.

Luckily, he gets the hint and pockets the money then turns to leave. However just as she is about to breathe a sigh of relief a pained moan echoes from the workroom.

The sigh turns into an icy sheet that lodges itself in her throat.

Matt halts only inches from the door and turns to face Rosalee, “Is someone here?” he maintains a casual expression but his lowered timbre speaks of his suspicious mindset.

“Yes, I have a customer in the workroom waiting for me to make them a sleeping remedy which I need the Mandrake root to do.” It takes all her vocal-chord strength to keep her voice calm. She thanks God that Matt is purely human and not a wesen otherwise all it would take is a single whiff and he would see straight through her lie.

She can tell that he doesn’t fully believe her but she is relieved to see him finally open the door and take a step out.

“I’ll call you tomorrow, it was good seeing you Rosalee.”

Rosalee maintains a smile on her face until the door clicks close behind him. Her mouth droops into a frown and she hightails it back into the workroom.

Sean is still where she left him only now tremors are running through his body and his eyes are pinched shut as he lets out whining growls.

She rushes to his side and kneels down beside him, “Sean?”

His body tenses, abruptly cutting off the tremors with a click but he can’t stop the growls from continuing to creak from the corners of his tightened lips.

She struggles to form a sentence, doing her best to refrain from asking him if he’s okay because even a blind person could tell that Sean was anything but fine. Should she tell him the mundane
fact that she has the Mandrake Root? While it was definitely good news it wasn’t as if just by
having the plant all their problems were solved.

Before she can contemplate another way to open communication, Sean grits his teeth and pries his
mouth open.

“Hand me the Grimoire.”

Not knowing how else to respond she rises from the ground and grabs the requested book off the
table then returns to Sean and hands him the book. She watches as he opens his eyes and hastily
flips through the pages until he lands on the one that he wants.

“Follow these instructions.” He pants as he turns the book to face her, his finger tapping rapidly at
the page beneath it.

Not knowing what else to do, Rosalee takes the book from him and scans the page for the spell.
The instructions are pretty basic and mostly come off as the directions one would see for an herbal
tea remedy. However, the tea that would be coming out of this wasn’t one that could be found in a
grocery store.

She lifts her head, prepared to speak but words are wiped from her mind as Sean curls further into
himself and lets out another whining growl.

Rising to her feet she hurries to the worktable and gets started on the potion.

~GRIMM~

A young male nurse enters Nick’s room and silently goes to check the patient’s vitals and IV. As
he works, his eyes trail across the unconscious man’s features taking in the deep bags under his
eyes and the way the light makes his clammy skin appear almost translucent.

From the moment Mr. Burkhardt had been brought in, mystery had surrounded him. His
symptoms were all over the place: convulsions, telangiectasias on the lower left side and upper
right part of the face, bradycardia and the list goes on. As he was walking into the room, he could
overhear one of the doctors saying that they were going to take Mr. Burkhardt for an MRI as soon
as the room became available.

Until then, Mr. Burkhardt would remain the latest medical mystery the hospital is treating. The
nurse was hopeful that his status would change before they had to contemplate preparing for the
worst.

Jotting down the time of the patient’s latest saline check, the nurse mentally notes the next patient
he has to check on before heading for the door. He only makes it a few steps before the machine
flatlines and emits a harsh continuous beep.

He doesn’t even have to call for a Code Blue before doctors and other nurses are stampeding into
the room and surround the patient’s bed. The doctors shout out orders as nurses comply with them
all in order to try and save Mr. Burkhardt’s life.

~GRIMM~

Rosalee turns off the hotplate and empties the boiled liquid into a thermos then screws the lid on.
Right as she finishes that, her cell phone rings, the screen lighting up with a picture of Monroe’s
smiling face.

With a swipe of her finger, she answers the call and brings the device to her ear.

“Hello?”

“Rosalee, listen you’ve gotta get back to the hospital. Nick’s condition has gotten worse and they’re talking about performing more tests. Juliette’s practically gone catatonic and I don’t know what to do.” In the background, she can hear the murmured voices of passing medical officials along with the occasional intercom message.

She props the phone between her ear and shoulder as she deposits the thermos into her purse.

“I’m on my way now with Sean and hopefully we have something that will help Nick. Try getting to Juliette to drink some water and alert a nurse just in case.” She goes to Sean’s side and squats down beside him.

She’s thankful that not only does Monroe not question her first name basis with Renard but also the fact that the two are together for whatever reason. Instead, he says he’ll see her soon and the two exchange goodbyes before hanging up.

“Sean?”

His eyes slit open and rove to her own, “is it finished?”

“Yes, but listen we have to get to the hospital now. Nick’s condition is worsening and Monroe says the doctors are talking about conducting more tests.”

At her words, Sean’s eyes open further and he tries to force his limbs to cooperate as he attempts to stand up. But as his luck has been going, he doesn’t get much further than to a swaying hunch before his legs give out on him.

Luckily, Rosalee sees the descent coming and quickly holds him up. Tossing the taller man’s arm around her slighter shoulders, she slowly helps him walk towards the door while making a quick pit-stop at the table to pick up her purse.

Although it is slow-going, they finally make it outside and to Rosalee’s parked car.

~GRIMM~

By the time they finally enter the ICU waiting room, she has had to wave off three concerned nurses and two doctors from taking Sean off to be examined. Truthfully, it would be so much easier if she could at least secure a wheelchair seeing as she was basically the only thing keeping Sean from making a bed on the tiled floor. But not only would that detract from their current mission, it would also take away the only person whom could hopefully save Nick and Sean’s own life.

When Monroe lays his eyes on his struggling girlfriend practically dragging the Guardian of Portland, he immediately springs from his chair and hurries to relieve Rosalee of Renard’s weight.

“What the hell happened?” he carefully deposits Renard onto the closest chair then turns to face a disheveled Rosalee.

Instead of receiving a response, she grabs him by the arm and drags him out of Juliette’s hearing range. Once that is accomplished, Rosalee dives right into her explanation.
“I need you to help me get Sean into Nick’s room and to keep an eye on Juliette.” She instructs, adjusting the strap of her purse digging into her shoulder.

As she goes to step past him back towards Renard, he whirls around swiftly blocks her path. From the way her body practicly vibrates, he can tell that she is in the midst of an inner battle, likely to shove him out of the way. However, Monroe is already dealing with the stress of not knowing whether his best friend is going to survive, he can’t handle being in the dark about another potential life-changing situation.

The eyes that meet his own momentarily steal the breath straight from his lungs. These are not the eyes that he dreams about staring into for the rest of his life. No, instead the eyes staring back at him are ones filled with greasy fear and tendrils of poisonous grief.

“Please Monroe, just do as I am asking you and I promise I will explain later.”

He wants to fight her on this, he really does. Monroe is all too aware of the catastrophic outcomes that can occur with limited knowledge on the battlefield. Because that is what this is, a battle and he is sure that victor is aiming for the life of Portland’s Grimm and he’s willing to bet Portland’s Guardian as well.

But he can also tell when questions can impede a quest and so, though his veins twist deeper into his heart, he silently nods and follows Rosalee’s lead in hefting Renard up from his chair.

However, while Monroe has resolved himself to keeping his questions to himself, Juliette is under no such mindset.

“What the hell is going on?” she stands and, to Monroe and Rosalee’s dismay, begins to follow them down the hallway.

Rosalee slips her purse over Monroe’s free arm then urges him to keep going. After seeing that he is doing as he is told she turns around just in time to prevent Juliette from going after the pair.

She can’t help the wince that shakes her body at the chilling glare the usually soft-faced Veterinarian sports.

“Juliette- “

“Tell me what is going on, right now.” Juliette crosses her arms and maintains her glare. But Rosalee can easily see the cracks webbing out from her flimsy hard-faced construction. Along with that it’s impossible not to hear the quiver at the end of her demand.

In truth, Rosalee wishes she could tell the other woman everything. Only shortly after getting to know Juliette, Rosalee easily gets along with her and greatly enjoys her company. However, like Nick she also has to pull off two separate personas: a very HUMAN spice shop owner and when not with Juliette, a WESEN aiding Portland’s Grimm in protecting Portland.

There have been so many times that she wishes she could pull Juliette aside and tell her about the world that she doesn’t know about, Rosalee’s and more importantly Nick’s world. A world where the fairytales Juliette likely grew up hearing are actually based in fact and that, for most of Rosalee’s life, the brave Hunter whom to humans comes off as the hero to wesens is actually the villain.

“Rosalee!”

Rosalee snaps out of her pondering and returns her gaze to Juliette’s smoldering eyes. She can feel
her lips twitching, eager to split apart and spill all the secrets that she has been keeping from her friend.

Thankfully though, the choice is momentarily delayed at the appearance of a white lab-coated Doctor addressing Juliette.

“Ms. Silverton, we’ve managed to stabilize your boyfriend’s condition. However, you are listed as his medical proxy and I would like to speak with you in private regarding the next steps in Mr. Burkhardt’s treatment here.” The Doctor smiles kindly at Rosalee for a brief moment before returning his gaze to Juliette.

Rosalee can see the internal battle raging in Juliette’s mind as her eyes flick between the Doctor and Rosalee. She is likely arguing between the merits of continuing her quest for answers from her friend and gaining more questions than answers by Nick’s Doctor.

In the end though, Juliette wisely turns her gaze to the Doctor and agrees to speak with him in his office. Rosalee knows she is long from off the hook however when she finds herself back on the receiving end of a granite-slap look from Juliette as she walks off with the Doctor that promises that their conversation is far from over.

Even though she knows her reprieve is only temporary, Rosalee lets out a sigh of relief and hurries after Monroe and Sean.

~break~

Monroe carefully places Renard onto the plastic chair situated beside Nick’s bed then rests his back against the wall as his eyes take in the fading state of his best friend. It was horrifyingly amazing how Nick’s appearance could change so drastically in what was only a few hours.

When Juliette had called him earlier from the hospital, he honestly didn’t know what to expect. At the time Juliette had been so overwhelmed with grief and shock that she could barely get out anything past a few barely coherent sentences. It had finally taken the help of a nurse to explain to Monroe that Nick was in the hospital and that his presence would be appreciated.

Rosalee was with him at the time of the call and even if she hadn’t been there was nothing that was going to stop her from accompanying him to the hospital.

Upon actually seeing Nick as he was being checked over by doctors it felt as though he were looking at a ghost. One that had been ravaged by a failed exorcism. Nick’s already pale skin was translucent and the bags beneath his eyes looked like weights sinking into his face.

One striking difference from the last time he had seen Nick was the creeping and twisting dark branches veering along the angles of the man’s face. It almost looked like someone had snuck into the room and made the unconscious man’s face their art project.

If that were the case, he would question if the artist was in their macabre phase.

The last time Monroe had laid eyes on his friend, that image had been horrible enough and he knew that it would haunt him for years to come. Now though, he was certain that the image would never leave his subconscious.

Tubes and wires splayed away and around Nick’s fragile body like vines of death slowly pulling him into its embrace. He can’t help but flash back to the memory of Nick laying on that sacrificial table, the knife sticking out of his chest and the blood….
The bones in his knuckles pop from the pressure as his fists clench in on themselves, his body doing its best to fight off the memory. Now wasn’t the time to get lost in memories, now was the time to fight to make sure that Nick didn’t become a permanent memory of the past.

Renard’s hollow groan thankfully pulls him out of his head and he goes to the other man’s side.

“Renard?” Monroe leans down beside Renard, his eyes slightly widening at the noticeable ashy tone and bloodshot eyes of the usually well-groomed man. He’s even more stunned when a thin trail of blood suddenly begins to drip from Renard’s right eye.

Not knowing what else to do, Monroe reaches into his back pocket to get his handkerchief and silently wipes the bloody evidence away.

Monroe can’t help but jump when Renard’s weak grip clamps down on his wrist and he meets the hazy and bloodshot eyes of Portland’s Guardian.

They only make eye contact for a few seconds before Renard seems to realize whom is touching him and he drops his hand.

Too drained of life to care about apologizing, Sean looks around his surroundings and upon laying eyes on Nick’s still form realizes that he is in Nick’s hospital room. His heart and lungs feel like they have entered an industrial sized shredder as he takes in the younger man. Like Monroe, he can’t help but contend that Nick is nearing the losing end of death.

Each whirring pump from the oxygen machine forces his own lungs to rattle out their own rattling reply.

He thickly swallows, “where’s Rosalee?”

“She’s talking to Juliette. I’m sure she’ll be here in a minute or two” Monroe sure hopes that is the case because he feels only marginally less in the dark than Juliette.

Another line of blood slips from Sean’s eye again and he silently wipes the droplets away, barely phased when he fleetingly examines the blood spatter on his hand.

The silence wanes off into awkward stillness until Sean breaks it.

“I need the thermos.” Sean requests, eyeing Rosalee’s discarded purse on the nearby table.

Understandably confused, Monroe looks around the room for the requested thermos but when he doesn’t see one he begins to fear that the Captain is babbling nonsense.

Thankfully before they can enter into a decidedly unfunny shtick in search of the requested item, Rosalee finally enters the room.

“Oh, Juliette and the doctor should be busy for at least a few minutes.” She walks to her purse and pulls out the thermos that Sean had requested.

“Doesn’t give us much time but it’s all we’re getting. So, whatever you’re going to do, I suggest doing it now.” She hands Sean the thermos and watches with Monroe as he shakily uncaps the container and stares down into its contents.

No one comments on the decidedly fruity but also putrid scent that emits from the container. If this works they may never react to the smell of rotting fruit the same way again, hell they may even smile.
“One of you needs to stand watch outside and make sure that no one enters this room.” Renard instructs, the slight trembling of his hand causes the contents of the thermos to rock back and forth.

Monroe and Rosalee connect eyes but before Monroe can even taste the beginning of words, Rosalee is steering him towards the door.

“Knock once if you see or hear anyone approaching” she instructs as she opens the door and effortlessly pushes him outside.

Before she can close the door, Monroe presses back against the door, preventing it from shutting.

“Rosalee I don’t think--“

She covers Monroe’s hand against the door and gives him an encouraging smile, “sweetie, I love that you want to protect me but you and I both know that of the two of us I’m the expert on wesen herbology. Trust me honey, if something goes wrong I know how to handle myself.”

She goes to close the door again but Monroe’s blockade remains strong.

