

# Under the Crimson Moon

By LCM

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## Part One, the Vampire's House

### Chapter One

Edgar woke up in a bed in a dark room. The covers were soft and provided warmth to the young runaway painter. But this wasn't his bed. Or his room. In fact, he had no idea where he was or who had taken him here. His hair was down and exposed. "Where is my hat? Why is my hair down?" The runaway painter thought.

He slowly got out of bed and felt around, touching the soft felt of his hat and the satin ribbon he would use to tie his hair back in a low, curly ponytail. "Where am I?" He thought as his eyes danced around the dark room.

The bed was large and the covers were a deep maroon color from what he could tell. There were three windows on the wall in front of the bed he woke up in. Edgar almost tripped as he slowly walked towards the windows. "If I could get a glimpse.. Maybe I can pinpoint my location."

The windows were each covered with silken curtains that glowed the same maroon color. The curtains were soft to the touch as Edgar moved them out of the way.

The night sky broke free from its translucent prison, the white moon shining freely into the dimly lit room. The room he was in overlooked a town in the distance. The very town he ran away from.

“Wonderful, it’s dark out..” The runaway painter sighed as he turned away from the window and tied his hair back, forming that low ponytail. With this newfound light, he began to wander around the room and get a better sense of where he was. There was a large dark oak cabinet in one corner of the room with a dresser full of clothing. On the left wall, sat a wooden door with a brass handle that screamed of being the exit.

The room was rather small, despite the three windows. Edgar walked to the door and set his hand on the brass handle. To the young man’s shock, it opened when he turned it. He opened the door slowly with an ear wrecking creak and walked out of the room.

The door led to a hallway lit by the moon. Why weren’t there any lights? The door closed behind Edgar with a slam, making him jump. It was then he realized something.

“I forgot to look for a light..” He sighed. “Whatever. There’s no use looking now. Whoever kidnapped me could’ve heard the door.” Edgar began to walk through the moonlit hallway, his eyes gradually adjusting to the limited amount of light. He passed several other doors and encountered a staircase. With his hand carefully running across the wall, Edgar walked down the stairs and glanced at a small candle in an indent of the wall to his right. Edgar gingerly took the

candle and continued to walk down the stairs, getting to another hallway. The young painter sighed and began to walk more.

As he walked, the sound of movement in one of the rooms captured his curiosity. With hesitation, he moved towards the room and peeked in.

Edgar saw a tall man in the room setting a table.

They were wearing a long cloak and had pale skin covered by black gloves on their hands. They had a soft expression combated by their crimson red eyes. A trait only few creatures had.

Edgar felt himself gasp internally and took a step back. But he wasn't quiet enough.

The person looked up after the echo of that single step infested their ears. The crimson eyes directly staring at the scared young painter.

Edgar froze in place, staring back at the creature and breathing quickly. Those crimson eyes could only mean one thing..

The person gave a warm smile and walked up to Edgar. When they were face to face, he lent out his hand for a shake.

Edgar slowly and shakily moved his hand towards the person, gently placing it in the hand presented to him.

The person was oddly cold despite their formal appearance. "You're recovering.." The person whispered, their smile growing as they shook Edgar's hand.

Edgar retracted his hand and backed away. Spotting the toothy fangs of the person. This concluded his suspicions. He

was captured by a vampire. He tried to hide his expression of pure fear with a smile, but his captor saw through it.

“Don’t be scared.” The person said and motioned Edgar to follow them with that gentle, warm smile. They looked at the candle Edgar was holding and took it from his hands, placing it on a counter. “You must be hungry.. You came just in time, I finished making food.”

Edgar followed the vampire and sat down at one end of the table. His heart was beating against his chest. His hair stood up on the back of his neck. His lungs felt constantly out of breath, as if he was suffocating in his own anxiety. He felt as if he was glued to the chair. Oh and how his left ankle ached like it had never before. It was only then when he looked down, he noticed bandages around it.

“You twisted your ankle in the woods. So I took you here to heal.” The vampire said, suddenly appearing next to Edgar and looming over him like a tall building.

Edgar looked at the vampire, doing a poor attempt to mask the terror going through his body. He couldn’t say anything, for no voice would cry out.

“Please don’t push yourself.. It’ll only take longer for you to heal.” He looked at the food on the table. “Please point to any food you’d like, I’d be happy to hand it to you.”

Edgar slowly turned to the food and examined it. It looked delicious enough to make his stomach growl. He opened his mouth to speak, but all that came out were unintelligible noises too difficult for the average person to understand. *“This is a vampire.. A vampire.. Kidnapped me.. I*

*shouldn't eat. He wants my blood. He's just fattening me for my blood.*" Edgar thought and slowly moved his hands to the table and pushed his chair out. "I...I'm.." He began to speak, his mind screaming that this was a horrible decision, but his will ignored it. "I'm not.. Hungry."

The vampire simply blinked. It didn't yell or scream at the scared painter. It didn't push in the chair either. It simply stared at him as if it was motioning "Are you sure?"

Edgar stood up from his chair. He could hear his heart beating against his chest the entire time, forgetting about his twisted ankle. He glanced around the room swiftly and spotted knives on a counter. *"I can kill this vampire before it tries to kill me. Perfect. I can't get bitten though."* The painter began to move towards the knives slowly, to not create suspicion. He felt the vampire's gaze capturing him like a wolf eyeing their prey. He slowly tried to reach for something near the knives, acting like he wasn't trying to get a weapon but the stress of the vampire watching made it difficult.

"What are you reaching for?" the vampire's voice echoed.

"Uhm.." Edgar stammered, looking around near the knives. "I'm.. exploring..?" He looked back at the vampire.

The vampire had a concerned look and walked towards Edgar and grabbed him gently by the wrist, slowly pulling him away from the knives. "It's dangerous. Don't hurt yourself."

Edgar, in a split second of panic, elbowed the vampire and tried to run. However, he fell hard on the ground and let out a quick yet loud yell of pain.

The vampire rubbed the place where the young painter had elbowed him and sighed. “Human.. You should get some rest. Please, allow me to walk you to your room.” It said as Edgar began to stand up, his leg shaking from the pain.

“S...Stay away from me!” He cried. There was no use of hiding his fear now. He was close to the table, glancing at the assortment of food and silverware. “I-I’m not eating *anything* you try to shove down my throat!”

The vampire was taken aback by this. Wasn’t this supposed to be predictable? “Wait.. human! I’m not-” They put their hands up and shook them as it walked towards Edgar.

“Don’t come near me!” Edgar shouted, grabbing a glass from the table, his eyes shrunken with terror. His heart was vigorously trying to escape his rib cage. His appendages shook like never before. His lungs were closing in on themselves.

“Human! Please! I can explai-”

*SMASH!*

*Thud.*

Edgar looked at the vampire lying on the ground, bleeding from the head. His eyes slowly wandered into his hand. He held the shattered glass tightly, his sweat loosening his grip over it. His vision began to darken as his breathing began to slow down. “*What’s.. Happening to me?*” Edgar thought. His balance weakened. Edgar’s vision darkened completely as he collapsed on the ground beside the vampire, a tear shedding from the scared painter’s eye.

Edgar woke up with a gasp for air. He swiftly sat up, breathing heavily. *“Was it all a dream?”* He thought. The soft covers of the bed Edgar woke up in said otherwise. He was back in that room again.. His hair was down and his hat and ribbon were in a similar spot to when he woke up. *“Am I having deja vu?”* He thought. He stood up from the bed and almost fell on the ground. Catching himself, he looked down at his ankle.

The bandages were there.

A sense of dread began to plague the young painter as soft footsteps were heard approaching the door. Edgar climbed into the bed as quickly as he could and pretended to be asleep, lying down almost exactly as how he would've been the entire time.

The door creaked open and the footsteps entered the room. The sound of something being placed down on a wooden dresser was heard. The footsteps began to approach Edgar, who tried not to open his eyes or shake. He had a feeling something was moving towards him. The feeling worsened when the covers were lifted.

*“This was a bad idea. That vampire is going to bite me. It’s going to kill me. Why did I hit it with that glass!? Why else would it keep me alive!?”* His thoughts were interrupted when he felt the covers gently coating his body up to his neck. The footstep noises began to leave the room, followed by the creak of the door opening and closing.

Edgar opened his eyes to where he heard something being placed and was met with some of the food from the

table with a small letter set by the plate. Beside the plate and letter, was a small napkin with a fork, spoon and knife resting atop. *“What type of fool does he think I am? I’m not going to just fall for this!”* He thought. But that letter began to fish for his curiosity, and it had caught the fish.

Edgar grabbed the letter slowly and began to read it.

“Hello, human! I’m sorry we met on the wrong foot, as your kind calls it. I really hope I can get to know you better. You don’t have to be afraid of me. I won’t hurt you. Your fear of me is understandable but please let me prove that I won’t hurt you. I hope you can understand why I brought you here. P.S! My name is Victor!”

Edgar looked at the small smiley face scribbled onto the letter and let out a nervous breath. *“It’s all a lie.”* He looked at the plate of food left for him on the dresser. Even though he desperately wanted to eat, he turned away and walked towards the windows. He opened one and walked onto the stone balcony, leaning on it and staring into the rising sun. *“I’m sorry.. I’ll come back. Alive. I’ll make sure of it. I won’t let myself be swayed so easily by this freak of nature. Even if I die by my own hands, I won’t let it get a single drop of blood from me. I promise.”*



## Chapter Two

When the sun rose, Edgar promised himself to escape this place. But he had no idea where the exit was. That vampire who called themselves Victor should be asleep by now. Vampires sleep during the day, right?

Edgar walked through the hallway, this time with a large stick he found resting against the wall of his room. He tried to stay off of his left ankle as much as possible. The quicker it heals, the quicker he can leave. In the hallway, the young painter found a small creature lying down by one of the doors. It didn't look like that vampire. It didn't look human at all. Edgar slowly walked toward the creature and observed it. "A dog." He whispered.

The dog turned its head up at Edgar. The beautiful onyx coat folding along its neck. The dog had soft orange eyes and pointed ears with a nervous look on its face.

Edgar moved his hand towards the dog and allowed it to sniff him. "I wonder what you're doing here." He said in a calm voice, trying not to scare the dog. The young painter knelt down, slowly setting the stick on the floor behind him. He moved his hand slowly under the dog's chin and began to scratch it.

The dog closed its eyes and began to wag its tail.

Edgar could feel the muscles on his face move upward in a smile as a wave of relief washed over him. It seems he forgot about all his problems just from petting this dog he randomly found.

“I see you’ve found Wick.” The vampire’s voice shocked Edgar, like a stake being plunged into his heart from the back.

Edgar completely froze as a look of horror washed over him. He breathed slowly in an attempt to stay calm.

The dog’s eyes opened and immediately spotted the vampire. Instead of showing affection to the vampire like Edgar thought the dog would do, it cowered in fear as its tail went in between its legs as its ears pinned down.

Edgar heard the vampire giggle softly. *“What kind of a monster would scare a dog!?”* He thought angrily. Clearly, this vampire wasn’t a regular one. *“What if it wasn’t even a vampire? What if it was a demon just masking as a vampire?”* This thought terrified Edgar even more than being face to face with a blood sucking parasite.

“I-I’m sorry! D-Did I scare you?” The vampire stammered.

Edgar looked behind himself at the vampire. “No...” His voice trailed off. “What did you do.. To this poor dog?”

“Oh.. About that..” The vampire looked down, putting his hand on his cheek in a sympathetic tone. “He was the pet of a hunter that came here with their group to try to kill me. I didn’t notice the poor thing until after I had defended myself.”

“You mean you killed his owner..?” Edgar confronted. His voice was shaky but at least understandable. “You killed the owner and that group and took their blood, didn’t you?”

The vampire sighed. “Yes.. That’s-”

“Then why are you keeping this poor thing here!? It’s clearly scared of you!”

“It is?” The vampire blinked.

Edgar was flabbergasted. “You *didn’t* know?” He then recalled what happened that night. He had given the vampire a blow to the head with a glass. “*Great. I might’ve made that vampire even dumber with that blow. Whatever, it works for me.*”

“I-I always knew Wick was scared of me.. B-but I thought he would’ve warmed up to me by now.. At least a little.” The vampire looked down with a sad look on their face.

Edgar looked at the dog named Wick, who was slowly getting braver. He wasn’t sure if the vampire was faking this or was telling the truth. The young painter sighed as he began to pet the dog again in a comforting motion. “Well..” He began to suggest. “Try to associate yourself with positive things. Like.. treats. Or food.” Edgar realized what he said and snapped his head towards the vampire. “Don’t even think of trying to do that to me! I won’t fall for your tricks!”

The vampire simply blinked again. “Oh- I had no intentions, human!” He then smiled. “Thank you, for the suggestion. Did you eat the food I left for you? I assume you would be hungry.”

Edgar shook his head. “Did you forget?”

“Oh..”

Edgar stood up. “When can I go home?”

“When your ankle heals. I’m surprised you’re even walking around.” The vampire handed Edgar the stick that was lying on the ground. “And you found the walking stick I gave you!” He smiled. “I found it in the woods. It was sturdy enough for me so I thought it was good enough for you!”

Edgar was confused. Back to square one with his confusion. “*Why is this vampire so nice to me?*” He turned to leave. “I’m.. Uh.. Don’t follow me.” The young painter said as he began to walk away. Once he got a good distance, Edgar could’ve sworn he heard the vampire say “I wonder when he’ll address me by my name..”

## Chapter Three

Later in the day, Edgar was staring into the distance again, his arms against the balcony. He was deep in thought.

The door creaked open as the vampire walked in.

“Human? Are you sure you’re not hungry?”

Edgar’s hair stood up on his back as he turned around and looked at the vampire. “I told you many times. I’m not going to eat *anything* you try to give me.”

“But you’ll starve, will you not?” The vampire walked up to Edgar, standing next to him and overlooking the village.

“Maybe I will. I doubt you’d care though. You’re just waiting for me to start eating and drop on the ground so you can drink my blood and kill me.” Edgar moved away from the vampire, hiding his neck. “I know your dirty tricks, vampire.”

“If I wanted to hurt you, wouldn’t I have done it already?” The vampire questioned.

Edgar paused for a moment. “You’re... doing the long game.. Aren’t you..”

The vampire sighed. “Nevermind.. D-Do you want to join me in the library? Maybe.. Y-You could find a book you like a-and we..”

Edgar didn’t reply. His gaze locked onto the village in the distance.

“I’ll let you go.. When your ankle is fully healed.” The vampire sighed. “I read somewhere that humans heal quicker when happy.. S-So I just..” The vampire stuttered over his words, thinking of what to say after each one. “Y-You probably want to be left alone now. I’m.. I’m sorry.”

Edgar watched as the vampire walked out of the room and closed the door behind himself. *“I still don’t understand what’s wrong with that vampire.. They’re saying they don’t want to hurt me but why don’t they take me back to the village? Why can’t they simply put me somewhere at least near the village so I can get back on my own? Why must I stay in this terror-ridden house?”* He stared at the door as his stomach growled again. *“When will that shut up?”* He thought angrily. *“I’ve been feeling a lot less afraid around that vampire.. but I don’t know if it’s from my grumpiness or not.”* The young painter began to contemplate with himself for a while. Wondering if he should accompany the vampire in the library and ask him questions. While one part of him was hungry and was practically begging him to eat anything. The last part of him was still afraid and didn’t want to risk being killed by the vampire.

Edgar spent his day looking for something to paint with-draw with, even. But at the end of the day he only found small scraps of paper, old-school feathered pens and ink jars. “Just how old was this vampire?” He thought, sighing at the supplies. Nevertheless, he began to sketch on the paper with the pen and ink. His hand diligently placed each stroke of dripping ink and hatched each shadow into the paper. He was so focused on the painting, he didn’t realize he wasn’t alone anymore.

“That’s a wonderful drawing.” The vampire’s voice suddenly appeared.

Edgar let out a scream. His hand shook, flailing the ink around. His other hand knocked over the small ink vial,

staining the wooden desk he was drawing on. He pushed out his chair in a quick motion and fell on the ground, his heart pounding as he tried to hide his neck with his ink-stained capelet. This vampire just snuck up on him! Any moment his neck would've been in the jaws, meeting the fangs. "I-I.." Edgar watched as the vampire moved its gaze to the sight of the mess.

The vampire was holding something in their hand and placed it in front of Edgar. "When you eat, don't eat on the floor like an animal. Sit on the bed if you have to." He instructed. The vampire then moved its hands toward the mess and began to clean it, gently picking up the ink jar and leaving the room, coming back in with a small handkerchief to wipe away the ink.

The entire time Edgar watched from the bed with a sense of worry. "*He's probably mad at me now for making such a mess.. What if he didn't want to kill me before but will now?*" He had placed the object the vampire gave him on the nightstand, which turned out to be a plate of warm pork cutlets with mashed potatoes and gravy.

Both of them were silent. Only the sound of the vampire cleaning filled the room.

Edgar could only imagine the scolding he'd have to go through if this was his mentor..

## Chapter Four

Mr. Sarai. The mentor that raised Edgar and his sister for most of their childhood. He was strict, kempt, intelligent, and artistic. He was the sole reason why Edgar became a painter. Mr. Sarai would fill the role of a parent until Lady Melissa Valden came back from her disappearance.

“Edgar! Clean up your mess!” He would yell often. Edgar wasn’t always a tidy person as a child, often spilling paints when he was startled and having a lot of things scrambled around in his room.

However, Edgar would always respond with “Yes, Mr. Sarai.” No matter how hard Edgar tried to get Mr. Sarai’s appreciation, he was always turned down.

“How can someone as rude as him take care of us?!” Edgar’s sister once complained as the two were outside. She was reading a book on different monsters she had pestered the exorcist enough for. “I wanna be a vampire hunter when I grow up! But he won’t teach me anything!”

“He’s an artist, Ella. Not a vampire hunter.” Edgar called from his painting. “What shade do you think the Crimson Moon is?”

“Ugh. You haven’t seen it??” Ella rolled her eyes.

“No. Mr. Sarai says it’s bad to go out during one. You haven’t been sneaking out, right?”

“Psht! Of course I have! It gets boring being in the house all day. Live a little!”

Edgar glanced at his sister with a concerned look. “Ella.. you know what Mr-”



“Oh *please*, Edgar.” Ella huffed. “You’re always trying to get his approval! He’s not even our real father. You have to learn to enjoy your life!” She put her book down. “Please..? You don’t even want to be a painter, do you?”

Edgar looked away from his sister and furrowed his brows. She always saw through him. Was this even worth it? After all, it was difficult to get at least some appreciation from him.

“Edgar! Ella!” Mr. Sarai called. “It’s getting late!”

Ella closed her book and climbed the tall oak tree next to the two and slipped the book in the branches, securing it and hiding it well. “Do you think Mr. Sarai is going to get mad if he catches me reading on monsters?”

Edgar took down his easel and put it in the small leather suitcase he had with him, carrying his painting that still had the fresh aroma of wet paint emitting from it. He let out a bittersweet sigh as he looked at his sister again, giving a slight smile. “Of course he would. You know how he is with the monsters..”

“I’ll just push the blame onto the exorcist! He’s the one who gave me the book!” Ella gave a determined smile on her face. “If he’s going to want me to stop looking up monsters he’ll have to take it with the head of the town!”

“If you get Mr. Sarai into trouble, he is going to ground youuuu.” Edgar taunted before giggling with his sister and walking back to the house.

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The two siblings quickly ran to the table after putting their things away. Edgar, who couldn't wait to show Mr. Sarai his new painting-in-progress, gulped down on the beef curry in front of him.

"You're eating like a wolf. Is there something you're not telling us, Edgar?" Mr. Sarai glanced.

From the look on Ella's face, Edgar knew she wanted to chime in and joke about it. But she knew better than to with someone like Mr. Sarai around... and monster jokes weren't allowed in the house. It could risk execution for all of them.

"Oh-" Edgar swallowed. "I just want to show you something!" He smiled.

"Eat first." Mr. Sarai instructed, sitting down. "And don't choke on your food."

When Ella finished, she looked at Mr. Sarai. "Why are Crimson Moons so dangerous?" She asked.

Mr. Sarai swallowed his spoonful and looked back at her. "The monsters get more powerful, of course. Werewolves become bloodhounds, vampires become aggressive mosquitoes, and the undead multiply if anyone is unfortunate enough to get bitten." He began, glancing at Ella's curious demeanor. "And it's why I specifically tell *you* to stay inside during them. Your brother seems to get it easier."

"Parent's pet!" Ella randomly shouted at her brother.

Edgar spat out the spoonful of curry in his mouth onto the tablecloth and began to cough, trying not to laugh at the childish insult.

“Both of you! How rude!” Mr. Sarai scolded. “Now I have to clean this up..” He stood up and began to wipe the curry off of the table. “In your rooms for your unprofessional attitude. We’re *nobles*. We have to be role models for the commoners! Not join them!”

Ella gave Mr. Sarai a look before pushing out her chair, putting her dish and silverware into the sink and storming off to her room.

Edgar however, had a guilty look on his face. “M-Mr. Sarai..?”

Mr. Sarai slowly turned toward him, an angry look in his eyes stared through Edgar. “What?”

“I-I.. I’m sorry..” Edgar pleaded. “L-Let me help.. Please?”

Mr. Sarai’s face didn’t change. “Go to your room.”

Edgar’s head hung low as he walked away, his ears being filled with the sound of Mr. Sarai cleaning up his mess.

## Chapter Five

It had been nearly a week since Edgar's capture. Edgar's stomach rattled in pain every couple hours. He couldn't bear to eat.. But every time he looked at the plate of food, he felt that he was being taunted. Such delicious food.. In arm's reach. But he couldn't eat it. That vampire would kill him!

Everyday at certain times, the vampire would knock on the door and place a plate of food on the nearby dresser and take the old, untouched meal and leave. Sometimes, the vampire would invite Edgar to leave his room to go somewhere around the house with them.

Edgar always refused but.. Maybe today he'll agree. *"It would be nice to get out of my room every once in a while.. It could help me find a way out and escape!"* He thought, lying down on his bed and staring at the plate on the nearby dresser.

Just then, the vampire knocked on the door twice and peeked in. "Edgar?" He began as he walked into the room and swapped the plates. "I.. I know you're a little scared of me a-and.. It might be stupid to ask but.." The vampire looked up at Edgar and wiggled his nose, as if he was smelling the air. The vampire looked concerned as he walked up to the young painter. "Do.. you want to get some fresh air in the courtyard? Maybe it'll help you."

Edgar took a breath. "S-Sure.."

"Oh.. oka-" Victor cut himself off, his eyes widened. "Wait. Y-You said yes..?"

Edgar nodded and watched as the vampire's eyes were beaming with joy.

The vampire smiled and sat on the foot of the bed. “Make sure you eat first! You haven’t been eating lately and I’m getting worried..”

Edgar sighed and stood up, walking to the plate. He gingerly grabbed the utensils and plate before walking back to the ink-stained desk. “Please wait outside.. I-I can’t take you staring at me.” His voice shook.

“As long as you eat.” The vampire smiled and left the room, gently closing the door behind himself.

Edgar stared quietly at the contents of the plate. “*Ground beef and vegetables this time..? That’s new.*” He thought to himself, sighing. He wasn’t going to eat this, that’s for sure. He wasn’t going to eat anything here. Edgar waited a couple minutes, staring out the windows in front of him as the sun gazed down upon the old, gigantic house he was held captive in. To distract himself, he would think of Mr. Sarai and anyone else who would be worried for him. Especially his sister.. If she was still there. “*I have to get out of here.*” When he was ready to leave, he walked onto the balcony and dumped the food over the edge, watching it disappear in the long way down. He then set the plate down on the desk and left the room. Leaving his room after a while, Edgar looked up at the vampire, who had a gentle smile on their face with its eyes gleaming with joy.

“This way, human!” The vampire said enthusiastically, walking down the hall. It then stopped for a moment when it turned around to see Edgar holding onto the wall for support, hopping on one foot. “Oh.. right. I forgot.” The vampire began to walk up to Edgar, who looked back with a paranoid

expression painted on his face. “You don’t have to be so afraid.. I’ll carry you!”

“*What??*” Edgar’s expression switched from fearing for his life to confusion in a matter of seconds. “N-No thank you.. You don’t have to. I-I’ll walk.” He objected.

“No. You’re injured. It’s my job to take care of you! Why else would I have taken you in?” The vampire reached for Edgar, who backed away.

“I-It’s not.. Please.. Y-you don’t-” Edgar began, but was cut off by the vampire’s grasp.

“Up you go!” The vampire said, their arms supporting Edgar’s body.

Edgar completely froze as his face became red. He couldn’t think. He couldn’t resist. He felt the vampire’s arms under his legs and back. He could only glance at the vampire, who simply smiled back before walking down the hall.

The walk wasn't as long as Edgar imagined, but now they were outside in the courtyard of the house. Ahead, the gate leading to the exit of this prison.

The grass was a vibrant emerald green color, contrasting the dark gray and red colors of the house. The porch had a tied roof that hung over, protecting the two from the eyes of the sun. Not far from the fence, sat a shed next to a stone well.

Edgar was placed down gently in a cushioned white chair. He thought the vampire would burn up in the sun, but Victor seemed unbothered by the light. "I..." Edgar began to speak. "I thought vampires burn up in the sun..?"

Victor looked at Edgar and giggled, fixating a big straw hat over his own head. "Of course we do! It just takes a while. It's not a one-two-three thing, silly."

"Oh..." Edgar watched as Victor walked to a box nearby and pulled out a sketchbook, pencils and an eraser.

"Ever since I saw you drawing.. I thought you would want these." The vampire said timidly, handing the drawing supplies to the young painter.

Edgar gingerly took the sketchbook, pencils and eraser and said nothing. "*Thanks..*" He thought. "*But I have no intention of being close with you.. you'll get me executed if you even let me go.*" He thought, opening the sketchbook and running his fingers along the rough pages.

"I.. wasn't sure what you normally use s-so.. I got the first one that I saw that looked good.." Victor stammered, looking away and towards the grass.

“It’s good quality.” Edgar said without thinking. “Ringed bindings.. sturdy pages and well sharpened pencils.” He felt himself smile while examining the items in his hands. He quickly realized what was happening and stopped smiling and swiftly closed the book. “*ARGH! I’M AN IDIOT!*” He mentally scolded himself. “*Stupid stupid STUPID!*”

“Why are you hitting yourself?” Victor suddenly spoke. He looked concerned and confused.

“Uh-“ Edgar froze. “N...Nothing.” He put his hand down and sighed.

Victor sighed before turning away. He walked to the nearby shed and took out a small watering can. Edgar watched as the vampire then moved to the flower beds nearby and began to water them.

The two were silent. Edgar began to sketch in his new sketchbook as Victor tended to the yard. “A young woman gave me this hat once..” He randomly said.

Edgar glanced up from his sketchbook, staying silent.

“She was really nice..” Victor’s voice trailed off.



The sun began to set, covering the yard in a blanket of gold, pink and red. Victor began to put the tools he was using away before walking over to Edgar. "It's getting late. Shall we head inside?"

Edgar slightly nodded and held on tightly to his sketchbook that hugged the pencils and eraser as the young painter was scooped off of his legs and into the vampire's arms.

The vampire walked to Edgar's room and gently opened the door, lying the young painter down in the bed. "Thank you.. For coming with me." The vampire smiled. "I appreciate it."

Edgar remained silent. His face was drowning in red again.

Victor walked to the desk and collected the plate. "You ate it.." He said calmly. "I'll begin to make dinner." The vampire walked to the door and opened it. "See you soon." He smiled, closing the door and walking away.

Edgar sighed as the embarrassment of being carried died down. He looked at his sketchbook and opened it to the last page. A map. *"Tonight. I'll get out of here.. I won't let this vampire kill me."*

## Chapter Six

Edgar lit a candle with a match in the kitchen. The vampire was nowhere to be found. He made it this far already. Perhaps he'll be able to escape easily. The young painter grabbed a knife and left.

The hallway was quiet. Not another person in sight. Edgar leaned against the stone walls, limping and dragging his injured leg on the floor. His heart was paranoid something would go wrong.. but Edgar pressed on. His stomach would ache every now and then, forcing him to stop and clutch his chest in pain, trying to avoid accidentally stabbing himself. Before long, he got to a flight of stairs and sighed. *"Either I ditch the knife or the candle.. I can't hold two in one hand or risk not holding the railing."* Edgar huffed. He knelt down and prepared to set the knife down, and suddenly slipped.

Edgar felt something grabbing the back of his capelet and holding him in the air. The force began to put pressure on his jugular. Slowly, he was dragged and forced to sit on the ground. The young painter looked around in a scared daze, his eyes widening when he saw who found him..

The vampire stared directly at him. It's crimson red eyes embedding themselves into his mind. It was one of the only things that gave light in the darkness, aside from the candle nearby.

"V..." Edgar stammered. "Vampire..."

"What are you doing!? You could've gotten yourself hurt!" The vampire scolded, putting its hands on its hips in the darkness.

Edgar looked down, a wave of shame fostering over him. “I-I’m sorry..” He looked up at Victor. “I-I.. I just..” He felt himself slowly reaching towards the knife on the ground beside him.

“You... what?” Victor patiently asked.

Edgar gripped the knife tightly in his left hand and aimed at Victor’s legs, attempting to force immobilization onto him.

In a matter of seconds, Edgar himself was immobilized. The vampire wrapped its arm around Edgar’s arms and chest. While using the other hand to hold Edgar’s left wrist. The vampire’s cold breath surrounded Edgar’s neck with the sharp tips of the fangs centimeters away from puncturing the skin and drawing blood. “Don’t move.” The vampire demanded in an angered tone. “You are injured and scared. I’ve told you many times that I wouldn’t hurt or kill you. And that I would let you go when you are fully healed.”

Edgar breathed in and out, it felt like he was suffocating from his own fear. He wanted to scream. To cry. To beg for help. All of it was worthless though. Nobody would hear him. Wick was probably asleep. Even then, the dog seemed to be trusting the vampire more.

“I take you in, give you food to eat, a room to sleep in, and treat your ankle. I’ve been *nothing* but friendly to you. And what do I get in return?”

Edgar said nothing. Only the sound of his shaky breath responded.

“I get a bottle to the head and pass out. I get constant stares of fear just by being in the same room as you! You tried

to injure me again because I caught you trying to escape. You would've fallen down those stairs if I didn't find you." The vampire scolded. He let go of the human, gently setting him down to not cause any pain.

Edgar fell onto his knees, breathing heavily. His eyes were widened as if he had seen a ghost. He looked at the vampire, tears running down his cheeks and dripping onto the ground. "I-I-.."

Victor let out a sigh. "I'm only doing this because I know you'll listen.. I don't *want* to do this." He knelt down and moved Edgar's hair away from his face. "Please go to your room.. For your own safety."

Edgar nodded and slowly stood up and walked toward his room, tears dripping on the floor as he tried to calm himself down from the vampire's sudden threat to his humanity.

## Chapter Seven

“Come on, Edgar! You’re so slow!” Ella called.

“Could you please wait a moment!?” Edgar yelled back.

“You’re going too fast for me! We have to watch out for traps!”

The sun was bright yellow, delivering its warmth onto the forest Edgar and his sister were in. The golden rays peered through each branch of leaves in the tall oak trees that surrounded them. Birds chirping and cicadas and crickets communicating were like strokes in a vast painting.

Ella stopped and turned to look at her brother, who was breathing heavily and looking back at her. “We’re in a safe part of the woods. Nobody can find us here, there are no traps, and we’re away from any monsters!” Ella was wearing a woolen violet dress along with a bonnet that shielded her beautiful dirt-colored hair. Her vibrant blue eyes looking at her brother.

On the other hand, Edgar was wearing a red-orange paint stained capelet Mr. Sarai had given him for painting. He wore an orange buttoned undershirt with long sleeves with brown pants and boots. To shield him from the sun, Edgar wore a matching beret with his capelet.

“How.. do you know?” Edgar said, out of breath and almost collapsing on a nearby tree as soon as he got close to his sister.

“Where do you think I run off to?”

Edgar didn’t say anything. He only sighed. “Now can you tell me about this mystical friend of yours?” He asked, sitting down.

“I will.” Ella began. “On one condition. You must swear not to tell Mr. Sarai!”

*“This can’t be good.”* Edgar asked. He remembered a couple days prior, Mr. Sarai had pulled him aside.

*“If your sister does something against the village rules, or against my rules. Tell me immediately. We can’t let her be so rash. It’ll look horrible for all of us.”* He had said.

Edgar wasn’t one to rat out his own sister for little reasons. But, if she’s telling him *not* to tell their guardian.. It had to be bad.

“Welllll?” Ella put her hands into a fist and placed them on her hips, expecting an answer.

“Fine..” Edgar caved. “I swear I won’t tell Mr. Sarai..”

“Perfect!” Ella cheered. She wrapped her hands around her brother’s. “Follow me.”

Edgar reluctantly followed, being dragged by his own sister for being out of breath.

The two reached a darker part of the woods. The dark pigment fading to black the further Edgar tried to reach.

“What is..” He whispered.

The symphony of the insects stopped. The birds went mute.

Edgar looked towards his sister for an answer, who wasn’t there anymore. His eyes widened as he looked at himself. It became hard to breathe. Edgar felt something gnawing on his ankle as he collapsed to the ground. “ELLA!?” He cried. “I DON’T LIKE THIS ANYMORE!” He looked at what was biting his ankle.

A bear trap.

“ELLA!?” Edgar screamed again, looking into the darkness. The young painter felt someone breathing against his neck. Touching it, he felt nothing.. But when he looked into his palm, a deep red liquid began to drip from it and onto the floor. The young painter covered his neck, trying to breathe in a panic.

The forest had turned nothing but pitch black. The only light came from him, faintly illuminating the dark, bloodstained grass. He could barely see the sky or the trees he had walked by.

Edgar was pushed onto the ground. A whisper taunting him in his head.

*“I take you in, give you food to eat, a room to sleep in, and treat your ankle. I’ve been nothing but friendly to you. And what do I get in return?”* The voice scolded.

“Wh-Who are you!?” Edgar cried. His vision began to become devoid of any color other than the shades of red and gray. He felt like his lungs would burst out at any moment because of how much he was trying to suck in oxygen. Edgar was pulled up from the ground. His neck felt as if he was being choked to death.

*“Do you want to end up like your sister?”* A different voice asked. It was demanding and shook terror into Edgar.

“N-No I-” He tried to protest.

*“If you keep this up maybe I’ll throw you to the werewolves. Nobody would suspect a thing.”*

“Please..” Edgar begged. “I-I don’t.. I don’t know what I did!”

*“I’ve made you something to eat. Maybe you’ll like it.”* The voice continued as a bowl suddenly appeared in front of Edgar.

Edgar felt himself reaching towards the bowl, his eyes fixated on it, like a dog wanting a treat. He pulled the bowl close to him and just as he was about to begin to eat. He felt something wrap around his neck, and force him to wake up.



## Chapter Eight

Edgar shot up, holding his neck and breathing in and out.

Victor looked towards him and raced over, forcing him to lie back down and placing something cold on his head. “Shh.. shh.. Calm down.. It’s okay..”

Edgar pushed Victor’s arms away in a panic, but was tucked under the blanket.

“You’re really warm.” The vampire said calmly. “Please.. Calm down. You’re safe here.”

Edgar’s breathing slowed down as he took off what was on his head and looked at it. The object was a large plastic back with cold water and ice inside. Edgar’s eyes felt watery and he couldn’t stop wiping them with his sleeves and hands. No matter how much he tried, he couldn’t get rid of it.

Victor pulled a chair over and sat beside Edgar. “I assume you had what humans call a nightmare?” He began, his hands in his lap as he stared at Edgar. “When I went to check on you, I found you twitching in your bed. I went to make sure you were okay but found you in tears.”