“I may not know what exactly you’re both planning but I can tell that this isn’t just a regular old vitalizing potion. I’m not going to leave you alone in here.” Monroe’s bottomless eyes rapidly tunnel into Rosalee’s own as they implore her to give in. To let him stand by her as they face down yet another assured path to danger, together.

“Rosalee” if it wasn’t for her amplified hearing, Rosalee is sure that she would have missed Sean’s voice. No matter how weak it is however, she can easily note the urgency that hitches the end of her name.

She does her best to bolden her eyes and plows ahead, “Remember to knock once.”

Knowing that if he were plea to her again she would likely give in, Rosalee leans up and kisses Monroe.

The sudden feeling of her soft plump lips moving against his own, causes his grip on the door to fall to the way-side. As he enjoys the way electric currents sing from his lips throughout the rest of his body he is unprepared for the sudden push that backs him into the hallway and face to face with a locked door.

If he wasn’t in a hospital Monroe would have had no qualms about kicking the door down. But not only would that get him kicked out of the hospital it would also draw attention to whatever Rosalee and Renard were doing.

A fact that he knew Rosalee was well aware of. But that wouldn’t stop him from continuing to beg.

Rosalee turns back to Sean and walks to his side, she gently stills his shaking hand. Behind her, the muffled sound of Monroe’s muffled voice grates against her resolve like a rock against a boat.

“What do you need me to do?”

Sean breathes what she takes as a sigh of relief, “turn off the heart monitor.”

She can’t help the moment of hesitation that momentarily binds her muscles together but she forces them to give way and forces herself to do as instructed.

The moment the machine goes silent, she expects an alarm to go off and for doctors to come
rushing in.

That doesn’t happen, instead all that occurs is the machine letting out one short bleep before going silent, the room now filled with nothing but the crinkling swoosh of the oxygen machine.

“Now I need you to get Nick to ingest the potion.”

She looks down at Nick, once again taking in the silvery vines possessing his pallid face and the black waves under his eyes that seemed to be consuming his face.

For a moment, she contemplates how to go about the task of feeding Nick the potion when she comes to the simple conclusion to simply hand-feed him it. That or risk injecting it into him and potentially causing a deadly reaction with whatever else was being pumped via IV into Nick.

Rosalee walks back to Sean and takes the offered thermos from him. She pauses once she is standing beside Nick once more before carefully adjusting the wires overlapping the bed to sit down next to her unconscious friend.

Her hand gently cradles the back of Nick’s head and neck as she tilts the edge of the thermos to his lips.

“It doesn’t have to be a lot, just a sip will do.”

At Sean’s words, Rosalee pulls away once a small amount of the potion has passed Nick’s lips before she shuts Nick’s parted mouth and softly rubs her finger up and down Nick’s throat. The gentle massage thankfully causes Nick’s body to swallow the potion.

Without having to be told, Rosalee hands the thermos back to Sean and watches as he brings the lid to his lips and drinks a small amount of it. His trembling hands almost cause the thermos to drop from his hands, causing her body to instinctively rush forward and take the container away.

Using strength that she was sure had long since left him, Sean pulls his chair up beside Nick and grasps the other man’s hand.

Rosalee can’t help the fascination that strings along her insides as she watches the silvery vines decorating their faces stretch and duplicate down their bodies, both coming to a joint end as they meet at the pairs joined hands.

Renard can’t hold back the gasp of pain that rocks out of his lungs as rivers of needles speed along the silver veins that camouflage his skin. A coating of cement slowly dribbles down onto his eyelids and he is only able to feebly push against the force before the darkness consumes him.

The moment Renard’s eyes slip shut, Nick lets out soft gasp before settling.

At a loss, as to what to do now, Rosalee lowers herself into the only other available chair in the room and takes up watch.

~GRIMM~

To say that the pain Renard feels upon awakening was comparable to twisting his legs and arms to a complete 360 would be an understatement. His body feels as if layer after layer of brick has replaced his bones and the cement that would normally stick the bricks together has instead made a home in the veins that not long ago was the river transporting his life force.

A simple twitch of his fingers sends a spasm of ice through his nerves and he’s temporarily
blinded by a white sheet when he cracks his eyes open.

The selfish, cowardly part of him wants to remain laying on the ground, curled up in a ball that would protect him from another onslaught of pain. It would be so easy to just allow the numbness creeping up his body to take over. To release him from the uncertainty that awaits him if he were to continue.

He hates that the voice whispering in his head seductively twirls his temporal lobe like a horny school girl trying to seduce her professor. He hates his mind’s arousal at the thought of giving up a life of pain and service that will only result in him dying surrounded by millions but ultimately alone.

The wesen of Portland only know him as a figure in the shadows, monitoring and protecting them from threats they likely never know of. And even with his passing they wouldn’t mourn him, they would simply go on with their lives rightly sure in the knowledge that another Guardian would soon take Renard’s place.

The only people that would mourn him would be the Wesen Council that would have to set in motion the transfer of power to the next Guardian in line.

Rosalee, while certainly a kind caring woman would maybe shed a tear or two for him but ultimately, she would barely come to think of him again. Monroe would simply follow in Rosalee’s footsteps, minus the crying of course and Hank, hell Renard’s whole department would hopefully feel some sadness but like the rest of the world they would move on as well.

The Grimm…Burkhardt…Nick… he would be fine. He would move on with Juliette and make a family of Grimms that would continue his family’s legacy. But for that to even happen, Renard would have to move, would have to cripple the pain keeping him hopeless.

He would have to live.

For now.

Gritting his teeth, he pushes his upper body up from a familiar but still foreign surface and looks around. The once glowing white room is now cracked and chipped, the once pristine whiteness has been slashed with branches of black and gray.

In the middle of the endless misery a greasy, organic and electronic tree twisting up from the ground. Sludge that looks like a mixture of motor oil and months old coffee drip to the ground creating a splatter of metallic. However, fucking flowers with razorblade pinwheels could sprout up from the droppings and he wouldn’t notice because all his senses hone in on battered but living centerpiece in the center of the tree.

Dripping black branches embrace Nick’s haggard body with diseased vines puncturing his ashen skin. The barely perceptible rise and fall of the other man’s chest gives him little comfort. Nick is dying, rotting from the inside out.

They’re both running out of time.

He tries to take a step forward, intent on finally saving Nick once and all, only to find himself rooted to the spot.

Literally, for what he had initially mistaken as simple black smudges running across the floor was in reality roots that connected himself straight to the tree that held Nick hostage.
Sean tries to move his hand but gasps from the searing pain that rakes across his insides. Following the flaring burning to its origin, he discovers that like Nick he too has become a cushion for polished black thorns to prick.

Another pull to free himself results in the vines and consequently the thorns digging even deeper into his skin. He’s sure that at some point the thorns are going to make landfall on his bones.

As he wracks his mind for a possible escape, out of the corner of his eye he notices Nick make the slightest movement. Giving his full attention to Nick he waits to see more signs of life but after more than a minute passes he about blames his misgiving on his imagination when Nick’s left-hand twitches.

The twitch re-energizes his original mission and he begins to fight against the vines’ and thorns’ hold. He can feel the thorns slicing deeper into his skin, the ragged cuts becoming a doorway for blood to gush out.

What Sean takes to be retaliation for his struggles, the roots and thorns encasing Nick visible tighten their hold on the defenseless Grimm. The guttural moan of pain that wrenches from Nick is a worse pain than the thorns attempting to crack his bones into pieces.

“Nick!”

Glassy gray eyes slip out and peer at him from beneath waxy eyelids.

~GRIMM~

Monroe’s fists shake as he stands guard in front of Nick’s hospital room. The faint groans of pain coming from the room behind him echo through his head like a haunted windchime. He knows that it is only a matter of time before a doctor or nurse comes snooping around in search of the source of the chilling cries of pain.

He can respect and fully believe Rosalee’s assertion that she can take care of herself, he has countless memories to fall back on for evidence. But experience doesn’t mean anything when dealing with a life and death situation. One way or another, someone is going to lose. He just prays that like all the times before, Rosalee will be the victor.

Hell, he hopes that everyone in their little family, one that he is quickly beginning to see includes a certain Guardian, lives to fight another battle.

The sound of Rosalee’s muffled curse jerks him out of his contemplation and back into crisis mode. However, before he can bring his fist up for the first pound on the locked door, an approaching pair of footsteps leading a scent quickly becoming familiar to him of pinecones and ocean breeze.

Before he even turns around he knows whom he is about to come face to face with Juliette.

Her usually well-maintained hair hangs in tangled waves around her narrow face accentuating the sheen of stress radiating off of her.

“Monroe? Where’s Rosalee and Captain and Renard?” she asks as she comes to a stop in front of him.

He tries to subtly angle his body in front of the door, tries being the key word seeing as the suspicion in her eyes ignites to Fahrenheit levels.
This is the part of the “plan” that Monroe hates, lying. Sure, he can easily whistle out a little lie about eating the last cookie but tell him to lie about not kissing his cousin’s girlfriend and he is doomed to sport a scar of claw marks down the right side of his back.

“They-They…um…you see—“

He is saved or more like screwed over from having to continue his pathetic attempt at lying by a rattling growl that slips out from beneath the door to Nick’s room.

Juliette’s eyes widen and she shoots forward, her hands wrapping around the handle to open it but as Monroe already knows, the door is locked.

Monroe stands in silence as she moves from trying to open the door to peering into the room, he watches her face morph even deeper into a mask of abject terror. Having been witness to countless minutes of the show going on inside he can relate to her building sense of fear and confusion.

She turns her frightened eyes on him, “what the hell is going on?"

“Juliette we’re only trying to help him.”

He feels a momentary sense of panic at the choking gasp Juliette lets out, thinking that the sight has induced some kind of episode. However, he is quickly given another diagnosis when Juliette shakes her head.

“He is getting help, from certified doctors and nurses! You fix clocks and Rosalee works with spices! What is going on in there is not a simple herbal tea! Now tell me what you they are doing or I will scream.”

His attempts at avoiding her blazing glare are unsuccessful as she follows his every tic.

“Monroe.”

He’s use to being in the role of the predator but right now he can’t help but feel like the prey beneath a lion’s paw.

~GRIMM~

Rosalee stands in stunned silence as she watches the silvery veins coil further across both men’s bodies, the sweat painting their skin giving off an eerie glow.

A croaking growl rumbles from deep within Sean’s chest as his head rolls to the side. Both men’s bodies seem to be working in tandem because not a second after Sean moves Nick shifts in his bed and lets out his own weak but still heart wrenching moan.

If emotional turmoil wasn’t bad enough, Rosalee can hear the unmistakable voice of Juliette arguing with Monroe. She knows it’s only a matter of time before Monroe’s big heart blinds him enough to where Juliette can force her way into the room.

She looks back at the unconscious men and silently urges Sean to hurry.

~GRIMM~

Sean continues what he realizes is a fruitless struggle against the thorns and roots. But seeing as he can feel the roots thickening and the thorns spreading further his panicked mind hasn’t been able to dream up another possible escape so further slashing of his body it is.
“Sean” Nick mumbles, his gray eyes almost completely glazed over with pain and what Sean forebodingly takes to be defeat.

Nick’s eyes only manage to stay slit open for another minute before they are seared shut for what Sean fears will be the last time. A coffin that would conceal the mummification of the eyes that Sean has come to love.

He thought the most scarring sights he would ever witness was first the image of Nick with a dagger sticking out of his chest, blood dribbling obscenely down his naked torso and collecting in the grooves of his body. That had been bad enough, and then the sudden ‘awakening’ of the soulless Grimm that had replaced the kind, game-changing man Sean loved had been enough to flambé his heart.

Those felt like the scrape of a needle compared to the nightmare creaking into existence in front of him. Like a scene out of a horror movie the tree that keeps Nick captive begins to what he can only describe as devour Nick.

The roots that clung to Nick’s limbs slowly coil inward, dragging his body deeper into the heart of the tree. His pounding heart corkscrews up into his throat as the creaking roots and thorns carve into Nick’s skin opening more rivers of blood.

Sean’s body could only twitch in his rasping cage as more and more of Nick’s body sank into the tree’s midnight bark. He doesn’t even have the band-aid of seeing that Nick is at least fighting being consumed, that the fighting spirit Sean is so used to peering in on continues to blaze.

Nick has accepted his seeming fate as sustenance for a cancerous twisting mound of quicksand. He wouldn’t allow that to happen, he couldn’t lose Nick. So, it seemed that it was now his turn to save the day.

He allows the rage and fear steaming within him to fuel his movements he easily blocks out the hail-storm of pain that covers consumes his body as he takes advantage of the two tools he possess: his rage and blood.

Rocking his body back and forth, he opens up more cuts along his body coating his body in even more lubricating blood. His body vibrates and whether it’s from the numbed pain or his boiling emotions he doesn’t know, the only thing he cares about is that his movement and blood spillage helps him drag Nick back.

At first the miniscule part of his mind that hasn’t reverted back to its most primal instincts doesn’t think his methods are doing anything more than depleting his body of blood. The Gods of Luck however appear to have finally deemed him worthy of their Graces when a loud crack breaks the air.

The startling crack briefly gives him back his mental facilities and he glances down and can’t help the cracking bout of laughter that rumbles from his chest. Running in a jagged line across the roots and vines is a crack.

With the crack giving him a little more room for mobility, Sean fists his hands and jerks them upward. The roots and thorns toss into the sky together and rain down upon him as he kicks out with his newly mobile feet to destroy the rest of his prison.

He doesn’t bother brushing the bark and thorns off of his practically shredded clothing as he stands and takes the first step towards Sean. Or it would have been a step if the floor hadn’t decided to become the ceiling.
Thorns and bark puncture his skin once more as he pushes himself up from the ground and shakes the drops of bloods dripping down his face. The rushing river in his ears did its best to drown him but he grits his teeth and breaks through the surface which gifts him with a pop of reorientation.

Sean shakily stumbles to the tree its putrid gasoline smell becoming more potent the closer he gets. The blood pumping from the open wounds that litter his body smears on the floor behind him and almost causes him to lose the weak stability he has.

Not willing to lose to gravity he leans most of his weight against the tree, his adrenaline-fueled mind notes the way the bark of the tree seems to pulse beneath his fingertips and sticks to his skin like sap.

His hand wanders around the trunk and stumbles upon a find that further clears the buzzing in his head. He gasps out a shocked chuckle and wraps his fingers around Nick’s hand that is partially sticking out of the tree.

On the outside the sight might have been comical but as a participant he couldn’t help but compare the sight to that of an unearthed grave. And it was especially unfunny when the hand that he held didn’t so much as twitch.

He barely processes a thought before he uses his hands like a spade to rip away at the greasy, burnt plastic that masquerades as tree bark. Roots and vines ripple along the trunk and wrap around his body as thorns hiss and bite his skin.

Sean ignores the way the oily sludge seeping from his excavated areas steadily turns his hands and arms black and red. The substance sears his skin as it mixes with his blood.

The roots and vines tighten their grips, cutting off his circulation in his arms and legs but just because a good portion of his body is numb it doesn’t prevent him from continuing to dig. Even if it takes him playing seed to another tree he will gladly do so if it means that Nick can be freed.

He is greeted a blinding blue-white light that nearly blinds him from the intensity upon ripping up an arm sized piece of bark. And finally, after most of his nails have been ripped from their beds and his body is more root than limbs he gets a deeper glimpse at the treasure he seeks.

Nick’s alabaster eyelids blanket his haunting eyes and his lips are slightly parted into the form of cupid’s arrow. His raven hair shines beneath the harsh lights that emit from the hellish nightmare the two men inhabit. Sean knows he doesn’t have the time to be a romantic sap but even under the circumstances Nick looks hauntingly beautiful.

~GRIMM~

Even behind closed eyes Rosalee continues to be blinded by the explosion of light that pulses from both Renard and Nick.

When the light show had first started, she had at first thought it was simply the reflection from the room’s fluorescent light. That assumption quickly proved to be false when the light bounced from a simple patch to a full-blown geyser, nearly sending her crashing into the hanging television from the surprise and intensity the lightshow brought.

She didn’t know that light could bring with it a sound but this one certainly did. The air in the room sizzled and chirped against the surfaces of the room. Disorienting her thoughts with frying meat and burning birds.

Having already, for the most part, been blinded, she mentally braces herself and slits her eyes open
for a quick peak at what is occurring in front of her but yet still shrouded in mystery. She can only watch for a few seconds before he slams her eyes shut once more, however a mere glimpse would have been enough to sear the image into her memory banks.

The spider webs that lattice their skins glows like the spider that made them were birthed from stars. She wouldn’t dare call the sight beautiful, especially not when the sight could come at the cost of two lives.

Two lives that were steadily laying claim to their own pieces of her heart.

A large cracking sound rips her from her thoughts and she whips her head just in time to see what looks to be the bottom of a trashcan slamming against the room’s window.

~break~

_Earlier_

At some point Juliette’s eyes had been replaced with burning coals because the ones glaring a hole into him couldn’t possibly belong to the usually sweet Veterinarian. Along with now possessing the eyes of the devil, Juliette has also borrowed the tongue of Calypso as evidenced by the rather creative way she threatened to eviscerate him using only a pen and a specimen jar.

Frankly, he’s surprised that not a single doctor or nurse, hell even a wandering patient has come to see the cause of the commotion Juliette’s threats is causing.

“Please just trust me when I tell you that the best thing you can do for Nick right now is go back to the waiting room.” He does his best to keep his voice calm, knowing that the slightest hint of anxiety will add fuel to her righteous fury.

Monroe knows he’s failed in his coaxing attempt though when all his words do is increase her clenched fists into bone breaking territory.

“You can take your “trust” and shove it—"

He doesn’t get to find out the physically impossible but no doubt painful area he should store his plea. This is because her words are drowned out by the blast of light that explodes into existence beneath the doorway and window.

Trying to conceal the sudden rave sparking out from beneath the door and window would be a miracle. Not even David Copperfield would have been able to dazzle Juliette well enough to have her forget about the trap door waiting beneath the stage.

“Monroe, get out of my way. Now.”

He doesn’t even twitch, knowing that if he moves he’ll likely be the cause of her finding out about the world that lives within her own.

Her muscles tense, bone and tendons warping together before ejecting forward. Juliette’s slight frame plows into Monroe’s burly one, barely causing him to move an inch. However, her lack of impact deploys her fists to rain upon his chest.

She pushes off of him with a snarl, her mouth contorts into a quivering grimace as her body pulsates from the building adrenaline. But suddenly her body stills entirely and her mouth droops to a firm line.
What unnerves him the most however is the absence of her inferno eyes. While there are still licks of flame quivering around the irises, Monroe can just make out the calming showers of water dousing the flames.

However, like a house consumed by flames, eventually the structure collapses and opens its walls to oxygen hungry flames.

Juliette’s mouth starts to open, her lungs expanding to allow maximum volume. He almost trips over his own feet in his haste to slap his hand over her mouth.

He expects the sharp sting of her teeth tearing into his flesh but what he doesn’t expect is the swift kick to the balls that she serves up as well. His legs are only able to hold him up for a moment longer before his whitening vision and ringing ears topple him to the floor.

Juliette doesn’t even wait for his body to fully make contact with the floor before picking up a nearby trashcan and proceeds to bash the window open.

~GRIMM~

Sean’s eyes water, whether that be from relief or the building intensity of the light he couldn’t tell. All he cares about is getting Nick out of this place.

As the light continues its attempt at melting his retinas the roots, vine and thorns continue their last-ditch attempt to halt his attempts at a rescue.

The need to finally rescue Nick, once and for all this time, thankfully gives him the strength to fight through the constrictions and grip a large chunk of “bark.” More blood oozes from his fingers as he tightens his grip.

The roots, as if sensing their coming demise, triple their attack by slithering up his torso and wrapping around his neck. He can barely get out more than a hacking gasp before his airway is cut off entirely.

He almost allows his survival instincts to kick in and move his hands to his throat but to do that would mean letting go of the tree. It would mean giving the demonic growth the opportunity to reabsorb Nick.

If that were to happen suffocating to death was preferable to living in a world that was void of one revolutionary Grimm.

His crumbling lungs twist in his body as his darkening vision threatens to pull him into the abyss. Fighting through the clouds taking over his mind he tightens his weakening grip and with a guttural yell rips the large piece of bark off the tree.

As soon as the tree loses the last vital piece of its skin, the throbbing light consumes both him and Nick. The cacophony of drums and tasers batter his brain into mush as Sean loses consciousness and his final thought before submitting is that he hopes they’ve finally won.

~GRIMM~

Rosalee only has time to turn her back when a spray of glass rains upon her, the fragile coins pricking her skin and leaving behind bloody kisses. Quickly following a trashcan is tossed carelessly into the room quickly followed behind by the wendigo inspired Juliette whom climbs through the now shattered window.
A lightning storm of alarms and lights flash to life, the sound drilling an even deeper hole into Rosalee’s already swiss cheese eardrums.

The other woman doesn’t get much further than the trashcan’s carcass before her possessed mind finally translates the scene before her.

Juliette is almost positive that she must have had a stroke or seizure at some point because what she is seeing right now cannot possibly be real. In reality, she has to be drooling in a padded room as a nurse hand-feeds her pills that will help keep her from shouting out about conjoined parasitic light snakes. Or this is all just a very physically real, extremely surreal dream that she’ll soon wake up from and find herself cuddling close to a sleeping Nick.

Those are the ONLY explanations that makes sense, that she is willing to accept. Because to admit that the scene taking place before her is real would be to believe that it really was Santa Claus eating the cookies she left out as a little girl and not her parents as they placed presents beneath the tree.

Both Nick and Sean’s skin are lit up like their veins had been replaced by LED lights. The lights seem to follow the beating of the men’s hearts because otherwise she would swear that the glow has a life of its own. And to even think that the static like rush that caressed her skin was a by-product of whatever was occurring with Nick and Captain Renard was too much for her already cliff-seeking mind to process.

But the most insignificant but still world tilting sight that pops a screw loose is the fact that Nick and the Captain are holding hands.

“Juliette.”

Her name is the only word Rosalee can get out before the beacon and noise coming from Nick and Sean builds to an explosion that rocks both women off their feet and against the walls of the room.

The light show performing on Nick and Sean’s skin flickers out and the room is suddenly filled with doctors and two security guards. The women barely have enough time to push themselves to their hands before the guards descend upon them and are dragging them from the room.

It is as they are fighting to remain in the room that they hear the beautiful sound of two in-sync breaths being released.

Chapter End Notes

The title of this chapter is actually inspired by the part of The Book of Genesis that speaks of two trees in the Garden of Eden, The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. I thought the symbolism was fitting, if not I'm sorry.
Chapter Announcement

Chapter Summary

Sorry for getting anyone's hopes up for an actual update.

Sorry this isn’t an actual update. This is disappointingly just an announcement to assure everyone that bookmarked and has been waiting for an update that I am working on the next chapter. It is almost completely written and planned out but my job, sickness and traveling has taken up a good chunk of my energy. Luckily though my schedule has finally settled down some and I am now able to devote more time to FINALLY finishing this story up.

I’m hoping and incredibly optimistic that I will finish this story sometime this year (maybe even in the next few months if you guys and I am really lucky) and therefore will not endure another year of being unfinished.

Thanks so much for sticking with me and my incredibly frustrating history of updates. Hopefully the end result will have been worth it.

Sincerely,
Purplepidgioncommandbase
Facing an angry mob would be preferable to the barrel of Lausenchlanges Rosalee's about to open.

Renard watches out of the corner of his eyes as doctors and nurses flock around Nick, their hands fluttering around the now conscious man like they were hesitant over handling hot coals.

He understands the feeling.

The flare of panic that consumes him whenever his sight of the other man is obstructed by a scrub clad back burns straight down his esophagus to his heart. He can’t help it though, sure not only were they in a hospital and surrounded by doctors and nurses but as far as Renard could tell not one of them were in the know of the other forces that walked beside them.

What they were and still dealing with couldn’t be found in any Kehrseite medical school book. At least not the ones that were highly respected in the regular human medical community.

It’s clear that the doctors have all but given up on Nick ever recovering from the ravenous sickness that had taken over his body. To see a man miraculously retreat from death’s door in a matter of hours is not a sight that medical officials likely see often. Renard is sure that those fluttering hands are nervous that a single touch, specifically their own, will push Nick back to the Reaper’s waiting embrace.

He has his own herd of doctors and nurses, albeit a much smaller herd, hovering over him as they catalogue his flushed skin and receding silvery veins that mirror Nick’s own. The doctors’ first instincts had likely been to call in the CDC seeing as they appeared to have two cases of the same disease.

Luckily though, he has yet to see any CDC emblazoned individuals enter the room. If that were to happen it was going to take a lot more than his connections to vanish any of the samples and reports that were drawn up.

He’s already going to have to abuse one of his Guardian abilities to keep what occurred in this room under wraps.

The sudden feeling of a foreign slick warmth around his wrist kicks his instincts into overdrive and he can’t help the growl that escapes him as his other hand lashes out to wrap around the attacker. His grip tightens and his sedated Zauberbiest softly purrs at the gasp of pain the action elicits.
Outside his predatory mind he recognizes the fact that the room has gone silent. One voice however is not silenced by the animalistic and it is the one voice in the room that could ever understand the battle between humanity and beastly instincts.

“Sean.”

His eyes instinctively seek the owner of the soft timber voice and his breath is stolen from him when he connects with achingly familiar gray eyes. Like his own beast, the hidden power caged behind the irises is in a haze but his own power can easily connect with the other’s.

Warmth spreads through his body as Nick gives him a dim but still breathtaking smile. His grip loosens enough to allow the trapped appendage to escape.

“It’s okay.” Nick soothes him, his voice little more than a whisper.

A thin prick in his arm is the last physical sensation he experiences before a cloud descends on his vision and is soon replaced by a blanket of darkness.

The last sight that fills his vision is that of Nick’s endless gray eyes.

~GRIMM~

The slight breeze nips at Rosalee’s exposed arms as she stands beside Juliette. With her enhanced vision, Rosalee can make out the fine goosebumps running along Juliette’s own arms. Contrary to her body’s signals however, she doesn’t so much as shiver nor does she break down and demand an explanation for what she had witnessed in Nick’s room.

A selfish part of Rosalee is glad for the small mercy of not having to contain a nuclear bomb. The other, the more empathetic and sensible part, is anxiously waiting for the timer to finally reach zero.

She prays that by that time the both of them won’t be in such a public setting.

The two hospital security guards that had ‘escorted’ them out of the hospital stand in mutual, authoritative silence as they wait for the police to arrive.

Deciding that her constant focus on Juliette isn’t going to speed up whatever reaction the other woman is going to have, she turns her focus to Monroe. Like her and Juliette he too had been taken out of the hospital. The few feet that separates them feels like an ocean as his bottomless eyes travel over her body, no doubt searching for injuries. By the way his nostrils occasionally flares, he’s also searching for blood and hidden injuries as well.

Seeing as they’re standing outside a hospital however, he’s no doubt having to separate the thousands of different scents for her and Juliette’s.

It was times like this, and it’s more than disconcerting that there are so many examples to fall back on, that she wishes that one of her wesen talents was telepathy. Instead all she can do is send him another reassuring smile and hope that this one will finally settle the pounding of both of their hearts.

Unfortunately, the arrival of a police patrol car, its lights flashing as they come to a stop in front of them, shoots down any hope of bringing their pulses down to normal.

She can only watch as an unfamiliar police officer gets out of the first patrol car and approaches the security guard watching Monroe. The officer and security guard exchange a few words before
the officer grabs Monroe’s arm and begins to pull him towards the backseat of his patrol car.

Rosalee isn’t even aware that she’s moved until warm hands grab her and pull her back into an equally warm chest.

The Officer holding Monroe gives her a once-over before addressing the figure behind her.

“You good?”

The figure chuckles and quickly following is a familiar voice that melts away some of her anxiety.

“Yeah, I’ll meet you back at the station.”

The Officer nods and escorts Monroe into the back of his cruiser. As the Officer walks to the driver’s side, Rosalee’s earlier distress returns and she tries to go towards Monroe’s reassuring face but Hank’s hold tightens.

“He’ll be okay, I promise.” He whispers as the cruiser pulls away, its lights silently flashing.