“It was..” Edgar stammered, his throat wanted to scream and cry. To let out everything that he had gone through in that nightmare. But he refused. He couldn’t.. “A dream...?” His voice was shaky and soft.

Victor nodded, gently taking the bag in Edgar’s hands and placing it on his head again. “You felt really warm when I found you.. So I began to read what it meant. You may have a fever. The book suggested I place an ice pack on your head.”

“O-Oh...” Edgar sat up in the bed, trying to balance the bag on his head so it wouldn’t fall off.

“Are you hungry?” Victor asked. “The book also said chicken soup could help relieve the sickness.”

“No.. I’m fine..” Edgar stammered. He looked around the room, noticing many things.

The layout was different. There were things that weren’t in his room.

“I took you to my room.” Victor admitted. “I would rather you take my bed than be in a wet one. Even if it was only a little, your tears soaked into the bed and I’d rather tend to that before you sleep in it.”

Edgar slowly nodded. “I-I’m sorry I shou-” He began, trying to get up.

“No no no no! Stay! Please.. I really don’t mind it. As long as you’ll feel better, I’m fine with it.” Victor let out a breath. Minutes of silence passed as the two sat there. After what felt like forever, Victor broke the silence. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“About what?” Edgar looked at the vampire. He had finally calmed down and was able to wipe his tears away. However, his voice was still strained and would take a lot more than just a couple of minutes to return to normal.

“The nightmare. Maybe it’ll help you feel better?” Victor’s body then jumped. “Oh wait.. Nevermind.. You- you probably wouldn’t want to tell me about it anyway..” He paused for a couple of moments. “...Sorry..”

Edgar waited a few moments. *“Should I? I don’t think I should tell him.. But it would be good to get it off my chest, right?”* He debated with himself, before he finally caved. “It was about my sister.”

Victor glanced up at him. “Huh..?”

“My sister went missing when we were children.” Edgar looked down at the blankets. “She was really sick and when I went to give her dinner, she was gone. Mr. Sarai and I looked for her for days. We even asked the exorcist of the village.. And still no luck.”

Victor had a sympathetic look on his face. The first Edgar had seen. “I’m..” The vampire began. “I’m really sorry..” The vampire put his head down. “I know.. how it feels. To lose someone you love.”

Edgar looked at the vampire. His feelings were conflicting with each other. The vampire let down its own guard.. to a human that doesn’t trust it. He felt sad, but better? He didn’t know. “Oh.. I’m sorry.. about that.” Edgar looked away. “This is.. awkward.”

“It’s okay.” Victor looked up at Edgar. “It was over a hundred years ago. They would’ve died anyway from old age.”

“Oh.. I see.” Edgar lied down, adjusting the plastic bag on his head. “I’m going to go to sleep..”

“Oh. Alright.” Victor stood up. “Do you need me to get you anything?”

“No th-.. y-you don’t have to.” Edgar stuttered. *“I was so close to THANKING that thing! Seriously, what is WRONG with me!?”* Edgar scolded himself.

“Alright. Good night.” Victor walked out of the room, gently closing the door behind himself.

Edgar began to close his eyes. The cold temperature of the bag made it difficult to get comfortable in the bed, but eventually he found a way and drifted off to sleep.

## Chapter Nine

The next day, Edgar sat in his room and stared out of the closed windows.

The weather was horrible. Rain dancing in the air and slamming against the glass windows as gravity dragged them to the stone balcony.

Edgar sighed and looked down at the desk he sat at.

The ink stain from the week prior had set into the old wood and created a river in the design.

It was only now when Edgar had realized the new design embedded into the desk. Edgar still felt guilty about telling Victor about his sister.. and trying to escape. He was bound to be punished for his actions, right? What would the vampire do to him for disobeying him..?

Right on time, the door knocked and opened. “Good morning, Edgar.” Victor walked into the room with a plate of food before exiting and coming back with freshly washed bed sheets, pillows and a mattress. He walked to the empty bed and began to place the mattress onto the bed. “Did you sleep well?”

“Mhm..” Edgar replied in a drawn out, tired voice. Surprisingly, Edgar did sleep well in Victor’s bed. He didn’t feel comfortable about it however. Wasn’t it rude to take someone else’s bed?

“Ah.. it’s raining.” Victor eyed the windows before stretching the bed sheet across the mattress. “Could you help me with this, Edgar..?” He looked at the human. “You look bored.”

Even if Victor couldn't see it, Edgar's eyes widened. "*How does he know?*" The painter looked at Victor. "Uh.. s-sure.." He stood up and walked towards the vampire, grabbing one corner and stretching it before tucking it under the mattress.

"Remember when you tried to escape..?" Victor randomly brought up.

Edgar felt a wave of dread fold over him as he looked at Victor. "What are you going to do to me..?"

"Nothing." Victor sighed. "I'm sorry."

"Huh?"

"I'm sorry." The vampire repeated. "I shouldn't have done what I did to get you to listen. I-I want you to stop being afraid of me.. but all I did was threaten your human life and scare you even more."

Edgar was confused. "I... uh.." "*What should I say..?*

"You don't have to forgive me.." Victor sighed, folding the blanket into place. "I panicked and I didn't know how else to make you listen."

"Okay.." Edgar timidly responded, handing a pillow to Victor.

Victor gave a polite smile and took the pillow. He fluffed it out before placing it on the bed. "Thank you."

Edgar gave a slight, silent nod as he walked back to the desk and sat down, putting his head in his arms.

"Since it's rainy out.. What are you going to do?" Victor asked, taking the plate of food and walking up to Edgar and standing over him.

"Draw.." He responded, clearly unmotivated.

“Do you want to join me in the library?” Victor offered.  
“It’ll give you something to do other than sit in your room and do something you’re unmotivated to do.”

“Over my dead body.” Edgar snapped.

“Oh- okay.” Victor placed the plate down beside Edgar along with utensils. “I decided to make raspberry pancakes.. I had the ingredients lying around. M-Maybe if you told me your favorite food I..” The vampire’s voice trailed off.

“S-Sorry.. I’m annoying you again. Aren’t I?”

Edgar didn’t say anything. He stared at the plate as Victor left the room. His stomach growled as he eyed the fresh, warm pancakes topped with butter and syrup. “I need to check if dogs can eat this.. I’m tired of just dumping everything he gives me out the window.” He said to himself.

Edgar had decided to rummage through his room again. Occasionally, he would flinch at the sound of thunder in the distance as the room flickered in a blanket of white. It seems the storm wasn't just full of heavy rain. He paused to take a look at his sketchbook and looked at the rough sketch on the page. The Crimson Moon. Edgar had never seen it personally, but he remembered his sister did.

*"The Crimson Moon was beautiful! It's just like the stories said! It looked blood red! But in a warm way!"* Ella exclaimed to him upon the night she first snuck out. *"Next month you should see it with me. It won't be as bright but it'll still be worth it!"*

Edgar always refused to disobey Mr. Sarai. He just wanted to be liked by his guardian.. And didn't want to be a werewolf's midnight snack. He never ratted Ella out though. Mr. Sarai would have to find out what she was doing on his own.

Edgar's search ended in a failure. He couldn't find anything that could help color the moon. Or give life to his crappy sketch. ....Unless. Edgar snuck into the kitchen, trying not to make too much noise to alert the vampire this early in the morning. He noticed a pattern in the vampire.

Every day around the same time. Victor would go somewhere and not come back for about an hour. Edgar would be left completely alone in silence for three times a day.

Edgar called this "Quiet Hour". It would happen every single time after the vampire walked into his room and gave him something to eat. The pattern became predictable enough for Edgar to know when he would have time to himself



to plan another escape.. Before he was stopped. Now, he uses it to soak in dread and starve.

Finally, the young painter made it to the kitchen and spotted the knives... which were locked in a cage. *“Does he seriously think I’m a child?”* Edgar sighed. He limped over to the cage and observed the bars. *“They’re small enough where I can’t stick my hand into them.. But big enough where I could stick something in there to get one out.”* He began to look around the kitchen. Peering into shelves and cabinets, but found nothing of use. Until, he found tongs. *“Perfect! Now to hope they fit.”* Edgar thought, smiling to himself in triumph as his stomach growled again. He went back over to the set of knives and with a shaky hand, he stuck the tongs into the cage and gently pulled out a knife with a sharp edge. *“Perfect.”*

The sound of nails tapping across the floor filled the room as Wick walked into the room. The dog went up to Edgar and rubbed himself against the painter’s leg.

“Good morning, Wick. It’s been awhile since I’ve seen you.” Edgar placed the knife down on the cabinet along with the tongs. He knelt down and began to pet Wick and scratch him on the chin, smiling as the dog’s tail wagged. “I have to go now.” Edgar said, placing the tongs back and gripping the knife in his hand. “See you around!” He called, walking out of the kitchen. When he got to his room, he quietly closed his door and locked it.

## Chapter Ten

The painting came out wonderful. The colors were vibrant and displayed a lot of variety. Edgar made the right choice. He gave a twisted smile, looking at his own artwork.

“Edgar!” Victor ran into the door. “Did you lock the door!?”

“UH-” Edgar looked at the door, his eyes widened. “*Shoot! I forgot! Quiet Hour ended!*” His mind rattled as he looked around the room. He threw a cloth into the rain. “J-Just a minute!” He called, watching the cloth become doused in rain. When he thought it was ready, he grabbed it and shoved it down his sleeve, quenching his fist in irritation as the cloth scraped against his arm. He unlocked the door and looked at the vampire anxiously. “D-Did.. I do something wrong?”

Victor let out a relieved sigh. “No.. sorry. I just smelt blood and I was worried for you.” He sighed. “I can smell blood from miles away. But the closer the source is, the clearer the scent.”

“O-Oh..” Edgar gulped, trying to mask his fear. “*So.. he must know then. Right? What was this for then!? Why did I toss this rag into the rain to muffle the scent!?*” He questioned himself.

“But.. I think it was just my senses acting up.” Victor sighed. “Is there anything you want for lunch? I-I can get the recipe book here for you to look at!”

“O-Oh.. sure.. I would like that.” Edgar watched Victor walk away. “*He’s making sure I actually eat this time.. Clever.*” He thought.

## Part Two, Trust is a Fragile Process

### Chapter Eleven

Monster. Traitor. Freak. Victor remembered all the names he had acquired over the years. None of it mattered if it was another vampire saying it. But he lived close to the human village of Greenforest, and if he was called those names by a human he was looking after, it hurt.

It was just a week ago he had found that strange human in the woods and decided to take them in. Victor's head hurt for the rest of the day after being hit with that glass. Of course, he could've killed that human and drank their blood until they were bone dry. But Victor was better than that. He wanted to provide a safe place for the human to heal.

Right now, Victor was cutting into the steak. He already had made the seasoning minutes prior and even tasted the watery mixture. The vampire placed the knife down and dunked his hands into the mixture before massaging it into the steak's crevices. *"Hopefully he'll eat this! I don't want this to go to waste."* The vampire thought. He then placed the steak into the pan and began to cook it on the stove, washing his hands.

When it was ready, he cut the steak into slices and placed them on a plate. Victor grabbed a napkin and a fork and walked to the human's room. Victor slowly opened the door and peeked inside. "Human?"

The human inside flinched and looked at him, clearly startled.

Victor placed down the plate and waved before closing the door. He began to walk down the hall and into the library.

The library was Victor's favorite room. It was grand with hundred wooden bookshelves that touched the ceiling. Some of the shelves housed an emergency blood bottle, an ink bottle, pencils, brushes, erasers, and feathered pens. However, most shelves were filled with books Victor had found, bought, or was given.

Victor sat down in one of the large green armchairs in front of a fireplace, just under a massive portrait of a forest with a kaleidoscope of colors.

Victor let out a sigh. "That poor human.." He eyed Wick, who just came into the room and lied down on the orange and red carpet in front of the fireplace. "He's so scared, don't you think, Wick?"

Wick eyed Victor for a couple moments, letting out a whimper.

"I hope he eats.. his blood is beginning to smell strange and he's beginning to lose weight." Victor continued. He stood up and walked to a bookshelf. "Is leaving him alone for an hour not enough..? Why won't he eat?" He looked through the titles of books and took one that read *The Human Body*. He walked to a cushioned reading chair and sat down. "I know he hasn't been eating.. his blood is foul-stenched." Victor sighed, opening the book and reading the table of contents.

Wick, who had been by Victor's feet as he rambled, fell asleep and let out snores.

Victor looked up at Wick and smiled. He was grateful for the human's advice, as it really did help him and Wick bond. Eventually, Victor found the page he had been looking for and began to read.

He read for so long, a lot of time had passed by then. Victor shot up and closed his book. "Oh goodness what time is it?! I need to start on dinner before the human really does starve!" He ran out of the library and to the human's room. "Human-" He ran into the door again.

Faintly, the human let out a scream.

"S-Sorry!" He went to turn the knob, but it wouldn't turn. "*Why is he locking the door..?*" Victor thought with concern. Victor's nose began to wiggle as he sniffed the air. Why was the scent of blood stronger..? "Is everything alright in there?"

"E-Everything is fine.. wh-what do you want?!" The human yelled, his voice shaking as always.

"Are you still okay with soup for dinner?" Victor asked. "I-I just wanted to make sure.. So you eat."

The human was silent for a couple moments. "Sure.."

"Alright." Victor walked away from the door, trying to ignore the scent of blood. "*There's something going on.. I'm worried for him.*" The vampire walked into the kitchen and began to make the broth, using magic to bring the recipe book towards himself and read the directions.

About an hour or so later, the soup was finished. Victor had accidentally made too much and poured the rest into a container, which he put into the fridge. The soup warmed his hands as he brought a bowl, napkin, and spoon to the human's room and knocked. "Human? Dinner is ready."

The door opened as the human looked at him.

Victor walked into the room and placed the bowl onto the nightstand. He then looked towards the human and examined his skin. “You’re beginning to worry me.. Please, human. Please eat.”

The human looked away and sighed. “Worry you that my blood will taste disgusting when you finally dig your teeth into my neck..?” He asked, once again hiding his neck.

“No.. i-it’s..” Victor sighed, not even bothering to try anymore. “Just eat.” He then left the room, gently closing the door behind himself. Victor walked down the hall and into the kitchen, taking out a bag of dog food and pouring it into a small bowl on the floor for Wick. The vampire then sat down at the table and began to eat his dinner.

## Chapter Twelve

Victor couldn't sleep. There was something about that human that made him concerned. Groggily, Victor stepped out of bed and began to walk to the human's room. Victor sniffed the air, making sure the human was still in his room. *"He's still there.. and he hasn't eaten. I need to break the news to him that I know soon.."* Victor thought, his nostrils filled with the putrid scent of the human's blood.

He turned into a shadow and slid into the room, forming into a small bat in order not to scare the human immediately. The vampire flew up into a corner of the room, covered in shadow. He stared at the human, who was lying down in their bed. *"Human.. What are you hiding from me..?"* Victor thought, watching.

Eventually, the human began to move in their bed and looked directly at Victor. "What is it..?"

Victor's eyes widened as he tried to hide.

Almost as if the human was watching Victor's poor attempt at hiding, he spoke again. "There's no use hiding it.." The human slowly got out of the bed, rubbing their eyes. "Are you waiting for me to fall asleep?"

Victor sighed, turning into his regular form and dropping onto the ground gently. He came out of the corner and walked towards the human. "I just wanted to check if everything is alright and you are actually sleeping.." He paused. "Sorry if I scared you or made you feel uncomfortable."



The human's eyes widened a little with worry as he looked up at Victor. "Why would you have to check if I was sleeping?"

Victor knew something was wrong with the human just from their scent alone and answered. "Just to make sure you aren't trying to escape like last time?.." His voice trailed off. "You almost got yourself hurt, I don't really want that to happen again." Victor then paused and sighed. It was time to admit everything he knew. "Besides, you didn't eat today. I'm worried for your health and wanted to make sure everything is fine without you even noticing." Victor watched as the human's expression grew in terror as it eyed him. Quickly, he tried to add a little humor to the situation. "But I guess hide n' seek isn't my specialty. After all, I can't hide well."

The human sat down on the bed, looking away. "I'm *fine*.." They snapped. "And I told you before.. I'm not hungry." Just then, the human's stomach growled.

The two went quiet for a moment, before Victor broke the silence with a concerned expression. "Are you sure..? I think your stomach says otherwise."

To Victor's shock, the human doubled down on their claim despite the nervous expression. "I'm sure."

"Are you really sure? I can sense that you haven't eaten in a while." Victor began. "You can tell me that something is wrong. Again, I'm not trying to hurt you."

"I.. I'm fine."

"Don't lie to me.. Do it for your own health, please."

The human gave Victor a look, sighing. "...Fine. I-I'm.. I'm not.. Really.." He stopped himself, crawling under the covers of the bed in an attempt to flee the conversation.

Victor simply walked over to the bed and sat down on it as the human buried themselves under the covers. "If you want I could bring you some food. There's some soup leftover. You don't need to starve yourself like this.." He reached towards the human and placed his hand onto their head. "It's having bad effects on your health. Even a human could notice.."

The human was quiet for a couple of moments. "Please.." They gave in. "I.. I don't know how much longer.. I can go."

Victor nodded. "Wait here please." He stood up and began to walk out of the room. He was worried for the human's well being and wanted to get him food as fast as he could. The vampire walked quietly and quickly through the hallway and glanced towards Wick, who was asleep by the blood room. *"At least someone is getting a nice rest."* He thought, giving a faint smile. Victor was quieter around Wick in order to not wake the dog.

When Victor arrived in the kitchen, he took out a bowl from the cabinets and placed it on a counter. He then took out the soup leftovers and poured some into the bowl. He put the leftover soup away before grabbing the cold bowl of soup and placing it into a microwave to warm it up. During the rummaging, he noticed a knife was missing from the knife block. *"Where did.. Nevermind. I have enough to worry about."*

When Victor came back with the soup, the human was on the balcony, looking over the edge.

The human turned to Victor and walked towards him, gently taking the bowl of warm soup and the spoon out from his hands with a despondent look mixed with fear.

Victor had gotten this look many times before. Usually it was when he caught the human doing something they knew they weren't supposed to do. But why was Victor given this look now? Did the human feel depressed? Lonely?

The human walked towards the ink stained counter and placed the soup down.

Victor watched as the human picked up the spoon and dipped it into the soup. The vampire walked close to the human, but kept his distance in order to avoid frightening it. With great anticipation, Victor watched as the human took a spoonful of soup and ate it. He could feel himself explode from excitement. The human ate! The human finally ate! He couldn't help but smile.

"Thank you... V..Victor." The human whispered, pausing their repetitive motion.

Victor's eyes sparkled as he looked at the human, his jaw dropped slightly. "Y-You said.. Thank you..?" Victor was confused. "*The human said my name?? And thanked me???*" He shook his head to snap out of his thoughts. "N-Nevermind. You're welcome!"

Soon after, the bowl had barely anything left. The human placed the spoon into the empty bowl.

Victor examined the bowl and turned to the human. “You were that hungry?”

The human nodded. Suddenly, he nearly collapsed. The human caught themselves before they hit the table, seemingly frightened. They turned to Victor with fear in their eyes.

“D-Did you put something in it..? I-I feel tired.”

“No.” Victor said calmly. “Maybe you were so hungry you didn’t realize you were tired.” He glanced out of the windows and to the night sky. “It is late after all..”

“If you say so..” The human said and walked into the bed. “You’re not going to bite me.. r-right?”

“Why would I? I didn’t take you in to hurt you. Besides, I have enough blood in case I need it. If it makes you feel better and gets you to sleep, I will leave and allow you to lock the doors and windows. As long as you feel safe enough to sleep, I’m fine with anything.” Victor offered.

“Okay..” The human agreed. “I-I’ll lock them.. good.. good night .”

“Good night .” Victor replied, walking to the door with the bowl in one hand. When he opened it, the human spoke again.

“My name is Edgar.”

Victor turned back to the human, now known as Edgar. “That’s a cute name.” He smiled and left the room, closing the door. “*Is this it?*” He thought, walking to the kitchen. “*Will I finally stop feeling so alone? Is it actually possible to get along with him?*” He couldn’t stop himself from smiling, all his doubts leaving his mind. “*After all, he finally told me his name!*”

*This is huge progress despite it only being around a month!”*

Victor placed the bowl into the sink and began to wash it. *“I hope tomorrow he’ll feel comfortable enough to tell me more about himself. I have so many questions! About him and where he came from.. what it’s like in the village..”* Victor’s mind trailed off as he cleaned the dried bowl and spoon and placed them into their respective spots, walking out of the kitchen. Completely forgetting about the missing knife from the knife block.

## Chapter Thirteen

Victor couldn't sleep for the entire night. His body was filled with too much joy for today. When the sun rose, Victor got out of bed and stretched. He left his room and went to Edgar's room.

To the vampire's surprise, he saw Edgar leaving his room and walking into the hallway.

"Oh! Good morning, Edgar!" Victor called. He approached the human, backed up against the closed door. "*Is he still that scared?*" Victor thought. He lowered himself to Edgar's height. Maybe Edgar was intimidated by the vampire's height? "I see you're feeling better today. You even came out of your room!" He smiled.

"H.." Edgar tried to find words. "Hi.." The human's eyes darted past Victor. "I-I was just.. looking for something to do."

"Oh! Well would you perhaps like to help me cook? I was going to get breakfast ready for us. We could do one of your favorite dishes but.. I don't know any." Victor looked away and gave a nervous smile. "You never told me..!"

"I-I.." Edgar stuttered. He seemed more nervous than Victor. Nevertheless, he agreed. "S-Sure."

"Great!" Victor stood up and picked Edgar up. He quickly went to the kitchen, carrying the human in his arms. When they got to the kitchen, Victor gently set Edgar down. "But you still haven't told me your favorite meals though.."

Edgar's face was swollen in a blush. His eyes darted away from the vampire's as he answered. "I.. don't really have

any..” He paused, taking a breath. “I was never too fond of the meals back home. There was just.. Something *off* about them.”

“Huh..?” Victor tilted his head. “Something off? Was there a way you could tell what it was?”

“It just.. Tasted bitter. I usually would take a single bite then head outside to eat something from the bar or a vendor..” Edgar looked up at Victor. “I remember I got sick one time from eating something from home.”

“Oh- well-” Victor tried to think of something to say. “Maybe you would like something more sweet? We could make pancakes with sweet syrup on top. Does that sound good to you? Or do you like sour or salty things better?” He looked down. “I can’t try thinking of something like that..”

“Sure..?” Edgar replied. “I-I’ll try pancakes.”

“Great!” Victor smiled. He took out a large book with many pieces of papers sticking out of the pages, filled with notes on recipes. “Then how about you make the syrup and I’ll make the pancakes?” He said, placing the book down on the table. “Don’t worry, it won’t be hard. I have all the instructions in this book with notes.”

Edgar walked over to the book as Victor went to the fridge. The human dragged his left leg to dilute as much pain on his ankle as possible.

“I’ll get started on the dough. If anything, don’t feel shy to ask questions.” Victor looked toward Edgar, who nodded quietly.

As Victor finished the batter, he heard the human speak.

“V..Vamp-” Edgar cut himself off. “Victor?”

“Yes?” Victor turned towards Edgar.

“Why did you take me in?”

Victor didn’t say anything. That question was familiar. He looked away as his smile broke into a frown.

*“Mr. Vampire..? Why did you take me in? Aren’t I just a waste of your time?”*

Victor didn’t say anything, he covered his mouth with his hand. He felt his hair begin to stand up on the back of his neck.

“So..? If you didn’t take me here to kill me and take my blood.. Then why am I here?” Edgar’s voice broke Victor out of his harrowing mindspace.

Victor looked back to Edgar and smiled. “Well, I found you in a very bad situation for your health and took you back here. I plan to return you back to Greenwood when your ankle heals.” He paused. “But I’m happy you’re here. In times like this, it’s nice to have a little company.”

“Yeah.. I.. I guess..” Edgar looked away, picking up the syrup solution that was held in a bowl. “The syrup is done by the way.”

“Wonderful! Put it over here.” Victor pointed to a counter. “I’ll start frying the pancakes. When it’s ready, will you join me for breakfast today? Or do you still feel safer in your room..?” Victor already knew the answer, and it hurt.

“I.. I guess..?”

Victor froze up. “I-”



“D-Did I do something wrong!?” Edgar immediately looked at Victor with fear. “I-I’m sorry I’ll eat in my room-” He quickly said.

“N-No it’s okay!” Victor grabbed Edgar’s wrist gently. “It’s just.. I didn’t think you would.” Involuntarily, he caught a whiff of Edgar’s blood. Why did it smell so..

“Oh.. Alright..” Edgar looked at Victor. “I’ll set up the table.”

Victor let go and watched as Edgar searched for the plates and silverware, completely forgetting about the scent. “They’re in this cabinet, Edgar.” Victor could feel himself laugh on the inside as he watched Edgar. *“What a nice human.. He wasn’t that nice before, but I think he’s finally opening up to me.”* He thought. He turned to the pancake batter and grabbed out a pan from the oven. He placed it on the stove and turned it on. *“I just hope he isn’t faking this.. And legitimately trusts me.”*

## Chapter Fourteen

Victor was reading in the library with Wick chewing a wolf bone on the carpet in front of him. *The Human Body* was Victor's current book of interest. He was originally curious on how long it would take for Edgar's ankle to fully heal, but just reading about the body from a human's perspective was intriguing to Victor. The sound of footsteps by the door, accompanied by the scent of dried blood alerted Victor, who gently looked up.

Edgar was by the dark wooden doors of the library, holding a small piece of paper in his hands. "This is the library..?"

"Mhm!" Victor smiled and looked at the paper in Edgar's hands. "What's this?"

Edgar timidly walked over. "You.. want to see it?"

"Mhm!"

"I never knew vampires were interested in the arts.." Edgar said, flipping over the paper to show a sketch of the forest and the town of Greenwood from a distance.

"That's beautiful..!" Victor moved his hands toward the paper. "May I?" He looked at Edgar's nod and gently took the paper out of Edgar's hands. "As for us vampires being interested in the arts, many of us know how to dance, paint, and sing. In fact, I loved to dance." He handed the paper back to Edgar.

Edgar's eyes were staring right at Victor's. "You.. you liked my drawing...?"

Victor raised an eyebrow. "Yes..?"

Edgar's eyes were wide, as if Victor was speaking a foreign language. He turned around and left the library, tightly holding the paper close to his chest.

"Was it something I said?!" Victor called out, but received no answer. *"..Did I make him upset?"* He thought, putting his hand on his cheek. *"I should apologize to him."* Victor stood up, closing the book and placing it on the seat. He walked out of the library and sniffed the air to find Edgar. Being guided by the scent, Victor walked to Edgar's room. The vampire pressed his ear against the door and faintly, he could hear the human talking.

*"He liked it! He really liked it!"* Edgar's voice faintly expressed. *"I-I can't believe someone liked it!"*

Victor couldn't help but smile as he moved away from the door. He walked back to the library as realization hit him. His frown faded as he thought, *"Has he ever felt praise for his talent before I met him?"*

Later that day, Victor found Edgar in the library, looking through a huge bookshelf. Wick was beside him, sitting on the ground and looking up. Victor walked towards the two and stared up at the shelf. “Looking for something?”

Edgar and Wick looked at Victor. “If.. y-you don’t mind. S-Sorry. I should’ve asked first.. Before intruding..” He said, his voice getting weaker as he looked down.

Victor looked at Edgar’s guilt-ridden expression. “Don’t worry. The library is always open for you! It’s Wick and I’s favorite place in the whole house!” He moved Edgar’s chin up. “What book are you looking for, Edgar?”

Edgar recoiled away from Victor, shoving his hand away. “D-Don’t touch me!” He fell quiet for a moment. “Please..”

“Sorry..! I forgot. It’s just been so long since I had company here.” Victor gave a nervous laugh.

Edgar then looked up at the shelf and pointed to a book on famous paintings. “This one, please.”

Victor reached up to the book titled *The Artists Behind the Paintings* and grabbed it. He then handed it to Edgar. “Here! There’s a ladder in that corner if you need it.” He said, pointing to a corner by the door.

Edgar nodded. “Thank you.” He turned to leave.

Wick began to follow Edgar out of the library, his tail pointed upwards like a pine tree.

“Edgar, you know you can read here with me.. right?”

Edgar looked back at Victor. “I.. can?”

“Of course...” His voice trailed off. “Were.. you not allow-“

“Don’t worry. I’m fine.” The human said with a strange sense of confidence. He then left the room.

Victor watched as Edgar and Wick left the library. Something about the human didn’t sit right with Victor.

~

More questions began to rise as another week went by. Victor began to lie awake at night, thinking of what life was like for Edgar before Victor had found him. *“Just what did that human go through?”*

## Chapter Fifteen

Victor woke up late. By now, it had been three weeks since he had found the human. The vampire sat up in their bed, the soft fluffy blanket cloaking over his body. He rubbed his eyes and let out a groan. “What time is it..?” Victor got out of bed and walked into the bathroom connected to his bedroom.

The bathroom had wooden walls and black and gray tiled flooring.

He walked up to the sink and turned on the faucet. Victor cupped his hands under the water and splashed his face with it before drying it gently. When he finished brushing his teeth and getting ready, Victor walked back into his bedroom and opened the windows.

The walls were made out of gray stones with beautiful blue designs embedded between each one. Victor stretched as he walked along the black carpet floor. Against the wall, there were stained wooden cabinets and a closet full of clothes. The bed frame was a deep brown wooden color with a red blanket and white pillows.

Edgar opened the door with something in his hands.  
“Vampire..?”

“Oh..” Victor yawned. “Good morning, Edgar.”

“You.. look tired.” Edgar observed.

“I haven’t gotten much sleep.” Victor sat on the bed and wiped his eyes. “How are you feeling?”

Edgar slowly placed the plate onto Victor’s lap. “I’m good.. h-here. I.. made you something.”

“What.. time is it?” Victor asked, looking at the slightly burnt macaroni and cheese on his plate.

“I-Is it not time for lunch..?” Edgar backed away. “I-I’m sorry..”

“N-No it’s okay-“ Victor let out a hacking cough. The plate fell on the ground, spilling the macaroni all over the carpet. Weakly, he pointed to a cabinet. “Blood!” He choked out. “Blood! Bottle!”

Edgar looked at Victor with a confused expression, before understanding and darting to the cabinet. He took out a bottle of blood from the shelf with trembling hands and rushed over to Victor, handing it to him while keeping most of his body away from the vampire.

Victor snatched the bottle and gulped down the blood. When he finished, only small drops were left. He closed the bottle and wiped the remaining blood from his lips. “*It’s so delicious.. but I can’t drink all of it in one sitting..*” Victor began to breathe heavily as his eyes glanced over to Edgar, who stood there, frightened.

“I-I...”

“I’m sorry, Edgar.” Victor said. “I haven’t been sleeping well. I’ll clean up.” Victor stared at Edgar’s jugular, his pupils slits. “*So.. hungry..*”

“N-No.. I.. I’ll clean..”

Victor shook his head. “*Stop thinking! His blood isn’t for you! He’s a living, breathing person! Not a vampire hunter trying to kill you!*” He let out a sigh as he looked up at Edgar. “Edgar.” Victor began. “Please leave.. It’s not safe for you right now.”

Edgar walked out of the room and closed the door behind himself, leaving Victor alone.

Victor stood up and walked to the bathroom, taking out a mop, scraper, and sweep pan, he cleaned up the macaroni and cheese stains from the carpet floor and threw them out. He let out a growl as he exited his bedroom and walked down the hall. The fresh scent of blood was too attractive. Victor stared at Edgar's room, his own eyes dilating in hunger. *"No! Stop it! You're better than that, Victor!"* He shook his head, scolding himself mentally. *"You scared that human so much they're probably afraid of you now! Just get some extra blood from the blood cabinet and go back to your room! You can't risk something like scaring him again."* Victor walked away from Edgar's room and down the hall until he got to a certain room. Victor opened the door to the room and closed it behind himself.

The blood cabinet housed around five fridges filled with bottles among bottles of blood. All of them labeled with the scents and blood types. Victor opened one of the fridges and took out a bottle named "B, HEARTY" and began to drink it right there. When he finished, he closed the fridge and left, taking the bottle with him.

When the door flung open, Edgar—who had another plate, but this time a peanut butter and jelly sandwich—stared at Victor with an awkward expression. "I... Uh.." He handed it towards Victor. "Here."

Victor was speechless as he took it with one hand.

Edgar then ran away, hiding his neck.



Victor sighed and walked to the kitchen, placing the empty bottle in the sink and cleaning it. After he set it to dry, he walked to the table and began to eat his lunch.

## Chapter Sixteen

Edgar had been avoiding Victor for the entire day after their interaction.

Victor thought he did something wrong and kept insulting himself for it whenever Edgar ran away in fear.

Edgar's ankle had fully healed by now but Victor didn't want to say goodbye yet. It was only when the two were both in the library, they talked.

~

"Edgar?" Victor asked, looking up from his book. "I'm sorry I scared you.. I panicked."

Edgar looked away, curled against the other chair. "I'm sorry for making the mess..." he muttered.

Victor went quiet. "It's not your fault. I wasn't monitoring how often I drank blood." He glanced at Edgar, whose body wasn't even facing him. "When us vampires go too long without blood, we begin to cough. And if we don't get a certain amount in a period of time.." He looked away. "Out come the fangs.."

Edgar remained quiet.

"I only told you to leave because I was afraid I would hurt you. I didn't mean anything else, please.."

"My ankle is fully healed.." Edgar said in a low voice. He slowly looked at Victor with a scared look. "Wh..When are you going to send me back..?"

Victor raised an eyebrow. Why was Edgar scared? Didn't he want to leave as soon as possible?

“Well.. whenever you’d like to. I won’t force you to leave if you don’t want to leave.”

Edgar was quiet for a couple moments. He then got up and walked over to Victor. “Y-You.. D-don’t mind if I can stay here.. Right..?”

Victor’s jaw dropped. He blinked. “Did I hear that right..?” He asked. “You want to stay here?”

Edgar nodded.

“But why?”

“I..” Edgar looked away. “I’ll tell you tomorrow.. It’s just.. Not something I want to get into right now.”

“If.. you say so.” Victor watched Edgar go back into the seat. “Are you feeling better?”

“Mhm.”

“Do you want to help me cook breakfast tomorrow?”

“..mhm..” Edgar’s voice began to get softer.

“And.. is it okay if I ask you things tomorrow?”

“....”

“Edgar?” Victor looked up and walked to Edgar. “Edgar?” He called again and then let out a sigh of relief. “He’s just sleeping..” He gave a smile and lifted the human up, carrying Edgar to his room and gently laying him down in his bed. Victor finally took off the bandages wrapped around Edgar’s ankle, and tucked the sleeping human under the covers. Closing the door as he left.

The next day during breakfast, Victor had a cup of brown liquid called coffee. Edgar had made it with the coffee beans he had asked Victor to get the next time he went to the village to buy food.

“And this ‘coffee’ is supposed to do.. what exactly?”

“It’s supposed to make you less tired. You almost fell asleep earlier..” Edgar explained, now fully walking around the kitchen. He seemed much happier now that his leg was healed, but Victor could tell the human was still cautious. “So.. I have a question..” Edgar asked as he sat down, picking up his fork.

“Ask away.” Victor smiled, beginning to cut into the bacon on his plate.

“Do vampires.. always need to drink blood? Like with their meals and everything?”

“No. We don’t. Vampires can go around two weeks without blood before feeling the symptoms of blood deprivation. We can have a couple of meals without it, but most of us drink blood by itself.”

“Oh.. I-I see.” Edgar began to eat the egg on his plate.

“Now.. following our conversation from last night, why do you want to stay here? Don’t you have someone waiting for you back home..?”

Edgar put his fork down and swallowed. “Well.. I got into an argument.. With my mentor. I don’t think he’d want to see me just yet.” He sighed. “The argument got really bad. Even *she* was brought up..”

“*She?*” Victor thought aloud. “Oh..” Immediately, he understood. “I’m terribly sorry, Edgar.” “*I can’t believe an argument was the reason I found him.. And an argument that bad where he seems unsure of going home.*” Victor frowned as he took another bite of his bacon. “Well, my home is always open to company like you. You can stay here as long as you like.”

“Thank you.. Thank you so much. I-I promise I won’t be a burden to you. I-I’ll try to do anything you ask me to!”

Victor let out a chuckle. “There’s nothing really for you to do. Just make yourself at home here. I’m happy to keep you as a guest, and when you’d like to leave, please don’t be afraid to tell me.” He decided not to ask Edgar anything about the argument. It wasn’t for him to know, and if it was that bad Edgar’s missing sister was brought up, Victor definitely didn’t want to make the poor human upset.

“Are you sure..?” Edgar looked up at Victor. He seemed confused.

“Of course I am.” Victor took a sip of the coffee and choked down the bitterness.

“How did you like the coffee?” Edgar asked, eager to get even a sliver of feedback.

“It’s...” Victor tried to find words to not crush Edgar’s spirits.

“It’s bad.. Isn’t it?” Edgar concluded.

“N-No, no! It’s.. just bitter.” Victor gave a little chuckle. “I’ve never had it before..! Can we add things to it?”

“I think so.. I heard from Demi that the vampire hunting captain usually drinks his coffee with sugar and cream.”

“Demi?”

“Oh!” Edgar jumped in realization. “I think I said too much..” He stood up with his plate, walking to the sink.

“Huh?” Victor tilted his head. “But you already got me interested!”

Edgar sighed as he placed his plate and utensils in the sink. “Fine..”

Victor smiled as he watched Edgar sit back down. *“He seems more comfortable talking about this Demi person. I wonder what they’re like!”*

“Demi is the bartender back in Greenwood. She’s really nice and I usually eat what she makes instead of the food at home. She has really great humor and even the exorcist likes her!”

“The exorcist?” Victor questioned. *“Is he still alive..?”*

“Mhm!...” Edgar’s voice lowered. “He scares me..” He muttered, almost out of earshot.

“Oh- well.. back to Demi. You said you eat what she makes?”

“Mhm. I went to her so often she began to prepare meals for me.” Edgar let out a nervous laugh. “She always said I was too apologetic and that she was happy to help me.”

“Well, if I see her I’ll definitely give her my thanks! You looked so.. what’s the word..?”

“What.. word?” Edgar pushed out his chair slightly, but enough for him to run off if he had to.

“Nononono! Shoot! I’m sorry I didn’t mean it like that!” Victor frantically yelled. “*Stop scaring him you buffoon!*” He mentally scolded. “I-I meant that you looked healthy!”

Edgar slowly nodded. “I’m going back into my room.. I’m working on something a-and I think you would like it!” He smiled as he stood up again. “I’ll see you later.”

Victor nodded as he stood up, picking up his plate and utensils and washing them in the sink with the others. He opened a counter and took out a bag of dog food, pouring it into a bowl along with some other snacks safe for Wick to eat. He refilled the water bowl before beginning to walk outside and tend to the flowerbeds.

## Part Three, the Horrid Reasons

### Chapter Seventeen

April 6th, the night before chapter fifteen.

~

Edgar sat on his bed, his head in his knees. He had just woken up from a nightmare a couple minutes ago. His breath was quick and panicked as the yelling of the Monster From Home echoed in his mind.

*“EDGAR! YOU IDIOT! DO YOU WANT TO END UP LIKE YOUR SISTER?!”* It scolded.

Edgar looked at the windows and to the village of Greenwood, shaking and digging his nails into his arms. *“I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to go back. I don’t want to go back.”* He repeated to himself. His elbows began to get soaked in tears as Edgar sobbed.

*“IF YOU KEEP THIS UP I’LL THROW YOU TO THE WOLVES YOU UNGRATEFUL BRAT!”*

Just then, Edgar heard three soft knocks on his door and then, a calm familiar voice. “Edgar? Is everything okay?”

Edgar stared at the door and wiped his tears as he walked to the door. When he opened it, he looked up at Victor.

Almost immediately, the vampire noticed something was wrong. “Hey hey..! What’s the matter?” Victor gently pushed Edgar’s chin up despite the scared human’s bodily refusal, and looked into his eyes. “You poor thing..” Victor sighed as he let go. He sat on the bed and patted the side next to him. “Do you want to talk about it?”



“There’s nothing to talk about..” Edgar protested.

“Edgar.” Victor’s tone shifted to a disappointed one, which only made Edgar’s hair stand up in fear. “Your eyes are red.. you were crying.”

“I’m fine.” Edgar protested, crossing his arm. His voice was weak and definitely clear he had cried. “There’s nothing for you to worry about.”

Victor nodded. “If you say so..” He stood up and wiped Edgar’s remaining tears. “Will you be okay?”

“I already told you. I’m fine.” Edgar pushed Victor away and wiped his face. “*I’m still not used to this..*” He thought, looking at the vampire.

“Goodnight.” Victor left the room.

“Goodnight..” Edgar responded weakly.

~

Not long after, Edgar couldn’t sleep. He was too afraid to shut his eyes for even longer than a blink. He was still tired, but needed to give himself something to do. Edgar stood up and slowly walked to the door and opened it.

The hallway was silent and dark. It was hard to see just a couple of inches.

Edgar took a deep breath as he walked out of his room. His entire body trembled as he walked through the hallway and remembered what happened yesterday.

*“I take you in, give you food to eat, a room to sleep in, and treat your ankle. I’ve been nothing but friendly to you. And what do I get in return?”*

Even if Victor had panicked when he found Edgar and said it to get him to listen, the guilt tugged on Edgar's heart strings. The entire time he's been nothing but rude to the poor vampire.

*"Edgar. If you wrong someone who has done nothing but treat you and provide you with things to survive," Mr. Sarai's voice echoed. "You are in the wrong. Treat those who give you things to survive with respect and maybe we wouldn't have this issue."*

Edgar always kept Mr. Sarai's teachings in his memory. But he never could understand what the issue Mr. Sarai talked about other than that he misbehaved and deserved to be punished. Edgar's body froze as it saw the stairway. The young painter glanced away and turned around. *"I shouldn't.. he might be awake.. and catch me."* A shiver went down Edgar's spine. *"But this time he might actually hurt me."* He convinced himself. Edgar quickly and quietly walked back to his room and gently closed the door behind himself. *"Tomorrow.. yeah tomorrow.. I'll make something for Victor instead!"* Edgar smiled as he lied down on the bed and tucked himself under the covers. *"It'll be nice to do something in return for all the help he's given me.."* Edgar thought, unwillingly letting the drowsiness of his body take over and drift off to sleep.

## Chapter Eighteen

The following takes place during chapter fifteen.

~

Edgar was in the kitchen with the recipe book out. It was around noon and when Victor would begin to make lunch. But Victor didn't leave his room and Edgar was too scared to open the door and wake the sleeping vampire. Edgar had the book out wide open to the macaroni and cheese recipe and kept looking back at it every few moments to make sure he got every single detail right.

When he finished, Edgar wiped the sweat from his forehead, letting out a sigh of relief. "Phew! That took.. A while.." He looked at the macaroni and cheese and smiled. *"Maybe Victor will like it.. If he's awake. I'm sure he'd be proud of me!"* Edgar then looked towards the knives. The cage was still around it, and the one he had taken was still missing. *"Has he not noticed yet?"* Edgar shrugged and picked up the plate and took out a fork, walking to the vampire's room. When the young painter arrived, he took a deep breath and opened the door. "Vampire..?" He called out, completely forgetting to call him by his name.

Victor glanced at Edgar. He had bags under his eyes and he seemed more tired than usual, as if he just woke up. "Oh.." He yawned. "Goodmorning, Edgar." The vampire gave a gentle smile.

"You.. look tired." Edgar observed Victor's appearance with precision. *"Did I come in during a bad time..? Does he want*

*me to leave..? Maybe I should just give him the food and go.*" He thought.

"I haven't gotten much sleep." Victor's voice echoed as he was heard sitting on the bed. "How are you feeling?"

*"He's more concerned for me than himself.. Why?"* Edgar questioned mentally, watching Victor rub his eyes in a tired manner. "I'm good.." He began, trying to the words to accompany his actions. "H-Here. I.. made you something." He struggled, gently placing the plate of macaroni and cheese onto Victor's lap.

Victor looked at the plate with confusion. Drowsily, he asked, "What.. time is it?"

"I-Is it not time for lunch..?" Edgar backed away. *"Oh no.. oh no no no.. I-I messed up.. O-of course he wouldn't want something like macaroni and cheese when he wakes up!"* Edgar tried to mask his fear with a smile, but it quickly went to a frown as sweat dripped down the sides of his face. "I-I'm sorry.."

Victor looked up at Edgar. "N-No it's okay-" He began, but was interrupted with a cough. The vampire bent over, covering his mouth with his elbow as fangs sprouted out.

Edgar watched as the vampire's eyes became slits. *"That can't be good..!"*

The plate fell on the ground, spilling the macaroni all over the carpet.

Edgar was petrified, his feet locked into the floor as if he was made out of stone. His hard work! On the ground and staining the carpet! *"Oh.. oh god.."*

“Blood!” Victor choked out. “Blood! Bottle!”

The yelling snapped Edgar back to reality. He blinked as he watched Victor point somewhere desperately. His eyes followed the vampire’s finger before rushing to the cabinet nearby and taking out a bottle of blood. *“This.. this is what he wants?”* Edgar thought, rushing back to the vampire and handing it to him through shaking hands. Edgar watched as the vampire lifted the bottle up and gulped it down until there was barely anything left.

The vampire looked at Edgar, who had nothing but stuttering coming from his mouth.

“I... I..” *“Please don’t hurt me please don’t hurt me please don’t kill me..”* Repeated in his mind. Edgar knew where the vampire was staring. His neck. It was thinking of a way to kill him. To poke its fangs through his skin and into his veins.

“I’m sorry Edgar.” Victor sighed, his eyes not moving from Edgar’s jugular. They were slits as if he was a wolf, eyeing a dog in the woods. At least.. If Edgar would die, it would be quick and painless. Right? “I haven’t been sleeping well.” The vampire continued. “I’ll clean up.”

*“He’s so mad at me..! I need to make it up to him! He’ll forgive me if I offer to clean it up, right??? He won’t kill me right???”* Edgar’s thoughts were a mess. “N-No.. I..” Edgar couldn’t help but stutter more. At any second the vampire could launch at him and grab him. “I’ll clean..”

Victor suddenly shook his head, closing his eyes. He looked up at Edgar and let out a sigh. “Edgar.” He began. “Please leave.. It’s not safe for you right now.”

Edgar was confused for a moment before nodding. *“He.. told me to leave..? Instead of hurting me..?”* He turned around and closed the door behind himself, his mind in shambles. *“He’s not mad at me.. Right? N-No he is.. Why else would he tell me to leave?”* Edgar walked down the hall and towards the kitchen. *“Maybe I should give him something to eat.. T-to make up for it! He’s probably hungry!”* He convinced himself as he entered the kitchen and began to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

## Chapter Nineteen

April 7th, shortly after chapter sixteen..

Edgar was in his room, painting quietly with a jar of blood set down on his desk near the lifted canvas. He was working on a painting of the Crimson Moon. *“I wonder what it’ll look like in person.. And if one happens soon.”* He thought, humming to himself. He paused and stepped away from his work, the paintbrush dripping the blood onto the ground. He gave a smile at his work. *“Maybe I should show Victor.. He’d like it, right?”* He then shook his head. *“No.. not yet.. It’s not good enough!”* Edgar sat back down, dipping his paintbrush into the glass of water, drying it and then dipping it in ink, painting the night sky. *“All my paintings have just been shades of red and black.. And I’m getting more and more exhausted whenever I have to refill..”* Edgar sighed.

*“A good painting has variety. Colors, shapes, value, anything the artist adds. Expand your work. Use the paints I’ve given you. I assure you the headache is just you complaining.”* Mr. Sarai would tell him.

*“I need variety..”* Edgar concluded. He stood up from his chair and left. *“What can I use..?”* He thought. “Victor?” He called out.

Nobody answered.

“....” Edgar felt a shiver run down his spine as he called out again. “Victor!”

Nothing, again.

Edgar ran down the hallway and suddenly tripped over Wick, who was staring at him with curiosity. “Ow..”

Wick looked at him and sat down, tilting his head.

Edgar looked back at Wick. “W-Wick! Have you seen Victor..?” He asked, a desperate look in his eyes. *“I can’t lose someone. Not again. Please. No.”* He mentally begged.

Wick stood up and began to walk somewhere, motioning Edgar to follow him.

Edgar followed, trying not to run ahead of the dog.

Wick led Edgar to the kitchen and stood up on his back legs, using his front paws to grip onto the table. He used his snout to point to a slip of paper that was left on the table.

“Good boy..” Edgar smiled, petting Wick. He took the paper and looked at it, reading the writing on it.

*“I’ll be out in the village today. I’m getting you things to paint with, as your current paintings are worrying me. Something tells me you’re not using actual paint. Please wait for me to get back!”*

The letter was signed with a beautiful signature. *Victor.*

Edgar had never seen a note made this way before and simply blinked. He looked over to Wick, who was sitting on the floor and still wagging his tail. “Thank you, Wick.” He smiled, giving the dog more pets and even a scratch behind the ear.

Wick closed his eyes, tipping his head up in enjoyment.

Edgar smiled at Wick and kept scratching him for a couple moments, before standing up and walking to the stairway. *“He won’t be mad at me if I go outside too.. Right?”* He thought, but decided not to risk it. He wouldn’t want to make the vampire mad..



Edgar spent his day in the library, reading the book he had asked Victor to give him days before. *The Artists Behind the Paintings* was truly an interesting find. He was curious about what other artists did for their portraits and how he could learn. The book definitely helped him with inspiration and tricks the other artists used. Edgar's eyes began to droop down as he sat in the chair and slowly drifted off to sleep.

~

It was a Crimson Moon. Edgar was trying to sleep, forced to listen to his younger sister try to force her way through a window.

"Come on.. work!!" Ella muttered, her fingertips sore with cuts from fiddling with the window.

"Ella.." Edgar looked over drowsily. "Just go to sleep.. it's dangerous."

"UUUUGH!" Ella groaned, looking at her brother. Even though Edgar couldn't see it, her eyes were a little more cloudy and she stumbled a lot more. "But I want to see the moon!"

Edgar got up out of bed and walked towards Ella. "No." He sighed. "Remember last time you wouldn't sleep? You fell off your bed."

Ella gave Edgar a look, refusing to lie down and sleep. "I'm not going to sleep until I see the moon."

A week prior, Ella began to get sick. Neither Edgar nor Mr. Sarai could understand what caused it, or what she was sick with. Ella began to cough a lot more and had to be bedridden for her own safety as soon as she began to walk into

walls and almost trip down stairs. It was Edgar's job to take care of his sister, who was just two years younger than him.

Edgar sighed. "Please, Ella." He sat on his sister's bed. "Please go to sleep."

"I'm not missing the moon!" She repeated. She stood up and nearly fell off her bed, Edgar catching her quickly.

"Hmph." She crossed her arms as she was lied down in her bed.

"See? You *can't* see the moon.." Edgar held his sister's hands in his, feeling the many cuts in them that bled over his hands and over her blanket and window sill. "Stay here. I'll go get the med kit." He stood up and lit a nearby candle, walking out of the bedroom.

Edgar walked into the bathroom and set the large wax candle down on the counter. He opened a drawer and took out a square box with a white and red design. He picked up the candle and walked back to the bedroom with the candle and med kit in hand. "Ella? You're still in bed right?"

"Where else.." Ella muttered.

Edgar walked up to his sister and took her hand. He gently cleaned the blood from her fingers and bandaged her hands. Edgar had no experience with a med kit, but he had seen Mr. Sarai use one before and memorized what to do when treating a wound. When he finished bandaging her fingers, he gave her a gentle smile and placed the lit candle on his bedside. "Now. Will you go to sleep?"

Ella let out a grumble and covered herself with the blankets, not even caring about the stained blood.

*“I’m going to have to tell Mr. Sarai about that..”* He thought, putting the med kit back in the bathroom. Before he went to sleep, Edgar blew out the candle and tucked himself under the covers.

~

## Chapter Twenty

Edgar woke up to the sweet smell of honey roasted stake and the gentle touch of his blanket. He was back in his room in the vampire's house. *"I don't remember falling asleep here."* He thought, standing up and stretching.

Crickets chirped as Edgar looked out the windows, gazing at the village of Greenwood just a mile or two away. The sky was covered in a blanket of darkness. Just how long had Edgar been asleep for?

He looked over to the dinner that Victor had cooked him and began to eat it. Every single bite warmed his stomach as he swallowed. He let out a sigh and thought about his dream. *"Ella.."* He thought. Her beautiful blue eyes; cloudy from that sickness she had developed. Even though it had been years since she disappeared, Edgar couldn't move on. To him, she had just disappeared yesterday.

There was something different about Edgar's room. He wasn't sure what it was at first, but when he saw a large box filled with metal containers, he felt a shiver run down his spine.

*"What is this?"* He thought, walking over to the box. Edgar gently knocked on the lids of the metal containers. *"They're full of something.. Maybe this is the paint Victor wrote about."* He concluded. His eyes then locked onto a note on one of the containers. He gently took the note and read it.

*"Have a great sleep, Edgar! I'm sorry I took so long! I had a run-in with a man who was trying to get me a certain type of paint. It took me a while just to get the ones I thought you wanted"*

*because of him and stares from the other villagers. I hope you enjoy the paints I got you!"*

Edgar dropped the note. *"A person.. Trying to get him to get a certain type of paint..?"* His eyes widened as he stepped away from the paints. *"I can't use those.. No.. no no.."* Edgar began to panic as he sat in the corner, covering his mouth and nose with his hands as sweat dripped from the sides of his face. *"I-I'll just dump the paints out.. J-Just like I did with my food he gave me.. When I first came here."* Edgar took a deep breath and stood up. *"No.. I should just hide them somewhere.. Somewhere away from me."* He walked towards the door and opened it. He then picked up the box of paint containers and carried them out of his room. Edgar walked down the hall until he reached a room he had never seen before. *"Huh..?"* He thought aloud. He gently put down the box and opened the door. Afterwards, he picked up the box and walked inside, placing it back down afterwards.

The room was filled to the brim with dust. The moon directly shone into the room through the old windows. The curtains were silver colored and tattered. The floor directly in the path of the windows was a tad bit brighter in shade than the floor in the shadows. Along the back wall, sat a bookshelf overflowing with children's books.

Edgar's jaw dropped as he looked around, exploring the room. He walked up to the bookshelf and took a book from it. He gently blew the dust off of the book, coughing as it flew into his face. *"Witches of the Woods.. I remember hearing about this collection."* Edgar whispered to himself. *"But.. why*

is it here?" He looked up at the bookshelf and saw something wooden behind it. Edgar went to the side of it and began to push it with all of his strength. And when it was out of the way, he looked at what he found.

A large wooden door with an old silver knob with a dark oak frame.

Edgar stared at the door with widened eyes. His curiosity had been caught in just a matter of moments. "What is this.." He whispered as his hand gravitated towards the knob. He tried to open the door, but the knob wouldn't turn. *"Locked. But why?"* He backed away from the door. *"If it's locked and hidden behind this bookshelf.."* Edgar's thoughts continued as he glanced back at the shelf. *"There must be a reason as to why."* He pushed the bookshelf back into its place and slid the book he had taken into its slot. He walked towards the door he left open and looked back into the room, directly at the hidden door. *"Why didn't Victor mention you?"* Edgar walked out of the room and closed the door, leaving as if he was never there.

## Chapter Twenty One

“Edgar! Did you see the new paints I got you?” Victor said ecstatically during breakfast. He had a bright smile on his face as he was dipping a tea bag into the steaming mug in his hand.

“Oh.. yessss...” Edgar’s voice trailed off. “Yes I did!” He gave Victor a false smile. “*There’s something wrong with those paints and I’m not going anywhere near them.*” He said in his head. He didn’t want to disappoint Victor.. But he just couldn’t fully trust those paints. And that person Victor mentioned in that note.

“Did you try them out yet?” Victor asked. He seemed more excited than ever which gave Edgar a fright.

“*He’s definitely planning something.*” Edgar concluded. “Not yet.. I’ll.. make sure to do it later today!” He gave a nervous laugh and began to eat his breakfast.

“Edgar? Why do you look so scared?” He asked. “Was it something I said..?”

“N-No it’s nothing.. Don’t worry.” Edgar bit into one of his pancakes and swallowed. “*Why is he so concerned for me?*”

“If you say so..” Victor replied, taking a sip out of his tea. “I realized you’ve been wearing that outfit for around three weeks..” He paused. “So, I thought we could get you something else to wear? I’d be happy to lend you some clothing.”

“Oh.. I..” Edgar lost his train of thought. “*Is it right to do that?*” He was quiet for a little. “If.. that’s fine with you.. I

guess?” Edgar wasn’t fully sure. Would the clothes even fit on him?

“It’d be good to get you out of the same clothing you’ve been in.” Victor wiped his mouth with a napkin when he finished. “I’ll go find some clothes for you. I’ll take care of the dishes, don’t worry.” Victor put his dish and mug into the sink and walked out of the kitchen, leaving Edgar alone.

Edgar stood up too, barely touching his food. He wasn’t hungry after the night before. Edgar walked up to a counter and took out dog food. “*Maybe Wick is hungry.*” He thought, walking to a dog bowl and pouring the food into it. Edgar then filled the water bowl and put away the bag of dog food. “*If he says he’ll take care of the dishes, he might not want me to do them instead..*” Edgar concluded, tossing away his food and putting the plate in the sink.

Edgar walked towards the dusty room again and when he arrived, he stared at it. His mind went blank as he looked at the handle of the door. “*Why is that room abandoned?*” Edgar eventually thought. He was so lost in his mind, he didn’t realize Victor was right behind him.

“Edgar?”

“AH- Oh-“ Edgar flinched and looked at Victor. “Y-Yes..?”

Victor looked into Edgar’s eyes with a serious look. A look all too familiar to Edgar.. but friendlier. “Don’t go into that room, please.” He said and turned around. “I pulled out some spare clothes for you. Follow me.”



Edgar stood there for a moment and glanced back at the door. *“Why does he not want me in there..?”* He thought, turning around and beginning to follow Victor.

~

When the two entered the vampire’s room, Edgar stayed by the door. He still felt uncomfortable with the whole ‘wearing Victor’s clothing’ situation, but nevertheless who was he to say no to the person providing him with the ingredients of survival?

“Soooo..” Victor began stepping aside from the bed, where three pairs of clothing laid. “Feel free to mix and match!” He smiled.

Edgar walked up to the bed and looked at the clothes.

The first pair housed a brown shirt with large sleeves topped with brown ribbon around the neck and wrists where the sleeves tightened and would hug around the wearer’s arms. The shirt was accompanied by a pair of black leggings with little pockets on the sides.

The second pair had a blue, neck-ruffled shirt with green and purple striped sleeves. There was a pair of blue bell bottom pants above the shirt. Both of the ends of each pant were rolled up, exposing the lighter blue side of the cloth inside.

Finally, the third pair of clothes was a brown tunic with a leather belt with a silver buckle. The tunic was housed with a pair of red leggings with black stripes going across each pant.

Edgar thought long and hard on what he would wear before looking at Victor. “Do.. you mind if I try some on?”

“Of course I don’t mind!” Victor smiled and motioned towards another room. “The bathroom is right there. Try on as many as you’d like! I’d be happy to give you other clothing to try if you find these don’t fit your taste!”

“..*Why does he have to say it like that?*” Edgar thought, shaking away the discomfort. He took all three pairs of clothing and walked into the bathroom. Eventually, he came back out with all three. “I like this combination.” He began and placed down the brown shirt with the black ribbons. Edgar then set down the leather belt with the silver buckle before laying down the blue pants.

Victor took the remaining clothes and looked at Edgar’s choice. “I think it’ll look great on you.” He smiled and placed his hand on Edgar’s shoulder in a supportive way.

Almost immediately, Edgar shoved Victor away and backed up. “D-Don’t touch me!..” He yelled with a panicked expression. Then, he looked at Victor, who had a shocked look on his face. “S...Sorry..” Edgar looked down. “I.. I just-“ He tried to explain himself, but was cut off by Victor.

“No.. it’s okay.” Victor sighed. “I know you humans don’t like being touched sometimes. I shouldn’t force it on you.” Victor paused for a moment, finding his next words. “Do you want these outfits too? Or just that one?”

“I’ll have all three.. it’s good to have more outfits.” Edgar took the outfits from Victor’s hand. “I’m going to put these in my closet now. I’ll see you later for lunch?” He asked.

“Mhm!” Victor smiled and waved with his right hand. “I’ll see you then!”

Edgar walked into his room and let out a sigh of relief. He thought for sure he'd have some damage done to him by that vampire. Edgar placed his new wardrobe into the large, empty closet and sat onto his bed. *"Why doesn't he want me in that dusty room?"* He thought. *"He's clearly hiding something, but what? Is it bottles of blood? Another vampire's room?"* Edgar paused his thoughts. *"What if it's another human's room..? Or what if there's a dead body in that room?"* Edgar felt a shiver run down his spine as he suggested that. *"But there's no strange smells coming from it as far as I remember.."* Edgar walked onto the balcony and stared into the distance. *"I should investigate more later today when he's asleep. It should be safer that way.."*

## Chapter Twenty Two

“Mr. Sarai? My head hurts..” Edgar complained. “It’s been hurting for the past hour ever since I opened up the paints you got me!”

Mr. Sarai glanced at Edgar with a disgusted look. “Quit complaining. You’re just not used to the type of paints I’ve given you. They’re high quality and look fresher than other paints.” Mr. Sarai wouldn’t even come into the room, or directly face Edgar. It was like Mr. Sarai began to hate him.

It had been around three years since Ella’s disappearance and with every passing day, Edgar’s hope for her to return lessened each day. He began to look outside his window every night with a candle on the window sill, waiting to see just a small figure come running back to her home. The Exorcist said she was dead, but Edgar refused to believe it.

Edgar had no choice but to work through his headache. He dipped his paintbrush into the vibrant paint plastered on his pallet and placed a stroke on the canvas. He coughed from time to time, but finally it was done.

As soon as Edgar finished, he took the painting and handed it to Mr. Sarai. The painter’s headache only worsened the more he was around the painting and the paints themselves. When it was night, Edgar took the paint pallet and paint buckets, placed them into a box and carried them outside into the backyard. Edgar grabbed a shovel from the shed and dug a ditch before dunking the paints into the ground and burying them. Edgar let out a relieved sigh and put the shovel away, taking the box with him inside of the

house. He lied down in his bed and drank a lot of water as his headache continued its relentless attack. *"It hurts so much.."* He thought. Maybe he could.. ask the Exorcist for advice?

*“What am I doing? Why am I doing this? This is a bad idea, Edgar!”* Edgar scolded himself as he walked through the darkness of the village. His house was far from the Exorcist’s, but at least it was in walking distance.

Greenwood was always scarier at night. The entire village was surrounded by vampires, werewolves, witches, and the undead. Any monster Edgar could imagine, it was there. Thankfully, the vampire hunters patrolled the streets during the night. They weren’t just vampire hunters though, they hunted all sorts of monsters. They were the law in Greenwood. The speakers of the captain’s authority.

*“If the vampire hunting captain is the voice of authority,”* Edgar always thought. *“Then why is the Exorcist here?”*

Alas, the young painter had arrived at the Exorcist’s house. The last few times he had approached it had been left in failure. All his attempts to escape his own ‘house’ had been wasted and added to that pile. Reluctantly, Edgar knocked on the door three times. *“The Exorcist is so going to yell at me for this..”* He thought. At first, there was no answer. So Edgar knocked again and louder.

After moments of waiting, someone walked to the door and opened it from the inside. “What?” They demanded in a drowsy, drawn out voice.

“Mr. Exorcist..?”

“Oh. It’s you.” The Exorcist sighed and fully opened the door.

The Exorcist had white hair and eyebrows, accompanied by their peachy-pale skin. They had red eyes with black pupils,

the only facial feature that remained exposed. The Exorcist always wore a red mask with black spikes on the outside to hide his mouth and nose. The grayish and brown leather held the mask to the Exorcist's face. On top of that, the Exorcist wore a brown leather capelet with a red shirt underneath. He had black gloves and a black belt to hold his brown leggings with spiked reddish boots at the bottom.

"If this is about your sister." The Exorcist began, becoming visibly irritated. "I'm *going* to bring you back to your home."

"It's not.. C-Can I.. come in?" Edgar asked, nervously looking into the Exorcist's red eyes.

The Exorcist let out a long, tired sigh. "Fine." He said in a sharp tone and stepped away from the door.

"Thank you.." Edgar walked inside and sat down as the Exorcist closed the door. "I-I'm sorry.. for waking you."

The Exorcist stabbed a nearby rat with his glove, lowering his mask to eat it whole. "You better be." He lifted his mask up to its original position and slammed the door.

Edgar flinched as the door let out a loud noise and watched as the Exorcist sat down in front of Edgar. "So. What is it this time?"

"Mr. Sarai.. got me these new paints.. but I've gotten nothing but headaches from them every time I've used them. It gets hard to breathe and opening up my windows barely helps."

"Well do you have the paints with you?"

Edgar silently shook his head. "I buried the paints.. Mr. Sarai has one of the paintings I made with them." He looked down. "There's something wrong with those paints.. I-I just know it."

The Exorcist grumbled. "I'm walking you home. You've wasted enough of my time."

"Wh-What?!" Edgar watched the Exorcist stand up. "N-No please! I-I don't want to go!"

The Exorcist grabbed Edgar's wrist tightly and forced him to stand up as well. "We're going."

Edgar pulled his wrist away from the Exorcist. "I'm not going with you." He said.

The Exorcist gave Edgar a look of anger. "I said." He began. "We. Are. Going."

"You're not even going to listen to me!? There's something wrong with the paints Mr. Sarai got me! I never experienced headaches using paints until now!" Edgar yelled.

"I'm someone who gets rid of *monsters*." The Exorcist protested. "NOT a doctor. I don't get why you don't understand that. Now get out of my house." The Exorcist walked up to Edgar, staring down at him as he spoke in a threatening tone. "Or I'll make you leave."

Edgar looked at the Exorcist in the eyes, looking for a hint of sympathy. However, he found none. The young painter hung his head down and walked towards the door. "Good night, Exorcist.." He said in disappointment. He looked back at the Exorcist and yelled again in a hopeless voice. "I hope



you're happy with what you're doing to me!" He opened the door and left, slamming it behind himself.

When Edgar got home, he snuck into his room and into his bed, resisting the urge to burst into tears at yet another failed attempt to escape his horrid predicament.

## Chapter Twenty Three

Current date.

Edgar lied down in his bed, exhausted. He had a long day and just wanted to sleep. But the overwhelming curiosity of the dusty room and the dread of Victor finding out about his lie kept the young painter wide awake. Groggily, he sat up and sighed. The intrusive thoughts had won. Edgar walked out of his bed and down the hall outside of his room, arriving at the dusty room. *“Why is he hiding you?”* He thought, opening the door and walking inside.

Edgar pushed the bookshelf and the door that was behind it. *“Let’s see what you show.”* He thought and turned the knob.

The door wouldn’t open.

*“Locked.”* Edgar sighed. He moved his hand away from the knob and looked through the keyhole. He couldn’t see anything through it and retracted his eye. *“Nothing.. Damn it.”* He sighed as he backed away from the door. Edgar turned to the paints in the corner of the room. *“What if.. I just.. see if they’re harmful?”* He thought. Swiftly, Edgar shook his head. *“No! No! That’s a bad idea! Why would I do something like that if I don’t even know what made the last ones make me react that way?!”*

Suddenly, Edgar heard footsteps from outside of the room. He quickly ran to the door and closed it as quietly as he could and stepped out of the doorway. He covered his mouth to prevent anything from squirming out. His body stiffened as the door was opened from the outside. Luckily for Edgar, the

side of the door that he ran to, had hid him.. But not the paints, that were on the other side of the room.

It was quiet for a couple moments. Edgar watched as the tall figure of the vampire walked into the room and shut the door behind himself.

Victor walked up to the bookshelf and gently moved it aside before unlocking the door and entering.

Edgar looked at the opened door to that locked room. It was as if it was calling him to it..

*“Edgar..”* It whispered. *“Come in..!”* But it would’ve been a death wish if he went inside.. especially with Victor in there.

Quickly, Edgar opened the exit door as quietly as he could and left the room, letting out a sigh of relief as he walked down the hall and to his room. But one thing lingered over him.

He forgot to close the door.

Edgar heard the knocks on his door later that night.

“Edgar?” Victor’s voice called from outside of the room.  
“Are you in there?”

Edgar picked his head up from the bed. “Yeah?” He called out. Slowly, he got up and answered the door for Victor. “Is something wrong?”

Victor had a sad look on his face, as if he was disappointed in someone.

“Why.. the look?” Edgar questioned, a sense of dread falling over him.

“Why did you lie to me?” Victor asked. “You said you would use those paints I bought you.. but they still remain untouched.. and in the room I asked you not to go in.”

Edgar froze. “*I LEFT THE DOOR OPEN!*” He concluded. In a panicked decision, he lied to Victor again. “I don’t know what you mean..!” He gave a nervous smile.

Victor sighed. “Stop lying. I know you went in that room.” He walked into Edgar’s room and shut the door behind himself. “Why? Why did you lie to me?”

Edgar backed away, trying to form a sentence for dear life.

“Edgar..” Victor waited for an answer, crossing his arms and sighing. “Please. I need to know..”

Edgar backed up against his bed. “I-I..” In a panic, he began to say the one word that went through his mind. Edgar clamped his hands together and stared up at Victor. “I’m sorry!” He yelled. “I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry!”

Victor raised an eyebrow.

“I-I’m sorry for lying! I’m sorry f-for not listening!” Edgar cried, praying for dear life.

Victor sighed. “It’s okay.. Just calm down..” Victor gently took Edgar by the hands and sat down. He looked into the human’s. “Take a breath.. Unclamp your hands.. And answer my questions..”

## Chapter Twenty Four

The conversation lasted for what felt like forever. Edgar awaited the words that would finally set himself free.

“Why would you think there was something wrong with the paints?” Victor had asked.

Edgar didn’t give an answer. He was too afraid to speak up. *“He won’t listen to me.. The Exorcist didn’t.. The hunting captain didn’t.. What will make Victor believe me?”* He thought.

“Well. How about we both go outside and paint this thursday? It’ll be a Crimson Moon!”

“I-” Edgar paused. “Aren’t those.. Dangerous?”

Victor tried to hold in his laughter, but he couldn’t help himself.

Edgar sighed and watched as the vampire laughed hysterically.

“Crimson Moon??? Dangerous??” Victor wiped a tear from his eye and took in gasps of air before sighing. “You’re kidding! They’re beautiful! Come on, surely you’d have to have seen one, right?”

Edgar went quiet and shook his head.

“...Right?” Victor asked again.

Edgar shook his head once more.

“Oh..” Victor blinked. He stood up and offered a hand to Edgar. “Then it’ll be your first time! We can paint it together!”

Edgar reached up and took Victor’s hand. “If.. you say so.” He stood up.

“There’s one thing I wanted to ask you.”

“Hm?”

“I keep smelling blood from your room.. Is everything okay?”

“Huh..?” *“He knows...! How do I hide this from him!?”*

Edgar thought. Lying wasn’t going to help him.. “What do you mean?” *“Just play dumb..”*

Victor sighed. “Edgar. Playing dumb doesn’t work with me. Are you hiding something from me?”