Only when the vehicle has vanished completely into the night traffic does she regain ownership of her arms. She turns to face Hank, words building in her throat of uncertainty and even anger but they never see fruition. Instead, she swallows them down with a bitter nod and instead focuses on more important matters.

“It worked, he’s alive.”

A thankful smile brightens the Detective’s features, “Thank God. I’m going to have to kick his ass later for all the gray hair he’s gifted me with.” The words are obviously said in jest but she can see the relief that a later even exists.

She laughs, “get in line.”

The pair allow a moment of companionable silence to pass before Hank continues, “so what the hell happened in there that led to this?” he questions, gesturing to their current surroundings.

All the warmth seeps from her in a slap of guilt and dread as memory of Juliette’s shocked and petrified face takes in Nick and Sean’s biologic lightshow. How could she just forget about the mind-warped state of the woman she claims to be a friend of?

She knows that love is bleeding but what kind of human being allows such emotion to completely forget the fractured state of another?

“Rosalee, are you okay?”

The lead in her soul crystalizes and she is unable to find even the smallest trace of irony that his words emit. All she can do is shake her head, “no, not right now. But it’s not me you should be worrying about.”

She turns to look at the statue formally known as Juliette and Hank follows her gaze.

“She saw Hank.”

His eyes widen and he jerks his head back to Rosalee’s somber expression, “’saw’ as in….?”

Her eyes, if at all possible, take on more weight as she meets his probing gaze, “as in the curtain’s been yanked back.”
Hank quietly curses and spares another glance at the still non-moving form of Juliette.

The obviously conflicted man paces for a moment before seeming to come to a decision as he grabs her by the arm again and leads her to his car where he swiftly deposits her inside.

“Hank—”

“I have to take you both in.” He takes a steadying breath and briefly turns his head to give an assuring nod to the remaining security guard.

He looks back at Rosalee, his expression quickly returning to its previous anxious one.

“We’ll talk more down at the station.”

Not knowing what else to say, she nods and watches Hank lead a silent Juliette to the car and help her into the seat beside Rosalee. Hank then takes his own seat behind the wheel, the stifling apprehension in the car building to a pressure point as soon as he shuts his door.

Rosalee can feel the moment the timer begins counting down.

~break~

Juliette silently allows herself to be led into the interrogation room, her face still a ghostly pallor and devoid of emotion. The cup of station coffee that Hank had set in front of her has been left untouched but the smell of its oily liquid continues to fill the room.

She can feel Rosalee’s nervous gaze frying into the side of her face, no doubt begging Juliette to show that life still flows within her.

Juliette isn’t so sure though that she wants to or if she even can, especially if it means accepting that she truly saw...whatever went down in Nick’s hospital room. Her scientific mind would love to be able to chalk the whole thing down as a stress induced hallucination. A neurological misfire where in reality she hadn’t really witnessed her boyfriend and his boss turn into living lava lamps. And she isn’t currently sitting in an interrogation room but a white padded room with drool drying around her mouth and chin.

The harshest dream that the Devil could come up with would likely be more accepting than realizing that the world she lives in isn’t so black and white.

Her childhood naivety has long since tacked itself in dusty memories. She knows that the world gives birth to horrors everyday: natural disasters, sicknesses and diseased minds that create endless horrors and sorrow in countless lives. She can’t open a newspaper, go online or even sometimes listen to Nick without learning of another event reminding her of the human race’s fragility.

But one rule, the one rule that her sanity digs its sweaty claws into, is that the supernatural is only found in fiction. It has no place in the real world.

However, she can’t deny the memory of the pulsing lights stroking her skin as it emitted from Nick and Captain Renard. She cannot falsify the way her breath caught in her throat as the glowing veins beneath the men’s skin pulsed in perfect harmony. And she definitely cannot denounce the guilt she sees whenever she catches Rosalee’s eyes.

How long has Rosalee known? Was she inducted into it through mere accident or had she grown up seeing magic carpets and witches wielding poison apples?
If not for the paralysis that has infected her tongue she likely would be demanding answers from the other woman. She can’t help but wonder if for every laugh the two shared, Rosalee would have another in secret at Juliette’s blindness to the reality of the world? And if so was it an isolated affair or in the company of others?

The rasp of the door lances through her thoughts but Paranoia, not quite ready to leave her be yet, as it tries to get in one last swipe at her crumbling defenses. It shows her steadily decaying images of herself intruding on hushed conversations and shifty gazes that become more and more frequent.

The memories whisper out and Juliette lifts her shadowed gaze to watch Hank sink into the metal chair across from them.

She takes in the bags under Hank’s eyes and the way he cradles his own cup of coffee, as if it alone is keeping him from hitting the ground in exhaustion.

*Secrets do weaken the soul.*

Paranoia’s scratchy lilt chimes, reminding her of its presence.

Contrary to what Rosalee and Hank likely believed, Juliette’s vacant state was not as skin deep as to be believed. True, her mobility had been slugged down to simple commands it hadn’t affected her mind. If anything, her cognitive abilities had never been sharper.

She had heard the anxious but still soft exchange between Hank and Rosalee, their words laced in code but still coming out clear.

Her group of people she could trust had grown even smaller.

Hank takes a long drink from his coffee then sets the mostly empty cup down and finally meets the pair of eyes across from him. He can only meet Juliette’s for a mere moment before he has to avert them.

“Before you ask, Monroe’s okay. He’s currently in his own holding cell awaiting my questioning, it’s not ideal but for the moment it’s the best I can do.” He assures Rosalee, knowing that she’s likely been worrying.

Rosalee nods and some of the tension that had been visible in her face loosens.

“I have about twenty minutes before anyone will wonder what’s going on and I’ve turned off the camera in here.” He states, his eyes finally strengthening on Juliette.

Her frayed mind sends out rioting messages for her to panic and commands to flee. Trying to solidify the belief that she is about to either be threatened into never revealing what she knows or killed to maintain whatever secret she stumbled upon.

Before tonight she never would have questioned her safety in the company of these two people. It’s funny how one moment can flip the feeling you used to have among friends.

Rosalee’s chair scrapes along the concrete floor as she turns to face Juliette, her expression melting between uneasy and comforting seamlessly.

She can’t help the flinch that shudders her body when Rosalee goes to touch her arm. The move meant to be comforting but instead evoking a prey-like response.

The message clearly gets through to the other woman because she is quick to pull her hand back.
Her earlier expression melts into sad understanding.

“This was never the way you were supposed to find out. Then again secrets like this rarely reveal themselves without earth shattering flair.” Rosalee stops her speech to take a breath, no doubt gearing up to reveal that the world is run by a secret society of unicorns and leprechauns.

“I know that you’re a woman of science and that you won’t believe anything I say without concrete proof. I will give you that, I promise. But first I need you to me promise me that no matter how crazy it sounds you’ll listen to what we have to say, okay?”

Seeing as her only exit is behind Hank and the fact that she would have to get by a full room of trained police officers she doesn’t have much choice.

She nods her acquiesce and mentally prepares herself for whatever bombshell is about to be added to her already damaged psyche.

“You know how sometimes you catch something impossible out of the corner of your eye? Say a shape that isn’t entirely human? More than likely it’s not your imagination.” Rosalee begins, doing her best to lead Juliette gently into the water. It would only accomplish chaos if she pushed her in too soon.

Juliette’s expression scrunches up in confusion and Rosalee is quick to continue.

“There is a world the same and yet completely different that walks alongside you every day. Where magic is as common as breathing and animal instincts share space with human ones.”

Rosalee knows she’s still being incredibly vague but the words she wants to say are clogged in her throat, clinging to the veins and muscle to prevent themselves, herself if she’s being honest, from being revealed.

There had only ever been one other occasion where she had felt the need to expose the existence of wesen and to say it had gone well would be like saying Hitler took his two art school rejections amicably.

His name had been Eric and at the time she had thought they were soulmates. They had met during the time she was finally getting her life back together after escaping her drug induced darkness.

They had met at an NA meeting and even though it was strongly discouraged against, for various reasons, they grew close. At first it was simply over their shared taste for powdered donuts and a desire to stay clean. However, after only a few months of coffee meet ups and encouraging phone calls they gained a shared desire for the taste and feel of the other’s skin and lips.

As cheesy and ironic as it was, they became each other’s drug.

When they were together time would drill into the dimples of his cheeks and all her doubts would melt away as she ran her fingers through his sandy blond hair. But when they were apart for even an hour her skin would become chilled and hissing remarks would bombard her.

*He isn’t coming back.*

*You don’t deserve him.*

*He doesn’t really love you*…

The voices would build to a crescendo up until Eric walked through her door once more and they
could run fingers over each other’s intoxicating skin.

For almost an entire year they lived under each other’s skin, rejoicing in the tingles and warmth that ruled their desires.

But like all things, especially that of a drug fueled rush, they must come to an end. And unfortunately for them this end was met with not a trip to the hospital but her brother Freddy’s shop.

The night had begun like any other, up until she had been religiously avoiding him as she made herself sick with thoughts of how her confession would go, Eric would come to her apartment and from the moment his body passed the threshold he was upon her. However, unlike other nights this one was different for instead of attacking his lips back with equal fervor she instead ducked away from his kisses and took a step back.

His confused expression at the brush off was understandable and for only a brief moment she considered going back into his embrace but this was important. After much thinking (only a few days really but they had been grueling) she was going to tell him about the other world that she was a part of, the wesen world.

“What’s wrong?” his eyes were glazed and the roughness of his voice drove an ax into the control she was trying to assert over herself.

“I…” she swallows convulsively and her hands ball into fists.

“I have to tell you something and I need you to promise that you’ll let me finish.” she begins, her eyes taking in how his lustful gaze is beginning to defuse as clarity takes over once more.

She understands the confusion that accompanies the clarity and quickly proceeds.

“This past year I have never felt more alive and free that wasn’t because of a drug. There aren’t enough words or gestures to thank you for just…being here.”

Eric smiles and steps forward, his arms reaching out for her.

She steps away, eliciting another frown from him.

“When you look at me, what do you see?”

His frown deepens and the thin crinkles around his eyes deepen with confusion.

“Tell me, please.” Her nails dig into her skin, threatening to break the fragile skin.

He steps forward and cups her cheek.

“I see…knowledge, mischief and comfort.” His thumb glides down her bottom lip.

She closes her eyes, letting her head rest against his chest.

“Physically?” her voice is muffled against his chest but he understands regardless.

He lifts her chin and looks down into her steadily watering eyes. His gaze travels over the face before him, drinking in the vision she creates.

“Freckles—”
She emits a grunt of annoyance and pushes away from Eric whom, much to his shock, actually stumbles away a few steps from the unexpected strength in her push.

The shock though does nothing to smother the growing irritation at her rendition of twenty questions.

“Eyes. Mouth. Nose. What do you want to me say?! Tell me and I’ll say it!”

“Human.” The single word comes out of her like a punch to the gut.

By the look of rattled confusion on his face, whatever word or words he had been expecting to come out of her mouth, they were nowhere close to being that one.

“What’s the matter with you? I don’t see a third eye or horns if that’s what you mean. All I see is a beautiful, normal HUMAN woman who’s concerning the hell out of me.” He tries to smile assuredly but his continued confusion makes it look more like a wince.

She shakes her head, “I know I’m not making any sense and I’m sorry for scaring you. However, I don’t feel like it’s fair or right to you to be in a relationship with a barrier of secrets. I want you to know everything about me and I want to know more about you.”

Rosalee can see that Eric is dying to say something but blessedly he keeps his mouth shut, allowing her to ride the momentum of her decision.

“There’s another reason besides our mutual addiction that I haven’t yet introduced you to my family. It’ll be hard enough for them to get past that. But the main reason is because of our what you could call cultural differences.”

He frowns, “is it because I’m not Irish?”

She laughs, “I wish it were that simple.”

The laughter has barely whispered out before her serious mood returns and she continues.

“My family is part of a world that fairytales, Grimm fairytales and so many other tales, are based on. As a community we’re called Wesen but there are also specific names for each species.” Eric cups his chin and maintains a blank expression.

“My family, myself included, are all Fuchsbau which interpreted can mean either foxhole or burrow. We’re a fox-like wesen and for generations no one has dated or especially married outside the wesen community. I want you to meet them and for them to accept our love.” She pauses, her hopeful and scared eyes finally meeting his own after a seeming lifetime of words.

He slowly removes his hand from his chin and takes in a slow deep breath. His expression never slips from its cruel blankness.

When it seems like all the air has been sucked from the room, he finally speaks.

“354 days.”

Rosalee’s already dimmed expression droops even further with the weight of confusion, “what?”

His expression finally turns to one that gives answers to his emotions. Disappointment.

“We both promised that we would never touch the stuff again. That the only drug we needed was each other. For almost a year now we have been clean and you’ve thrown all of that away!”
She vehemently shakes her head and reaches out for him but is heartbroken when he adds to the
distance between them.

“No. No, baby I promise I’m clean. I swear to you I’m telling the truth about everything!”

“I want to believe you but I can’t. You have been acting off for two weeks now. Dodging my calls,
disappearing for days on end and when you do finally show up you look like you haven’t slept in
days. More than anything I want to think it’s just stress or hell even that you’re cheating on me but
knowing what I know about you, I can only think of one thing.” He paces further away from her.

Rosalee can’t fault him for his suspicions, if their positions were reversed she would have the same
suspicions. However, just because she understands them, doesn’t mean she can’t feel just the
tiniest measure of anger at the accusations.

“I understand your position but you have no right to accuse me of cheating on you! I’m sorry that I
made you feel like I was breaking our vow and that I made you fear my fidelity but those are the
last thing I would EVER do.”

His pacing stops, “So I’m just supposed to believe this fantastic story of yours? Don’t you think
that if any of that were true that it would have made the news or hell history books somehow?!”

“Wesen went into hiding centuries ago after the fear of being hunted down became too much.
Since then, most of us hide our animal sides and for the most part live normal human lives.” She
tries.

He runs a hand through his already mused hair before brushing past her “When you finally feel
like being honest, call me.”

He heads for the door, picking up his jacket from the floor as he goes.

Knowing that if she lets him go now she’ll never have the courage to tell him the truth again, she
flings herself in front of the door abruptly putting an end to his exit attempt.

“I can prove it.” In truth, she could have revealed herself at any point to him during this entire
conversation what with her emotions being as stable as a ball on top of a pyramid. Yet, she had
somehow managed to keep the reaction at bay for which she didn’t whether to be thankful or
regretful.