Edgar remained quiet.

“Edgar.” Victor repeated, raising an eyebrow. “You’re hiding something.”

“No I’m not..” *“How is he going to react to this!?”* Before Edgar knew it, he was grabbed by the wrist and felt his sleeve roll up. He immediately fell silent as he stared up at Victor, who’s pupils shrunk and jaw dropped. “I.. I can explain.”

“What is this?” Victor looked at Edgar with worry in his eyes. “Who did this?”

*“He doesn’t.. Whatever! I can use this!”* “They’re umm.. From a time in the woods.. Werewolves.. Attacked.”

“Oh you poor thing..” Victor opened the door. “Let’s get you bandaged up.”

*“He’s that gullible???? That’s.. A whole different reaction than I had anticipated..”* Edgar was speechless. He stood up and followed Victor into the bathroom down the hall.

~

“Edgar. How long have you had these for?” Victor asked, disinfecting the many scars on Edgar’s right arm.

“A while.. I used to go outside when my mentor was asleep to calm myself. I ended up getting attacked a couple of times though..” Edgar flinched as the wounds stung. He was mentally shocked that his lies were being believed.

“And you were never caught?” Victor reached for gauze before wrapping it around Edgar’s arm. “You should’ve known by now..”

“No.. ow! Not too tight..” Edgar looked away. “I never told Mr. Sarai.. him and I never got along.”

“Why is that?” Victor asked, finally applying the bandages around the wounds. “You don’t have a mom or dad?”

Edgar fell silent.

“Oh...” Victor went quiet for a moment. “I’m sorry.. I shouldn’t have..” He gently let go of Edgar’s right arm. “May I have your left arm?”

Edgar quietly held out his left arm and watched Victor gently roll up his sleeve. Edgar barely remembered his parents. For all his life, his parental figure was Mr. Sarai. “*Where.. are mom and dad?*” He questioned himself. His eyes began to droop.. and he began to slant downwards. Edgar flinched as the loud sound of a snap filled the room.

“Edgar! Are you alright?!”

Edgar looked up at Victor. “I.. yeah..?” He blinked.

Victor let out a sigh of relief. “Thank goodness.. I guess you’re just getting tired.” He began to apply gauze on Edgar’s left arm. “Could you stay awake a little bit longer?”

“Yeah.. s-sorry.” Edgar gave a nervous laugh.



“It’s okay.” Victor reached for the bandages. “Who’s Mr. Sarai, if I may ask?”

Edgar was quiet for a moment. “My mentor..”

“Oh..”

The two of them remained quiet for an extended period of time. By the time Victor had finished bandaging Edgar’s arms, Edgar was ready to go to sleep.

“Edgar.” Victor began. He was carrying Edgar in his arms.

“HM?” Edgar quickly responded, too embarrassed to give a proper response.

“..You weren’t the first human I took in.” Victor admitted, opening Edgar’s door and putting the human down gently.

“Please.. spare me the dread and stay out of that dusty room. Alright? It hurts for me to go in there..”

Edgar was speechless. *“Another human?! And they stayed in the dusty room?! What were they like? Where did they go? Did Victor.... No. He wouldn’t have.. right?”* All he could do was nod quietly and choke out the words, “good night.” in response. Edgar went into his room and shut the door, crawling into his bed and burying himself under the covers. *“I never would’ve thought there used to be another human here.. just thinking of it is unnerving.. What happened to them? Are they still alive?”* It looked like Edgar wouldn’t be getting as much sleep as he liked now, as his brain laid awake full of questions that were hungry for answers.

## Chapter Twenty Five

A year before the current events.

“And.. you’re sure your mentor is poisoning you?” The vampire hunting captain asked.

Edgar was in the office of the vampire hunters. Specifically, the captain’s office.

The office had white brick walls and a black tiled floor. The chair Edgar sat in was metal with a red plastic seat and backrest. In front of Edgar, a black wooden desk.

“Yes. I felt horrible all last night ever since I ate something he made.”

The captain, whose name was really Frederick Rutin, raised an eyebrow at Edgar. “Kid.. I’m sorry but I think you went to the wrong place..”

“You..” Edgar sighed. “You won’t even listen to what I have to say either??”

“Fine, fine.” Rutin pulled out a sheet of paper and a pen. “Could you tell me your symptoms and anything you found out of the ordinary?”

“Well.. every meal Mr. Sarai makes for me, tastes bitter. It never did before my sister went missing..” Edgar took a deep breath. “Yesterday, I ate something he made for dinner. I threw up and had to spend the rest of the night in bed..”

Rutin jotted down everything Edgar had said. “That’s.. strange. Is there something you’re allergic to in the food he makes?”

“I-I don’t know.”

“Mr. Valden. It’s either a yes or a no.”

“No..” Edgar caved. “I-I don’t have any allergies.”

“I see..” Rutin jotted something else down. “What have you been eating before?”

“The food Mrs. Demi makes. If not that, then something from a vendor. I ate anything to avoid eating whatever Mr. Sarai cooks.”

Rutin nodded. “Hm.. and none of those tasted bitter?”

Edgar shook his head.

“Alright. I’ll have someo-“

Suddenly, the door flung open, cutting Rutin off.

“Captain! One of those scientists are dead!” A vampire hunter ran in the room, out of breath. “Luca is furious and is accusing the Exorcist himself!”

Rutin sighed, rubbing his eyes and muttering something. He stood up and took the paper with him. “Take care of this.” He ordered, handing the paper to the vampire hunter. He then turned to Edgar. “I’m sorry our time was cut short, but I assure you we’ll have that problem taken care of.”

“Thank you.. Mr. Rutin.” Edgar stood up and left the room, Rutin closing the door behind them and walking out of the building with Edgar.

~

“THE EXORCIST DID IT!” Someone in a lab coat yelled. They had a strange accent to their voice, completely outing them as someone not from Greenwood. “I KNOW IT!”

Edgar watched on the steps of the hunting base’s porch. How could someone accuse the Exorcist of murder?

There was a large crowd in the center of Greenwood. The Exorcist and that scientist were two of the notable people. Some vampire hunters had walked over and began to disperse the crowd. Then, it was the Exorcist, the scientist, and a strange lump covered with a thick cloth on a wagon.

“Excuse me? You’re not allowed to be here right now.” A vampire hunter said, staring at Edgar. “Please leave the premises.”

Edgar looked up at the hunter. “Oh.. sorry.” He stood up and began to walk away, staring at the trio still in the center of the village. “*I wonder what happened to cause such an accusation.. I wonder if Mrs. Demi knows.*” Edgar changed his route and headed towards the bar. He opened the door and peeked his head in, smiling at the familiar scene.

Usually when one enters a bar, the irresistible scent of alcohol would attack them. Influencing them to drink as well or at least have a good time partying with friends. But for Edgar, this was comforting. He had spent so much time in the bar, he had become well known among the drunkards and even played darts with them sometimes. Oftentimes, he would stay after closing to help Demi clean up. However, it would usually get Edgar yelled at for being home late. He wasn’t even allowed to go into the bar in the first place.

“EyYYYYYY! ITszzz VALDeN!” One of the drunkards shouted, smiling and raising their drink. “WhEre’ve you-” *Hic!* “Been?”

Edgar shut the door behind him and smiled, walking over. “Mr. Sarai doesn’t like me coming here. But he suspects I’m out doing whatever it is I do!”

“Good fer nAThin’ rich guy..” *Hic* “He’s naWT yEr DAAD.”

Another drunkard chimed in. “CatZZ oUT of the BAAAG!” They looked at Edgar, trying to keep a straight face. “I met yer mOM onCe.” They leaned against the chair they sat in. “SUUUUUUCH A nice WOMAn!”

Edgar’s smile faded to a much smaller one. “Yeah.. I.. bet she was.” Edgar sighed and walked away from the table and up to the counter where Demi stood.

“Rough day?” She asked.

“Not really.. I just.. Miss her.”

“Chin up!” Demi turned around, grabbing a shot glass and filling it with a foaming drink. She then placed it in front of Edgar. “Something I experimented with. Don’t worry, there’s no alcohol in it.”

“Thanks..” Edgar took the shot glass and circled the rim of it with his finger, sighing. “I never understood why she and dad left Ella and I behind.”

“Who told you that?” Demi put her elbows on the table, staring at Edgar.

“Mr. Sarai..” He sighed. “He told us that mom and dad just.. Left one day. And he decided to take care of us.”

“Well-“

“I HEARD THE ESSORSHISSHT SHOT ‘ER!” A drunkard yelled.

“MOXXIE!” Demi yelled, her voice was filled with rage. “WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT FOR!?” She then looked at Edgar, who had a horrid look on his face. “Edgar..”

Edgar had nothing to say. His fists clamped themselves as he held back the thoughts racing through his mind. “*HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH HORRIBLE THINGS!?*” He questioned, bearing his teeth and holding back his anger. He had every right to be mad.. But drunk people say stupid things all the time.. They don’t know what they’re talking about. Edgar sat in silence as the world around him began to muffle itself. He took a drink of the concoction Demi had made, and put his head in his arms.

## Chapter Twenty Six

Directly after chapter twenty five..

“Edgar.. I’m so sorry..” Demi sat next to Edgar and rubbed his back.

Edgar wiped a tear that rolled down his cheek. “Don’t.. worry about it.” He looked away. “I’m going to go home..”

“Alright.” Demi moved her hand under Edgar’s chin and gently moved his head to look at her. “Hey. Smile a little more.” She gently reached behind Edgar’s head and pulled out the ribbon. “And you look happier whenever your hair is down.”

Edgar took the ribbon back and shoved it into his pocket. “Bye Mrs. Demi.. thank you, again.”

“Of course. Will you be here tonight?”

Edgar nodded. “I’ll try. Mr. Sarai has been getting more mad at me lately because I keep sneaking out.” He walked out of the bar, tying his hair back as soon as he stepped outside. “*Mr. Sarai would kill me if I kept it down..*” He thought and walked home.

~

“I’m home..” Edgar called out, entering his house.

“Welcome back.” Mr. Sarai’s voice echoed from the living room.

Edgar walked upstairs and into his room, taking off his shoes and lying down. Sooner or later he’d have to get back up again and start painting something, so it was best that he would get as much rest as possible.

Shortly after, Mr. Sarai walked in. “Not even a hello?”

“Had a rough day.” Edgar sighed. “Did you hear what happened today?”

“First of all, it’s noon. Secondly, what happened?”

“That foreign scientist accused the Exorcist of murder.” Edgar moved the shades away from the window, letting in the warm sunlight. “There was a whole crowd in the middle of the village.”

“Who in the right mind would accuse the Exorcist of something like that?” Mr. Sarai sat down on the other bed in the room.

Edgar felt horrible as he watched Mr. Sarai. He looked away and pulled the blanket over himself. “I don’t know..”

“What’s the matter?” Mr. Sarai walked over, pulling part of the blanket off of Edgar. “Are you hiding from your parent?” He asked in a sharp tone.

“N-No! No..” Edgar sat up, gripping onto the blanket and quenching his fists. “I just.. Don’t want to talk right now.”

Mr. Sarai sighed. “Fine. I got you something though.” He handed Edgar a box secured with red ribbon. “Open it before I leave.”

Edgar gently took the box and untied the ribbon. He then took off the lid and reached inside, pulling out a small painting knife. “Oh..?”

“For your paintings. If you wanted to add more definition to the portrait, a pallet knife could be of assistance.” Mr. Sarai smiled. “I’ll leave you be for now. Are you hungry?”

Edgar shook his head.



Mr. Sarai nodded and left the room, closing the door behind himself.

Edgar put the pallet knife into a drawer and placed the lid back on the box. *“Why would Mr. Sarai randomly get me something like this?”* He thought. Edgar placed the box somewhere and sat on his bed, looking out of the window. *“I can’t wait for the vampire hunters to come knocking on our door and investigate everything. You would’ve loved to see it, Ella.”* He then looked down. *“If you were still here.”*

“You’re not doing it right.” Mr. Sarai hissed. “Hold your arm up like this.” He grabbed Edgar’s arm tightly and lifted it up. “There.”

“Ow..” Edgar muttered, shaking his arm in pain. In his hand, the paint-covered pallet knife, which spilled paint onto Edgar’s face and clothing. Some of the paint sprayed across the canvas. Mr. Sarai didn’t have to say anything for Edgar to know he was disappointed in him. “Oops...”

Mr. Sarai let out a long sigh with an angered look in his eyes. “You’re cleaning that up.”

“Okay..” Edgar whispered. He wiped the paint off of his face and coughed. “*It’s that paint again.. What is wrong with it..!?*” He thought.

Mr. Sarai went to the door. “I’ll be back later.” He left the room and shut the door.

Edgar backed away and sighed. “*I.. I need to get a sample..!*” He thought. Grabbing the small box in his room and quickly shaking a glob of paint from his pallet knife into the box. He shoved the box and hid it somewhere before going back to his painting, slaving away until his headache got to be too much for him, forcing him to leave the room and claim it was finished.

~

The next day, Edgar was walking to the vampire hunting base with the box in hand. He saw someone in a lab coat leaving the building, arguing with a vampire hunter. “*What’s going on there?*” He thought. Quickly, Edgar hid in a bush near the building and listened.

“ALL OF YOU ARE HYPOCRITES!” The accented lab coat wearer yelled. “YOU DON’T CARE TO LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY!”

“UGH! Mr. Balsa! Please be reasonable! Why would the Exorcist kill someone!?”

“Because he HATES US! Why am I the only one being reasonable here!? Lato kamino!”

Edgar couldn’t understand what that meant.

“You know what? I’m done. I’m done getting *your* help!”

“Mr. Balsa!”

“VANUSE!”

Edgar watched as the scientist walked right past him with an angered expression on their face.

The scientist who Edgar had assumed to be Mr. Balsa had dark brown hair tied up in a ponytail. He had an eyepatch over his left eye and scarring on his cheeks. He wore a white lab coat with different colored stains all over, like a canvas with splatters of paint.

Edgar waited until the scientist was gone before walking over to the building and knocking. “I have a paint sample..” He said, holding up the box when the door opened.

One of the hunters glanced at the box and took it. “Thank you.” They shut the door.

Edgar waited a little bit before walking away. “*Please say this gets the weird feelings to stop..*” He coughed and began to walk back home. He had nothing else to do for the rest of the day, and he definitely didn’t want to go back to the bar.. At least for now.

## Chapter Twenty Seven

Current Time, The Day After Chapter Twenty Four.

Edgar couldn't sleep comfortably knowing that Victor had found out one of the many things he had hidden from him. Knowing that there was a previous human in this house made Edgar's insomnia even worse. His mind was constantly filled with questions as he stared up at the ceiling. *"Who were they? What were they like? What happened to them? Why were they here? Did Victor kill them?"*

Before long, the sun had risen and began to fill the room in a blanket of light. Edgar had gotten no sleep that night and was exhausted. The tight bandaging around his arms restricted his movements, but it was probably for the better. Right?

Edgar got out of bed with difficulty and stretched out his back. Usually he would hide in his room longer, but ever since he grew to trust Victor, his morning routine had changed. Edgar opened up the door and exited the room. The young painter walked into the kitchen, yawning as he grabbed a bag of coffee seeds and poured some into a pan. He placed the pan over the stove and turned it on, placing a lid onto the pan and watching the seeds bounce around and shed their outer shell. Afterwards, Edgar ground the seeds up and put them into a strainer.

Eventually, Edgar made his own coffee and began to drink it on the table. He looked up to the entrance of the kitchen as Victor entered, rubbing his eye. "Morning, Victor."

Victor yawned. “Good morning.” He looked at Edgar’s coffee. “The coff... coffee?”

“Mhm. I just made some.”

“Oh? How?”

“Oh uh.. Let me show you.” Edgar stood up and walked to the bag of coffee beans. He began to explain the steps to Victor and instructed him gently on what to do. He smiled whenever Victor was able to do a step correctly. For once, it was Edgar on the other side of the stick. But instead of him scolding Victor, he corrected any mistakes in a soft voice.

Eventually, they had finished another cup of coffee. Edgar watched Victor pour a large amount of milk into the dark brown liquid before stirring it with a spoon.

“Hopefully it isn’t as bitter this time!” He said in a joking manner.

Edgar couldn’t help but laugh. “Yeah.. hopefully!” Edgar sat back down and sighed. “Can.. we talk about last night?”

“Oh.. is it about.. the previous human?” Victor’s tone immediately changed to an upset tone as he sat down as well.

*“I should switch the topic..”* Edgar thought. “N-No.. nevermind. It’s okay.” He took a deep breath. “Are.. you mad at me for hiding the scratches from you..?”

Victor shook his head. “I wouldn’t say mad. Just.. disappointed. I thought you trusted me, and knowing you lied to my face and hid those attack markings from me just.. makes me think you don’t trust me.”

“Sorry..” Was the only thing that would come out of Edgar’s mouth. He took a sip of his coffee and returned to silence.

“I have somewhere that I’d like to bring you to.” Victor began. “If you let me, of course.”

“And.. what is it?”

“It’s the garden!” Victor smiled. “I thought you would like some fresh air.. Especially after last night!”

“You have a garden..?” Edgar questioned. “S-Sure..! I.. don’t see why I would be opposed to it..”

“Perfect! And of course I have a garden! It’s on the side of the house.” Victor stood up, drinking his coffee. “How about later today. Would that be fine with you?”

Edgar nodded.

“Now.. what shall we make for breakfast?”

~

Edgar held the knife he had stolen almost a month ago and kept hidden in his room. *"Maybe I should give it back.. I haven't cleaned it either."* He thought. He then shook his head. *"No.. Victor would see through my lie quicker than ever.."* He continued. Edgar placed the knife back to where it was hidden and lied on his bed. He stared up at the ceiling in silence. *"Maybe I should ask to see the garden..?"* He questioned himself. *"But Victor might be busy.."* Edgar pulled the covers over himself and began to close his eyes, drifting off to sleep.

~

Almost a month prior.

Edgar was wiping the counter with a wet cloth, scrubbing as much debris off as possible.

“Edgar! You silly! You don’t need to go that rough!” Mrs. Demi laughed. “Go easy on the wood!”

“Right.” He responded, reaching over to the spray can and spraying soap onto the counter. He then began to wipe the soap into the counter, gentler than earlier.

“Thanks again for helping clean up.” Demi began. “It was really busy today. Maybe you should start coming here during the day and helping me tend to the drunkards!” She joked. “Heck, I’d even pay Mr. Sarai to *let* you come here!”

Edgar let out a laugh and smiled. He looked at Demi and sighed. “We both know his answer. Even if you try to bribe him it’ll be a no.”

“Yep..” She paused for a moment, arranging the cleaned bottles in the cupboards. “Have a seat. I want to talk to you about something.”

“Hm?” Edgar sat down and placed the cloth and spray to the side. “What is it?”

“Did you know, I used to be a vampire hunter?”

“What..!?”

“Mmmmhm!”

“No way! There’s no way you could’ve been one! I thought only boys could become vampire hunters!”

“Nnnnope~!” Demi smiled and pointed at herself with her thumb. “Right here. Retired vampire hunter!” She said with a sense of pride. She then sat down in front of the



counter. “Shame I had to retire to run the bar. It was fun while it lasted.”

“Haha.. yeah.”

“Whelp.” Demi stretched, looking at the clock and flinching. Her eyes widened. “Oh sh-ort!” She stuttered. “You need to get home!”

“It’s that time already!?”

“It’s later than that time!” She put the cloth and spray into their cabinets and walked over to Edgar. “Do you need me to walk you home, Edgar?”

“No.. Mr. Sarai doesn’t want to see you.” Edgar felt a shiver run down his spine.

*“If I see her again, I’ll kill her.”* He had threatened under his breath.

Edgar had overheard Mr. Sarai say it awhile ago, despite him threatening the bartender quietly. It sent fear that traveled through his body... he knew something about that threat wasn’t just saying something.

The young painter stood up. “I’ll be fine.. Good night, Mrs. Demi.” He began to walk to the door. *“I really shouldn’t tell her.. He’ll get even more mad with me.”* He placed his hand on the door knob.

“Good night!” Demi called out, waving as Edgar left.

Edgar stood outside the bar with a nervous expression on his face. He took a deep breath. *“You’ll be fine.. He’s probably asleep! You can sneak in..!”* Edgar thought, desperately trying to calm himself down as he began his walk home. He looked

up and frowned. *“There’s no moon... it’s darker..”* He concluded, walking faster to his house. When he arrived, he opened the door and slid inside, locking it behind himself.

“Edgar.”

Edgar froze. He began to shake as he moved his hand away from the door and slowly turned around. A drip of sweat slid down his forehead as he stared at the monster of his house, that sat in a chair facing the door.

“Where were you?”

## Chapter Twenty Eight

“Well?” Mr. Sarai stood up and walked up to Edgar, towering over him. “Where were you?”

Edgar backed up against the door, fear forcing his body to shake. Edgar’s breath became shaky as he looked up at Mr. Sarai, who had a shadow covering his face.

Mr. Sarai raised an eyebrow, expecting an answer. He crossed his arms.

“M-Mrs Demi’s bar... M-Mr. Sarai.” Edgar choked out.

Mr. Sarai raised his hand, and swung at Edgar.

Edgar fell hard on the ground. His cheek stung as he shakily put his hand on the mark. He looked up at Mr. Sarai, tears rolling down his cheeks.

Mr. Sarai stepped loudly on the ground as he reached down and grabbed Edgar by the tie he was wearing. “Do you know how difficult it is for me to raise you, brat?”

Edgar didn’t answer. The only thing he did was cower and try to pull his tie out of Mr. Sarai’s grasp.

“I gave you simple rules to follow. I gave you a curfew. I gave you warnings, food, water, and a home. ANYTHING you could ask for.” Mr. Sarai paused and let go of Edgar’s tie. He smiled, watching Edgar fall against the wall. “You poor thing.. you’d end up like your sister if it wasn’t for me.”

“What did you say..?” Edgar looked up at Mr. Sarai.

“Oh. Did you not hear me?” Mr. Sarai cleared his throat. “I said, you would end up like your SISTER.”

The NERVE! Edgar felt his blood boil as hatred flowed through his body. But could he hate the one person that is

giving him the ability to live..? “WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?!” Edgar yelled. “DON’T YOU DARE TALK ABOUT HER LIKE THAT, YOU-“

“Don’t. Yell. At. Me.” Mr. Sarai hissed. He walked closer to Edgar and grabbed him tightly by the wrist. “Maybe I *should* throw you out to the wolves.. I’m sure they’d like a disgraceful BRAT like you for their LUNCH!” Mr. Sarai grabbed onto the doorknob.

“NO! NO! I’M SORRY! I’M SORRY!” Edgar cried. He tried to release himself from the grip. His wrist was hurting from the tight grasp.

“Then go to your room and think about what you’ve done. Don’t come out until you have an apology.” Mr. Sarai let go of Edgar. “And if I hear that you’ve gone to that bar again, it’ll be the last day you *breathe*. Don’t go crying to the Exorcist or the vampire hunters for help.” He stood over Edgar, his eyes staring directly into Edgar’s. “Because nobody can help you.”

Edgar stood up, hanging his head down as tears rolled down his cheeks. He ran to his room and locked the door, falling to his knees and erupting in tears. “*I can’t deal with this anymore..*” He thought. Edgar looked up at the window on the left side of his room. The side that belonged to his sister before she disappeared.. Edgar thought of Ella. Her cheerful, childish voice contrasted his quiet, timid nature.

“*Edgar!*” Her voice flung through his mind. “*What if we run away from here! You said it yourself, Mr. Sarai is acting strange.. And I don’t have a good feeling about it. If we hide our scent, the werewolves won’t find us!*”

Run.. away..

Edgar rummaged through his closet and took out a long rope. The same rope he used to sneak out through his room many times before. All those failed attempts to get out of this place. Edgar was too scared to go downstairs. He'd have to go with no food. No water. Nothing. He opened up his window, the cold breeze filling the room. *"I have to get out of here. Don't look back."* He reassured himself as he tied the rope to his bed frame. Edgar wiped a tear that came from his eye and tossed the rope down. Slowly, he stepped out of his room and went down the rope. Edgar took one last look at his house before running into the woods, wiping his tears as they fell. *"Ella. I wish you were here with me.."* He thought. *"If only I could hear your voice again."* Edgar kept running, not looking back.

*CLANK!*

Edgar slowly looked down as a shooting sense of pain went through his ankle.

A bear trap...

Edgar tried to pull his leg out. *"No no no shoot shoot shoot!"* He fell on his side, a snap erupting from his ankle. Edgar couldn't help but yell out in pain, trying to get up and bite his tongue.. but the pain began to become too much for him.

*"Edgar"* called a soft, comforting voice. *"Edgar!"* The voice became louder, as if it was calling out to him.

*"Edgar!"* Victor shouted.

Edgar sat up quickly, taking deep breaths. He looked around and wiped his eyes. "Where-"

“Shhh!” Victor shushed Edgar, moving his head to look at him. “It’s okay.. it was just a nightmare..”

Edgar stared at Victor, who gently wiped his tears. “Where...”

“The garden.” Victor smiled. He moved his hands away from Edgar, gently placing them on his lap. “I wanted to bring you here today.. but I saw you crying in your sleep again.. I couldn’t just leave you to cry, so I brought you here to cheer you up.”

Edgar carefully examined the room. He looked at the glass walls that encased the heat of the sun, acting as a greenhouse.

The floor was made out of stone tiles and had little bits of grass growing in between each one. Next to the path, were abundances of flowers. All grown with beautiful bright petals. Every color Edgar could imagine, a flower matched it. There was a small fruit and vegetables garden by one part of the glass wall, all of which were grown with delicacy and great care. Edgar and Victor were sitting on a stained wooden bench with metal supports. And the sky was a beautiful sunset, covering everything in a blanket of gold.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it.” Victor said, gently wrapping his arm around Edgar and pulling him close.

Edgar flinched for a moment, but then stopped. He.. wanted to move closer.. but why? What was this? He couldn’t stop himself from inching closer to Victor and leaning against him.

“Oh..?!” Victor looked at Edgar in surprise. “Edgar.. are you feeling well..?”

“...” Edgar was quiet for a couple moments. “I don’t.. know..”

“Do.. you want to talk about that nightmare?” Victor asked, gently rubbing Edgar’s arm.

“Okay..” Edgar said. “If you tell me what happened with the old human.”

Victor paused for a moment and sighed. “Fine. But tell me everything.. please..”

*Could* Edgar tell Victor everything? Everything about his sister? His mentor? Greenwood? He took a deep breath, and spoke. “Twas the night you found me.”

## Chapter Twenty Nine

The talk had gone on for much longer than either of them had liked. Edgar began to tear up as he told Victor everything Mr. Sarai had done to him and his sister. Victor's face kept contorting from hate to concern and back. He wasn't sure what to feel.

"A-And then.." Edgar sniffed. "You found me.."

Victor was speechless at first, and all he could do was hug Edgar tightly. "I won't let you go.." He whispered. "I won't let you go back.. Not to him.."

Edgar sniffed again. "Thank you.." He looked at Victor as the vampire let go. "I.. I'm sorry for lying.. I-I was.."

"Scared?" Victor finished. "Please.. Don't do that again. I beg you, Edgar. You'll only hurt those around you.. and yourself."

"A-Alright-" Edgar was cut off. His face became bright red when Victor held his hands.

"Promise me, you won't do it again."

"*He's really concerned for me.. it's cute..*" Edgar thought. "I promise."

"Thank you." Victor smiled, letting go. The vampire looked at the sky and sighed. "I guess I should tell you my story..? With that door?"

"Mhm." Edgar looked at Victor. He was finally about to learn the truth!

"Do you know *Stay Home, Young One*? The collection of vampire stories from a hundred years ago."



“Yeah.. I faintly remember Mr. Sarai and Ella telling me those stories. That’s the one with the vampire that kidnapped that child, right?”

Victor nodded. “Have you ever thought the collection was biased? How could a vampire stand down to six humans?”

“Well... not really.” *“Where is Victor going with this?”* Edgar thought. *“Did he hate those stories?”*

“What I’m about to tell you will change your view. So please.. bare with me.”

Edgar looked at the vampire with a confused expression.

“A hundred years ago, I used to work as a vampire hunter to make a living. It let me interact with the humans in your village and have a friendly relationship with them, despite me being a pure blood Crimson Vampire. One night on my patrols, I found a small child eating a rat. The boy had mangled up hair and torn clothing. When he noticed I saw him, he ran away from me. I saw the same boy the next night, but I had a piece of bread and a cup of milk with me. I handed both to him and left. Eventually, he became friendly enough with me. On the night I quit, he came up to me.”

*“Come here, little one.”*

“I began.”

*“Would you like to live in a house? I would love to take care of you.. you don’t seem to have food, water, or a home. Probably no parents for that manner.”*

Victor took a breath, leaning back on the bench. “The boy said yes, and I carried him home. I took care of him and gave him the name of Aesop. We lived together until..” Victor

sighed, his voice becoming fainter. “My identity was found out.. that day, six vampire hunters came to my door during breakfast.. and I was forced to give Aesop away.” A tear began to develop in Victor’s eyes. “He used to stay in that dusty room.. and I would wake him up every morning when he slept in. I couldn’t bear to enter his room after I gave him away.. so I locked the door and hid it behind a bookshelf...” His eyes glanced at Edgar. “And then.. I found you. I-I thought I could fill in that gap.. and lock away everything. But you’re smarter than I am, it appears..”

Edgar gave Victor a pat on the back. “You.. must’ve felt horrible..”

“I did.. the last time I saw Aesop was when he looked at me with tears in his eyes.” Victor wiped a tear. “Well then.. this was an eventful talk..!” He gave a nervous laugh.

Edgar looked at Victor. “*He really doesn’t want to talk about that.. he even changed the subject..*” He remarked. “I’m sorry I made you say that.. how old are you, anyways..?”

“I’m 523 years old.”

Edgar’s eyes widened. “*523??? MY GOODNESS HE IS OLD!*” He thought. “Wow- you uh-“ Edgar couldn’t form words.

“I believe the term to describe me is.. a fossil? I think? I read in a dictionary that they’re remnants of something old.”

Edgar could feel himself snicker in happiness. “You’re kind of right.. but I wouldn’t call you a fossil.”

“Oh?”

“I think old would be the word you were looking for.. but you look very young! Almost as young as the Exorcist!” Edgar shivered for a moment.

“I have an important question..” Victor began. “Have you seen the Exorcist..?”

Edgar felt a shiver run down his spine. Why did he feel this when talking about them? “A couple of times.. he’s not really an open person.”

“I see..” Victor nodded.

“Can we stop talking about him..? He.. makes me uncomfortable. For some reason..” Edgar looked away.

“Oh- sure.” Victor began to leave the garden. “I’ll be making dinner now. Tomorrow it’ll be a Crimson Moon, if you still want to paint it with me.”

“Oh.. of course! I’ll stay here and explore.” Edgar said.

“Alright. I’ll come get you when it’s ready!” Victor left the garden and shut the door behind himself, leaving Edgar alone.

Edgar began to walk around the garden, going over everything Victor had told him. *“I can’t believe that the stories we were told were about him.. Greenwood thinks he died shortly after he gave Aesop away a hundred years ago. I’m the only person who knows he’s still alive.”* Edgar looked at the house, then at the village of Greenwood, just over the horizon. *“Poor Victor.. he’s been so alone and made into a monster. I can’t imagine the guilt he feels..”* He sighed. *“Would he agree to what I’m thinking..? I don’t want to go back to Mr. Sarai.. but I can’t keep hiding.”* Edgar took a deep breath, and quickly made a

decision. *“Friday.. I’ll go back to Greenwood.. with Victor. And we’ll expose Mr. Sarai for the monster he truly is.”*

# Part Four, Return to Greenwood

## Chapter Thirty

Edgar sat down on the dinner table. He picked up his fork and began to eat the steamed peas on his plate.

Dinner tonight was a steak with sweet potato fries and peas, drizzled with gravy and a vegetable stuffing on the side.

Victor was oddly quiet during dinner. Perhaps it was due to facing his disappointments once again.

“Victor.” Edgar began. “I want to talk to you about something important.” He gently sat down his fork and looked at the vampire.

Victor’s eyes glanced at Edgar, his body tensing up.

“Well.. This Friday..” Edgar began. “I want to go back to Greenwood.” He paused, taking a deep breath. “And I want you to come with me.”

Victor seemed more relaxed. “You.. want me to come..? W-With you.. To *Greenwood*??” He let out a sigh but still looked at the human with concern. “I-I’m afraid I can’t.. Wh-why do you want to go back!?”

“I.. What Mr. Sarai did to me.. I want to expose him. I want to try again. Just this last time.”

“Edgar I..” Victor started.

“Please. I *need* you to come with me.”

“Edgar..” Victor’s eyes darted away.

“Victor.” Edgar’s voice was hoarse with desperation. He stood up, trying to seem larger to get his point to Victor. “Mr.

Sarai wants me *dead*. He wants me wiped off the face of the planet. If I try to expose him on my own he'll *kill* me. Then what will you have then? You said you wouldn't allow me to go back to him, but if you stay here in fear, I'd be forced to go back to his sad excuse of care." He sat down. "Please Victor.. I'll give you anything you ask of me.. Even my blood.."

Victor was quiet. He simply picked up his fork and knife, and went back to eating.

"*He can't be serious!!*" Edgar felt betrayed. The ONE person he thought he could count on. The one person he thought CARED about him! "Victor! You've gone to Greenwood before! You literally went there to get the paint buckets! What's stopping you from going back!?"

"Because last time I was threatened!" Victor randomly shouted, slamming his fist onto the table.

Edgar saw something coming out of Victor's forehead. What was it? Whatever it was, Edgar didn't like the look of it.

"Last time I took a human into my care, I was threatened with *death* if I didn't give it away! I was threatened when I came to visit and told to leave if I didn't want to be dewinged! I'm not going to Greenwood, and that's final." He hissed.

"Dewinged!?" Edgar said, clearly confused. He had barely heard of that practice. So little that he assumed it was fake.

"Nevermind! You said you were a pure blood Crimson Vampire, right!? Weren't those things hunted into extinction!?"

"Yes but not me! You humans killed my kind because you were all too afraid of us!" Victor looked away, hiding himself

with one of his back wings that sprouted from his shoulder. “I don’t want to discuss this over dinner.”

“What will it take you just to come to Greenwood with me? I’m not asking you to stay there with me..” Edgar let out an exhausted sigh, tearing into his steak in a fit of anger.

“Could you just live up to what being a vampire is!? Please?!”

Victor’s fists began to shake as he held the fork and knife. He glared at Edgar, finally showing what was poking out from under his forehead. Horns. Large horns. Victor’s crimson eyes acted like a stake being stabbed in Edgar’s heart. “Fine.” The vampire sighed, standing up. “On three conditions.”

Edgar felt joy run through his body.

“First. Observe why they called us Crimson Vampires.” Victor opened his mouth larger than ever.. And ate the entire meal whole. Gravy stained his lips and part of his clothing. The entire plate was covered in a mess. “Condition one.” Victor began, sliding the plate into the sink. “Us Crimson Vampires are messy when we kill. We can cover an entire room in the blood of one human if we wanted to. You must not *ask* me to kill someone.” Victor then grabbed a napkin and began to wipe the gravy off of him. “Condition two. We leave Sunday instead.” He turned to Edgar when he finished cleaning himself. “I need to see if Greenwood is safe for me. I can’t trust the vampire hunters not to come here while I’m gone and take you by force, so I will have a friend of mine here to keep you safe.” Victor flattened his hands on the table, his horns growing as his wings spread. “They haven’t come in a while. I don’t trust that they haven’t stopped trying to kill me

yet.” Victor let out a deep breath, walking to the fridge and pulling something out, his horns and wings shrinking and disappearing. “Last condition. You give me that knife back. I know you took a knife, but I don’t know where you had put it. I’ve been so distracted lately that I haven’t gotten a chance to ask you until now.”

Edgar nodded. “Fine.” He had been eating the entire time and had just finished. “Were.. you mad at me? You don’t usually have.. horns.” He watched Victor take a carton of milk out, and down the entire thing in one gulp.

“I just don’t want you to get hurt. I don’t want to lose another person I care for.” Victor threw out the carton. “I.. apologize if I scared you.”

“It’s fine..” Edgar smiled, standing up and beginning to clean his dish. “I’m sorry if I went too hard on you. It was wrong of me.”

“Don’t be. I needed that.” Victor smiled. “I’ll be in the library if you need me.” He began to leave. “And you better give me that knife back! Or we’re not going at all.”

“Okay dad!” Edgar rolled his eyes, not caring about what he just said.

Victor’s eyes lit up as his jaw dropped. He ran out of the room, squealing.

Edgar looked back at Victor. “...What is he on about?” He shrugged, and looked at the gravy covered plate. “*I should get started on that one..*”



## Chapter Thirty One

Thursday, three days before Sunday.

Edgar was in the kitchen with Victor. He had recently taken up a hobby of reading near the vampire, or just wanted to be around him in general. Edgar gazed at the knives. The one he had taken was placed back in its slot. But recently, Edgar noticed a new addition to the knife holder. Instead of the regular cage, there was something else instead. “Victor?” He said. “Why is there a bird cage around the knives..?” He looked at Victor. “*Where did you even get one..?*” Edgar finished in his mind.

“I can’t trust you enough not to go near them yet. So from now on, you’ll have to ask me if you need a knife for anything.” Victor explained, mixing up the oats in the pan he had over the stove. “What are you reading, if I may ask?”

“Crimson Moons.” Edgar answered, flipping a page. “I thought I should read up on them since I’ll be experiencing my first one tonight.”

“Ahh. Interesting.”

“Is it true that vampires grow four arms?” Edgar asked.

“I- Wh-” Victor turned around and gave Edgar a look. “No.. They must be mistaking it for my wings. Only Crimson Vampires have two pairs of wings.” He looked back at the pan of oats. “One pair under our arms that connect to the sides of our chest, and the other pair that come out of our shoulders.”

“Ahh.. that’s interesting.”

“Mhm.”

“About the dewinging..”

“No.” Victor said sharply, his voice tainted with fear.

“It’s outlawed. The Exorcist banned it.” Edgar said.

“Greenwood has changed a lot since the old one that went missing over a hundred years ago.”

“It..” Victor’s voice sounded relieved. He looked at Edgar with disbelief in his eyes. “It is..?”

“Yeah. I heard about the practice. It sounded so dis-“  
Edgar was cut off.

“Please.. let’s not talk about this.” Victor sighed. “The topic.. makes me very uncomfortable.”

“Sorry..” Edgar mumbled, going back to reading his book.  
“*He’s still against me going back.. poor Victor.*” He glanced at Victor, who went back to making the oats. “*How bad was Greenwood when he was living there?*”

~

Edgar was still reading the book by the time breakfast was done. He wasn't even halfway through. *"Did a human make this book? Or a vampire?"* He thought.

"Edgar? How long does it take to set up a canvas and paint pallet? I need to know for when we paint later." Victor asked.

"I'm not sure the exact amount of time." Edgar looked at Victor. "Usually Mr. Sarai would set it up and it would take a couple of minutes."

"Ah. I see." Victor nodded. "You seem very interested in that book."

"It reminds me of my sister. She would always sneak out during one to see it. One time, the Exorcist found her asleep in a tree." Edgar chuckled. "It became our inside joke where she would get found by the Exorcist. 'Your sister is a magnet for trouble!' He'd say." Edgar laughed, making an impression of the Exorcist with his voice.

Victor laughed along. "You said there's a new Exorcist, right? How long have they been around for?"

"Nobody knows." Edgar said. "And I haven't been studying the laws or history of Greenwood."

"Oh? Why?" Victor pulled up a chair and sat down next to Edgar.

"I'm homeschooled. Mr. Sarai taught my sister and I everything we 'had to know'. Ella was more into the law, history, and monster stuff as far as I could remember." He sighed. *"I've gotten more comfortable with talking about her.. What does this mean?"* Edgar thought.

“I’m sorry I keep making you bring her up..” Victor looked away. “It must be hard for you.”

Edgar was quiet for a moment. “Talking about her.. Doesn’t bother me that much. It stings, but..” He paused, trying to find words. “It’s like she’s here with me again. Calling me childish insults whenever I do something stupid.” Edgar gave a soft smile. “She’s the reason I even learned about monsters in the first place.. And the strength to run away.”

“Oh?” Victor’s eyebrows raised.

“I remember one of the first things she told me, werewolves have a strong sense of smell, much like vampires. But they smell the scents of a human, not their blood. So before I ran away, I hid my scent.”

“I never knew that.” Victor said. “I used to set up bear traps for them. The one you ran into was the model I was used to. Any other model and I would’ve had to amputate your foot!” He smiled, laughing.

Edgar gave Victor a concerned look. “*Is this his attempt at humor..?*” He thought.

Victor’s smile faded as soon as he looked at Edgar. “Bad joke..?” He asked.

“For us humans.. Maybe.” He looked away, a shiver running down his spine. “I don’t want to imagine getting my foot amputated..” Edgar then found his opportunity. “Maybe it would’ve attracted your blood thirst?” He gave a nervous laugh, elbowing Victor.

Victor smiled once more. “Who knows!” He replied. “You’re becoming more comfortable with jokes about that!”

Edgar laughed nervously. “Yeah.. but sometimes I can’t tell if you’re joking or not.” He had a worried smile while looking at Victor, who simply just smiled.

Victor stood up and stretched. “I’m going to the library if you need me.” He walked out of the kitchen.

Edgar nodded and went back to reading. Wick had already been fed, so he didn’t have to get sidetracked. But.. How was old Greenwood? Perhaps he should ask Victor. But he was too interested in the Crimson Moon! “*What should I do..?*” He thought. “*History is more important than the moon. I should ask Victor some stuff.*” Edgar stood up and folded a napkin into the large book and closed it. He walked into the library and called out. “Victor! Do you have any books on Greenwood’s history? If you mind telling me how things were back then?”

Victor was putting logs into the fireplace. “Wow. Changing interests already, are we?” He asked, forming a small flame in his hands and guiding it to the logs.

“YOU HAVE FIRE!??” Edgar exclaimed in shock, watching the logs burst into flames. “HAVING A FIREPLACE IN A *LIBRARY* ISN’T A GOOD IDEA, YOU KNOW!”

Victor simply chuckled as he closed the metal doors. “Relax. I know what I’m doing.” He turned to Edgar. “Old Greenwood.. Is that what you humans call it?”

“Well, what else are we supposed to call the past Greenwood?” Edgar asked, walking into the room and putting the book on the Crimson Moon down.

“I would’ve expected a different name..” Victor remarked, turning to the large bookshelves and looking through the titles. “Why do you want to know about it?”

“I never expected a vampire-” Edgar cleared his throat. “A *Crimson Vampire* for that matter to be so afraid of a human village..”

“Your village was different.” Victor began, reaching for a book and reading the title. “Here.” The vampire said, hanging it to Edgar. “The old Exorcist of Greenwood was a control freak, the vampire hunters were corrupt from the inside, and that place has some horrors I’d rather not witness once again.”

Edgar took the book and read the title.

*GREENWOOD, THE HUNTING VILLAGE*

“Who wrote this?” He asked, putting his finger over the author’s name.

“A vampire in the royal court.” Victor began. “The vampyric hierarchy is composed of the winglets, standards, crimsons, silver, the court, and the family.”

Edgar looked up at Victor. “So, like a monarchy?”

“Yes!” Victor smiled. “The winglets are the youngest, and on the bottom. The family being royalty and on the top.”

“*There’s no way I would’ve learned this..*” Edgar remarked. “*This is interesting.*” He walked to a chair and sat down.

Victor used some of his magic to bring the book of the Crimson Moon into his hands. “*The Cursed Moon of Monsters?* Ah! Right! I remember this book!” Victor laughed. “Do you want me to put this back? You left something in it.”

“I’d like to keep reading it, please. I’m just.. Changing my interests, as you would say.” He looked at Victor. “I couldn’t find a bookmark anywhere.”

“I’ll get you one.” Victor opened a cabinet and took a piece of tree bark out, sliding it into the spot where the napkin was. “There!”

“Thanks..” Edgar gave Victor a smile, his eyes locked onto the book. He flipped a page and glanced at the table of contents. Almost immediately Edgar felt appalled from the names. “*The Burnings, Dewinging, Extinction of the Crimson Vampires... oh my goodness..*” Edgar gently turned to each paper and began to read.

~

It didn’t take Edgar long for him to stop reading and apologize to Victor for everything the vampire was afraid of.

Victor looked at Edgar with a confused expression the entire time and reassured him that it was alright. “Edgar, it’s alright..! Really!”

“I don’t want to bring you with me if you don’t want to go..” Edgar mumbled. “Especially after.. eugh..”

The vampire smiled and let out a chuckle. “Again.. It’s okay! I know the practice is gone.” Victor moved his hand to the ponytail Edgar had and gently took the ribbon out.

“Doesn’t it get tiring having this in all the time?”

“A little.” Edgar admitted. He took the ribbon back and began to tie his hair back. “*Why did he do that?*” He thought.

“Wait.” Victor said quickly, gently lowering Edgar’s arms away from his hair. “You look happier with your hair down..” He gave a gentle smile.

“I do..?” Edgar questioned. “I remember Mrs. Demi told me that too..”

“Why don’t you have your hair down for today? I’d like to see what difference it makes.”

“Oh?” Edgar was confused. He couldn’t understand why Victor was suggesting this. “Alright?” Edgar put the ribbon into his pocket. “How long until we can see the moon?”

“Only a couple of hours. Could you tend to the garden for me? I need to take Wick out for a walk.”

“Alright? How do I do that?”

“Just water them a little! But don’t do too much!” Victor instructed. “There’s a little note near the watering can if you need further instructions.” Victor called out for Wick, who trotted over, tail wagging. “I’ll see you soon!”

“Bye!” Edgar waved, watching Victor leave with Wick. Edgar walked to the garden, his mind questioning the quick interaction. “*He must be busy.. why would he randomly ask me that?*” He shrugged and walked into the garden.



Edgar met Victor out on the balcony. He was setting up the easels as Victor was setting up the chairs.

The moon stood high above them, blessing the sky with its red presence.

“Isn’t it beautiful..?” Victor asked, stopping to lean on the balcony and stare at the Crimson Moon.

Edgar looked at the moon. “Yeah..” He said. “Yeah it is..” He could hear his sister in Victor’s voice.

*“See, you big scaredy cat? It’s beautiful!”* She would taunt him. *“I’m staying out all night! This is a once-a-month phenomenon!”*

*“You were right, Ella..”* Edgar thought, smiling. He grabbed a canvas from a basket in between the two. “Where did you get a canvas?”

“I may or may not have.. ran an errand in Greenwood.” Victor took another canvas out along with two paint pallets. “Could you help me set these up?”

“And you said you were going tomorrow instead.” Edgar pointed out. He walked over to the box of paint buckets in the corner and carried them over one by one. He helped Victor set the paint pallets up, choosing colors and scraping them from their buckets onto each pallet. Before long, they had finished setting up.

Edgar picked up his brush and took a deep breath, dipping his paintbrush into the black paint and gently creating a stroke against the canvas.

The scent of the paint was an indescribable one. But something about it made Edgar feel safer. His head didn't hurt and he didn't have to cough every five seconds..

Edgar turned to Victor, who was flicking the bristles of the brush like a small child. "You're supposed to hold it like this." He said, gently taking the brush and readjusting it to fit the proper grip. "Here."

"Oh.. thank you!" Victor looked at Edgar and smiled. The vampire turned to the canvas and began to place strokes of paint down with Edgar's guidance. "Am I doing it right?" Victor asked.

"Mhm! When you're done with a color, dip your brush into a cup of water and dry it. The water will dilute the paint if you don't dry your brush enough." Edgar instructed.

"Alright.." Victor slowly nodded, trying to absorb all of Edgar's instructions.

Edgar went back to his painting, continuing to add strokes of black paint to fill the sky. When he finished, he glanced up at the Crimson Moon. "Victor..?" He asked.

"Hm?" Victor turned to Edgar.

"How do vampires become stronger during a Crimson Moon?"

"Well.." Victor began, his mental library searching for an answer. "I'm not exactly sure. But my family passed down a story that a queen vampire asked the moon for a bountiful harvest once a month to feed her people. Thus, our enhanced senses to find humans and other warm blooded critters."

Edgar was drying his brush. “They drank more types of blood?”

“Of course they did! But, the human taste became too favorable to the vampires, and we’ve changed.” Victor sighed. “Since then, we vampires could wait once a month to get blood.”

“But how do you get stronger?” Edgar asked once more, now applying red paint in a circular motion on his canvas.

“The moon enhances our senses. In reality, that’s the only thing that the Crimson Moon helps us with. We don’t get physically stronger or something.”

“I see..” Edgar said. He yawned, stretching his back out.

“We can continue tomorrow. I’ll clean up.” Victor offered.

“No, don’t worry.” Edgar looked at Victor. “I’ll let what we have so far dry overnight.” He stood up. “Can you bring this to the sink and rinse the paint off?” Edgar handed his paint pallet to Victor. “I’ll clean up here.”

“Alright.” Victor took the paint pallet from Edgar and picked up his own. “Good night, Edgar.”

“Good night.” He smiled, watching Victor’s back wings spread out and carry the vampire into the air. Edgar watched in awe as Victor flew back into the house, closer to the kitchen. “*I didn’t realize how big his wings were..*” Edgar’s began to put the chairs to the side of the balcony and clear the area, placing the canvases to the opposite side. When he finished clearing the balcony, he stared up at the moon in silence.

The beautiful red crimson color of the moon illuminated the dark blue sky. The chirps of crickets and the hoots of owls filled the ambiance as the lone human stared.

Edgar slowly put his head onto the stone railing, his eyelids drooping over eyes as he heard his sister's voice in his mind.

*"I'm glad you were able to see it."* She would say. *"This is definitely a night to remember."*

Edgar slowly drifted off to sleep in the moonlight, forming a smile as he thought, *"Yes, Ella.. this is a night to remember."*

## Chapter Thirty Two

Friday, two days before Sunday.

Edgar woke up to the smell of breakfast. He was in his bed with a plate of food on his nightstand. *"I guess I slept in.."* He thought. Edgar noticed a small letter next to the plate and gently took it. *"What does this say?"*

"Good morning, Edgar!

I'm going to be in Greenwood today. A good friend of mine will be watching you. I gave him a list of what to do and strict instructions to not enter your room. If you do talk to him, please try not to be afraid. He'll take advantage of that.

See you soon!"

Edgar sighed as he got out of bed and took the plate of food to the desk before beginning to eat. *"I wonder who that friend is."* He thought. *"They'd have to be a vampire.. But what does Victor mean by that they'll take advantage of my fear?"* Edgar looked at the door. *"He was given instructions not to come into my room.. but I have to go out and ask him myself if I'm too curious."* The young painter contemplated for a moment. He decided to leave when he finished his food, gently opening the door. Edgar peeked his head out through the crack for a moment, and left his room with the empty plate in hand. Edgar walked to the kitchen and placed the plate in the sink. He turned to go back to his room, but froze when he saw a stranger staring at him.

The stranger had pale skin and silver hair that flowed down his back. He had sharp fangs sticking out of his mouth, stained with blood with a pointed nose, clear eyes and sharp

eyebrows. The stranger wore a black and red leather coat that formed prosthetic wings on the shoulders. Along with the outfit, he wore long, brown boots and black hide pants. "So." He began, observing Edgar's every move. "You're that human Victor told me to babysit." The stranger stood up and walked over to Edgar, towering over him.

Edgar heard the vampire sniff him, trying to hide his discomfort. "*WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO???*"

"He's definitely been taking good care of you." The stranger smiled. "Your blood smells delicious!" He sighed. "If only he'd let me take a little bite.. but what if you let me instead?" The stranger's smile grew, showing his sharp teeth in an attempt to scare Edgar.

"N..No thank you.." Edgar stuttered. "I-I'd like my blood.. Inside of my body." He looked up at the stranger, who seemed displeased.

"Ugh.. when Victor said he had a human here I never expected that he's actually treating it like it's his child." The vampire scoffed.

*"I already don't like him.." Edgar thought. "But.. if he's friends with Victor. Does that make him trustworthy?"* He held out his hand to the stranger. "I'm.. Edgar."

The stranger raised an eyebrow before taking Edgar's hand and shaking it. "Joseph, a Silver Vampire." He retracted his hand, observing Edgar more closely. "Victor tells me you're a little jumpy.. have you never seen a vampire before?"

“I’d.. rather not get into it.” Edgar put his hand down. “Victor never mentioned you until Wednesday. Any idea why?”

“We had a.. rough meeting.” Joseph sat down, offering Edgar to sit down as well.

“Really?” He sat down as well, eagerly looking at Joseph.

“Mmmhm. When I met him I was trying to kill him.” Joseph shrugged. “Good times.”

“I’m sorry wh-“ Edgar was cut off.

“He didn’t tell you?” Joseph asked. “He really has a lot of secrets..”

“He didn’t..” Edgar paused. “Are you going to tell me?”

“HAH!” Joseph laughed. “No. If he didn’t, then there has to be a reason.”

“I’ll ask him when he comes back.” Edgar stated. He looked at Joseph, who raised an eyebrow.

“That’ll be awhile. Are you sure you can wait that long?” The vampire asked, sighing when Edgar nodded. Joseph began. “Another reason for me not being mentioned, is that he *knew* I would freak you out.”

“Oh no wonder.” Edgar muttered. “*Not even an hour of us meeting and he already wants my blood..*”

Joseph went quiet for a couple moments, tapping his nails against the table. “You remind me of someone.”

“Huh?” Edgar looked at Joseph. “Who?”

“This girl I found years ago. You look like her, but it’s like you’re the polar opposite. She wants to become a vampire hunter, yet you look like you’re afraid to even hold up a knife.”

*“What is he saying?”* Edgar looked up at Joseph. “If only you knew..” He mumbled before beginning to ask about who Joseph was talking about. “Who was that girl?”

“You really think I’ll let you in on my little secrets?” Joseph smiled, showing his blood-stained fangs once more in an act of intimidation. “Maybe later I’ll tell you. If you behave.”

Edgar was quiet, giving an annoyed look towards Joseph. He stood up and began to leave the kitchen.

“Awwww is the young human maaaad?” Joseph taunted.

“I’M NINETEEN!” Edgar yelled, throwing his hands up.

“I’m still older~!”

“Just how old are you?” Edgar looked back, trying to hide his annoyed expression.

“566.” Joseph smiled.

Edgar looked away, grumbling. He walked out of the kitchen and into his room. Today was going to be a long day.

~



Edgar was outside on the balcony, painting. He was much calmer than before, and focused on the portrait of the Crimson Moon. Despite Victor not being around, Edgar still acted like normal. He had overheard Joseph talking to Wick and leaving to take the dog on a walk. For now, Edgar had all the time in the world to himself.

The painter dipped his paintbrush into a cup of water, washing the red paint out of the bristles. He looked into the distance and stared at the faint village of Greenwood. *"I wonder how Victor is."* He thought. *"I hope he's still agreeing to come with me when I leave for Greenwood. I wonder what he'll think of Mrs. Demi when he meets her. I hope she won't give him trouble.. Knowing she's a retired vampire hunter. Can she sense Victor being a vampire?"* The young painter asked himself.

"What do you want for lunch?"

"AH-" Edgar screamed, swiftly turning to Joseph, who was sitting on the balcony, his side wings open and his nails tapping against the stone. "What was that for!? I thought you weren't allowed in my room!" Edgar shouted.

Joseph smiled. "Your *room*? This isn't your *room*. It's a balcony, silly human." His smile only grew. "Perhaps you need some more vocabulary."

"No." Edgar looked away. "I don't." *"Why is he so obsessed with getting on my nerves?"* He finished in his head.

"Aww.. don't look so down.." Joseph made a pouting face, before wiping it away with his smile. "Now. What do you want for lunch?"

“Uh.. I think Victor made something.. Left overs?” Edgar tried to remember. *“I don’t trust anything that Joseph makes. He’s acting just like.. Him.”* Edgar felt a bad taste in his mouth. The bitterness.. *“No.. forget it. He’s not here.”*

“Hmm.. so humans don’t eat pellets..”

“NO??? WE DON’T???”

Joseph bursted out in laughter. “Oh I know! I’m just messing with you. I’ll be back when lunch is ready.” The vampire tipped back and freefell off of the balcony.

Edgar sat in silence for a moment before sighing. *“He confuses me so much..”* He shook his head. *“Don’t think about that! You have free time now, Edgar.”* Edgar looked back at the canvas. *“I might as well finish this.”* He picked up his paintbrush and began to mix a gray, then he continued to paint.

~

It was around dinner time when Victor came back. Edgar had overheard both vampires speaking in a hushed tone outside of his room.

*“He must think I’m asleep..”* Edgar thought, staring at the door from his bed. *“It is late though..”*

Gently, the doorknob turned and Joseph entered the room with Victor watching.

“With.. a careful talk from Victor.” Joseph began, he waved his finger and sat down on a chair that floated towards him. “He let me enter your room before I leave.”

Edgar sat up in his bed. “What is.. This about?” He asked, glancing at Victor, who simply motioned to Joseph.

“Your sister.” Joseph began. “Remember when I said you reminded me of a girl I found years ago?”

Edgar nodded.

“Well. After Victor and I talked about that topic.. She may be your missing sister. The last name is Valden, right?”

“Yesss....” Edgar felt his heart racing. His sister. Alive!? “Y-You know where she is, right!? E-Ella Valden.. Fr-From Greenwood!?”

“Correct.” Joseph’s smile grew.

Edgar went quiet. His jaw dropped as he tried to process everything. *“My sister has been alive.. For all this time..??”*

“You’re probably wondering.” Joseph said. “Why hasn’t she been here all this time?” Well.. she’s been training. When I nursed her back to health, she did everything she could to try and kill me. The silly girl pointed a stick at me and told me she’d drive it through my heart! That’s when I knew I had to

nurture that wish. I wanted to make her into a proper vampire hunter. When she became sixteen, I gave her the chance to leave and return to Greenwood. However, she refused. She vowed to leave after my blood was on her sword.” Joseph sighed. “Such a strong girl..”

“C...Can I.. see her?” Edgar asked. *“I’m not sure what to think.. How else do I respond?”*

Joseph shook his head slowly, frowning. “I’m sorry, but no. We are all very busy. You and Victor have a village to go to on Sunday, and your sister and I still have some training to do.”

Edgar let out a sigh. “Oh...” He looked up at Joseph. “Does she even know.. I’m alive?”

“No. She probably thinks that though.” Joseph explained. “I never mentioned you besides when I had to reassure her I didn’t harm you after I took her.”

“Oh..”

“I’m sure she misses you a lot, however.”

“I do too..” Edgar looked away. “I’ve... missed her every day since you took her..” He then sniffled, looking back at Joseph. “I-I can’t help but feel mad at you.. But.. I want to thank you for saving her life.”

Joseph smiled. “Of course.”

Edgar stood up and walked to the painting he had made before gently handing it over to Joseph. “Could you.. Give this to her? Tell her it’s from me. Please..”

Joseph took the painting and looked at it. “It’s unfinished.”

“I know. But I don’t know when I’ll see you or her again.. And I want her to know I’m still out there.”

Joseph nodded. “Good night, Edgar.” He walked towards the door and paused, whispering something to Victor, who gave a gentle smile and a nod of approval. Joseph walked out of sight and out of the house.

Victor walked into the room and up to Edgar. “I’m sure we can visit her soon.. But it’d be safer if we deal with that Mr. Sarai first, alright?”

Edgar nodded. He felt a tear run down his cheek and wiped it. “O-Oh.. I’m.. crying..?” He asked.

Victor gently placed his hand onto Edgar’s head. “It’s normal.. You just found out she was alive after all this time.. It’s probably tears of relief, or happiness.” He pushed Edgar’s bangs out of the way. “And you kept your hair down all day.. You really are happier with it like that.”

Edgar chuckled, a smile forming on his face. “I guess I am.”

“Get some rest. We have a big day tomorrow.” Victor said in enthusiasm. “We need to prepare for our Greenwood trip on Sunday!”

“Alright.. Good night, Victor!” Edgar smiled.

“Good night!” Victor walked out of the room and closed the door as Edgar went back into his bed and covered himself with the covers.

## Chapter Thirty Three

(Note: Starting now, it is from Victor's point of view.)

Saturday, one day before Sunday.

Edgar was packing the materials he thought he needed. Him and Victor had come up with a cover plan. They would say Edgar had been found recently by a vampire hunter named Grantz, who would be played by Victor.

Over a hundred years had passed since Victor had shown his face commonly in Greenwood, so it was doubtful that people would remember him.

While Edgar was packing, Victor was in the kitchen making food for their trip. He didn't feel safe staying in Mrs. Demi's bar, knowing she was a former vampire hunter, but he also couldn't leave Edgar in the hands of that awful Mr. Sarai.

Victor took out the meat loaf he had made and began to slice it with a knife. *"I hope our plan works."* He thought, placing the hot loaf into a plastic container. *"Going back to Greenwood will be risky.. But I have to do this. I have to do this for Edgar's safety."* He looked towards the hallway that led to the front door. *"And mine.. There haven't been many vampire hunters coming to kill me recently. I'm relieved, but it's like they're planning something."* Victor turned to the kitchen entrance when he heard the sound of footsteps.

"You're still making food?" Edgar asked.

Victor nodded. "You said that Mr. Sarai doesn't let you wear your hair down.. Right? What will you do back in Greenwood?"

“I’m done listening to him.” Edgar replied, walking over and glancing at the knives. “His threats are worthless if he can’t poison me.”

“Why are you looking at the knives..?” Victor asked.

Edgar looked at Victor. “Do you think you’ll get exposed? Even with our cover story? I don’t want to lose anyone else because of him.. I’m not even sure if Mrs. Demi will listen to us if *she* finds out.”

“*He’s changing the subject..*” Victor sighed. “Well- I’m going to hope not.. Even then, I’ll take you back here as long as you’re willing. I won’t let you stay with someone like *him*. That’s for sure. Heck, I’m ready to let Joseph take care of you if I can’t.” He let out a small chuckle. “But we all know how you two interact.”

“Heh.. yeah..” Edgar said.

“Now. Why do you want the knives?” Victor asked, going back to the main topic.

“How’d you know I wanted one?” Edgar asked. “It’s.. for self defense. I can’t defend myself without a weapon.”

“I don’t like that delay, Edgar.” Victor said, giving the painter a concerned look. “Wait- why would you need to defend yourself?!”

“One, Mr. Sarai. Two, I’m nineteen. I can handle knives.”

Victor let out a long sigh. “Fine.” He walked over to the knife holder and lifted the birdcage. “You’re only allowed to take *one*, and I will hold onto it.”

“Seriously!?” Edgar complained.

“Seriously.” Victor said with a stern look. He watched Edgar reach and take a small, yet sharp knife. Victor immediately grabbed the knife and took it away from him and said, “I’m not letting this knife out of my sight, understand?”

Edgar groaned, watching Victor cover the knife holder once again. “Fine.”

“Good. Now bring the bags here so I can put it in one. I have to continue making food for our trip.”

Edgar walked out of the room, leaving Victor alone with his thoughts.

*“Am I really ready to return..? After all these years?”* He thought. Victor turned to the fridge and grabbed out a cold bowl of soup. *“Even if I checked the place yesterday.. I’m still scared. I feel like there’s something I left behind there. My old life? No.. that can’t be it..”* Victor’s mind flashed to a young boy. A boy all too familiar with him. He shook his head and closed his eyes. *“Stop! Stop thinking! You did what you had to do! It’s already over!”* He opened his eyes, trying to get his mind off of... him.. *“He’s long gone.. He’s dead.. Just.. get back to work.. Get back to preparing..”* Victor thought to himself. Before long, he had already found portable thermoses and began to place the warmed up soup into them.

~



Victor stared off into the distance from the balcony in his room, his hands on his lap.

Greenwood, the Hunting Village. A feared place of humans.. Barbarians, even! Every vampire feared that place!

Victor sighed, leaning his head back against the chair he sat in. *“I hate how naive I was..”* He thought. He only had gone to Greenwood all those years ago because of a bet, and his own curiosity.

*“Victor! Let’s make a bet!”* One of his closest friends had said. *“I bet you can’t stay in Greenwood long enough and become a vampire hunter! We’d be able to get rid of that village once and for all! Especially with your power!”*

~

One hundred years ago..

“I don’t know..” Victor had responded. He was only around 422 at the time. Not young, but not elderly. “I’m the last Crimson Vampire.. And maybe those humans have a right to be that aggressive. Their village is in the middle of a werewolf infested forest.. Not to mention they didn’t realize I lived close to them until a couple of months ago.” Victor, at the time, was curious about humans. He wanted to see one for himself. A kind one.. One that wouldn’t try to put a stake through his throat on sight.

“You can turn into that human disguise of yours!” Andy, Victor’s close friend, said. “They won’t know!”

“I guess so...” Victor muttered. He sighed. “Fine. I’ll do it.”

“Yesss!!” Andy smiled in triumph. “Come on, let’s get you that disguise!”

~

Victor walked into Greenwood. He kept his head down despite all the stares that the other humans were giving him. He could almost hear them whispering about him. “*Why are they looking at me so much!?*” He thought. Victor began to shake as he walked through the village square. At any second if he was found out, he could be killed.

“Hey! You there!” Someone shouted.

Victor flinched and froze in his path. He looked up at the male human walking towards him.

The human had a werewolf fur cloak around their wolf-skin leather tunic. He wore a chainmail pair of pants and brown shoes. The human had several scars on their face with little-to-no treatment, as if it were badges. "Are you new here?"

"Oh!.. Yes.. sorry, I just heard so much about this place!" Victor smiled, trying to seem normal.

"A traveler, are you?"

"Yesss!.. I'm.. a traveler!" *"Play it normal.. Act like a human.."* He reassured himself, staring at the man in front of him.

The man stared for a couple of moments before holding out a hand. "I'm Marshall. Lead Vampire Hunter, at your service."

"Oh..! I-I'm Victor!" He reached out and shook Marshall's hand. *"He feels so warm.. Is it true humans are warm blooded? Oh.. and the blood from everyone here! It's.. such a high quality! It's like a farm!"* He thought.

"What a pleasure to meet you!"

"The pleasure is all mine!" Victor smiled, slowly calming himself down. *"He really thinks I'm a human!"* He thought.

"Allow me to show you around. Where are you from?" The human asked.

Victor went silent. *"What should I say??? I know!"*

"Victor?" Marshall asked. "Is everything alright?"

"I.. I can't remember.." Victor shrugged with a worried smile.

“Amnesia?” Marshall suggested. “You should stay here then. I can help you get on your feet and maybe your memories will come back to you.”

“Oh..? Uh..” *“What do I say?! I didn’t think I’d have to stay here for longer than a day!”* Victor panicked. “Thanks..?”

“Of course!” Marshall smiled. “Follow me!” He began to walk through the village.

Victor began to follow Marshall, looking around himself and studying everything he could. *“Everyone seems so nice.. I wonder how someone from here could strike fear into us..”* He thought. *“We are afraid of.. such nice people. Is it our fault for antagonizing them?”*

“Over here is the bar.” Marshall said, leading Victor around. “We can get you a room to stay in. It also acts as an inn.”

“Don’t I need to make money to buy a room..?” Victor asked.

“It’s on me.” Marshall paused. “If you’re staying here that is.”

“Well.. I don’t know..” Victor’s voice trailed off. *“I don’t want to stay here longer than I have to..”* He then sighed, remembering the bet he agreed to.

“Is there something wrong, Victor?”

“No.. it’s.. Just thought I remembered something, sorry.”

“It’s alright.”

“You said you were the lead vampire hunter, right?” Victor asked. “Maybe.. I could be a vampire hunter? T-To pay you back.. For your kindness.”

“I haven’t even done anything yet!” Marshall laughed. “Of course you can become a vampire hunter! Let’s get you that room before anything else, alright?”

~

“These traps are difficult to disarm.” Victor remarked, looking at the bear trap in front of him.

It had already been a day since he arrived in Greenwood and Victor was determined to win the bet. He was in the vampire hunting base with Marshall, beginning to train and hopefully become a real vampire hunter.

Victor couldn’t shake off the irony of the situation. A vampire? Becoming a vampire *hunter*?? That was unheard of.

“They’ve always been like that.” Marshall said. “I’ve tried to come up with other types of bear traps, but they always broke on the tests we ran.”

“Well,” Victor began. “What holds this together? It could be the amount of force in such a quick motion.” He examined the bear trap, pushing down on it to disarm it. “What if.. We lessen the amount of force it has by using iron?”

“Iron is weaker..” Marshall remarked.

“That’s where the serrated teeth come in. It’ll be easier to disarm and keep the same model. But, if whatever is caught tries to get away, the teeth will cause it to leave a blood trail.”

“Hmm.. yes, we’d have to test that.” Marshall looked at Victor with a smile. “You’re really smart. It’s like you were made for this.”

“Oh..! Thanks!” Victor smiled. “*Humans.. Know how to compliment each other? What else can they do?*” He thought.

“Now, follow me. We’ll test your crossbow skills.”

“Crossbows? Already?” Victor asked, surprised.

“Of course! Every vampire hunter needs to know them! Or else they’d be dead before they could call for backup.”

*“So they don’t hunt on their own?”* Victor thought, following Marshall to another room.

The next room had a shooting range. It led to the back of the base and an open way into the woods if Victor ever had to escape. To the left of the yard, stood three different circular targets painted red and white. Each target placed further from the shooting area.

“Here.” Marshall said, grabbing a crossbow from the rack on the left wall and tossing it to Victor.

Victor quickly caught it, his hair standing on the back of his head. “Ah! Careful!” He yelped. Victor could feel his wings begin to form from the shock.

“Sorry.” Marshall said, grabbing a quiver of arrows and tossing it to Victor.

“I said careful!” Victor hissed, almost dropping the crossbow while trying to catch the quiver.

“You need to work on your reaction time. Right then, a vampire could’ve snuck up on you and bit your neck.” Marshall determined, grabbing a quiver for himself. “First, you tuck the quiver over your shoulder like this.” He put it on to show Victor. “Then, take the crossbow and hold it with the limbs facing down when not in use.”

Victor nodded, putting on the quiver and doing as told. “Like this, right?”

Marshall nodded. “Good. To load your crossbow....”

It took awhile for Victor to begin to fire the crossbow. Despite the long wait, Victor found the instructions very helpful. In four tries, he was able to land a bull’s eye for the first time.

Victor looked at Marshall with a smile on his face and expected a smile back.

All he got in return was a disappointed face.

“What..?” Victor questioned. “What happened?”

“I trusted you.” Marshall said. “You’re not even human.. Is Victor even your name? Or is it the name of a human you murdered.” The lead vampire hunter slowly pointed his crossbow to Victor’s neck. “Leave, don’t come back here.”

~

Victor woke up to excruciating pain across his neck. He sat up quickly and held his neck with his hand. “*A nightmare.. But that’s the least of my worries!*” He thought. Victor let go of his neck and stared at his hand. His eyes widened at the blood dripping off of his hand and onto his lap. Quickly, Victor whirled around and stared at the other person in his room.

A man of average height stared at Victor with fear, shakingly holding a bloody knife. The blood was smoking off of the knife.