His disbelief barely makes a dent in her resolve to break one of the biggest rules the wesen world
has: to never reveal your wesen form to Kehrseites. There were contingencies were humans were
let in on the secret but she was positive none of them fell under “trying to save a relationship.”

Eric steps away from her, wordlessly giving her the go-ahead to prove her “crazy” story.

Rosalee is more than aware that she only has a few precious moments before Erik loses what little
patience he has left and leaves.

Closing her eyes and doing her best to fight against her battling nerves, she woges.

Eric's mouth shuts with an audible click.

She shouldn't be as shocked as she is by the screeching of furniture being bumped into. And she
most definitely shouldn't be brought to her knees by the slamming of her door.

All her calls and texts went unanswered and no amount of NAA meetings all over Portland would
land her a simple glimpse of his face. Going to his apartment only gave her face time with the faded wooden door of Eric's apartment.

Needless to say, but she never saw him again.

Rosalee subconsciously bites her bottom lip before meeting Juliette's bewildered gaze.

"As a whole we're called wesen but just like any species there are different breeds. I fall in what you could think of as the Genus Vulpus variety. Or more specifically, a Red Fox."

Juliette's disbelieving smile is unfortunately expected.

"Aren't you supposed to be the sane ones right now?"

Flashbacks are Eric pound against her mind. She throws the deadbolt against the door.

"I've been where you are Juliette. Questioning shadows and hell even being paranoid of my own friends and colleagues. Everything Rosalee is saying is the truth." Hank voices, common sense and past interrogations telling him that Juliette was close to shutting down on them.

"What you saw tonight in Nick's hospital room is part of a spell that was used to help Nick wake up." Rosalee adds.

Juliette shakes her head, "no, no what I saw tonight was a by product of insomnia and grief and this--" she jerks her hand between Hank and Rosalee "is either a contagious case of PTSD or a really sick joke."

By the end of her retort, Juliette's rattled emotions have partially consumed her voice and betraying tears glaze her eyes.

Hank stands from his chair and rounds the table to kneel in front of Juliette. His hand hovers over the table before cautiously resting on her knee.

"We're telling the truth, I swear to you."

Juliette moves her leg, jostling his hand off. "That's even worse. Now, unless you're going to charge me with a crime, I'd like to go home."

He continues to look at her, his eyes imploring her to believe them but it has not effect. Hank blows out a breath, "at this point the hospital has declined to press charges citing the duress of grief that they suspect is the main cause behind tonight's events."

Rising from the floor, Hank steps to the door and opens it.

Wiping her eyes, Juliette goes for the door but like revelations past, Rosalee blocks the doorway with her body.

"This wasn't the way I ever wanted to show you but you're leaving me no choice." Without looking, Rosalee pulls the door close.

She looks over Juliette's shoulder at Hank and not so subtly tilts her head towards the other woman. Thankfully he understands the silent message and gently grasps Juliette's shoulders.

Understandably, Juliette nearly jumps a foot in the air at the sudden contact.

"Remember, no matter what changes, I'm still me." Rosalee assures.
Seeing the anxiety and fear swirling in her eyes, Rosalee lets all her nerves escape in one long breath. Riding the tail-end of the breath is the last few tingles in her face as her whiskers settle.

Juliette's eyes widen to saucer proportions. While the only air she can manage through her parted lips are wheezy gasps.

"Breathe...it's okay." Hank whispers, his hold on her gently increasing so as to prevent the escape Juliette is gearing up for.

The petrified woman's only presence is a faint but still high pitched gasp.

"Not wanting her to pass out from lack of oxygen, Rosalee reverts back to her human face and offers what she hopes is a comforting smile.

"I'm a Fuchsbau, a fox wesen."

Juliette dry swallows, "You--what--I...I don't...."

In her shocked state, Hank figures it's safe to release his hold on Juliette long enough to pull up a chair and maneuver her into a chair.

Hank walks to Rosalee's side, "I turned off the cameras before I came in." he whispers, though it's not really necessary seeing as THE secret has been revealed.

Rosalee nods in thanks while her eyes remain on Juliette and her increasingly paling skin. She's especially not liking the green tint to her pallor.

Taking advantage of her heightened reflexes, Rosalee grabs the trashcan near the door and parks it in-between Juliette's parted legs. The clumpy plops of vomit sound followed by the unmistakable sour stench of half-digested food.

It's not the ideal reaction but at least she didn't run screaming to put together a mob of torches and pitchforks.

After a few more dry heaves, Juliette regains control of her gag reflex. She lifts her head and wipes away the tear tracks running down her cheeks.

"So you're a Fusbau?" she tries, still unable to find her footing after having the floor pulled out from under her.

"Fuchsbau" Rosalee corrects, practically giddy at the notion of answering questions instead of trading pleads and exclamations.

Juliette jerkily nods her head, "right, Fuchsbau."

She looks at Hank.

"And you're...?"

"Human, not a drop of wesen blood in me." he responds, pulling away from the wall he had been leaning against.

"Hank and now you are what wesen refer to as Kehrseite-Schlich-Kennen, a regular human that knows about the wesen world." Rosalee explains.

Juliette grabs her cup of water off the table and drains the cup dry. Her hand has just left the handle
of the cup after placing it back on the table when she pauses.

"Wait, what about Nick? Is a Kehreite...something or a...a wesen?"

Rosalee bites her right inner cheek and sits back down beside Juliette.

"He's neither."

Juliette frowns in confusion then briefly raises her brows and tilts her head forward in a silent "go on" message.

She had already revealed so much to Juliette, plenty more than she had ever disclosed to a normal human before. However, by answering this one question she wasn't just leading a friend deeper into foreign land, she was also exposing one of her closes friend's most guarded secret.

Facing an angry mob would be preferable to the barrel of Lausenschlanges Rosalee's about to unleash. Her hands are basically tied though because if she doesn't tell Juliette now, Rosalee knows that not only will she seek them out herself but that her inquiries will lead to interest from unfriendly parties.

Going for the Band-Aid method, Rosalee answers, "Nick's a Grimm."

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Chapter End Notes

Lausenchlange(s):(LOW-zin-shlong-guh; Ger. Laus "louse" + Schlange "snake") is a snake-like Wesen that first appeared in "Of Mouse and Man". - copied from http://grimm.wikia.com/wiki/Lausenschlange
He pulls his hands into fists at his side and exhales a harsh breath, "fuck."

I struggled writing this chapter, but at last I finally got it written and posted within a more reasonable timeline. To those who have stuck with me this long, thank you so much and I hope you enjoy this update!

"A Grimm? As in GRIMM fairy tales?"

"Every story has a grain of truth to it and some a whole bag." Rosalee responds, retaking her seat beside Juliette.

Juliette lets out humorless chuckle, "A Grimm. Of course, why not?"

"A Grimm--"

Juliette holds up her hand, "just stop, please just stop." She rises from the chair and walks to the door.

"Thank you for telling me." she opens the door and walks out.

Hank watches her retreating form until she is no longer in view before turning to face Rosalee.

"I still think we should have let Nick handle it."

The glare she douses him with could have melted steel.

He holds his hands up in surrender.

Her eyes lose their fiery edge and simmer back to their usual warmth, "she needed to know."

Whether she says this for him or her, neither can be sure.

~GRIMM~

The next time Nick opens his eyes he is immediately hit with the overwhelming scent of antiseptic. He's also welcomed by the cold bursts of oxygen running up his nostrils into his lungs from the tubing clipped to his nose.

Hospital, either that or the Grimm had decided to add another layer of allusion to its torture. For all he knows it could be lurking beneath the bed right now, waiting for the right moment to pounce
and rip out his throat.

An insistent beeping mimics his rising pulse as his traitorous mind conjures up all the ways the Grimm could drain him dry.

A warm tingle settles around his arm. He would have lashed out but his limbs feel like he's been swimming in drying concrete.

"Nick."

A cold embrace steadily pulling him into numbness.

"Nick."

His grasp on the reigns of life getting weaker.

"Nick!

Bottomless pools of warmth and pale but still so lovely skin with plush lips fills his vision.

The cold recedes its hold, leaving Nick in a lukewarm head-space.

After suffocating in a black hole for so long, he can't bring himself to look away from the first breath of air he's seen in what feels like ages.

The fact that this "fresh breath" is Sean Renard, his boss and a MAN doesn't even cross his mind.

Nick winces as he attempts to moisten his parched throat. His wince doesn't go unnoticed by Sean whom magically produces a cup of water with a straw already in it. The other man holds the cup up for him as he takes a few long sips before placing the cup to the side once Nick signals he's had enough.

He clears his throat, "thank you."

A warm smile lights up Sean's face, "I figured you'd be thirsty."

The flash of teeth that peeks out from Sean's usually stoic face causes what Nick can only compare to heart burn. But instead of acidic reaction that would have had him reaching for an antacid, he chases after the sensation. Saddened when he can only cling to the fingers of the sensation.

Unfortunately, Sean's smile retreats and the achingly good pain flickers away, leaving him with little more than a sliver of an echo.

Sean, whom had miraculously managed to discharge himself an hour earlier, roams his eyes over Nick, seeking out any physical reason for the younger man's concerning lack of focus. Sure it could be easily attributed to the various drugs from earlier working their way out of his system. Or it could even be his mind slowly readjusting to consciousness.

However, no simple, standard, HUMAN medical complication had been the reason for his admittance into the hospital. Therefore, the chances of complications were scarily more likely to fall into the realm of complete soul shutdown.

The Guardian would have loved to have any knowledge to fall back on. Any inkling as to what he should be looking for. Ultimately though, he is sightless.

Because, like any new cure there has to be a guinea pig and any consequential side effects have yet
to be written down.

Not for the first time, he wishes he had made it a point to know the identities of all high leveled medical doctors connected to the Wesen world. More specifically, ones that were loyal to him and not their own organ smuggling addictions.

If he had, getting Nick the cure wouldn't have been so dramatic.

Hindsight all the good it does him right now.

Nick's eyes continue to be miles away, reminding Sean all too much of the way he had looked while being held prisoner by the Grimm. Seeing it again so soon is like a lion's claw raking through his heart.

In a desperate need to bring those eyes back to the glistening orbs he loves, Sean grabs Nick's hand.


Nick loses his breath at the explosion of emotions and sensations.

The swirling vortex that had been clouding Nick eyes vanishes. He pulls his eyes away from the cracked and peeling walls to Sean's worried demeanor.

Sean can only briefly panic at the spark that travels from his arm to the rest of his body. The experience all too familiar to the one that preludes Il Sangue Mente.

Thankfully though, the one heart-stirring difference between the two is that instead of the chilling hand squeezing his heart, he is overcome with an almost overwhelming embrace of summer air.

A soft gasp draws Sean's attention to Nick. Nick, whose slightly parted lips, shining from the lights and his sinfully ruffled hair briefly diverts blood to his groin. The organ quickly begins to perk up at the messages being sent. Goosebumps spread over his entire body and the air in the room suddenly seems to have thinned, leaving him lightheaded and overheated, all at the same time.

An intercom announcement for a Dr. Haroldson effectively dumps a bucket of ice water over his engorging problem.

He mentally scolds himself for not only how inappropriate it was, given the circumstances but also because it is unfitting of a Guardian to behave like a horny highschooler.

If his father had taught him anything besides not trusting anyone outright, it was that a wesen, be it man or woman, was no better than an animal if they were slaves to their instincts.

For Sean, everything in him was screaming at him to pull Nick into his arms and lick his way into that delectable mouth. Rip the flimsy hospital gown off of Nick's creamy skin and expose the chest of dark hair that teases him with brief glimpses under shirts. To finally slot his body against--

No.

To take what was not willingly given was a sin of the highest order and Sean adamantly refuses to write a page in Nick's already too long nightmares.

Needing to distance himself, Sean starts to pull his hand back only for Nick to snatch it back.

The slide of their skin ignites another spark of ember through their veins.
Sean knows the right thing to do is to break the contact. Cut off the head of the snake before it can taste his flesh. Like a kid to candy however, his restraint can only prevail for so long.

Nick's hand moves at an agonizingly slow pace up his arm; the hairs on his arm became electrified from the soft touch.

His breath stutters when Nick's fingers circle over a faint scar beside the inner crook of his elbow. He had received the scar years ago in one of many disputes with a rebelling wesen. In truth, Sean had completely forgotten about it and would have continued to do so for many more years to come.

The younger man's skittering touch ignites his skin's sensitivity, washing away the layers of skin that has since regrown.

Either Nick doesn't notice the effect his touch is having, which is slim considering his Grimm heightened senses, or he isn't revolted by Sean's reactions.

He childishly hopes it's the latter.

Unknowingly to the both of them, Nick's pulse has given voice to the brewing heat building between them. Regrettably, the machine can't keep a secret and quickly alerts Nick's attending physician.

Dr. Haroldson barges into the room, the beginnings of a question jumping on his tongue but the abrupt hand pull from the Police Captain silences his mouth and watches the suit clad man rise from his chair. The red of the other man's face speaking more clearly than any words could for what the Doctor had walked in on.

Sean walks past the doctor and silently exits the room, intent on leaving the hospital and finding a hole to bury himself in.

The doctor clears his throat, dislodging his shock from earlier and addresses his patient whom has slumped back against his pillow. A myriad of emotions flitting across the other man's face.

"I would advise against any...strenuous activities during your stay here." the man in the bed closes his eyes and gives a tight lipped nod.

"Try to get some sleep Mr. Burkhardt. I'll see you in the morning." he turns his back and exits the room, turning the light off on his way.

Nick opens his eyes and stares up at the darkened ceiling. Currents of heat bubble beneath his skin, focusing primarily in his fingers and palm where the memory of Sean's rough but somehow velvety flesh remains.

He flexes his fingers, trying to shove the recollection away but it remains strong. Burying in even deeper if possible.

He pulls his hands into fists at his side and exhales a harsh breath, "fuck."

~GRIMM~

Earlier

As soon as Juliette enters the house, she knows she's made a mistake. The familiar smell of spices and warm vanilla aren't enough to disguise the underlying current of fresh paint covering three
bullet holes.