“*Holy water..?*” Victor thought, coughing and quickly covering the wound with his jabot. “You’re the first one to finally manage to get a wound *this* bad on me..” Victor said aloud, walking towards the vampire hunter.

“Stay back!” The hunter yelled. “These.. These arrows are tipped with holy water! W..We’ve come to take the boy home!”

“..We?” Victor repeated.

Distantly, Edgar’s yells of fear echoed through the door. Both the vampire hunter and Victor looked at the door.

Victor, without a second thought ran out of his room. “EDGAR!” He yelled, leaping into the air of the hallway and extending his wings to get there quicker. The vampire barged through the door and looked up.

The second vampire hunter with a crossbow turning to Victor with a look of hate.



## Chapter Thirty Four

“You...” The second vampire hunter said. “Not only have you killed my brother, but you’ve KIDNAPPED A HUMAN!”

“He didn’t-” Edgar shouted, but was cut off.

“Quiet! He’s hypnotizing you! He’ll kill you if you’re here any longer!”

Victor heard footsteps running behind him.

“I did it! I hurt the vampIRE-” The first hunter shouted.

Victor had grabbed the hunter by the neck and slammed them against the wall. “I’ll deal with you later.” He hissed. Victor winced as his shoulder began to burn, he turned to the room and lunged at the second vampire hunter.

The second one let out a scream as cracks came from its right arm.

“I would’ve considered letting you leave here alive..”

Victor hissed, ripping an arrow out of his shoulder. He grabbed the small knife the hunter was reaching for and taunted him. “Was this what you were looking for?”

Edgar stayed in the corner of the room, his eyes widened with fear.

Victor looked up at Edgar as the hunter tried to grab the knife. “Edgar. Leave the room. I don’t want you to see what I’m about to do.”

Edgar quickly left the room, running from the other vampire hunter who was lying on the floor in pain.

Victor raised the arrow. “Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t let you have a long, painful, death.”

The vampire hunter didn't say anything. It just stared at Victor with hate.

The two were quiet for a while. Victor moved once more, chucking the arrow to the vampire hunter in the hallway when it began to move.

"Stay down." Victor hissed.

"O....kay.." The hunter replied, shakingly giving a thumbs up.

"You.. killer.." The other hunter hissed. "How does.. It feel?"

"To know I'm killing two foolish hunters that put my life and my child's life in danger? Glorious." Victor replied.

"To know *you* killed.. My brother! And you're killing me too.. You're getting to kill the *both* of us.."

At first, Victor thought it was nonsense. An attempt to get Edgar to hate him. But now, Victor was confused.

"What..?"

"You *killed* my brother! Stupid vampire.. Must I really repeat myself!?"

"..Do you have a picture?" Victor got off of the hunter.

"You really think I'm not going to kill you? Idiot.." The hunter grumbled, standing up.

"No. I *know* you won't. I broke your arm and took the knife from you. And you need two hands to operate a crossbow."

The hunter's eyes widened. "How'd you.."

“Don’t worry about it. Now, do you have a picture of your brother?” Victor repeated. “I’ve killed so many of you hunters that I can’t remember names!”

“You disgust me..” The hunter grumbled and took out a photograph, hesitantly showing it to Victor.

Victor scanned the photograph, keeping his hands away from it to give the hunter the little respect it didn’t deserve.

“No.. I’m sorry, but I don’t recall seeing this person.”

“So you’ve forgotten faces too?”

“Oh. How low of you to think of me that way.” Victor grumbled sarcastically. He gently closed the door. “Let’s just get this over with.” Victor’s fangs fully exposed themselves as he grabbed hold of the hunter, and bit into the neck.

~

Victor found Edgar in the kitchen.

“Wh.. What happened?” Edgar asked, noticing Victor’s blood soaked appearance. “Are you hurt!?”

“This isn’t my blood, silly!” Victor smiled, wiping his mouth. “We’re still leaving tomorrow, right?”

“...You killed them..???” Edgar whispered.

Victor looked at the horror in Edgar’s eyes. “It was in self defense.” He said.

Edgar backed away. “I.. Need some time alone..” He glanced at Victor. “Please..?”

Victor sighed. “Fine. But, we’re still leaving for Greenwood tomorrow. Correct?”

“Y-Yeah.. S..sure..” Edgar choked out.

Victor gave Edgar a concerned look before walking out of the kitchen. He coughed up a small amount of blood on his way to the bathroom. “*I should’ve tended to my wounds first. It’s so easy to forget..*” He thought, taking his jabot off in the bathroom and wiping the blood off of his neck. He took off his cloak and began to wrap gauze around his neck and bandaging it. Victor put on clean clothing after washing the blood off of himself. He washed the blood-soaked clothing after doing so, and hung them to dry.

Victor walked back to the hallway to find Edgar cleaning the blood. Victor had already moved the corpses somewhere else to clear the hallway and room. “Oh? You’re helping clean up..?”

Edgar didn’t say anything.

Victor walked up to Edgar. “You don’t have to.. If you’re afraid that I’ll hurt you,” Victor paused, lowering himself to Edgar’s height. “I promise you, those were the only two humans I would kill.”

“You.. promise?” Edgar asked, glancing at Victor.

Victor nodded. “I swear on it. I will never break this promise until it puts your life in danger.”

“O-Okay..” Edgar responded. He watched Victor grab up a mop and help clean up the remaining blood. “That other one said you killed his brother.. Is that true?”

“No.” Victor said. “It was a misunderstanding. Joseph must’ve killed his brother.”

“Oh.. I hope they’ll see each other again.. I-In the after life.”

“They might.” Victor remarked.

When the two finished their cleanup, Victor took the bloody mops and began to go outside.

“You’re not going to drink the blood?”

“There’s other dirty things inside the blood now. Besides, I already collected enough blood.” Victor explained.

“Last question.” Edgar. “You.. acted calm. Have vampire hunters been coming here trying to kill you all this time?”

Victor nodded. “It’s.. normal. It’s also how I’ve been able to survive for this long. All the blood I have comes from those who try to kill me.”

“Oh...” Edgar nodded. “I.. see.”

“I’ll see you later for dinner.” Victor said before leaving the room.

~

Victor dumped out the dirty blood into the filter in the garden and watched the blood drain out. He sighed, sitting down and recalling his nightmare. *“Why do I keep remembering him..?”* He thought. *“It was over a hundred years ago.. I shouldn’t be remembering either of them..”* He looked at his reflection in the glass, his eyes widening as he jumped away. He didn’t see himself anymore. But instead, a fake. *“Why..?”* He questioned. *“Why do I still remember?”* Victor looked at Greenwood in the distance. *“Is it because of the inevitable? My own fears? Good lord give me an answer!”* He let out a sigh, trying to clear his mind. *“Tomorrow. You’re going back tomorrow. Pull it together.. You’ll have a new disguise.. You can lie about those two vampire hunters. Surely they were sent here to kill and retrieve.”* Victor left the garden and began to head to the kitchen to make dinner. It was still early, but it was best he do something to get his mind off of this. He’d have to get a lot of rest too.. The first time he’d be sleeping during the day in a while. Victor walked up to Edgar’s room and knocked on the door.

As expected, Edgar answered the door quietly.

“Do you want anything for dinner? I’m making it early to have enough rest for tomorrow.” Victor explained.

“Are you alright?” Edgar asked. “That’s not like you..”

“Don’t worry. I’m perfectly fine.” The vampire smiled. “Now, for dinner?”

“I’ll have whatever you make. I don’t mind.” Edgar answered. “Don’t push yourself.. You’re worrying me.”

“Ah.. I..” Victor nodded. “I see. I’ll let you know when it’s ready, alright?”

“Alright.”

“Remember, tomorrow we get up early and leave for Greenwood.”

“I’m sure it’ll be a quick trip. What’s there to be afraid of when you’re able to blend in?”

“..” Victor didn’t have an answer at first. “I.. don’t know.” He admitted. He then waved and began to walk away, pondering the question. As he went into the kitchen, he finally had an answer. “*The fear of being exposed...*”

## Chapter Thirty Five

Sunday.

Victor yawned as the clock in his room chimed. It was an hour before daybreak, but it was the only way Victor felt safe to travel. He rubbed his eyes and got out of bed, stretching.

*"It's time.."* He thought, walking into the bathroom and splashing warm water on his face. Victor looked in the mirror and took a breath, closing his eyes. He began to whisper to himself as his hair changed. His skin became peachier and and his fangs shrunk in size. After the transformation had ended, Victor opened his eyes and stared at himself.

His eyes were still red. That was something Victor couldn't change without help. However, Victor's hair had turned black and he looked more human with rosy cheeks. Victor began to look through his wardrobe to find anything that would make him look human. He took out the clothes he thought would work and quickly put a pair on. He then put the rest into a bag and walked out of the room.

Victor marched to Edgar's room and knocked on the door. "Edgar! It's time!" He faintly heard Edgar moving in the bedroom and went to the kitchen where he took out leftover pancakes with chocolate chips in them. He placed them into the microwave and let them warm up while he made sure everything was in order.

Edgar walked into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes. "Good morning.." He said drowsily. His eyes then widened. "Who are-"



Victor giggled. "Relax. It's me." He turned around. "It's my human disguise. It works, right?"

"Yeah.." Edgar nodded and sat down as Victor pulled the pancakes out of the microwave. "You really wanted to leave *this* early..?"

"Well yes." Victor replied. He already was awake as he placed a plate by Edgar. "Eat first." He then grabbed another plate of pancakes and placed it in the microwave. "It'll be a long walk to Greenwood from here."

"I see.." Edgar yawned, beginning to eat.

After the two ate, they grabbed their bags and left the house.

"Where's Wick?" Edgar asked.

"I left him in Joseph's care. I made sure he knew what to do and when to." Victor smiled, winking at Edgar. "I always think ahead!"

"You're a really methodical person." Edgar observed

Victor smiled as he opened the gate for Edgar and closed it behind himself.

"I forgot to ask. Is it true you vampires sleep in caskets?"

"Not entirely. Only humans who have died and were turned into vampires sleep in caskets." Victor answered.

"Pureblood vampires, like me, sleep in beds similar to you humans."

Edgar nodded. "And you're sure we're not going to get attacked this early?"

"I'm sure." Victor replied. "The werewolves are going to sleep or turning back by now."

~

By the time they arrived, dawn had just arrived. Victor was hesitant to step into Greenwood while Edgar walked in immediately.

Edgar turned around to Victor and gently grabbed his hand, walking with him into Greenwood. "It's okay.. Everything is okay.. Nothing bad will happen." He looked up at Victor. "I promise."

Victor silently nodded and followed Edgar into the village. "Is it normal for everyone to be in their houses at this hour? I can't remember." He whispered to Edgar.

"Yeah. It's still early." Edgar looked at a building and walked over to it. "We can stay here! It's Mrs. Demi's bar!"

"Uhh... I.. I don't know.." Victor stammered, stiffening up.

"She's really nice! Don't worry. She should be open by now." Edgar knocked on the door and waited in anticipation.

Victor heard footsteps from behind the door and froze up in fear.

"Who could be up at this hour..?" A woman's voice echoed.

The door opened.

"EDGAR!" The woman yelled. The voice belonged to a tall lady with long, brown hair. She wore a cloth shirt and pants, along with leather boots and a hat. The woman immediately grabbed Edgar and hugged him. "Where in God's name were you?! I was worried sick!"

“Hi Mrs. Demi..!” Edgar said, pushing himself away. When Mrs. Demi let go, he motioned to Victor, who stood there, frozen. “This is Victor!”

Slowly, Victor waved his hand and tried to form a smile on his face. “Hi..!”

Mrs. Demi eyed him for a moment, before returning to her cheerful attitude. “You two can’t stay out here in the dark, there’s monsters roaming about! Come in, come in!” She opened the door and held it for the two, closing it once they entered.

“Mrs. Demi is really nice. Trust me.” Edgar whispered to Victor.

Victor could feel his side wings nearly bursting out. His panic was through the roof. *“I don’t like this.. I don’t like this...”* He thought. Victor felt Mrs. Demi staring at him from the door. *“She knows I’m not a human.. but how?! Hasn’t she met shy people before??”*

“So.” Mrs. Demi began. “Where have you been?! Are you hurt?!” She raced over but kept her distance from the two. “Everyone thought you were going to die! With that vampire living close by and two vampire hunters going MISSING-“

“Mrs. Demi. Calm down..” Edgar said. “We will explain everything shortly.”

“Uh- We??” Victor asked.

“Yes. We.” Edgar repeated.

Mrs. Demi nodded. “Whatever. I’m just glad you’re alive.” She walked behind the counter. “Is there anything I could get for you two?”

“We already ate breakfast. No need to worry. But is it alright if you could prepare a room for Victor? He’ll be staying here for a couple of days.”

“Sure!” Mrs. Demi nodded and began to leave the room. “I’ll be right back.” She said, heading up stairs.

When Victor was sure the woman was gone, he spoke in a quiet voice. “I already don’t like this. Not even an hour in and she already hates me!”

“She doesn’t hate you.” Edgar reassured him. “She’s just concerned for me. She knows how strict Mr. Sarai was.. and for her to know that I’ve been missing for so long and come back with a complete stranger to her, it’s understandable that she’d be worried.”

“Oh.. will she hate me if she finds out-” Victor asked, but stopped himself when he sniffed Mrs. Demi’s blood. “She’s listening!” He whispered. “She doesn’t trust me at all! She’s going to throw me out the second she can and report me to the vampire hunters!”

“Allright! Room is all set-”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

Mrs. Demi and Edgar both gave Victor a confused look.

“Is.. he okay?” Mrs. Demi asked.

“He’s a little shy..” Edgar responded, trying to say it quietly.

“I see...” Mrs. Demi slowly nodded. “Anyways, as I said, the room is all set. Edgar, why don’t you explain to me now? I’m sure it’d be nice for Victor to get some rest and maybe a drink to calm his nerves.”

“Alright!” Edgar immediately agreed.

“O-Oh no.” Victor said, preparing one of his first sentences without absolutely freaking out. “I don’t drink..! Do you have something else? Like.. coffee? Or tea?”

“Mmmhm!” Mrs. Demi nodded, going behind the counter and pulling out a mug.

Victor watched as Edgar sat down at one of the chairs and began to talk with the bartender, who was brewing coffee. Meanwhile the vampire looked around the bar.

The bar’s walls were made up of a dark brown painted brick pattern with gold in the ridges. The floor was stained oak wood. The ceiling was also wood to mirror the floor. The chairs were metal cushioned with black felt tops that housed cotton inside. The counter was made up of wood with a stained top that was covered in countless scratches.

By the time Victor’s coffee was ready, Edgar had gotten to where he had warmed up to the vampire, who in this story was just a traveler. That traveler being played by Victor.

Mrs. Demi slid the hot mug to Victor and passed him a napkin, a small packet of sugar and a little cup of creamer before resting her arms on the countertop and listening to Edgar’s story.

“Thank you.” Motioned Victor, with a gentle smile. He took the small cup and put it into his coffee, along with the sugar. He stood up and looked for the trash.

“Then, we began to-“ Edgar paused, looking up at Victor. “The trash is over here.” He pointed to a small bin.

“Thank you.” Victor replied as Edgar went back to the story. He tossed away the empty cup and packet before sitting down and taking sips of his tea.

~

“So.. you decided to sneak out of your house, you got yourself stuck in a bear trap, twisted your ankle.. and then Victor found you and nursed you back to health?” Mrs. Demi summarized.

“Yep!” Edgar confirmed. “That’s it.”

“And why did you sneak out..?”

Edgar went quiet.

“Sorry. I shouldn’t have asked..”

“No.. no.. it’s okay. I just don’t want to talk about it right now.”

Mrs. Demi nodded.

“I’ll begin to remove some stuff from the bag I brought along. I’ll be back!” Victor said and walked up the stairs.

“You’re in the third room to the left!” Mrs. Demi called.

Victor walked to his room and opened the door. He stood still to try and concentrate. “*I’m sorry Edgar, but I still don’t feel safe around her.*” He thought and began to listen in on Mrs. Demi and Edgar’s conversation.

“Edgar, there’s something off about that man. His name alone is ringing so many red flags for me.”

“What do you mean?”

“A hundred years ago, a vampire went by the same name and became a vampire hunter. *Nobody* knew it was a vampire until a merchant looked into the eyes.”

“You think he’s a vampire?”

“Probably. Or a werewolf.” Mrs. Demi presented. “Closest thing to a human, but still a monster. For now, keep your distance. Please. I can’t bear to see you in danger.”

“Mrs. Demi.. if he wanted to hurt me, he would’ve done it by now.”

“Or maybe he’s just waiting. Waiting for you to let your guard down now that you’re back.”

“Do you really think of him that way? Look. If we go up to him now, he’ll be getting his things out. Nothing else!”

“Then why don’t we check?”

“Are you serious?”

“Yes I’m serious.”

Victor heard movement and immediately opened the bags and began to place the items in places he thought would fit them.

“I hope it’s to your liking, Mr...”

“Victor. There’s no need to be formal towards me.”

“Alright.”

“And yes.” Victor answered. “The room is alright.” He smiled. “Thank you.. I.. apologize for how I was earlier. I’m not used to prolonged interactions.”

“All is well!” Mrs. Demi smiled. “If you need anything, I’ll be downstairs.” She walked down the steps.

Victor nodded, and looked at Edgar who was standing by the door.

“I told you everything would be okay.” Edgar said quietly, giving Victor a smile.

“I hope so.”



## Chapter Thirty Six

Victor and Edgar spent the morning touring Greenwood. Victor had a hat on his head and covered himself in what humans called sunscreen, to protect himself from the sun. Edgar had guided Victor to many different places around the village, including the graveyard where the two saw a strange man talking with a scientist before waving to them. They had purposely avoided Edgar's house.. that would be the last place they'd go to.

"And here's the Exorcist's house.. office.. thing." Edgar said. "I don't.. go in there any more."

"Why?"

"The Exorcist isn't really fond of me."

"Ah.. I see." Victor nodded.

"Follow me." Edgar began to walk somewhere, his voice slowly getting quieter.

Victor reluctantly followed, giving Edgar a concerned look. "Alright?"

The two had arrived at a large house with a little gate and garden in front. Victor watched Edgar open the gate, walking on the path and tying his hair back before knocking on the door.

Edgar let out a sigh and turned to Victor, forming a slight smile as the door was answered. He turned to the door and spoke to the man who answered. "Hello, Mr. Sarai."

"Edgar..?" The man said quietly. "You're alive??"

"Yeah.. I-I am.."

“I was so worried for you!” Mr. Sarai said. “Where have you been!? You’re not hurt, are you??”

Already, Victor felt disgusted by watching their interactions. “*This.. is Mr. Sarai? He looks nothing like what Edgar said.. what a disgusting human.*” He thought.

“I’m fine, Mr. Sarai.” Edgar said, not even flinching as Mr. Sarai inspected him. He motioned to Victor and said, “This is Victor. He’s the traveler that found me.”

“Ah.” Mr. Sarai turned to Victor and held out his hand. “Such a pleasure.”

“It’s great to meet you!” Victor lied, shaking Mr. Sarai’s hand. “You’ve raised him well, he’s such a nice person!” “*If I want to get on his good side.. I have to lie to his face.*” He thought. “*I have to praise everything he’s done.. I’m ashamed.*”

“Thank you.” Mr. Sarai smiled, letting go. “It hasn’t been easy. I was a good friend of his parents.”

“Really now?” Victor couldn’t believe it. “Edgar hasn’t told me about them.. maybe it’s something we shouldn’t bring up?”

“Oh. Really?” He looked at Edgar, who looked back. “Could you go inside for a moment?”

“Yes.. Mr. Sarai.” Edgar walked inside the house and closed the door.

Victor’s heart sank as he watched. “*Poor Edgar..*” He thought.

“Now..” Mr. Sarai continued. “His parents abandoned him and his sister when they were young. Edgar was two and Ella was only an infant. I began to take care of them since

then and it hasn't been easy. Especially with Ella going missing a couple years ago."

"Oh.. I see.. and you're comfortable telling a complete stranger this?" Victor asked. *"He doesn't make any sense."*

"You helped Edgar survive! You're the reason he's alive right now! What else could I do to thank you?" Mr. Sarai asked. "And of course I'm comfortable telling you this. If you're someone he trusts, I suppose I should be able to trust you as well."

"That's wonderful." Victor smiled.

"I'll be talking with him for a moment. He must've been so worried about coming back. I can't thank you enough, Victor."

"Do you mind if I come in?" Victor asked. *"I don't want him to hurt Edgar.. that horrid..!"* He thought. He wanted to shout at Mr. Sarai for everything he's done.. But he couldn't. He'd be spotted. He would die. He'd be executed. Nobody would listen to him. As much as he hated it, he had to smile and pretend to be completely oblivious.

"I'm sorry, but I'd rather our talk be private. It's a discussion about private family matters. Though I may trust you, some things shouldn't come out of the house."

"I understand." Victor said. "How long will you take?"

"We shouldn't be too long." Mr. Sarai opened the door and went inside, shutting it.

Victor immediately stopped smiling as his face contorted to worry. *"Oh God.. what do I do..? I had the perfect opportunity to.. EUGH! I NEED TO DO SOMETHING."* He looked around the

garden and ran to a random watermelon and kicked it. He didn't realize how much force he had used until it was already in the air, splattering on him. "Lovely." He muttered as he became soaked in the destroyed watermelon parts.

~

Victor walked into the bar to wait. Mr. Sarai and Edgar were taking longer than he had liked. Victor took one whiff of the room and was appalled by the stench. "*What is that scent!?*" He thought. He looked around at the mass amount of humans and walked over to Mrs. Demi, who was behind the counter.

"Rough day?" She asked.

"I kicked a watermelon." Victor admitted. He grumbled when he saw the woman snort.

"Why?? You're not even drunk!"

"Don't worry about it.." Victor hissed.

"You don't look like you kicked a watermelon, you looked like you bathed in one!" She let out a breath, stopping when she saw Victor's unamused face. "Sorry.. Just tried to lighten the mood a little."

"Is.. all of this normal?" Victor asked, glancing at all the drunkards in the room.

"Yeeeeeup." Mrs. Demi said. "It's what a bar is. Have you.. *never* been to one?"

"Never."

"Shocking."

The door opened as someone walked into the bar. Victor looked, hoping it was Edgar.

It wasn't.

"Hey, captain! The new recruits got you frustrated again?" Mrs. Demi asked.

Victor watched the person sit down in the seat next to him.

"The lovebirds." The new person grumbled. "They're head over heels for each other! It's so aggravating that they won't even focus!"

"Mhm. Brandy?" Mrs. Demi asked, getting out a bottle already.

"Please."

Victor stared at the person and immediately recognized the uniform. His eyes widened in realization.

"Victor." Mrs. Demi began, handing the man a shot of brandy. "This is the vampire hunting captain, Frederick Rutin."

"Cap...tain..?" Victor whispered under his breath. *"Has he been sending those vampire hunters to kill me all along..? I could kill him now to get him to stop.. the smell of everyone's blood is so overwhelming.. yet he sticks out like a sore thumb. So does Mrs. Demi.. No! Stop thinking! This isn't good..!"*

"You're that traveler I heard about. Victor, right?" The captain said.

"Yep..!" Victor smiled.

The captain eyed him for a moment. "Why do you look like you just took a bath but it was full of watermelon?"

"Oh come on! I only kicked a single one!"

"Huh." The captain's eyes squinted. "You sure?"

“Do I really look that bad..?” Victor asked.

Mrs. Demi was the only one that answered him. “You should wash up.. Bathroom is upstairs.”

Victor sighed. “Fine.” He walked upstairs and into the bathroom, closing the door behind himself.

~

When Victor came back down, he saw Edgar talking with Mrs. Demi and Frederick. “What’d I miss?” He asked, sitting next to Edgar.

Edgar looked at Victor, his upset look saying everything for the human.

“..Oh..” Victor immediately understood.

“So. This is the traveler you were talking about, Edgar?” Frederick asked.

Edgar nodded.

“Well, earlier he looked like he took a bath in watermelon.”

“Is that why there was a broken watermelon in the garden..?” Edgar asked.

“...I kicked it.” Victor grumbled.

Edgar snorted, forming a slight smile. “If you say so.”

Frederick looked at Victor and smiled. “Thanks for finding him. I wanted to try and find him myself but I kept getting preoccupied and every hunter I would send would go missing.”

“Of course!” Victor smiled. “*So that’s why they kept sending them.*” He thought.

“We just sent two yesterday to kill the vampire. I’m hoping it’s not going to end like the other attempts.”

“Oh.. well.. why do you want to kill it?”

“It’s not safe for us. That vampire lives too close to us.”

“But has it done anything to you?” Victor asked.

Edgar looked at Victor and shook his head.

“Nevermind.” Victor quickly said, not even noticing Mrs. Demi squinting her eyes at him.

“No, no. It’s quite fine.” Frederick chuckled. “We’re vampire *hunters*. We want to get rid of it before it can do any harm to us.”

“Ah.. I see.” Victor nodded.

“Was such a thing not where you’re from, Victor?” Frederick asked.

“No, it wasn’t. Then again, it was years ago..!” Victor lied. “I suppose I have too much empathy for my own good.”

“Who knows.” Frederick shrugged. He pulled out some gold and placed it onto the countertop. “I should get back to work. Thanks again, Demi!” He looked at Edgar and Victor and shook Victor’s hand. “It was good to meet you.” He looked at Edgar. “Cheer up. I’m sure things’ll get better soon.” He let go and left the bar.

Mrs. Demi sighed. “It’s almost noon. Perhaps you two should visit the Exorcist. It’s important to let him know you’re back and alive.”

“The Exorcist scares me.” Edgar admitted.

“I’ll go with you!” Victor smiled.

“Alright then.” Edgar stood up. “I’ll see you later, Mrs. Demi!” He walked out with Victor following behind.

~

Knock knock.

Victor and Edgar stood outside of the Exorcist’s house in anticipation. Victor had tried to make every excuse he could think of, but Edgar had dragged him along either way.

Victor froze when the door opened.

But instead of a blonde man in red robes, it was someone completely different.

“Oh God save me. You’re not here to ask about your sister, are you?” The Exorcist hissed.

“No..” Edgar sighed.

The Exorcist glanced at Victor. “Who’s this?”

“Victor.” Edgar said quickly. “He’s.. the one who found me and brought me back here.”

“Alright.” The Exorcist shrugged and slammed the door.

Victor was speechless. He glanced down at Edgar, who had a baffled expression. “Is this normal?”

“Unfortunately,” Edgar began. “yes.”

“Lovely.” Victor grumbled. “*First, a sadistic lunatic as the leader of this town, but now a grumpy old man who...*” Victor paused his thoughts, sniffing the air. “*His blood smells different.*”

“A-Are you getting hungry?” Edgar asked.

“No.. sorry. There’s just something off about him.” Victor said. “His blood smells different.”

“Could it be the diet?”



“No.. it’s not that.” Victor began to walk off.

Edgar ran over to Victor. “Then what is it?”

“It’s like.. he’s not even human.”

“You can’t be serious. Come on. Let’s go to the library.”

“Alright.”

~

Victor got back to the bar late. It hurt him to watch Edgar go into Mr. Sarai’s house. But he couldn’t do anything about it. At least not yet..

The bar was empty and Mrs. Demi was cleaning up.

Victor waved and went up the stairs, closing the door behind himself. Victor’s disguise faded as he walked into the bathroom and washed his hands. He then took out the contacts from his eyes and placed them down in the container he brought with him. After that, he poured the cleaning solution in the container and left it to soak overnight. Finally, Victor flopped onto the bed and groaned. “What a day..”

Just then, there was knocking at the door.

“Coming..!” Victor said, getting up out of bed and casting his disguise. He opened the door to see Mrs. Demi. “Hi..? Could I help-“ Victor screamed and stepped away. His eyes began to burn as his disguise automatically faded away. His wings exposed themselves as he desperately tried to wipe away whatever was splashed at his eyes.

## Chapter Thirty Seven

“I KNEW IT!” Mrs. Demi yelled.

Victor shielded himself with his wings, wincing in pain when the woman splashed his wings. “*HOLY WATER!*” He thought. Victor forced himself to open his eyes despite the pain. “*I don’t want to hurt her..*”

“Answer me, vampire!” She yelled. “Why are you with Edgar?!”

Victor moved his wings away and lunged at Mrs. Demi, grabbing her by the throat and pinning her to the ground. With his other hand, he quickly held her arm down which contained an almost-empty glass of holy water. Tears erupted from Victor’s eyes as he tried to clear the holy water from his eyes. “I’m.. protecting him!” He choked out. His voice making him seem more threatening than he’d like.

“Stay.. AWAY FROM HIM!” Mrs. Demi shouted, grabbing a dagger and stabbing Victor in the arm that held the woman’s hand down.

Victor let out a hiss as his grip loosened. He backed up and shielded himself with his half-burned wings.

Mrs. Demi got up, holding the holy water ready. “You’re.. you’re that vampire.. from the house.. Aren’t you!?”

Victor nodded, lowering his wings only a little. “His story is true. I found him in the woods.. and took him in. Now if you would PUT DOWN THAT HOLY WATER-“

“I won’t take orders from a VAMPIRE!”

“Then why don’t we get Edgar here so he can explain to you privately?!” Victor shouted.

Mrs. Demi went quiet.

"I'm only here to keep him safe from his HORRIBLE PARENT! I never WANTED to come back here but HE convinced me to." Victor explained. "All I ask is that you stop trying to kill me.. just.. for a moment.. and I won't kill you."

"How do I know you're not lying?" Mrs. Demi asked.

"If I try anything.. you can kill me."

"..Deal. Stay in there.. I'll be back." She closed the door. "And no funny business!"

Victor heard the lock turn from the outside and heard something being put against the door. "*I'm locked in..*" He concluded. He went through his bags and took out the medkit and began to treat the stab wound on his arm. By now, his vision was slowly clearing up. His wings had burn holes that emitted small amounts of smoke. "*That'll have to heal on his own.*" He thought, taping scraps of cloth on the wing membrane to cover the holes.

~

"Vampire!" Mrs. Demi's voice beyond the door called out. "Are you still in there?"

Victor's eyesight had fully returned. "Yeah!" He replied. He could faintly hear the door being unblocked and the lock turning. He sat on the bed quietly as the door opened.

Mrs. Demi had a crossbow aimed at Victor as she walked in, motioning Edgar to follow inside.

"Alright." She said, pulling up two chairs while keeping the crossbow pointed at Victor.

"What is all of this..?" Edgar asked.

“Tell me everything.” Mrs. Demi ordered. “This *vampire* here has been near you.. and I don’t trust it.”

“Mrs. Demi.” Edgar said, deadpan. He looked at her. “You can put the crossbow down.”

“Why? That’s the vampire making all those hunters we send go missing.”

“Self defense.” Victor protested.

“Not your conversation, vampire.” Mrs. Demi hissed.

“Mrs. Demi..” Edgar sighed, facepalming. “He’s the one that found me and nursed me back to health. Everything I said to you was true. The only lie was that Victor was a traveler. He was a vampire the entire time.”

“How do I know he’s not threatening you?”

Both Victor and Edgar stared at Mrs. Demi.

“I have enough blood to last me a lifetime because of those vampire hunters.” Victor said.

“If Victor wanted to kill me by now, he would’ve done it back when he found me unconscious in the forest.”

“What if he’s-”

“He’s why I’m going to be able to take Mr. Sarai to court.”

“WHAT!?” Both Victor and Mrs. Demi yelled.

“HOLD ON I DIDN’T AGREE TO THAT!” Victor yelled.

“WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!? I KNOW HE’S STRICT BUT YOU CAN’T TAKE YOUR PARENT TO COURT JUST BECAUSE OF THAT!” Mrs. Demi yelled.

“He’s much more than strict..” Edgar said, quenching his fists as his legs shook. “Much.. worse..”

“That monster is why I kicked a watermelon.”

“He’s a monster like you?” Mrs. Demi asked.

“NOT LIKE THAT!” Victor sighed. “I’ll let Edgar explain.. All I ask is for you not to report me to the vampire hunters. Please..?”

Mrs. Demi sighed. “Edgar. Tell me everything. Now.”

Edgar took a deep breath, and began to explain.

~

The topic made Victor’s fingers twitch in rage. He was trying so hard to keep his hate hidden, but it was still visible on his face.

Mrs. Demi was speechless, possibly disturbed. Almost immediately, she gave her answer. “Fine. I’m in.” She looked at Victor. “But don’t expect me to trust you immediately.. I’m keeping my eye on you so you don’t go berserk and kill my customers.”

“Your customers are safe.” Victor reassured her. “I took a whiff earlier. Not even the winglets would bother to bite them.” He joked.

“...” Mrs. Demi slowly reached towards her crossbow.

Edgar shook his head again, motioning Victor not to make that joke.

“Oh- sorry. Wrong time.” Victor sighed. “But either way, don’t worry. I brought my own bottles of blood. I want to avoid as much harm as possible.”

Mrs. Demi slowly nodded. “We should get the captain in on this.”

“I tried. I tried to report that Mr. Sarai was poisoning me. Nothing was done..” Edgar sighed.

“Weird.. I’ll call him over anyway and explain everything to him. Then, you can ask him about that. Something doesn’t sit right with me.” She left the room and closed the door.

Edgar looked at Victor. “How are your wings?”

“They’ll get better.” Victor looked away.

“I’m sorry she attacked you.” Edgar said. “I didn’t know she would do that. I didn’t tell her you were a vamp-“

Victor raised his hand. “No. No.. it’s fine. She found out on her own.” He looked at Edgar, who was looking at him with fear. “Oh-“ Victor put his hand down. “Sorry.. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Please.. don’t do it again..”

“I won’t.”

~

When the door opened again, Edgar had fallen asleep. Victor had laid him in his bed and sat down in the chair nearby.

“So. This is the vampire?” Frederick asked. “I should’ve known. You felt sympathy for the damn thing.. turns out you were just trying to save your own skin.”

Victor looked away. “Could you word it nicer..? I don’t want to be seen as a villain.”

“Well.” Mrs. Demi said. “Edgar here wants to take Mr. Sarai to court.”

“What? Why?”

“..A lot of reasons.” Mrs. Demi said and summarized everything Edgar had told her.

“So the poisoning was true..” Frederick called out loud.  
“Why wasn’t anything done?”

“Not even you know?” Victor asked.

“I don’t know. He came to me around a year ago asking for something to be done. I had to handle something in the village so I assigned it to someone else.”

“So if nothing was done..” Mrs. Demi began.

“He’s not alone.” Everyone concluded.

“But what kind of man would do this to someone?”  
Victor asked.

“Vampire.”

“Call me Victor.”

“Victor.” Frederick corrected himself. “Has anyone told you what the Valden family is?”

“No.. why? Does that relate to this in a way?”

“Yes.” Frederick cleared his throat. “The Valdens were a wealthy family. They had high status and wealth in another village. Then, Melissa and her husband Lawrence moved here. They still kept their status with pride, but never shoved it in our faces. It was well known. There’s one reason why Mr. Sarai could be doing this. For their wealth.”

“What.. happened to the parents?” Victor asked.

“Melissa was executed years ago for treason. The Exorcist himself killed her. Lawrence died a year before her.”

Mrs. Demi looked at Frederick. “What..? I always thought they abandoned the poor children.”

“No. I kept quiet about the whole situation. It wasn’t good to mention it to the children.” He sighed. “Exorcist’s orders as well.”

Victor sighed. “So.. you lied to him?”

“No. It was all Mr. Sarai.” Frederick admitted. “But if we take him to court.. Who will take care of Edgar? He’s not old enough to own a house on his own.”

“I’ll do it.” Victor said. “I’ll take care of him.”

Both Mrs. Demi and Frederick eyed the vampire.

“I’ve been doing it all this time and you can’t trust me for a moment!?” Victor complained.

“We’ll talk about it.” The two hunters concluded.

“I’ll look at the laws regarding tomorrow. You should get some rest too.. Victor.” Frederick stood up. “Good night, you two.”

“Night, captain.” Mrs. Demi said.

Victor quietly waved.

Mrs. Demi gently picked Edgar up. “I’m moving him to another room. I’m not bringing him to his house.. and if that Sarai guy gets mad about it, he can deal with it.” She left the room. “Good night.”

Victor nodded and returned to silence as Mrs. Demi closed the door behind herself. The vampire was left all alone. He quietly tucked himself into bed and closed his eyes.



## Chapter Thirty Eight

“You’re a quick learner!” Marshall said, clapping at Victor’s archery skills. “Pretty soon you can come with us on hunts!”

“I can?” Victor asked.

“Mhm! You’re learning quicker than the other recruits. But, you’d have to be limited to werewolf hunts.. Vampire hunts are a whole other story.”

“Ah.. I see.” Victor nodded, lowering the crossbow in his arms.

“Have your memories returned yet?” Marshall asked, taking out the arrows from the targets.

“No.. unfortunately not.” Victor sighed, taking the arrows from Marshall.

“That’s a shame.” Marshall said. “Let’s pause here for today. The Exorcist is supposed to be coming soon.”

“The Exorcist?” Victor questioned.

“That’s right. The Exorcist said he’d like to see you.”

“Ah.. I see.” He replied, his nervous tone exposing itself.

“Hey. It’s alright. You don’t have to worry.” Marshall reassured him. “The Exorcist has kept this place safe for years! I’m sure he’d like to see how you managed to survive on your own. Especially with no memories!”

“Alright..”

~

Victor was eating lunch at the front desk he was assigned to. He heard the door open and glanced up from the salad he was eating.

A man with blonde hair and a red robe walked into the room. Vampire hunters nearby bowed their heads immediately. The man walked up to Victor and asked in a gentle voice, “Good day, sir. May I know where to find Victor?”

Victor swallowed the small scraps of lettuce and onions in his mouth before answering. “O-Oh.. that’s.. me. I’m Victor. You must be the Exorcist.. right?”

The vampire hunters watching began to whisper and gossip. Just hearing it made Victor’s stress increase.

“Shall we take a stroll in the woods? I heard you have amnesia and survived on your trip here. That by itself is very impressive.”

“O-Oh.. sure.” Victor closed the small plastic container that housed his salad.

“No no. I’ll wait for you to finish. I didn’t know I came in on a bad time.” The Exorcist smiled, giving a chuckle.

“It’s alright.” Victor said. “I’m not that hungry anyway.” He stood up from the chair he sat in and placed the salad in the trash. “Let’s go, shall we?” He opened the door and held it for the Exorcist.

The Exorcist nodded, walking out of the building and waiting for Victor.

~

“So.. I hear you’re a traveler.” The Exorcist said, his voice calming and gentle.

“Yeah.. that’s all I remember about myself besides my name.” Victor gave a nervous smile.

“It truly is a miracle you survived out here all by yourself.” The Exorcist looked around. “Here should be a good place to rest.” He sat on his knees and clamped his hands together.

Victor sat down, his hands on his lap. “Are you sure it’s safe out here..? I don’t have my crossbow with me.”

“Oh I’m quite sure. The vampire hunters patrol the woods regularly and if they catch a monster, they bring it to me.” The Exorcist explained.

“And.. what happens then?”

“I’m sure you’ll find out soon.” The Exorcist smiled.

“Very soon..”

~

Victor woke up in a panic, breathing in and out. He looked around the room and let out a sigh, recognizing the wooden walls of the room Mrs. Demi had set up for him. Both sets of Victor's wings were exposed from the shock. *"I can't forget his voice.. His face though.."* The vampire thought. *"I've forgotten his face."* Victor got up out of bed and hid his wings. He opened the door and walked out of his room. *"Maybe some fresh air could help.."* He thought as he blindly walked toward the exit door and opened it.

The outdoors had a cool breeze that forced every inch of drowsiness away. The chirps of crickets were abundant, accompanied by Victor's own footsteps.

The vampire casted his disguise after stepping out of the door.

~

By morning, Victor was already back in the bar, taking blood out of one of the containers he had brought, along with a pre-made meal.

The door opened as Mrs. Demi's voice filled the room. "Morning, vampire." She said sharply before glancing at what Victor was holding. "You brought blood with you?"

Victor nodded. "I wanted to limit the amount of harm I could bring.. I-if it makes you feel better I'll let you see the amount I brought." The vampire offered.

"No need." Mrs. Demi sighed. "Edgar said he wouldn't be able to sneak out when I brought him home. So I'm stuck with you for the day or whenever Mr. Sarai decides to let the poor kid out."

"A-And you're not going to go.. *Help* him?" Victor questioned, screwing off the top of the bottle lid.

"I can't." Mrs. Demi sighed. "That man would kill me and then get away with it. Besides, if we want anything to truly be done," She paused for a moment. "we'll need to get the Exorcist involved. That's why we're solving this legally." She leaned against the doorframe, crossing her arms as Victor gulped down on some blood. "So as much as I would like to run into that house and get him out of there, I can't."

"Oh.. I didn't think these types of problems would be so complex." Victor responded, closing the bottle and placing it into the bag.

Mrs. Demi nodded and then glanced at one of the small meals Victor had out. "Edgar says you've been making him food when he was gone." She looked at Victor. "Is that true?"

“Yeah.. why?” Victor asked, confused.

Mrs. Demi walked over and held her hand out. “Mind if I try some? I’m a bit lazy this morning.”

“Oh..” Victor quickly nodded and took out a container of meat loaf. “I didn’t make many breakfast meals.. Sorry.” He said, handing it to Mrs. Demi.

“All good.” She said. “Since you’re going to be here for a while, mind if you help out around the bar?”

“Why?”

“You want people to be on your side. Nobody here will trust a stranger immediately.” Mrs. Demi suggested. “In court, there’s two teams. Yours, and the enemy. You *want* people to be on your team.”

Victor nodded.

“I’ll go set up for today. I’ll call you down shortly.” She left the room with the meatloaf container, leaving Victor to eat his breakfast by himself.. just like old times.

~

Victor came down shortly after he had finished and began to help Mrs. Demi set up. He felt comfortable enough not to keep his disguise up in front of her, and to be able to use his magic.

Mrs. Demi would sometimes flinch at the sight of floating cutlery and then look at Victor with an angered face, who would just give a nervous smile in return.

“How was the meatloaf?” He eagerly asked.

“Not bad.” Mrs. Demi begrudgingly responded, walking to the door and flipping over a sign. “You should get your disguise back on.”

“Alright.” Victor said, casting it and walking up to Mrs. Demi. “What does the sign indica-”

“AH!” She screamed, backing up. “Don’t get so close to me!” She yelled.

“Oh..” Victor stepped back. “Sorry..” *“I wasn’t even that close to her..?”* He pondered.

Mrs. Demi sighed. “Well, the sign tells people that the bar is either open, or closed.”

Victor nodded as Mrs. Demi walked back behind the counter. “And.. what now?”

“I wait. You can do.. Whatever it is you vampires do.”

Victor nodded and glanced towards the door. When Mrs. Demi wasn’t looking, he quickly opened the door and left the bar.

~

Some unfinished business had been bugging Victor lately, so much so he had decided to go to the graveyard. The vampire asked around for a little bit before getting the directions and bravery to head there on his own. Some people gave him odd stares, reminding the vampire of his first time. Only a hundred years prior. It may have been a long time for most people. But for Victor, those one hundred years have been constantly replaying in his head and torturing him. Every little decision came right back at him to bite and ridicule.

The graveyard was close to the forest. Victor had to pass by a couple of trees to get to the dirt roads that lead to the graveyard.

*"I wonder why it's so distant."* He thought, finally getting to the entrance.

The dirt roads opened to a black gate with pointed tips, connected to a fence around the perimeter. The graveyard was mostly quiet aside from the sounds of footsteps and woodland ambiance. Nearby the back corner, laid a small, one story house.

Victor walked into the graveyard and began to look at the many stones, scanning each one for a certain name. *"White, no.. Pulvar, no.. Dears, no.. where is Aesop?"* He thought. Victor glanced at the small house and walked towards it. He gently knocked on the door and waited for an answer.

Not too long, a man with an eyepatch opened the door. They had a thick accent and wore a lab coat. "Yes?"

"Are you the grave keeper here?" Victor asked.



“No, I’m the friend of the grave keeper. Why?” The man stood in the doorway, crossing his arms.

“I’m looking for someone.” Victor said. “I.. would appreciate it if you could get the grave keeper.”

“Hmm..” The man thought for a moment. “Wait here.” He said, closing the door.

Victor stood in silence, glancing around the graveyard until the door opened, which he quickly turned to look.

In the doorway, stood another man with a lab coat acting as a cape. They had pale skin, red eyes and blonde hair. Under their coat were tattered clothing covered in dirt. The man had a death grip on a shovel and was slouched over, staring up at Victor.

*“There is no way he is human.”* Victor thought confidently, sniffing the air. *“Nevertheless, I should act like he is one..”* He cleared his throat. “Hello, are you the grave keeper?”

The pale man nodded and slowly reached out to Victor, opening his hand. “An...drew..” The man said in a quiet voice.

“Nice to meet you, Andrew.” Victor smiled and shook the grave keeper’s hand.

“What can.. I help you.. with?” Andrew asked, retracting his hand to hold the shovel once again.

“I’m looking for someone by the name of Aesop. Do you know where he’s buried?”

The grave keeper tilted his head and walked past Victor. He took a glance at the stones before turning to Victor. “No.. no Aesop.” Andrew said, returning to the house. “So warm..”

Victor gave a blank stare before turning to the eye patch-wearing man. "What was that all about?" He asked.

"He's a little different." The man said before glancing at Victor. "I'm sorry he couldn't find this.. Aesop for you."

"Don't sweat it." Victor sighed. "It was a while ago anyway.."

The man shrugged before speaking. "I guess. You look new around here. Who are you?" He asked.

"Victor." The vampire gave a small smile. "And you?"

"Luca." The man smiled back. "A scientist."

"Interesting!" Victor said. "And I am new. I came here with Edgar."

"The missing kid?"

"Yep! I found him and brought him back."

"Ah. I see. Pretty soon you'll be the talk of the village sooner or later."

"I.. I see.." Victor nodded. "I should probably get going, I wouldn't want to leave Mrs. Demi alone for too long!"

"You know Mrs. Demi?" Luca asked. "Could you give this to her?" He took out a small letter and handed it to Victor.

"Oh. Sure!" Victor smiled and waved. "Farewell! Tell Andrew I said thanks for his attempt!"

"I will!" Luca waved back, shutting the door.

Victor let out a sigh of relief, walking out of the graveyard. But part of him felt upset. Why wasn't there a grave for Aesop? Was he still alive? There's no way. Over a hundred thirty years had passed.. And humans can't live that long, right? He looked at the graveyard for one last time. "*This*

*place is full of monsters.. More than I remember. That Exorcist doesn't seem human.. And the gravekeeper isn't either. Just what happened when I left?"*

~

When Victor walked back into the bar, most of the tables were filled with people. He went right to work, leaving the letter he was given behind the counter and then offering his help to Mrs. Demi. Today was going to be a long work day.

## Chapter Thirty Nine

“I looked through the laws.” Frederick said. “Nothing against a monster being in the court.” He looked at Edgar, who had a plate of chicken parmesan and chamomile tea. “I also did find this. It’s from your mother.” Frederick pulled out a small note and handed it to Edgar. “She gave it to me while she was in prison.. And told me to give it to you when you were older and away from Mr. Sarai. It was for yours and Ella’s eyes only.”

Edgar gently took it and glanced at the hand writing. “Thanks..” He said softly, reading the note.

Victor was sitting next to Edgar, quietly watching everyone. “What does it say?” He asked when Edgar finished reading.

“She knew about Mr. Sarai..” Edgar sighed. “She apologized for.. ‘Everything’. She didn’t do anything, right?” Edgar looked at Frederick and Mrs. Demi.

Mrs. Demi sighed. “She was executed for treason.. Becoming too friendly with a monster. We received an anonymous letter with evidence.”

Edgar went quiet, putting his head on his forehead with a distressed look on his face.

“Edgar..” Mrs. Demi said. “I’m-”

“It’s a lot t-to take in..” Edgar sighed. “I never got to know her anyway.”

Everyone went quiet for a couple of moments, before Frederick began to speak again.

“What do we do after Mr. Sarai is taken to prison?” He asked. “None of Edgar’s other relatives live close, and he is underaged.”

“I’d happily take him in!” Victor offered, looking at Edgar who simply stared. “If that’s what you’d like, that is.”

Edgar nodded. “You’ve done more this past month than Mr. Sarai has done for the past seventeen years.”

Victor smiled, mouthing a thank you before looking at Frederick and Mrs. Demi. “How are we going to get the village on our side though? Vampire hunters aren’t allowed to aid people in court so it’s fair for both parties.”

“We get evidence and witnesses.” Mrs. Demi said. “What’s better evidence than the Valden sister herself?”

“Ella?” Frederick asked.

“You can’t.” Edgar sighed. “She’s with a vampire.”

“I thought she-” Frederick was cut off.

“She’s alive. She’s just really busy.” Edgar continued.

“Joseph, the vampire, would kill you two if you came to his house.” Victor said, looking at Frederick and Mrs. Demi.

“And it’s a far walk.”

“But not a far fly?” Mrs. Demi asked.

Victor sighed. “You want me to go there..?”

“Yep!” Mrs. Demi smiled.

Victor groaned. “Fine.. if it’ll get us to win the case. I’ll leave now.”

“Wait. Now?” Edgar asked.

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“It’s far even if I fly. So I should start my journey now, shouldn’t I?” Victor smiled, opening the door with both pairs of his wings exposed.

“I see.” Frederick agreed.

“Fine then. See you soon, Victor.” Mrs. Demi waved.

“Bye, Victor.” Edgar said.

“Goodbye for now!” Victor said to the three of them, waving as he closed the door behind himself, and took off into the air.

# Part Five, the Grueling Wait

## Chapter Forty

Edgar woke up in his bed. Last night, he had managed to sneak back home without being caught. Quickly, he took one of the many bags from under his bed, reaching out and taking a container of leftover chicken parmesan. He grabbed a fork and opened the container, eating in his bed. Sure, the meal was cold. But it was a lot better than being forced to eat whatever Mr. Sarai makes for breakfast. It would surely be poisoned. It always is.

Edgar put the container back in the bag and got up out of bed. He stretched and got dressed for the day, peeking out of his door. *“Good.. Mr. Sarai is still asleep.”* He thought upon seeing the rest of the lights off. Edgar walked down the steps and into the living room, taking a small book out from under a chair.

The night prior, he had learned many things. The real reason his mother was gone, how Mrs. Demi and the captain felt about Victor, and even some rumors of Mr. Sarai was working with someone else. An insider in the vampire hunters. The thought shook Edgar to his core, but it was a hard reality.

Victor would be gone for most of the day due to his trip, so it was just Mrs. Demi and the captain that were around.

Not long after, Mr. Sarai walked into the room. “Good morning.” He said.

“Morning, Mr. Sarai..” Edgar replied, turning the page in his book.

“What are you reading?” Mr. Sarai asked, glancing over at the book.

“Nothing-” Edgar quickly closed the book, staring at Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Sarai glared at Edgar before sitting down in front of him. “Where’s that Victor person you introduced me to? You didn’t tell him anything that happens *here*, did you?” He asked in a snarling tone.

“No Mr. Sarai.” Edgar lied quickly, staring at him dead in the eyes. “I didn’t... what are you going to do to him?”

“Nothing you need to know.” Mr. Sarai answered. “Now where is he?”

“He left. He left momentarily. Please, Mr. Sarai do *not* do anything to him! He’s done nothing!” Edgar begged.

“But he *can* in the future..” Mr. Sarai grumbled. He stood up and walked to the kitchen. “Are you going to eat anything? Or will you starve yourself to death?”

“I’m not hungry..” Edgar said, his voice filled with worry. As he watched Mr. Sarai leave the room, Edgar began to think. He was worried not only for Victor, but surprisingly Mr. Sarai as well. “*What kind of damage would happen to the both of them? Mr. Sarai would be definitely killed.. But Victor..? What could happen to him?*” Edgar pondered every aftermath that went through his head. Each shook him to the core and progressively got worse. Victor’s fate was clear. He wouldn’t



be spared. Mr. Sarai though? Edgar didn't know. But if he was, Edgar was certain that he'd die not long after.

Edgar sighed, trying to get his mind off of everything. He opened the book and went back to reading, hoping to god Victor would come back soon.

~

Throughout the day, Edgar's routine returned to how it was before he ran off. Wake up, deny breakfast, paint, deny lunch, sit in his room, be homeschooled for a little, deny dinner, and sleep. However, every time he denied meals, he would secretly be eating the meals Victor had made on Sunday. He would also be eager to show Mr. Sarai his new confidence in painting, who genuinely seemed shocked.

*"Maybe if I play nice, he'll let me out a little more."* Edgar thought. But every time he asked to go outside, he was told no. "Why?" He asked.

"I don't trust you out there. You could run off again.." Mr. Sarai hissed. "We don't want you to go missing again.. Would we?"

Edgar shook his head in fear. *"When will he stop!?"* He thought.

~

A day or two had passed before there was a knock on the door. Edgar was hiding in his room with the door open with a crack. Faintly, he heard Mr. Sarai's voice speaking to... ..

"It's wonderful to see you again, Victor! Where've you been for the past couple of days? We've been worried sick!"

*"No. You haven't been."* Edgar grumbled.

“I was exploring the woods.” Victor said. “Is Edgar home?”

“Yep! I’m sure he’d be glad to see you. Come in!”

“Oh- thank you!”

Edgar peeked out of his door, sticking his head out and observing the two walk into the house.

“Where is he?” Victor asked, looking around.

“He should be in his room. I’ll go get him.” Mr. Sarai said and began to walk up to Edgar’s room.

Edgar opened the door when Mr. Sarai got close. “Yes..?” He asked, pretending like he knew nothing.

“That dumb friend of yours is here..” Mr. Sarai whispered in an angered tone. “You better not tell him *anything* about what happens here. Understood?”

Edgar nodded and watched Mr. Sarai move out of the way. The painter ran down the stairs and into Victor.

“Oof! Edgar!?” Victor yelped. The vampire knelt down and put his hand on Edgar’s shoulder. “What happened?” He whispered.

“Nothing. I’m just glad to see you.” The painter said confidently. “We should go outside.”

“Mhm.” Victor agreed.

Edgar looked at Mr. Sarai, who stared at him from afar. “Can I go outside? Victor is here so I’ll be safe!”

Mr. Sarai’s face contorted into a sigh. “Fine.”

Edgar smiled as he walked over to the door with Victor, opening it.

“Be back by dinner!” Mr. Sarai shouted.

“Okay!” Edgar shouted back, walking out of the house with Victor following.

~

“He didn’t hurt you or anything, right?” Victor asked immediately when the two were alone in Mrs. Demi’s bar.

“No.” Edgar replied. “He wants to do something horrible to you..” Edgar looked at Victor. “I don’t know what.. He won’t say.”

“That’s concerning..” Victor said, thinking. “You said he tried to poison you a couple of times, right?”

Edgar nodded.

“He might try to poison me.” Victor concluded. “He doesn’t want to be held accountable for my death..”

“But he doesn’t work alone.” Edgar reminded. “There’s *someone* in the vampire hunters that works with him..”

“That’s right..” Victor pondered. However, when he went to speak, the door opened.

“What’re you two talking about?” Mrs. Demi asked.

“Mr. Sarai.” Edgar answered. “He wants to hurt Victor.. We think he’ll hurt Victor with poisons.”

“Hmm.. I see.” Mrs. Demi said. “Let me go wrangle the captain and we’ll catch up.” She closed the door.

Edgar looked at Victor with a worried expression. “What about Ella? Is she coming?” He asked.

Victor sighed and shook his head. “No, Edgar. I’m afraid she isn’t..”

## Chapter Forty One

Edgar stared at the bowl in front of him. “*Why does he keep trying?*” He thought, glancing at Mr. Sarai, who was eating at the head of the table. “Mr.. Sarai?” He said. “I’m not.. Hungry.”

Mr. Sarai looked up. “Are you sure? I worked hard on that..” He grumbled.

Edgar nodded. “Can.. I be excused? Please?”

Mr. Sarai gave Edgar a look and motioned his dismissal.

Edgar stood up and dumped the soup down the drain. He then walked upstairs into his room and locked the door. “*He’s acting nicer than usual.*” He thought. “*He’s planning something.*” Edgar rummaged through his things hidden under the bed. When he grabbed a container, he pulled it out and opened it. The painter froze in dismay as his stomach growled, looking at the inside of the container.

“Missing something?” Mr. Sarai taunted from the other side. “How rude. Has Victor been influencing you not to be grateful for what I’ve been giving you?”

Edgar looked at the door. Despite it being locked, he felt like it would open at any moment. He didn’t say anything.

“Tomorrow, you will eat breakfast.. Tonight, you go to bed hungry for your horrendous attitude.” Mr. Sarai hissed, walking away.

Edgar let out a sigh. “*No wonder why..*” He thought, closing the container and putting it back under the bed. He lied down and stared out of the window.

~

The next day, Edgar forced himself to eat breakfast. His stomach felt worse and he felt like he would throw up at any moment.

As expected, Victor came over again asking to see Edgar.

Much to Edgar's surprise, Mr. Sarai let Victor see him. Edgar was instructed to lie down due to his upcoming symptoms. He could see Victor beginning to lose his patience with Mr. Sarai just by looking into the vampire's eyes. It was astonishing how someone like Victor would have a smile on their face despite being face to face with a horrible person.

"I'm sure you have places to be, correct?" Mr. Sarai asked in an attempt to make Victor leave.

"In fact I don't. I'm not a busy person!" Victor smiled. "I'd love to stay and help Edgar feel better."

Mr. Sarai glanced at Edgar for a moment, then at Victor. "How about we talk downstairs? I could get you some refreshments."

"Oh- Alright!"

Edgar watched the two leave his room. The young painter turned on his side as his throat ached. Edgar had already lost his voice from one meal. It was clear to him. *"Mr. Sarai isn't playing anymore.."* He thought. *"He wants me dead."* All Edgar could do was lie around in bed. He wouldn't be much help to Frederick, Victor or Mrs. Demi. *"The captain said he'd get the court date settled.. He'd have to talk with the Exorcist directly to request one."* Edgar recalled. *"And Mrs. Demi is trying to help everyone get to know Victor so he has a better chance when he presents the evidence. But what is the evidence..?"* He asked

himself. In a short moment, he remembered. *"I'm the evidence.."* Edgar could feel something rush up through his throat. In a moment of panic, he positioned himself over the trash bin next to his bed and threw up.

~

Victor had been able to convince Mr. Sarai to let him stay for the day and take care of Edgar. "You poor thing.." Victor remarked, changing the bags in the bin. "He found out, didn't he."

Edgar nodded.

"Why don't you talk?"

Edgar opened his mouth and pointed at it. When he looked at Victor's confused look, Edgar instead motioned with his hands.

"Ah.. I see." Victor sighed. "We should get you to a doctor."

Edgar pointed towards the door and shook his head.

"What about the door?"

Edgar looked at Victor with an annoyed expression.

"OH! Right.." Victor face palmed. "Mr. Sarai.. he won't let you?"

Edgar shook his head.

"That- that should be illegal!"

*"But it isn't.. he can't be forced to take me to a doctor."*

Edgar thought, nodding.

"Here." Victor handed Edgar a small notebook. "I use it to keep notes. But for now you can use it to communicate!" He took out a small pencil and handed it to Edgar as well.

Edgar took the notebook and pencil, smiling and flipping to a clean page. Then, he wrote *"Thank you!"* onto it.

Victor smiled back. "Does your throat still burn? I can rummage through cabinets to find honey. I remember reading that it helps calm down a sore throat."

*"Sure."* Edgar wrote. *"I'd like anything to calm down my symptoms.. Whatever Mr. Sarai put into my breakfast, it's clear he wants me to be bedridden."*

Victor nodded. "I'll just be a moment!" He smiled and left the room, leaving Edgar alone.

Edgar lied down on his back and sighed, staring up at the ceiling. He placed the notebook on the nightstand beside him and tried to think of something. *"I won't let him delay the court plan."* He thought. *"If he wants to kill me, he'd better do it like a real threat and get his own hands dirty. I need to get better as quickly as possible. I can't let this poison delay anything. I need to get the court day set. I need to get up.. I need to tell the Exorcist."* Edgar rolled out of bed and tried to stand up. His legs were shaking as his throat was in flames. He shuffled to the door, but stood still when it opened.

Victor stared at Edgar with a spoonful of honey in his hand. "Oh! You're up!" He smiled. "Do you still want the spoon?"

Edgar nodded, taking the spoonful and eating it. He then pointed down the hall.

"You want to leave?" Victor guessed. "Edgar, you are under the weather!" He took the spoon back.

Edgar walked to the notebook and wrote in it just as a headache began to form. *“I can’t let him delay my plans. I need to get this to the Exorcist as soon as possible.”*

“Lie down.” Victor protested. “I have an idea.”

Edgar tilted his head but did as told. He lied back down in his bed and stared at Victor.

“Wait here.” Victor smiled and closed the door gently, walking away.

*“I wonder what he’s planning.”* Edgar thought. His eyes began to droop as he yawned. *“Why am I so tired....?”* He thought. He couldn’t fight against the drowsiness and soon fell asleep.



## Chapter Forty Two

Edgar woke up to furious knocking on his door, accompanied by Mr. Sarai's voice. But instead of his usual angered tone, it was a more frightful one.

"Listen, Edgar is asleep! You don't need to-"

"Back away, Harvord. I know what I'm doing." A new voice has said.

*"My throat finally stopped hurting.."* He thought. Right away, Edgar understood who was there and why. He climbed out of bed and walked to the door, opening it.

The Exorcist stood there, staring down at Edgar. His red eyes seeing right through the young painter. Next to the Exorcist, was Mr. Sarai, or what the Exorcist had called him, Harvord. "May I come into your room for a moment?"

Edgar gave the Exorcist a confused look for a moment. "I.." He mumbled. "Sure..?" He moved out of the way and watched the Exorcist walk into the room.

The Exorcist turned to Mr. Sarai. "Scram." He said in a harsh tone before slamming the door and locking it.

Edgar backed up towards his bed and stared at the Exorcist. *"He looks very agitated.. what happened?!"* He thought.

The Exorcist walked up to Edgar, who began to shake in fear. "That friend of yours tells me you want to take your guardian to court.." The Exorcist began, his tone slowly becoming more confused. He sat down next to Edgar and studied him. "Are you afraid of me?"

Edgar didn't answer either question.

“You *need* to answer my questions or I cannot help you.”  
The Exorcist hissed.

Edgar nodded quickly. “I-I want to take Mr. Sarai to court..”

“And why?”

Edgar took a deep breath and began to whisper. “I can’t say here! It’ll be all in the court case! I don’t want to be in his care anymore!”

The Exorcist raised his eyebrow and smiled under his mask. “You entertain me. Consider it set.”

“Really..? That quick?” Edgar asked, astonished.

“Barely anything here interests me.” The Exorcist grumbled. “All this will bring to me is pure entertainment that I’ve been *starved* of..” He stood up and opened the door. “See you soon. The court day will be Monday.”

“Monday!? Why not tomorrow?!”

“Because. I need to clean up the church, and set up the tables. Good day.”

“Wait-”

The door slammed.

Edgar sighed. “*Lovely.. The Exorcist was really helpful!*” He thought sarcastically. “*Now I just have to hope Mr. Sarai doesn’t-*” His thoughts were interrupted by an angered yell.

“EDGAR!”

Edgar raced towards the door and locked it. “*Oh god.. No no no.. I can’t let him do anything to me now. He’ll kill me.*” Edgar thought. He ran over to the window and struggled to open it.

“*SH- SHOOT! HE LOCKED IT???*”

Mr. Sarai began to bang on Edgar's door. "OPEN UP! NOW!" He shouted.

Edgar slowly looked at the door in horror. He took a deep, shaky breath and walked towards it.

"What the hell were you thinking? Getting the Exorcist of all people involved?" Mr. Sarai grumbled, walking in the room as the door opened. "A court case!? For the love of GOD you have to be stupid!"

"I-I'm sorry.. Mr. Sarai.." Edgar backed away. "I-It wasn't-"

"It *wasn't* your idea?" He scoffed. "No amount of scolding will make you learn your lesson this time.."

"Wh-What are you going to do.. To me?" Edgar backed up against the wall, staring up at Mr. Sarai.

"Something I should've done a long.. Long time ago.."

~

(Note: Starting now, it is from Victor's point of view.)

"You WHAT!?" Victor yelled.

Victor had been invited to dinner with Mr. Sarai and Edgar. Victor accepted with much hesitation. He hasn't heard from Edgar all day and wanted answers.

"I told you." Mr. Sarai grumbled. "I tossed him into the woods.. I know what you and him are planning and I won't let it happen."

"I'll tell the Exorcist on you... you..." Victor stood up, trying to prevent himself from being exposed. "I'M GOING TO KILL Y-" Victor stopped.

"Sit back down, would you? Dinner isn't over yet.." Mr. Sarai said in a calm voice.

Victor felt something cold around his neck and gently touched it. "What is this..?" He asked, staring at Mr. Sarai.

"You haven't met my friend yet. Victor," Mr. Sarai said. "this is Kevin." He motioned his hand behind Victor.

A man wearing a large, black hat with white hair and a black mask formed into view. He was holding a chain-link sword against Victor's throat.

Victor glanced at the man, studying his appearance more. He sniffed the man and developed a shocked expression upon finding out who, or what it was.

"We know you're a vampire." The man named Kevin said. "And it's no secret that I'm one too. Now sit down.."

Victor sat back down as the chain-link sword was retracted. He watched Kevin sit down and observed him more.

Kevn wore a black overcoat and a brown belt with a silver buckle over his waist. He wore black, leather gloves and boots and had black eyes.

“I find it amusing to know that the sack of flesh in the woods managed to befriend a *vampire* of all things.” Mr. Sarai laughed. “And if he’s gone, the court case can’t happen.”

“You...” Victor growled.

“You might as well show your true self. You can’t do anything to me. Kevin is an insider of the Vampire Hunters and he could easily report you should you try to attack me.”

Victor said nothing. All he did was stare at the plate of food in front of him with a defeated look.

“Make this easy for all of us.” Mr. Sarai began. “Get out of here.. And don’t come back.”

“Or what..” Victor looked at Mr. Sarai.

“Those wings of yours would be perfect on display.” He replied, picking up the knife and cutting into a steak. “I have yet to see them myself, of course.”

Victor’s eyes widened as he put the connections together. He began to shake in fear, hearing voices in his head.

*“Leave this place and don’t come back, fiend.”* They said.  
*“Or else it’d be you being dewinged next.”*

Victor sat there in a panic, keeping quiet. He wanted to leave but he didn’t know what could happen.

“You’re free to leave.” Mr. Sarai said.

In a quick moment, Victor stood up and darted out the door. He could care less about his own safety now.. His wings

burst out of his disguise as he flew up into the air to begin his search for Edgar.

~

“Edgar!” Victor yelled. He looked around in a panic, sniffing every second he could. His disguise had worn away as his wings tucked themselves against his back. It didn’t take Victor long to find Edgar, curled up against a tree with a bloody arm. “Edgar?!” Victor said quickly, shaking Edgar.

Edgar let out a groan and opened his eyes, staring at Victor. He gave a faint smile as he tried to stretch. “Victor..” he mumbled.

“It’s okay.” Victor cupped his arm under Edgar’s neck and held him against his chest. “I’m here.. I’m sorry I-“

“It’s.. not your fault.” Edgar said, more awake now. “Mr. Sarai.. just got mad.”

Victor wrapped his wings around Edgar as the vampire’s grip tightened. “Are you hurt?”

“Not anymore.. my bleeding stopped.” Edgar jumped. “Your disguise!”

“That doesn’t matter to me. When is the court day?”

“Monday.”

“Ugh.. it’s friday night.. d-don’t worry. We can last..”

“What did Mr. Sarai do to you..?” Edgar asked, looking at Victor in worry.

“Don’t worry.. you don’t need to worry.. let’s get your wound patch before-“ Victor fell silent as the sound of a crossbow moving echoed. He turned around and stared at the new person in front of them.

“Vampire,” They said. “Back away from the human.”

## Chapter Forty Three

The vampire hunter had gray hair and bright yellow eyes that glowed in the dark. He had two tufts of hair mimicking the ears of a canine and fangs poking out of his mouth. His nose was pointed and covered with freckles. The man wore chainmail and animal skin leather clothing. “The last thing I want to do is have to report a feral vampire to the captain. So I advise you to back away.”

Victor’s grip only tightened around Edgar. He began to growl and bare his fangs towards the hunter. “You’re the one that’s backing away..”

“Victor-“ Edgar began to say.

“Don’t worry.” Victor said. “Everything will be okay.” He then faced the hunter and widened his eyes. Victor’s pupils turned into spirals in an attempt of hypnosis.

The hunter stood there for a moment before putting their finger on the trigger. “Your hypnosis doesn’t work on me, vampire. I repeat, back away from the human or I’ll shoot!”

Victor’s growling got louder as his pupils went to normal. His grip tightened. “I won’t let him go.” He hissed. “I won’t let another human take him away from me!”

“Victor wh-“ Edgar said quietly.

“Now back away!” Victor yelled.

The hunter lowered his crossbow and began to approach. “Listen we can solve this without-“

*HISSES!*

“Victor! Stop!” Edgar yelled.



“I WON’T LET HIM GO!” Victor yelled, his grip almost strong enough to crush someone. “I WON’T LET THE BARBARIAN VILLAGE TAKE AWAY THE ONE THING THAT MADE ME HAPPY! I’VE COME THIS FAR AND I WON’T LET YOU COME AND TAKE HIM AWAY TO THAT MONSTER OF A PERSON!”

“You’re speaking nonsense!” The hunter said. “Vampires are able to curse people with their names, right?! My name is Emil! There! You can curse me if you let me return him to Greenwood-“

“If you take a SINGLE STEP CLOSER,” Victor threatened. “I’LL GIVE YOU A REASON TO HUNT ME DOWN-“ He was cut off.

“VICTOR STOP! YOU’RE HURTING ME!” Edgar yelled.

Victor went quiet as his grip immediately loosened. “W-Wha..?” He looked at Edgar, who looked back at him with a terrified look in his eyes. “I..”

The hunter named Emil grabbed Victor’s wings, tossing him onto the ground. “ADA!” He called out, placing both of his hands against Victor’s wings.

Victor let out a demonic screech as he watched a woman in similar clothing to the hunter, approach Edgar. “Get away from him!” He yelled.

“Child.. calm down.. we aren’t going to hurt you.” The woman calmly said, her hands exposed to Edgar, who backed away.

Edgar took a couple steps back before running deeper into the woods.

“Wait!” The woman looked at Emil. “Take the vampire to the captain! I’ll go after the kid!”

“He doesn’t smell like a child..” Emil remarked. He took out a small muzzle and placed it over Victor’s mouth and nose. “Sorry. For precaution.”

Victor growled as he watched Ada run after Edgar. He was forced to stand up as Emil tied his hands behind his back. Victor sniffed the hunter just for a moment. The strength he possessed was... unnatural.

“Alright. Let’s go.” Emil said. He gently pushed Victor and began to escort him out of the woods.

Not long after, Victor finally determined Emil’s scent, werewolf. The scent was of a werewolf.