An intruder with an abnormal amount of strength, not to mention his almost ogre like mannerisms. At the time she had easily put it off as drugs and possibly steroids but with recent revelations she can't help but remember the man's seeming inability to bleed, even after the amount of times Nick had attacked him.

She shakes her head and deposits her purse and jacket on the nearby coat rack.

Needing to calm her nerves, Juliette enters the kitchen and picks up the tea kettle to boil water in.

Filling it to the near top, Juliette places it on the stove top to boil. It doesn't take long for the drops of moisture on the heating surface to sizzle. The sound takes her back to the reverberating crackle of the intruder's skin as the hot water ate into his flesh.

That had been the only time she can recall the intruder showing any sign of being in pain. Even after though, a normal man would have likely been crippled by the pain but instead he had been able to flee with a surprising amount of speed and strength.

A medical condition and or drugs was one thing and the most sane explanation she could come up with. But the damning moment that Juliette has never been able to get over is after throwing the scorching water onto his face and he was screeching in pain, she would swear to have briefly witnessed the bones beneath his face and hands shifting.

Boiling water could do a lot of things to skin, swelling, blistering, etc. but she has never heard of it being able to realign bone. At least, not to a normal human....

Out of the corner of her eye, she can see the flashing red light of the answering machine.

Happily taking the distraction, Juliette plays the message waiting for her.

"Ms. Silverton, this is Dr. Haroldson from Mercy General. I'm calling to inform you that Mr. Burkhardt's condition has stabilized. And in light of your relationship with him I assume that you would like to see him before visiting hours are over at 8 PM. Goodbye."

The message ends with a final beep. Juliette stands in silence, shocked at the invitation instead of the banishment she had been expecting. Ridiculous as it is, considering it's a hospital and not a store or private residence, being barred from stepping foot on hospital property wasn't unheard of. Especially if the reason is because of costly vandalism.

What was even more shocking for her, was the fact that she was still standing in her house instead of heading for the hospital. Whereas when Nick had first been brought to the hospital, it had taken several doctors and assuring words from Rosalee to pull her away from Nick's side. But even as she sat in the waiting room, picking apart a Styrofoam coffee cup, all she could obsess over was what she would once she could see Nick once more.

Now though, seeing that she has only an hour before visiting hours ended didn't drive her into an anxiety attack. Instead, it tempted her with a reason not to go at all.

Amazing how a few short hours could feel like submersion into a parallel universe.

The part of her that is in love with Nick is unsurprisingly appalled and outraged by even the notion that she isn't going to see him. Though the part of her that has steadily been gaining strength over the years of being with Nick pushes for the avoidance technique. This side gains even more traction when Rosalee's reveal of Nick's true heritage and the secrets he's been keeping from her,
with likely even more than she knows already.

She doesn't react when the tea pot lets out a shrilling alert. Instead, she calmly turns off the burner and pours the hot water into a nearby mug.

Her body goes through the motions of choosing a tea bag and wrapping the string of the bag around the handle of the mug to steep. As she goes to sit down at the round dinner table, her stomach gives a soft gurgle, announcing it's building need for nourishment. She's surprised its taken this long, considering she's sure she hasn't eaten anything in at least six hours if not more.

Juliette continues to allow her body to lead the way as she goes to the fridge and snatches up the leftover Chinese food doesn't usually indulge in. However, she doesn't feel like cooking something else and it's just the comfort food she needs right now.

In short amount of time, she has finished both her tea and the entire box of cold sweet and sour chicken.

Coming to appreciate the mindlessness of being her own body's puppet, she soon finds herself in her bedroom getting ready for bed. A little earlier than she would usually sleep but her routine was thrown out the window the moment Nick collapsed in the bathroom.

Only, without the usual exhaustion she would feel when slipping into bed nonexistent, she can't help but notice how huge and cold the bed is without Nick's arms wrapped around her. Nor can she get past the light smell of the aftershave that Nick has recently taken to wearing floating around her head space.

A distraction, that's what needs.

She sits up in bed and looks around the room. A small stack of books sit on her nightstand, a slightly dusty bookmark marking the page of a book that she can't even remember the plot line of. Her jewelry sits in a nice line of two in front of her vanity beside a larger box containing her makeup and small nick knacks.

Finally, a mere flash of white brings her attention to Nick's dresser in the corner of the room. From the bed, it looks like at some point while Nick had been changing, a white sock had managed to jam itself between the opening of the compartment.

Juliette whips the cover of the blankets off of her and speeds over to the dresser. In almost a giddy fashion, she pulls the drawer open and is met by mismatched socks and haphazardly folded underwear.

Seeing as Nick and her have been living together for a few years now, she had from time to time done and put away Nick's laundry. Along with that, Nick had also taken his turn at laundry duties but, while he was good with putting the right amount of soap in and setting the correct time, folding laundry had and continues to be a weak point for him.

So, the sight is completely expected.

Usually, she would have been annoyed at the sight, especially when it concerned her own clothing being rumpled. However, the sight gives her the distraction she had been looking for.

With a few pulls she manages to pull the entire drawer from the dresser and carries it to the bed, upending the contents onto the bed.

Picking up the first stray sock within sight, she goes about finding its and all the other misplaced
pairs back together again. A few minutes in however, she comes across an object that is decidedly not an undergarment is a small black velvet box.

The numbness she had been enjoying stutters into a wall of emotion as she reaches out with a shaking hand and plucks the box up. It's smooth material feels like a dog's bite as she contemplates what might lay inside.

A pin accommodating Nick for solving a high profile case? A family heirloom? Or maybe it's just an empty box that somehow found its way into the back of Nick's dresser.

As her grandmother would have said, "La curiosidad mató al gato."

*Curiosity killed the cat.*

Not an original or heartfelt saying, but Juliette had always had a curious nature about her and because of this, was often compared to the a feline's curious nature. Her grandmother had had an especially fond habit of adding that her late cat Raffa might have lived for years more if he hadn't been drawn to the shiny pavement that made up the streets.

Now is no exception, for even though the distraction's purpose was to take her away from thinking of Nick, she had inadvertently come across yet another of his mysteries. One that she can't pull herself away from no matter how many times the voice inside her head hits her.

She flips the box open and her mouth goes dry at what lays nestled inside. She had had her suspicions as soon as she saw the box and seeing as they had been dating for many years now it was only a matter of time before a box like this would show up.

Only, she never pictured its appearance during a time like this. She certainly expected to feel different about it as well.

As a little girl, she had always pictured herself being proposed to at a fancy restaurant or in the middle of a beautiful forest or garden. The man would get down on his knees and deliver a movie perfect speech about how much he loved her before opening a velvet box to show a simple but elegant ring. She would giddily accept and be whisked away into a fairy tale ending.

She never imagined coming across the ring herself while trying to avoid thinking of the man she loved.

*Loved.*

Past tense. A slip of the mind or a betrayal by her inner desires?

The confusion alone scares her.

She still loves him, the thought of losing the emotion is like a vice around her heart. Ripping away a core part of what makes her Juliette Silverton.

But what makes Nick Burkhardt the man she lays with each night? The man she traded hearts with years ago?

Juliette snaps the box shut, the shining ring feeling more like a mockery than a proclamation of love.

Clarity, that's what she needs. A flashlight to wave in the darkened hallways of her mind.
She isn't going to get that by hiding in her house.

No, she needs to go to the one man whom can set it all straight.

Nick.

Her bedtime alarm clock flashes 7:30.

Set on a mission, Juliette chucks off her pajamas and changes back into her day clothes then places the box into her purse and heads for the hospital.

~break~

The nurse gives Juliette the side-eye as she picks up the phone and presses the intercom button.

"Dr. Haroldson to the nurse's station, please. Dr. Haroldson to the nurse's station."

She places the phone back on its cradle then gives Juliette a marshmallow sweet smile.

"He may be with another patient. Might I suggest coming back at tomorrow's visiting hours?" if her smile was a marshmallow, the sugary voice the nurse uses was the cavity the treat created.

Like the nurse and the rest of the world, she too had had to deal with the odd impatient person. With that, Juliette can play "sweet" with the best of them.

"I'm aware he must be a very person busy person but I would really appreciate even a minute of his time." she throws on her own punch of a smile for good measure.

The nurse responds with another signature smile and goes back to looking at her computer screen.

A few minutes later, Dr. Haroldson, a man in his late 40s with salt and pepper hair and thin wire-framed glasses approaches the desk.

Having met earlier when Nick had first been admitted for a brief moment he quickly surmises that Juliette is the reason for his summons.

"Ms. Silverton, it's good to see you again. How are you feeling?" he asks, undoubtedly inquiring about the grief that led her to destroying hospital property.

"Much better, thank you. And I'm so sorry about what happened, I honestly barely remember doing those things."

He nods and offers a sympathetic smile, "Grief can be quite the catalyst. Now, I assume you are here about Mr. Burkhardt?"

She nods. "yes, would it be all right if I saw him? I know it's after visiting hours but I don't think I'll be able to sleep if I can't at least lay eyes on him."

Dr. Haroldson sighs and glances at the large face of the wall clock. 8:15. He looks back at the younger woman and is faced with a familiar look of hope. It was one that he saw on a regular basis and unfortunately he was usually the one whom had to bring an end to.

He cherishes the moments he can uplift that hope.

"Follow me. We've moved him out of the ICU and into his own room."
Juliette smiles and follows the doctor, being careful to avoid bumping into other medical personnel and patients.

"We did have to sedate him briefly after he first woke up due to the excitement of his awakening. But the sedative should be wearing off by now. As I mentioned in my message, he is currently stable and barring any further complications he should be able to return home sometime in the coming week."

His easy going manner however drops the closer they get to a room that Juliette guesses belongs to Nick judging by his slowing pace. All it takes is a sense of sound to understand the doctor's abrupt composure.

Although muffled due to the thickness of the door, the unmistakable sound of an accelerating heart beat is enough for the doctor to dash from her side and rip the door to the room open.

The shocked look on the doctor's face is enough for Juliette to hurry towards the door as well, but she only makes it to the window looking into the room, the open blinds successfully concealing her face from view. She can't decide between being happy about the camouflage or angered because of the sight that meets her when she looks into the room.

A matching expression to the doctor's finds its way onto her face as she watches Captain Sean Renard, her boyfriend's boss, practically laying on top his subordinate with Nick caressing a patch of skin near the crook of the other man's elbow.

The Police Captain quickly jerks his arm away from Nick's probing hand, and stands from his chair. The blush that eats up a good chunk of his features belies any excuse the man could have been cooking up as he meets the eyes of the doctor.

Nick doesn't fare much better with the reddening of his ears as the situation fully catches up with him.

But what was the situation? A relieved moment between two friends? A steady hand to chase away confusion?

In truth, Juliette knows exactly what had been interrupted.

For the first time, in what she is sure is a long while, she is finally baring witness to a hidden part of Nick.

She can't decide whether she's relieved or saddened by this revelation.

There had always been a nagging suspicion when she had seen the two interact, especially when it came to watching Renard. During special events the older man would seem to linger around Nick for far longer than he did any of his other officers. There was also the way he looked at Nick when he didn't think anyone else was watching. Before she had had trouble putting a name to the look, having been so engrossed in her own love for Nick, that she was oblivious to the encroachment of others. Now though, she realizes that that look had been of unrequited love.

Or maybe not so unrequited if the way the guilty way the two were acting now was anything to go by.

Suddenly, Renard exits the room, his eyes averted to the floor as he attempts to make a hasty retreat. He only makes it a few steps past her before hastily coming to a halt. His posture becoming so stiff she half expects to see his spine protrude from his back.
His movements are halted as he slowly turns to face her, the guilt eating away at his complexion. The stiffness of his body remains, no doubt readying itself for the barrage of words he expects to be thrown at him. He might even be so cowed that he wouldn't use the wesen powers she suspected he possessed.

After Rosalee's confession it had been easy to read between the lines of what she had seen in the hospital room. She had her doubts that a normal human would be capable of surviving the display of magic she that had gone down in that room.

She didn't know what he was but she suspected it was something powerful.

It would be so easy and she believes within her rights to lash out, especially after seeing Renard and Nick groping at each other. Okay, so it likely hadn't gotten that far but she's sure it could have if they hadn't been interrupted.

Juliette can picture herself walking up to the man and slapping him across the face and raining insult after insult on him. Drawing an audience that she would serenade with the tragic tale of this one man ruined her relationship.

Juliette does none of that.

Instead, she calmly walks past Renard and exits the hospital.

Chapter End Notes

Throughout this story I have done my best to avoid writing Juliette scenes, mostly because I don't particularly care for the character. However, for the necessity of this story I forced myself to do it. Luckily, I am actually quite happy with how this chapter turned out, even if it was mostly Juliette based.

Along with that, I finally gave you guys some much anticipated and long overdue Nick/Sean action. Okay, so it was mostly just inner thoughts but that skin to skin contact, huh? That was good, huh?

Please leave a comment or kudos if you can, I really appreciate hearing from you guys!
I wanna hold you when I'm not supposed to

Chapter Summary

“At least a year ago I could recognize the man I chose to share my heart with.”

Chapter Notes

I'm alive folks and for a very belated New Year gift I would like to present a new chapter! Sorry about the delay, this chapter was really hard for me to write and I kept having to start over on it because it didn't feel right. Truthfully, I'm still not completely happy with it but if I don't post it now I might never.

Side note: the title of this chapter is a lyric from Selena Gomez's song Back To You.

The moment Rosalee lays eyes on Monroe, she rushes forward and engulfs him in a hug. His arms immediately wrap around her in return and she revels in the comforting scent of forest and metal.

She smiles at the feel of lips against her neck.

“Are you okay?” Monroe asks as they pull a few inches apart.

“I’m doing better.” She reaches up and briefly cups his scruffy cheek before lowering her hand to his arm.

Monroe’s heart warms in understanding and he tilts his head down to deliver a chaste kiss to her lips.

Hank, whom had been doing his best to give the two some semblance of privacy, steps forward.

“Sorry but we really, really need to talk. Privately.” Hank subtly tips his head towards the exit of the bullpen.

Wrapping his arm around Rosalee’s waist, the couple follow Hank out of the door. They continue walking until they come upon a relatively empty hallway.

Hank sends a passing uniformed officer a cordial smile before turning to face the couple, his smile dropping into a frown.

“It’s no secret that a lot of…things have happened over the past few days. Years even. And while I’m growing used to the increasing amount of creativity I’ve had to use to cover up wesen occurrences, what happened in Nick’s hospital room is colossal.” The usually straight-to-the-point Detective struggles to think of and produce the words needed to relay the bombshell ticking within him.

“Falsifying reports, losing evidence I can and have done. Erasing memories though, Juliette’s
memories, that’s a whole different ballgame.”

Monroe bites his tongue to keep in the expletive that wants to roll out.

Why did all the lights at the end of the maze keep flickering out into another curving path?

“What does she know?”

Rosalee’s apologetic eyes travel up to his, “she’s Kehrseite-Schlich-Kennen.” She hesitates.

“And she knows about Nick.”

As expected Monroe is shocked. Not hat Juliette was in the know now but that it had happened so soon. Monroe, unlike Nick, has never been under the impression that Juliette was forever going to remain in the dark about the wesen world.

Juliette was dating a Grimm -Portland’s own stereotype breaking one at that- and combining the times that Nick’s “extracurricular activities” had followed him home, it had only been a matter of time before the truth came out. Only so many things could be cleverly talked away from what had really happened.

Although, like Hank and more importantly Nick, if anyone was going to tell Juliette of the wesen world it was going to be by Nick himself. It was as much a right as a responsibility for the man to take upon himself.

Knowing the Grimm, Nick had likely gone through a dozen different scenarios and speeches in preparation for the moment the secret was exposed. Some of them might have even involved Nick’s frequent habit of stumbling into fights with wesen and Grimm prejudices.

Monroe doubts any would have involved a cult of Endeizechen Grimm led by Nick’s psychotic mother would be the cause. However, with how twisted the other man’s life had become, maybe he’d come close.

“I’m going to take a wild guess and say she didn’t take it well.” The guilty looks he receives is answer enough.

Rosalee’s hand travels down to entangle with Monroe’s, “we figured she needed some time to wrap her head around this.”

Monroe nods, “does Nick know?”

Hank shakes his head, “I’ve tried calling his room but he’s not picking up. I was gonna head down there to tell him, figured it was better he hear it in person.”

“We’ll go with you. After all, I’m the one that told Juliette. Whatever does or doesn’t happen between Nick and Juliette is on me.” Rosalee states, still believing she did the right thing but ready to take her part of the blame for the potential fallback.

“Rosalee you only did what you thought was best. After what happened with Hank…it was the right call.” Monroe shoots Hank an apologetic look, remembering the breakdown the other man went through after his glimpse into the wesen world.

Monroe knows he’ll never fully forgive himself, he’s sure Nick feels the same, for allowing the Detective’s downward spiral to continue for so long.
At the time Nick and he had thought they were not only protecting Hank but the wesen community as well. Over time though, it became clear that their silence had only created problems for the wesen world and Hank.

Hank gives a small nod in acknowledgement, “he’s right. I still believe Nick should’ve told her but Juliette needed to know. Now c’mon, visiting hours are over but I should be able to get us in for a few minutes.”

The three exit the precinct and get into Hank’s personal vehicle.

~GRIMM~

He could feel the needle of his IV moving each time he flexes his hand, the tugging strangely comforting as internally his mind is drowning in a sea of confusion.

Nick can still feel Sean’s hand on his awakening skin and experience the rush of his blood flowing through his veins. Goosebumps hatch along his arms as the other man’s phantom voice reverberates in his mind.

“Nick.”

Faintly he can hear the phone in his room ringing, signaling the fifth call in the span of an hour. Just like the four, he lets the rings die out. He’s aware that it’s only a matter of time before the caller/callers appear in person to demand an explanation for being ignored.

At the moment though, he can’t find it in him to care. No, that’s not entirely true, he does care. Not about hurt feelings and being smothered by anxiously relieved loved ones but about whom doesn’t show up and the reaction he won’t be able to hide.

The few moments he can gasp for breath, he worries that the discomfiting emotions battering him will be written on his skin, visible for all to see.

Phantom fingers travel down his arms, encircling his wrist to rest against his pulse. He tries to imagine Juliette’s slender fingers rubbing his skin but he finds the visage leaves a surprising taste of wrongness in his heart. The vision flickers and fizzes between a thicker and darker hand. This image feels his entire body with a welcoming warmth, drying up the previous patch of negativity.

There is no doubt in his mind whom the second hand belongs to. However, he is nothing if not a stubborn man, especially when it comes to matters of the heart; a heart which at one point he was sure belonged to a beautiful, redheaded veterinarian.

From the moment he had met Juliette all those years ago, he had felt with all his being that she was going to be the face he woke up to and dreamed of each night. Her lips would be the only ones to ever grace his again. And the only lips to form his name in such a way that would be the closest ring of an angel’s voice he would ever hear.

Back then, the notion that any of that would change was as preposterous as saying fire was cold. But now, now fire could maybe cool his burning mind.

Nick truly wishes the saying “an active mind cannot exist in an inactive body.” Maybe then the flood of damning revelations wouldn’t have slipped through the cracks.

When was the last time Juliette’s touch felt anything but pressure against skin? How long ago since her smile awakened the nest of butterflies in his belly?
Probably as long back to when he muttered a “you too.” To Juliette’s “I love you.” Shortly after first meeting his new Police Captain.

He winces at the bitter taste the thought leaves in his mouth.

Had it all been a desire for normalcy? To stay in a routine he knew and understood rather than embrace the unknown and…exciting?

He thinks back to his teen years. The time, society says, Is when you begin discovering the person you’re destined to become.

High school seems like a lifetime ago. And yet his mind effortlessly brings up moment after moment when his mouth went dry as Thomas the quarterback smiled at him. The time Nick was sure someone had set a fire in his chest as Thomas’ hand briefly brushed against his as Nick handed him a pencil.

How a brief glimpse of Thomas’ bare chest as they changed out of their sweaty gym clothes caused him to have to change in a bathroom stall.

After graduation, Nick never saw Thomas again.

Once the temptation of Thomas was gone, Nick can remember convincing himself his momentary infatuation (3 years to be precise) was just his hormones being out of whack.

Biology had been easy to hide behind and soon he found himself in college surrounded by attractive college girls.

Girl after girl came and went from his life during this time. His male friends had jokingly called him a player after each failed “relationship”, all the while giving him high fives.

He let them shower him in the typical male gratitude’s for all the girl’s he had “conquered” during college. It was easier than admitting that of all the girls he had dated, he had only had drunken sex with one of them. His first time in fact.

Her name had been Jennifer. She had been a sweet girl that had a habit of twirling pens into her short brown hair.

After that one night together however, Jennifer refused to talk to him again, claiming she couldn’t be the blanket he hid under.

For two whole days he had pondered over her words, fumbling through hazy memories from that night. On the second night, as he laid in his dorm room waiting for sleep to come, THE memory returned to him.

He had been on the verge of his climax, sweat running down his chest as Jennifer rode him with her eyes shut and moaning.

When his body went over the edge, a single name left his mouth, one that was decidedly not Jennifer’s or female for that matter.

Nick, in his inebriated state didn’t even realize what he had said but Jennifer had and her look of arousal quickly drained from her face.

As he lay in his dorm room, he experienced his first ever panic attack. It felt like his lungs refused to properly expand for three days straight. When his lungs finally did get their acts together, he still
had to contend with chattering shakes as the adrenaline finally seeped from his body.

Just the thought of considering a key part to his identity was enough to steadily clog his throat with stones. And so, he made the decision to lock the questions and experiences in the deepest part of his mind.

Parts that, until meeting Renard and his believed dead/psychotic mother came back into his life, had been collecting dust and rust. Now however, his mind is as chaotic as the day he had his first male fantasy.

The door to his room opens and he is only mildly surprised by the appearances of Hank, Monroe and Rosalee.

Swallowing the array of emotions he really can’t deal with right now, Nick sits up as well as his run-down body will let him.

“I was wondering when you guys were gonna show up.” He does his best to inject some levity into his voice. That’s made difficult though by the slight sting from his IV ling that reprimands him for trying to “nonchalantly” brush his drooping bangs out of his eyes.

Hank scoffs and walks further into the room, “well considering the five missed calls from an ignored warning. How are you feeling man?” the other man ends his question with a “don’t bullshit me” brow raise.

“I’ve been better.” He’s honestly too tired to even attempt a lie. His friends would definitely see right through it.

After not verbally speaking for he didn’t know how long, his dusty throat slurps up what little moisture he has in his mouth. He clears his throat in an attempt to gather enough saliva to dampen it.

At some point, Rosalee must have noticed his discomfort because she appeared at his bedside handing him a cup of water.

“Thank you.” He takes a few gulps of the water, immediately relieving the sticky dryness in his throat and mouth.

Even with his focus on curing his parchness, he doesn’t miss the pinched smile that staples into Rosalee’s mouth. With everything that’s happened, he doesn’t question the uncharacteristic action.

“You have any idea how long they’re going to keep you here?” Hank continues, pulling up a chair and plopping into it.

“My doctor says he wants to continue monitoring me for at least another week. Something about taking a few more MRIs and blood tests.” He blanches at the thought of more needless testing.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea? I mean, you’re not exactly normal, biologically speaking of course.” Monroe jumps in, coming to a stand beside Rosalee.

Rosalee shakes her head, “the differences in your blood would be miniscule. Worst case scenario, they mistake those variations for anemia or an iron deficiency. As for the MRI, I honestly don’t know. My knowledge of Grimm neurology is severely lacking.”

“Doesn’t matter anymore. As soon as I can walk without keeling over I’m out of here. Besides, I’ll recover a lot better at home with Juliette.”
It’s impossible to miss the flinch Juliette’s name causes in Rosalee and Monroe. He’d been willing to brush off Rosalee’s previous odd behavior but now that Monroe has joined in he can’t ignore it any longer. Especially not when it may involve Juliette.

“Is everything okay?”

Nick is nearly blinded by the fake smile Monroe whips out, “Everything’s great! You’re awake! We’re just here visiting, making sure nothing got scrambled or exposed.” Monroe sucks in a breath at the sudden elbow to the stomach.

Rosalee pins him with a glare before it deflates at the kicked-puppy look Monroe responds with.

Like a spoiled-child, Nick slams his hands down on the scratchy hospital sheets, eliciting the attention of all three of his friends.

“Is someone going to tell me what’s going on?” he demands, looking at the three faces in front of him. Neither one is able to hold his gaze for longer than a few seconds, not even Hank which only causes his anxiety to worsen.

Monroe, still not yet willing to give up the horrendous ploy, opens his mouth yet again.

“What do you mean? We’re just three friends, having a conversation.”

Rosalee gives her boyfriend’s hand a comforting squeeze, “you can stop Monroe. I’ll take it from here.”

Monroe looks relatively relieved but at the same time concerned at her words. Nick’s not given much time to contemplate what that could mean before Rosalee begins.

“While you were unconscious and literally battling your inner Grimm, Juliette was practically living in the waiting room. She wanted to be by your side the moment you woke up. That would never have happened though if it wasn’t for Renard. He performed a spell that took his subconscious into your mind.”

Nick nods his head, remembering the shock and relief he had felt at seeing Se-Renard. Before his arrival, all Nick had felt was a rib-shattering pressure with every breath he managed to sip in. An inky force that he can now recognize as his spelled Grimm side trying to delete Nick’s humanity entirely. It had nearly succeeded.

“Because of the spell’s magnitude, I stayed in the room while Monroe kept watch outside the door.” She takes a moment to formulate her next words carefully.

“Everything, as I as I could tell, was going according to plan. It wasn’t until Renard and you started to convulse and furniture flew around the room that the plan went to hell. Juliette came to check on you and Monroe could only hold her back for so long.” Her voice hitched, serving to ratchet up Nick’s already over-taxed heart.

“Is she..? She’s not-“

Rosalee fervidly shakes her head, “Juliette’s alive. Just a few minor scrapes and bruises.”

Nick’s heart rate, while not completely steadily, goes back to a healthier rate. Rosalee is all too aware that the likelihood of cardiac arrest is a too real possibility with the news she is about to
deliver.

“She saw everything. Nick, I could tell that she was going to go down the same path Hank did so I decided, for the sake of her sanity and to an extent our friendship to tell her the truth. The truth about the wesen world…and you.”

Instead of lifting the weight that people often describe when confessing, she feels as though bits of stone have been added to hers.

Silence dominates the room. Not even a ticking clock or monitors can break the walls that have sprouted around Nick’s head.

He can see Rosalee’s lips continue to move, her eyes pinched as her hands go to his own.

Her touch may as well be a graze of breath for all the help it does.

Is this what a stroke feels like? A prison cell lined with numbing silence?

When he had “inherited” his family’s legacy, he knew there was no way to ever return to his old life. At some point, his new and old life would collide. Hank’s descent, although messy, had almost been a relief. No longer would he have to run two angles on a single case; push for insanity when a perp’s motives and methods entered fantasy.

It was supposed to have made things easier.

At home with Juliette he could pretend he was still a caring, honest, loyal boyfriend. While at work his walls could fall and all the anger, confusion, fear and rightness of being a Grimm could find a purpose in his duty as a Detective.

The two worlds were never supposed to collide.

Vibrations of white noise built up in his head, steadily trying to crack his head open from the inside.

Mutely he can see Hank, Monroe and Rosalee trying to get his attention. Their expressions fully crossed into panic as they gather in a circle around his bed.

His eyes remain uncaring as his doctor silently argues with the three. Not a muscle twitches to reach out as his friends are led from the room. And his mouth remains sealed as a warm puddle chugs into his veins from an injection.

With a pop, the aquarium of white noise in his head vanishes.

~GRIMM~

The combination of smoke and liquor drifts over Renard, wrapping around him like a dumpster drenched newspaper.

Only a few other people, some of them wesen from the brief vogue he witnesses once they recognize him. He doesn’t blame them for their surprise. All though there was no law stating it, the Guardian of a territory did NOT frequent establishments beneath their station with questionable rusted stains embedded into the cracked wooden floor.

As the Bastard Prince however, he figured his “station” was nothing more than a laminated name tag.
Renard ignores the looks and takes a seat at the aging bar. His suit jacket is nearly ripped when he moves his elbows against shining bar top. The Guardian and Police Captain of Portland, Oregon would have been furious at the damage done to his tailor-made suit. He would have demanded the owner pay for the repairs (even though he could get it done for free) and sent in a health inspector to shut the place down.

Instead, he merely flags the bartender down and orders a whiskey neat.

The bartender has barely finished pouring the drink when Renard unwisely knocks the drink back in two large gulps. He places the now empty glass down.

“Another.”

Without missing a beat, the bartender pours a more generous helping then walks away, leaving the half empty bottle behind.

Renard should probably feel insulted. He is the Guardian of Portland, a seen but unseen force ruling over the wesen in his territory. Not a crippled emotional mess, drowning himself with alcohol in a hole-in-the-wall bar. But, as he’s already reminded himself, there is a reason he is referred to as “The Bastard Prince.”

Around him, he continues to hear the clinking of glasses and the cough of a serial smoker. It’s almost soothing in the same way one feels after plucking a sliver that has been irritating a person all day.

Unluckily for Renard, his sliver couldn’t be relieved with a simple pair of tweezers. He was sure nothing, not even the eventual pull of death, would unburden his soul of the look Juliette Silverton had given him outside Nick’s hospital room.

He picks up his glass again, this time taking a more shallow drink.

The chilling knowledge and accusations he saw reflected in her eyes left no question that she had been witness to the wildly inappropriate moment Nick and he had shared. No, Nick had no blame in this, it was all on Renard. Allowing his feelings to lead him while Nick was exhausted and under the influence of drugs.

Florence Nightingale would have, and rightly so, slapped him. Detective Burkhardt was his subordinate, nothing more. His reinvigorated feelings for the younger man were just an after-effect of the spell and the trauma both had suffered together.

All he had to do was lock said feelings away, limit his interactions with the Detective and over time the feelings would fade.

He dutifully ignores the voice reminding him that had been “the plan” since the moment he had first met the younger man.

Pushing the voice aside, he focuses on the memory of Juliette and her actions back at the hospital. This was the woman Nick loves, the one whom held the key to Nick’s heavily guarded heart.

He has no right to even glance at the love the two share. And yet, he has done exactly that and more. Juliette witnessed this and all Renard can hope is that she doesn’t leave Nick over Sean’s stupidity.

Renard smothers the twinge of hope the thought gives.
Nick needs Juliette more than anything right now. Sure, the Detective would have help from his trio of friends/partners but no care would be as great without the person whom is loved by the injured party the most.

Renard would never and could never be that person. No matter how painfully his heart swells each time he glances at the younger man.

He finishes the rest of his drink then grabs the whiskey bottle and pours himself some more.

~GRIMM~

I week later

His call goes straight to voicemail. Again.

In a way, it’s a fitting punishment for all the calls he ignored during his hospital stay. Nick just wishes Juliette would at least send him a “leave me alone” text.

“Hey, I know this is the part where I’m supposed to say “I’m here for if you want to talk.” But, there’s no “if.” Please Juliette, call me back.” He ends the call and pockets the phone.

A knock alerts Nick’s attention to Hank standing in the doorway.

It’s hard to miss the sympathy in Hank’s gaze as he walks further into the room.

“You ready to go?” Hank asks, obviously doing his best to not bring up the message he most certainly overheard.

Nodding, Nick grabs his bag of clothes from the bed and rises off the bed.

~break~

Traffic starts up again and Hank presses down on the accelerator, taking a left onto a route that should get them away from the early morning traffic.

For the past fifteen minutes only the car radio fended off the silence that festered between them.

While Nick appreciates the space Hank is giving him, he can only take so much nameless music hammering his thoughts.

“Have you heard from Juliette?”

An almost apologetic look crosses over Hank’s face before he answers, “I tried calling her a few times. It wasn’t until yesterday that she sent a me text saying she needs time.”

Nick knows he should be happy that Juliette is at least communicating with someone, albeit briefly. However, he can’t help the flare of hurt at the fact that it was Hank whom received the fabled text and not him.

Noticing the brief flicker of emotion, Hank continues “take it for what it is man, she needs time. Give that to her and you two will be back to your regular love struck selves in no time.”

Nick swears the sides of his lips split from how hollow the smile he gives Hank feels.

They both know things will never be the same, Nick especially when it came to his relationship with Juliette.
“Yeah, you’re probably right.”

~break~

Hanks pull his car to a stop in front of Nick and Juliette’s house. Her car is parked a few paces in front of Hank’s.

Initially Hank had volunteered to let Nick crash at his place for a while until things with Juliette had been sorted out. Nick hadn’t wanted to impose though, partner/friend or not, Nick didn’t want to make Hank feel like he had to play host for his love-troubled friend.

Monroe had also offered but with his relationship with Rosalee going strong still, Nick really didn’t want to interfere with any “romantic plans” that may come up.

While things between the four friends were still a little rocky, they were steadily rebuilding the ladder that linked them together.

One rung however was barely more than a wood chip.

It had been naïve and a more than a little presumptuous of Nick to think that Juliette wouldn’t be at THEIR home. She was more in the right to be there than Nick considering she paid a bigger chunk of the bills.

Being a Detective didn’t pay as well as a well-established veterinarian did after all.

His earlier wishes to communicate with Juliette seem like a distant memory now when faced with the impending face to face conversation that’s going to occur.

No one should be so anxious about seeing, let alone speaking to their significant other.

But as much as he wants to melt into his seat, he knows that he can only stall the inevitable confrontation for so long.

With a useless breath, he unbuckles his seatbelt and reaches into the backseat for his bag then exits the car.

“Thanks again, Hank. I’ll call you later.” He goes to close the door when Hank speaks.

“Good luck.”

He can’t help but feel as though Hank is wishing him well on a health screening with the way his partner’s looking at him.

Unable to think of anything else besides another thanks, Nick opts for a dim smile and closes the door.

A few steps later Nick is standing inside the entryway of the house facing a drawn-faced Juliette with a duffel sitting at the foot of the stairs.

“Hi Nick.” Nick’s own bag soon finds a home of its own on the floor.

“Juliette, it’s good to see you.” He’d like to say this the first conversation they’ve had where both feel like strangers to the other.

Going along with the stage Nick has set, Juliette responds “it’s good to see you too. How are you feeling?”
“Okay, a little stiff but that’s to be expected after laying in bed so long.” Abandoning his bag Nick travels further into the house and enters the kitchen, going straight for the sink.

Behind him he can the familiar creak of the floorboards as Juliette follows him inside. He mindlessly grabs a glass off the drying rack and fills it with water.

The sound of dripping water fills the gaps of building silence, both not wanting but knowing that it needs to come to an end.

As he slowly drinks from his glass, his back still to Juliette, he lets his eyes flick around the counter; Taking in the small box on the counter filled with miscellaneous items like a box of tea bags and newspaper wrapping what he guesses to be fine china.

He never liked tea, could barely stand the taste of what he called “dirt water.” Juliette practically lived off of it though.

Finishing the water, he sets the empty glass down and turns to face Juliette. Her arms are wrapped around her middle and she can barely meet his gaze.

“I wanted to tell you.”

Juliette readjusts her hold around her middle with an audible sniff.

“In the beginning, there were so many times I nearly did. Lying next to you each night, knowing I was keeping a huge part of myself secret from you was devastating. I had to protect you though, not only from all the dangers but also because I knew you would never look at me the same again. I mean, it’s not every day a person starts seeing and experiencing a whole new side of the world.”

Juliette shakes her head and finally lifts her head to look at him. The pain in them nearly enough to bring Nick to his knees.

“You should have told me, at least then we would have been talking about it instead of sweeping it under the rug. Adding to the list of things that just didn’t make sense. Furthering the gap that has been building between us for a while now.”

“I needed to protect you.” Nick reiterates, taking a step forward before stopping midway at the step back Juliette responds with.

“How? How is lying to me protecting me? Nick, I know and accept your job as a Detective is dangerous and that you can’t tell me everything about it. But those are dangers I can explain and understand. You as a Grimm though, that’s something that the only way I can comprehend is by you being honest. Like it or not, your lies left me vulnerable to whatever wesen villain of the week you managed to piss off.” The bite of her words, exaggerated or not, leave him feeling like chunks of skin have been ripped off his body.

Unable and part of him unwilling to fend off the anger her words bring him, he pushes back.

“So it’s okay if I omit details about human criminals but it’s wesen where you draw the line? Up until about a year ago, I didn’t even know there was a difference!” it’s weak and he doesn’t even entirely know what he means but at this point he’s fighting a wounded animal fighting a losing battle.

Juliette glowers and the defensive stance she previously held melts into offensive.

“At least a year ago I could recognize the man I chose to share my heart with.”
His hand subconsciously moved to his heart, as if checking to make sure the pain he could feel in his chest wasn’t because of the dagger he swore had been rammed into him. Not finding a bloody, gaping hole he drops his hand.

“I’m still that man.”

She shakes her head as a pinched smile warps her face, “No, you’re not. And maybe it’s for the best. No more masks, no more questioning everything. Just a clean break, or as clean as the aftermath of a hurricane can be.” She mutters the last bit to herself but he picks up all the same.

Moving past him she goes to grab the box of items off the counter but he intercepts her, holding her in place by the shoulders. His grasp weak enough where she could shake him off if she so desired, he prayed she wouldn’t though.

He isn’t sure he won’t lose his balance.

“Juliette I—I need you.” He stutters, his throat seemingly filling with super glue.

Her posture deflates, as if Nick’s words had pricked the defensive bubble she had built around herself. A brief flare of hope bursts in his heart only to extinguish when her spine straightens into an impenetrable resolve.

She lets out a cold chuckle, “you never could say it.”

His brow furrows in confusion, “say what?” if a word was all it took to keep her in his arms he would scream it.

Juliette’s eyes meet his own, the orbs of color filled with what he could only describe as resolve.

“Love, Nick.”

Nick’s grip fleetingly tightens on her shoulders before relaxing, subconsciously not wanting to hurt her.

“I’ve said it, I’ve said it dozens of times—”

Her expression turns pitiful as she smiles up at him, “never first though, never because you just felt like it or even after sex. It’s like my proclamation of love for you is a cue. I can’t do this anymore, I can’t be in a one-sided relationship any longer.”

He adamantly shakes his head, “I love you, Juliette. I love you so much.” His voice cracks, overwhelmed by the surge of fear fueling his beating heart.

She cups his cheek and gently rubs the prickly skin on his unshaven face.

“No you don’t, at least not the way I want you to.” She sniffs as she valiantly keeps the tears from running down her face.

The fear swelling inside him threatens to drown him as he recognizes he is losing her.

“We can fix this, I can fix this. Just let me try. Give me a chance to show you how I much I love you.” He is barely gasping enough breath to not pass out as the waves threaten to pull him completely under.

His hands travel down to her hips, gripping them to a near bruising force, pulling her body closer to him as if that will prevent her from drifting further away.
“I saw you with him, at the hospital.”

Nick adamantly believes that for a full minute his heart had ceased function. That was the only explanation he could come up with for the way he was able to make out each fleck of dust in the air and each individual scratch that had accumulated on the floor.

She doesn’t need to elaborate on who, he may be in denial of the events taking place but he isn’t stupid enough to plead ignorance. He owes her that much. And he certainly doesn’t comment on the way that even the reminder flutters his heart back into gear.

“Nothing happened, nothing will happen. I only want you.” He tries, his hold on getting weaker by the minute.

Juliette drops her hand, “Maybe not today or even in the coming year but you can’t promise it won’t happen. I don’t want you to. And that wasn’t even the first time I’ve noticed the charge you and Captain Renard share. Every time we go to one your work functions and you even stand near him I feel like an intruder.”

“Captain Renard is my superior, a friend at most.” Only his fingertips connect him to her.

“Most friends don’t look at each other like they personally hung the moon.”

Nick wants to retort, to deny the truth of her words but at this point his word arsenal has run empty. He’s not quite ready to fully acknowledge what he feels for his Captain but Juliette’s observation makes burying the truth nearly impossible.

Seeing that she’s finally gotten through to him, Juliette easily slips out of his weak hold and picks up the box from the counter.

“I’m going to be staying with a friend for a little while, I’ll stop by occasionally to pick up the rest of my stuff.” She hefts the box into a more secure hold in her arms and walks towards the door before stopping, her back still turned to him as he stands in stunned silence at the events taking place.

If he could speak, he would insist that he should be the one to move out. That the house is rightfully hers. He can only manage an inaudible gasp.

They both know the real reason why she’s moving out though. After all, the memories they built in this house, both good and bad, are enough to suffocate him. He can only imagine what kind of memories Juliette associates with each nook and cranny of the house.

If anyone should have to suffer that fate, it should be him.

“I’ll always care about you. Be happy and please stop running from yourself.” With that said, Juliette exits the kitchen and carefully sets the box down on the staircase.

She digs into her pocket and takes out the engagement ring, the simple band gleaming in the dim lighting of the house. She can’t help but smile as she fingers the smooth material, allowing herself a moment to indulge in a fantasy where she walks down an aisle in a beautiful wedding dress. Nick waits for her in front of a priest, a smile on his face as she gets closer and closer to him.

The fantasy ends at the feel of hot tears falling down her cheeks. She quickly wipes the offending traitorous tears away and sets the ring down on the table near the door, fighting down the voice that screams at her to pick it back up. To not end the love story she was trying to build.
She ignores the voice and instead picks up her duffel bag and sticks her arm through the handles then bends down and picks up her box.

Juliette takes what she wishes was a more steadying breath and without a backward glance, walks out the door. Knowing that if she even entertained the idea of one last look she wouldn’t be able to leave.

So much had happened in the house. And while not all of it had been good, there was still plenty of moments that she knew no matter how hurt she was by their ending, she would cherish for the rest of her life.

Nick Burkhardt is another passing chapter in her life and at some point they may cross path again. For now however, she needs to continue going forward and believe that somewhere out there is her happily ever after.

Back inside the house, Nick slumps onto a kitchen chair and looks at the spot where only moments ago the one constant in his life once stood. The revelation she parted with sitting like lead in the pit of his stomach.

He doesn’t fight the wave of crippling fear and anguish that topples over him.

Chapter End Notes

Damn me, I just keep emotionally writing off the female love interests! Oh well, at least we still have Rosalee. Also, there is only one more chapter after this (for now at least, it might be split into two later). I hope you enjoyed this chapter and if you did I would really appreciate a kudos or even a comment!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!