~

Victor's containment was discomforting as it looked. Victor's wings were being held open by chains connected to the walls and ceiling, Victor's hands were held in place in a metal pillory that did not have a hole for one's head. The muzzle was still over Victor's nose and mouth, and his head was all the vampire could move. "*They really changed the containment..*" He thought. He glanced up ahead, beyond the cage and stared at Emil, who was watching him.

"I hate your eyes.." Victor hissed, staring at Emil's golden eyes.

Emil grumbled and turned away. "You've been quiet until now and the first thing you say is that you hate my eyes."

"I can see them from my cell."

"And I can feel your bloodlust from out here."

"I know you're a werewolf." Victor hissed. "But why..? Why are you doing this!?" He tried to move, but the chains holding his wings began to tug, forcing him backwards and deeper into the cell, before returning him to his regular position.

"It's.. complicated." Emil said. "And I'm *not* a werewolf.. You're lying."

"You deny it when nobody is around. Amusing."

"Just like how you deny being a vampire.."

Victor began to growl as his hands clenched into fists. He wanted to say something, but nothing would get him out of this situation.

The door opened and Ada entered the room.

Immediately, Emil wrapped his arms around Ada. “Have you found him?”

“No..” Ada said, running her hand along Emil’s hair. She looked at Victor, who was watching with a judgemental stare. “Has the vampire been giving you problems, dear?”

“I told you-” Emil sighed and let go. “He insists I’m a werewolf..”

“Silly vampire.” Ada laughed. She walked up in front of the bars and stared at Victor. “You must’ve been mistaken. I’m sorry but none of us are werewolves. Pretty soon you’ll be killed anyway.”

Victor growled.

“Growling won’t help either.”

“Your *friend* sickens me..” Victor hissed.

“Don’t you talk about Emil that way!” Ada shouted. “And you sicken me for that insult.”

“You humans make no sense!” Victor yelled.

Emil just rolled his eyes.

“Actively helping a *werewolf*!? You put so much time into preventing a vampire from being in your midst, that you completely overlooked a werewolf!”

Emil began to growl at Victor as the tufts of hair began to change.. They became fluffier.

Victor smiled under his mask. “*I’ll just annoy that werewolf.. I should have enough strength to get out of here.. Right?*” He thought. “*I just need a distraction.*” I bet that he’ll end up killing you when you’ve served your purpose!”

Ada gasped in an offended tone. “Why you..”

“He’ll just tear you apart like a chew toy.”

“I would NOT!” Emil shouted, his legs were already lycanthropic as his tail began to form, curling around the loose leather that trailed from his waist onto the floor.

“Look. He’s already turning.” Victor shrugged, pointing at Emil.

Ada turned and looked at Emil. “Oh you silly vampire.. I’ve *known* he was a werewolf. I was the one that got him the job!”

Victor sniffed the air as his smile only grew. “But you neglected to tell the others, correct?” He looked at the doorway, which was still open.

“What do you mean..?”

Victor pointed at the door as he saw a man walk in. “The captain.”

Ada’s face turned to one of shock as she looked at the door. “Oh...! C-Captain!”

Emil had a similar reaction. He ran behind Ada and tried to calm his transformation down, but to no avail.

“What.. did I walk in on..” Frederick asked in a confused, yet nervous tone.

“Nothing- nothing.. We just.. Caught a vampire!” She backed away and motioned toward Victor, who had a huge smile hidden under his muzzle.

Frederick glanced at Victor before staring at Emil, who was backed in the corner and whimpering. “..I-” He cut himself off and sighed. “I have so many questions.”

“The vampire did it!” Ada shouted. “He turned my darling Emil into a werewolf! He heroically gave up his name to try and trade a child to save it-”

“Vampires can’t curse people into werewooooolves!” Victor shouted back, trying to hide his laughter.

Ada gave Victor an angered look. “SHUT UP!” She whisper-yelled.

Frederick looked at Victor. “How did you..”

“Mr. Sarai.” Victor said. “He threw Edgar into the woods.. And now he ran off.”

“Edgar ran off.. Again?”

“Yeah...” Victor, Ada, and Emil all said at once.

Frederick facepalmed and groaned. “Oh my god.. NEITHER OF YOU TWO COULD GET ANYTHING DONE.” He yelled. He let out a long sigh before looking at Ada. “Release the vampire. His name is Victor and he is friendly. I’ve talked with him personally.”

“WHAT!?”

“Release him or I’m firing both you and Emil, and reporting him to the Exorcist. And you *both* know how he is with you two.”

Ada sighed. “Fine..”

“Emil. I swear to GOD if you turn on us-”

“I won’t! I would never!”

“Good.” Frederick let out a breath. “I’m done. I’m just- I’m gonna go drink. I need one after dealing with all three of you.” He left the room and shut the door.

Victor, Ada, and Emil all went silent for a moment.

“Does he usually do this?” Victor asked shortly after.

“Yes.” Ada sighed, unlocking the cage and walking inside.

“Emil dear, help me with these confinements.”

Emil walked into the room and worked with Ada to release Victor.

When all of the shackles were off of Victor, including the muzzle, the vampire spoke.

“That was rather.. Unpleasant.” He remarked. “But.. thank you, anyway.”

Ada looked away and crossed her arms.

“How did you know I was a werewolf?” Emil asked, now fully appearing as a human.

“I smelt your blood as you were taking me away.. And your strength is not that of a human’s. If you were more careless it would’ve been too obvious. Are you a pureblood werewolf?” He answered.

Emil nodded as he began to exit the room with Ada. “I.. don’t really want to talk about it.”

“Oh.. my apologies.” Victor said.

“You’re a lot more.. Nicer now.” Ada remarked. “It’s suspicious. Why did the captain never tell us about you? What’s with that kid Edgar and you?”

“It’s complicated.” Victor sighed. “Will you be able to attend the court meeting on monday?”

“No. We can’t. We have a little day planned for each other.” Ada answered, turning to Emil. “Don’t we, dear?” She booped him on the nose.

Emil only smiled and blushed.

“I.. I see.” Victor nodded, exiting the cage as well. He quickly turned back into his human form. “Did you see where Edgar ran off to?”

“He’s the child, right?” Ada asked.

“Yes.” Victor confirmed. “I’m going to look for him before he can get himself hurt again.”

“No.. sorry.” Ada sighed. “But I did find a piece of torn cloth.” She showed it to Victor.

“And you didn’t tell the captain?”

“He never asked.” Ada shrugged.

Victor gently reached towards the piece. “May I?” He asked.

Ada nodded, handing it to Victor.

“A word of advice from a former hunter. You want to report *everything* to the captain. Even if it may be a miniscule clue.” He said.

“Understood.”

“Wait-” Emil started, but was cut off by Victor.

“Emil? Could you sniff this for me?” Victor presented the cloth to Emil. “I used to work here many years ago.. I’d rather not talk about it however. It brings back.. Bad memories.”

*“BEGONE, FIEND! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TAKE CARE OF A HUMAN CHILD!”*

Victor shivered.

Emil nodded and sniffed the piece of cloth before handing it back to Victor. “Scientist.” He hissed.

“...” Victor went quiet as his eyes widened. “I know exactly where he went. Thank you, you two.” Victor ran out of



the room, leaving behind a confused Emil and Ada. *“Luca.. When I catch you Luca.. ohoh.. You better begin to pray to whatever god you believe in.”*

## Chapter Forty Four

Victor banged on the gravekeeper's door. "OPEN U-" He shouted.

The gravekeeper began to scream from beyond the door.

Victor completely froze. "What the- nevermind." He banged on the door again. "OPEN THE DAMN DO-"

The gravekeeper screamed again.

Victor stopped for a moment. "*The hell is wrong with that damn gravekeeper..?*" Victor looked at the door, then slowly at his fists. In a split second decision, he pulled his hand back and formed a fist. He then quickly rushed his hand through the door and broke it. Victor stuck his hand through the door and unlocked the door.

The entire time, Victor's ears were plagued with the gravekeeper's screams.

Victor walked into the house and right up to where the screams were coming from. "Would you calm yourself down!? You're hurting my ears!"

Andrew was on the floor hiding under a table. He looked at Victor and let out one final scream as he flinched. The gravekeeper's face was pale with horror. "WHAT DO YOU WANT!?"

Victor backed away, visibly uncomfortable. "...yeesh. Are.. you okay..?"

Andrew just quickly nodded with a scared look.

"Okay..." He looked around for a moment. "Where's that scientist, Luca?"

"I-I don't.."

“Where is he?” Victor growled. “*Calm down.. He’s already terrified enough.. Don’t scare him..*” He told himself and breathed out.

“I can’t.. R-remember..” Andrew stuttered.

Victor’s eye twitched. “*Don’t get mad, don’t get mad, don’t get mad...*” “Could you.. Give me a general direction..? Of where he might be?”

“Woods...? Maybe..?” Andrew looked up and made a creaking noise with his voice. “Can’t.. Remember..”

Victor sighed. “*Undead aren’t reliable.*” He complained mentally.

“Lab..? Yeah... lab.. Wait-” Andrew stood up. “I’m not... supposed t-to tell...!”

Victor crossed his arms. “What about this, you tell me everything you can about Luca’s location and I’ll leave. Is that okay? Because right now I *really* need to find him..”

“I can.. Ask..”

“No. You’re telling me everything you know. He took someone *I* care a lot about and I need to talk to him.”

“Won’t.. Tell!” Andrew crossed his arms and looked away.

“Please?” Victor tried.

Andrew made an angered noise, turning away from Victor completely.

Victor let out a long groan and reached towards Andrew. He grabbed the gravekeeper by the back of the shirt and dragged him outside. “Maybe this will jog your memory.” He muttered.

Victor walked into the forest and dropped Andrew on the grass. “There. Remember now??” He asked, quickly losing his patience.

“I.. I said.. I’m not.. telling..”

“*Hypnosis might not work.. what if I..*” Victor cleared his throat. “Luca wants to see me.”

“Oh..” Andrew looked at the sky for a moment, and pointed in front of Victor. “Lab is.. that way.”

Victor went quiet. “*Why didn’t I try that before???*” He thought. The vampire sighed. “Thank you.” He quickly began to walk towards the direction Andrew had pointed to.

~

After walking for who knows how long, Victor sat down by a tree and sighed. *"I can't rest here for long. I need to keep moving."* He thought. He looked up at the sky which was turning into a mix of soft, warm colors. Victor's face contorted to worry as he stood back up and began to walk again. *"It's getting late.. where is that lab??"* Victor lifted his head and sniffed the air.

Just as he expected, nothing.

Victor let his head down and continued to walk in the direction. *"Did I pass it? Is it further? How long will it take for me to find it?"* He questioned. *"Just keep walki-"* A small poke on the side of his neck interrupted his thinking. "Ow... what the?" Victor gently felt his neck and took out a small dart. "What is.." He began to feel dizzy and collapsed on the ground. Faintly, Victor saw someone walk up to him just before his eyes drooped shut.

~

Approximately 100 years ago.

Victor was up late again. He was writing information down from various documents he had stolen. The vampire had nearly forgotten the entire reason why he took that bet. To get information on Greenwood. Faintly, he heard wingbeats against the window and without looking, Victor opened it.

Andy, the other vampire climbed through the window and retracted their wings. He wiped his mouth with his arm before looking at the papers in front of Victor. "What are those?" He asked.

“Documents.” Victor answered. He reached over to a paper and handed it to Andy. “This is about werewolves. Specifically the anatomy.”

“Eugh..” Andy shuddered. “They’re really interested in this stuff.. how many werewolves do you think they killed to learn all of this?”

“Many.”

“Hmm... did you find anything on us vampires?”

In truth, Victor did. He found many things on them. Stories, artwork, and even.. things he didn’t feel comfortable thinking about. But he couldn’t help his overwhelming curiosity about humans. “No.” He lied. “Nothing yet.”

“Seriously??” Andy complained. “This place is the *vampire* hunting base. They’d have to have stuff on us..”

“It’s an umbrella term. That’s what the captain told me when I asked about it.”

“You talked to the captain?”

“Yes.. directly.” Victor admitted. “He’s.. not really that scary..” “*What am I saying?*”

Andy gave Victor an unamused look. “Are you joking? Victor. You *can’t* be friends with humans. They’re *barbaric!* Murderers even! You’ve seen what they’ve done to our brethren!”

“I know..” Victor sighed. “Sorry.”

“How about we meet next month?” Andy asked. “Then after that you don’t have to stay here anymore.” He walked up to the window and sat on the sill.

“Sure.” Victor smiled.

“Alright. One last thing before I go.” Andy exposed his wings. “Do NOT get on the Exorcist’s bad side.. every missing case from our town always involved him.” He sighed. “And I’d hate to see you have an unmarked grave.” Andy leapt backwards from the window and flew off into the night.

Victor felt a shiver run down his spine, replaying the warning in his head. *“It’s hard to believe the Exorcist is that bad.. Especially after meeting him in person.”* He turned back and continued writing. *“But is he really such a horrible person?”*

~

The next day, the Exorcist took Victor to brunch. Victor had slept in that day, which he apologized to the Exorcist for, but was let off without a warning.

“Why were you up so late?” The Exorcist asked, stabbing his fork into a waffle and putting it into his mouth.

“Reading documents.” Victor said.

“On what?”

“Different monsters. I didn’t realize the monsters that we hunt are studied and written about!”

The Exorcist laughed. “Yes, of course. We take every opportunity we can to learn about these monsters in order to *kill* them..” The Exorcist stabbed their fork into another piece of waffle, some syrup easing out. He gently moved the knife and cut the waffle apart. “Then again, it’s risky. As the monsters could easily overpower us, should we not be careful.”

“I.. see..” Victor nodded, a little discomforted by the Exorcist’s violent nature.

“Well now.” The Exorcist dabbed his mouth with a napkin. “Now, whenever you’re ready we shall depart. I am much eager to show you something I’ve found last night.” He smiled.

“Oh? Alright..” Victor said. When he finished eating, he stood up and followed the Exorcist out the door. “What did you find?” He asked.

“Oh. You’ll see.” The Exorcist smiled.

Victor’s nose caught the smell of blood unlike any other. He stopped in place and looked at the alley beside the bar. At first, he couldn’t see anything, but with a little more focusing he managed to spot a small child. “*The blood smells awful...*” He thought.

“Victor!” The Exorcist shouted, causing the vampire to jump.

“AH- Yes? Sorry..” Victor looked at the Exorcist.

“Don’t worry.” He said. “Let’s continue.”

Victor followed the Exorcist to the lower levels of the hunting base.

The walls were covered in stone. The only light that filled the dim staircase was from torches bolted to the walls in little indents. The area would’ve been quiet if it wasn’t for the sounds of footsteps and then the faint ambiance of chains being moved.

Victor had never been down in this part of the base before and looked around nervously. “What.. is this place?” He asked.



“The place where we keep monsters.” The Exorcist took a wooden bar off of a door and opened it. “After you.”

Victor slowly walked in, his heart beginning to race as he looked around. The vampire looked in front of himself and froze.

The Exorcist walked beside Victor and with a grim smile, he spoke. “Last night, I hunted this vampire myself. Soon, I’ll take its wings and kill it.”

In front of Victor, was Andy. Who was chained to a wall behind bars, staring at the two with fear in his eyes.

## Chapter Forty Five

Current date.

Victor woke up in a cold sweat. *“That nightmare again..”* He thought. Almost immediately, he noticed he wasn’t outside anymore. *“Where am I?”* He thought.

The room was a bland olive-white. The floor was the same color as the walls. In front of Victor, sat bars and a metal door.

Victor was laid in a bed with white blankets and covers, along with gray pillows.

The vampire got out of the bed and leaned against the bars. *“Am I in the vampire hunting base..?”* He thought. He looked behind himself, realizing his disguise had been dispelled. *“Oh no..”* He thought. As Victor tried to cast the spell, he heard footsteps approaching and a familiar voice.

*“Oh wow.. You really *are* a vampire.”*

Victor turned and looked at the voice, which belonged to Luca. *“What have you done with Edgar?”* He asked, immediately forgetting about his exposed appearance.

*“So that’s why you were in the woods..”* Luca mumbled.

*“ANSWER MY QUESTION!”* Victor shouted. A wave of rage inflicting his voice.

Luca was taken aback for a moment, but cleared his throat. *“He’s in another cell. But don’t worry, he’s sa-”*

*“What are you going to do with us..”* Victor cut the scientist off.

“Maybe run a couple of tests..? But the kid is fine. He’s just..” The scientist snapped his fingers. “What was it.. Ah! He’s just watching the wolf kid.”

“What wolf kid..?”

“Don’t worry about it. As long as that one is kept contained, everyone is safe.”

Victor gave the scientist an annoyed look. “And why am I here..”

“Well.. I’ve never ran tests on a vampire before. I feel like it’d be an interesting experience.”

“You see me as a guinea pig..?” Victor hissed.

“Well.. no.” The scientist began. He walked to a mini fridge and began to dig through it. “I just want to answer some of my own questions, that’s all.”

“But why did you take Edgar?”

Luca looked up at Victor. “I’m sorry.. I can’t give an answer for that.” He looked back into the mini fridge, taking out a jar of red liquid. “It’s classified.”

The scent reached Victor’s nose in mere seconds. How long had it been since he had blood? He couldn’t remember. Victor’s eyes focussed on the two jars that were brought out.

“Alright..” Luca began, taking the jars and walking to the cage. “One jar is human blood from a corpse I found a couple days ago. The other is cattle blood. I’m curious, which one do vampires prefer more?”

Victor watched as Luca opened both jars and grabbed a pair of tongs.

Gently, the scientist pushed both jars into the cage and sat down, observing closely.

The vampire gently grabbed one jar labeled “A” and sniffed it. *“Sweet blood.. the human had a very sugary diet. Middle aged as well.”* Victor tipped his finger into the jar and licked the blood off from it. *“Too sugary.. they had some sort of addiction. It would be better if balanced out with something with more flavor.”* Victor licked his finger clean before setting the jar down. He grabbed the jar labeled “B” and sniffed it. *“Interesting scent.. vegetarian. Definitely an old.. What did he say it was? Cattle?”* Victor dipped a different finger into the jar and licked the blood from it. *“Delicious.. must.. have more..”* Victor looked at the jar with dilated eyes. He slowly turned to Luca and stared at him.

“Why are you.. looking at me?” Luca asked, visibly uncomfortable.

Victor didn’t say anything. Hunger was all he felt. Could he continue drinking this delicious blood? Did he have to give it back?

“You.. you want the cattle blood. Right?..” Luca guessed. “K-Keep it.. just.. stop looking at me like that.” He reached for the tongs and took back the A jar and closed it. He stood up and placed the jar back into the mini fridge.

Victor began to devour the cattle blood. Every drop went right into his mouth. When the jar went empty, Victor’s pupils had returned to their regular size. He turned to Luca, who was writing at a desk. “When can we leave..?” He asked. “Edgar and I have to go to a court hearing on Monday.”

Luca looked at Victor with a solemn expression. "I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't-"

"I don't know." Luca stood up and walked to the cage. "My boss wanted something to do with Edgar and wouldn't tell me what." He whispered. "However, I'll try to get you two out by Monday. It may take me a little to convince him though."

Victor remained quiet as Luca walked back to where he was and continued to write. Victor looked at the metal door. "*I wonder.. Can I break it down?*" He walked to the door and stared at it for a moment or two before pulling back his fist and ramming it through the door. Just as expected, the door came off with a single punch. Victor stepped out of the cell and stared at Luca, who stared back at him.

"How did you.." Luca said, reaching into his inner coat pocket and pulling out a gun.

Victor stared at Luca in silence.

"In. In the cage." Luca pointed the gun at Victor.

"I'm not a dog." Victor hissed and began to walk towards him.

Luca put his finger on the trigger. "I said. Get in the cage."

Victor grumbled and turned around, walking back into the cage. "What will you do now that I broke the door?"

Luca began to dig through cabinets again. "You said you wanted to find Edgar, right?"

“Yes?” Victor replied, watching the scientist walk over with a cup of water, and doused it over the entrance of the cage.

“I’ll talk with my boss about letting you two go. Only if you cooperate and stay in the cage.”

Victor sighed. “*If it’s what’ll get us out of here..*” “Fine.”

“Good.” Luca put the cup into the sink and left the room, leaving Victor alone.

Victor waited for a couple of minutes. The silence was slowly getting to him. However, just a couple of moments after, he began to hear Edgar. “Edgar!?” He put his ear against the wall.

The echo of Edgar’s screams reached the vampire, along with a panicked yelling.

Victor pulled himself away from the wall and looked at the broken door. He then looked at the wall. “*I have to help him.*” Without a second thought, Victor’s horns and both pairs of wings revealed themselves, and he charged at the wall.

## Chapter Forty Six

“GET AWAY FROM ME!”

“Hun...gry...”

“EDGAR! I’M HERE!”

The whole room was filled with yelling.

“VICTOR???”

“FOOD..”

“Everything’s okay!”

Victor’s wings flapped away the dust, creating an opera of coughs. When he saw the young painter, Victor rushed over and hugged him.

“How did..” Edgar said, almost quietly. He looked towards the direction where a series of growls were admitting from. He let out a yelp and hugged Victor tighter.

“Shh shh.. It’s okay.. I’m here.” Victor said, he then looked at the direction Edgar was looking, blinking.

The growling came from a small child that wore ragged funeral clothing. They had twigs in their messy hair and were attached to an IV filled with blood. The child looked pale and had dark brown eyes, along with a couple of arrows sticking out of their neck.

Almost immediately, Victor began to talk in a calm voice. “Hello there, little one. What’s your name?”

The child walked up to Victor with their arms out, reaching for Edgar. “Food...”

Edgar went quiet, trying to move away from the child.

“Food?” Victor set Edgar down behind himself and sniffed the child. “*An undead.. Oh.. Poor thing.*” He cleared his throat. “No. Not food. Edgar is a human. Just like you were.”

“Hu..man..?” The child repeated in a raspy voice.

“Yes.. if you keep your distance from Edgar, I’ll feed you. Alright, little one?”

“Rob..bie.. Robbie..” The child walked out of the room the trio were in, and into another cage.

Victor couldn’t help but sigh. “*Why is he kept here?*” He looked at Edgar, who had a deathgrip on his cloak. “What happened? Are you hurt? What did that scientist do to you?”

“I’m fine. The scientist didn’t do anything yet.. He seemed more concerned with you.” Edgar replied. “Where is he anyway..”

“I don’t know.” Victor paused. “Let’s get the kid and get out of here.”

“No!”

“What do you mean, no?”

“We need to leave that kid here.. It’s an undead. It’ll be bad for us and itself if we bring it with us.”

Victor frowned. “Really?”

Edgar nodded.

Victor took Edgar by the hand. “Fine then. Wait by the door, I’ll go feed the child and then-” He was cut off as a loud shot fired through the room. Victor looked at his shoulder, a look of horror as he watched the blood spilling from his shoulder turn into smoke.

Edgar watched in horror, speechless.



Victor looked at the doorway and stared at a man in a lab coat, who held a gun pointed at Victor.

“Vampire.” The man began. He stepped into the room, keeping his gun pointed at Victor. “My student tells me you have a court case to go to on Monday.”

“Yes.. Yes that’s right..” Victor said, biting his tongue to fight off the pain. He stood in front of Victor, glaring at the man.

“Unfortunately for you, I won’t let you go.” The scientist began. “You’re too much to lose.”

Victor hissed at the scientist. “What will it take for you to let us go!?”

The scientist looked behind Victor. “Kill the human.”

“What!?” Edgar and Victor said in unison.

“I’m not going to do that!” Victor yelled. “What if I take that little Robbie off your h-”

“I said, kill him.” The scientist repeated in a harsh voice.

“I told you I won’t!” Victor repeated.

The scientist looked towards the doorway, gun still pointed at Victor. “LUCA! GET IN HERE!”

In mere moments, Luca walked in the room. “What is it?”

The scientist grabbed Luca by the collar and dragged him away from Edgar and Victor.

“Victor. While they’re arguing, let’s just leave.” Edgar whispered.

“Oh?” Victor looked at Edgar.

Edgar gave Victor a look. “Did you seriously forget? You broke a wall behind yourself. Let’s just go through it and get out of here.”

“Oh. Right.”

While the two scientists were talking, Victor and Edgar walked through the halls of the labs, and left.

~

“That was really easy.” Victor remarked.

“Yeah.. I guess god didn’t like that place.” Edgar said. He looked at Victor. “Can we talk about.. the woods thing?”

Victor looked at Edgar. “Oh.. sure..?” He said.

“You scared me.” Edgar began. “I-I understand you were trying to be defensive but.. with you holding onto me really tight, it scared me.”

Victor was quiet as he continued to walk alongside Edgar. He only could sigh.

“Sorry for.. running off.”

“I’m sorry for scaring you.”

“It’s okay..”

The two went back to being quiet until they reached Greenwood. Unlike before, Victor wasn’t hesitant to enter Greenwood. He walked into the village as his disguise formed, holding Edgar’s hand. Right away, he took Edgar to Mrs. Demi’s bar before heading to the infirmary to get his wound healed.

~

Victor was standing in front of the Exorcist's house. A couple moments later, Victor heard footsteps and looked behind himself. "Oh? Little one?"

Robbie stared at Victor. "Doctors.. arguing. Robbie escaped." He smiled, and then looked at the Exorcist's door. "What's this..?" He gently put his hands around the knob.

"This is the Exorcist's house. There's no need to turn the knob, I already knocked." He gently moved Robbie's hands away.

The door opened as the Exorcist stared at the two. "One, I thought you died." He said, pointing at Victor. He then looked at Robbie. "Two, you're supposed to be dead."

Robbie hid behind Victor. "Scary.." he whispered.

"You know he's an undead?" Victor asked.

"Come inside." The Exorcist stepped out of the way.

"No thank you!" Victor protested, backing away with Robbie.

"Why?" The Exorcist asked.

"I just.. don't feel comfortable." The vampire said. "And Robbie is afraid."

The Exorcist gave Victor a look before sighing and nodding. "Of course I know he's an undead. I've known from the start. I just didn't do anything because he wasn't worth my time."

Victor gave the Exorcist a look in return.

"Well? Go on. Tell me why you're here." The Exorcist closed the door behind himself and leaned against it.

“Do you think.. I could take care of Edgar? Being that he isn’t.. Fully an adult yet?”

The Exorcist was quiet for a couple moments and looked into Victor’s eyes. “What did you say your name was?”

“V-Victor.. Is there something wrong..?”

“No.. sorry.” The Exorcist shook his head. “You just.. Reminded me of someone.” He cleared his throat. “I can’t answer your question, sorry. That is up to the rest of the villagers. Depending on what they think, will decide on if you will be able to take in Edgar as your own child.”

Victor nodded.

“Remember. The court case is on Monday in the old church. Don’t be late.” The Exorcist closed the door.

Victor looked at Robbie, who peeked out from behind his leg.

“Is he gone..?”

“Mhm.” Victor replied. “Do you have any parents, little one?”

“I can’t remember..”

Victor sighed. “Come with me then.. I’ll let you stay with me.”

## Chapter Forty Seven

One hundred years prior.

Victor laid wide awake in a bed. Normally, he'd be trying to sleep during noon to make up for the lack of sleep he'd been getting. But now, he couldn't. He was too afraid.

*"I found this fiendish vampire sneaking about last night. Poor thing was so confused when it got caught!"* The Exorcist had said.

Victor's own dear friend.. Caught and chained against the wall in a cage. He was too afraid to do anything. He couldn't go down there and help Andy.. Not now.. People would think he was too suspicious.

Gently, someone knocked on the door.

Victor looked at the door. "Come in." He called out.

Marshall opened the door and walked in the room. With a sigh, he gave a soft smile. "Good evening, Victor. Is everything alright?"

Victor was quiet. He didn't know what to say or start with. He buried himself under the blanket, trying to find comfort.

"Did the Exorcist show you..?" Marshall asked, pulling up a chair and sitting in front of Victor.

Victor nodded.

"Ah.. I see." The captain cleared his throat. "I'm sorry, but I.. he's asking for the both of us. He says it's important you come with me."

Victor hesitated before getting out of bed. He stood in front of Marshall. "Now?"

Marshall nodded and stood up.

Victor sighed and began to walk out of the room with Marshall following behind.

~

The two began to walk down the stairway leading to Andy's cage. The entire way down, Andy's screams echoed up the stairs and infested Victor and Marshall's ears. When the two got down to the cage, Victor wanted to run and hide.

The Exorcist turned around, a metal fire poker in his hand. "Ah. Glad you two could make it." He gave a smile.

Victor looked at the fire poker with fear, staring at the glowing red tip. "Wh..Why do you.. Have that.." He asked.

"Just questioning our captive." The Exorcist smiled.

Victor looked at Andy, looking at the many wounds over his body. He put his hands over his mouth and backed away.

"Where are you going?" The Exorcist hissed. "We haven't gotten to the main part yet."

"Exorcist. If I may intrude, this is torture.. No living thing deserves this." Marshall said. He motioned towards Andy, who was breathing heavily from all the burn marks.

"Not even a vampire."

The Exorcist gave a look of disgust. "Then how about I propose this." The Exorcist went towards a bucket of cold water and set the fire poker into it. He then took out a small flaying knife from his inner coat. "We dewing the damn thing and kill it."

"What..?"

Victor's heart stopped. Dewing?

“WHAT!?” Andy screamed. He looked at the Exorcist with fear. “Y-YOU DON’T NEED TO DO THAT! I-I’LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW!”

“Oh but it’s too late for that.” The Exorcist placed his finger on the knife’s tip and spun it gently. “You’re no use for me.. And I’d love to hear you scream, but I’m scaring the new recruit.”

Andy looked at Victor.

Victor could tell what Andy wanted. His eyes were pleading for help. Begging for Victor to break loose from his disguise and save him. Victor wanted to as well.. But the truth was.

Victor was a coward.

~

Current day, Mrs. Demi's bar.

Victor woke up in a sweat. Beside him, was Edgar with a worried look. "What happened?" Victor choked out.

"You.. you looked like you were having a nightmare." Edgar said.

Victor sniffed Edgar and let out a sigh of relief. "Good.. it's you."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing.. nothing." The vampire responded. He sat up, looking down at the blanket covering him. "Is that all?"

Edgar gently took out his sketchbook. "Do.. you want to talk about your nightmare?"

"No." Victor looked at the sketchbook. "*Maybe I should change the subject..*" He then looked at Edgar. "What did you draw?"

"Nothing yet.. I'm looking for inspiration." He looked at Victor's stature, which gave away the vampire's anxiety. "I'll brew up some tea. While I do that, why don't you draw?" Edgar handed Victor a pencil and eraser.

"Oh?.. okay."

"I won't take long. I promise." Edgar left the room and shut the door behind himself.

Victor looked down at the blank page as memories from his nightmare rattled through his head. Maybe drawing could help him get his mind off of it? "*I'm not a good drawer.. But I don't want to disappoint Edgar.*" He thought. Victor kept thinking until an idea came into his head. "*I know what to*



*draw!"* Victor picked up the pencil and placed it against the paper..

~

Edgar came back shortly after with a mug of steaming tea with a napkin. "Victor, I'm back."

"Welcome back." Victor gave a small smile. He was much calmer now and reached for the mug. He took a sip as Edgar grabbed the sketchbook on his lap.

"What'd you draw?" Edgar asked.

"Joseph, Andy, and I.."

"Andy?"

"He.. was a friend I had." Victor lied back against the pillows.

Edgar understood immediately. "Oh.. I'm sorry." He ran his fingers along the paper. "Joseph mentioned you two had a rough meeting.. And that he tried to kill you. Could you tell me what happened?"

Victor took another sip of tea and sighed. "Yes.. I remember it well." He looked at Edgar. "I suppose I could. My family used to be in possession of a book. A book that housed many spells. The Vampire King and Queen wanted to have it for themselves, but my ancestors refused. So.. they were hunted down. At the same time, humans had found out how to kill vampires, and were hunting us down left and right. So, I couldn't go anywhere to hide when I had the book. I got into a fight with a couple of humans who tried to kill me. I managed to escape from them and hide in an abandoned watch tower not too far from a cliff. I didn't know that I was being

followed, however. Joseph walked up to me and told me I had no choice but to give him the book. He'd kill me if I tried to resist, and I would've eventually died from my wounds if I tried to fly away. He offered me a deal." Victor took a sip of tea before continuing. "The book, for my life. I handed him the book and he began to treat my wounds. He promised to tell the Court and the Royals that I had succumbed to my injuries in the woods and the book was somewhere nobody would find it. In reality, he hid it from the Royals and probably still has it somewhere." He then looked at Edgar. "Later on, we began to talk more and I guess.. He became someone I could trust." He smiled.

Edgar looked up at Victor and sighed. "Everyone just hates you in this world.. Don't they?" He asked with a hint of pity.

"I don't look at it that way." Victor's smile remained. "Humans are afraid of me, but not all of you hate me." He took another sip of tea. "And you've proven that.. Tell me, what time is it?"

It's.. around two AM.." Edgar said. "I couldn't sleep so I went to walk around and then I heard you."

Victor nodded. "You should get to sleep now. We have a court case tomorrow and it's best for us to stay away from Mr. Sarai and whoever his accomplice is."

"What about you?"

"I'll be fine. It's normal for us vampires to stay awake at night."

Edgar nodded. "Good night, Victor."

“Good night.” The vampire responded. Victor smiled when Edgar left the room. As Victor began to drink his tea, he heard another voice.

“Do you really think you’ll be able to win in court?”

Victor put the mug down immediately as his eyes widened. He recognized the voice immediately. “Why are you here, Kevin?” He asked.

“You haven’t forgotten my name. Good.” He replied, walking up to Victor and standing over him.

“What do you *want??*” Victor asked.

“Why haven’t you left yet..” Kevin asked, avoiding the vampire’s question.

“We’re staying for the court date..” Victor got out of bed and stood up. Now he was the one towering over Kevin.

“Answer. My. Questions.” He snarled.

“You won’t win.” Kevin said. Yet again, avoiding Victor’s questions. “Do you really think a human can be taken in by a vampire?”

Victor growled.

“Pathetic.” He said. “This has all happened before, hasn’t it, vampire?” He began to walk around in circles, taunting Victor. “You took the poor thing in-”

“Don’t you *dare* bring him up..”

“And then you gave him away when he needed you the most.” Kevin stopped, pivoting his body to face Victor. “You’ll do the same with this one too. I’m sure of it.”

Victor couldn’t come up with a response. He looked away and growled.

“You know I’m right. So why are you still trying to take custody over Edgar? Shouldn’t it be better for.. A *human* to take care of him? Rather than a vampire?”

“Shut up.” Victor grumbled. He walked past Kevin and put his hand on the knob.

Suddenly, the chain-link sword was wrapped around Victor’s wrist. With a yank, Victor was pulled towards Kevin and fell on the ground with a thud.

“I’m here to see you try to win.. And then finally take your wings when you *crumble*..” Kevin hissed. He unwrapped his chain-link sword from Victor’s wrist, putting it on his waist.

“Why is everyone after my wings!?” Victor complained.

“I’m not. I’m just being paid good money.” Kevin shrugged.

Victor gave Kevin a look and sighed. “Can I be left alone now?”

“Yea. Sure.” Kevin walked out.

Victor watched the door close and sighed. He stood up and climbed back into bed. He laid awake, staring at the ceiling before falling into a deep sleep.

## Chapter Forty Eight

Victor couldn't sleep for long. He had that nightmare again. The nightmare of Andy being dewinged. But, it wasn't really a nightmare. More of a memory that played over and over in Victor's mind. Projecting onto the screens that were his eyes.

It was Sunday now. Tomorrow there will be a court case. The one that determined everything.

Victor sat on one of the chairs on the front desk, barely touching the breakfast Mrs. Demi had made him.

"Something wrong?" Mrs. Demi asked, eyeing Victor.

"Where's Edgar?" Victor asked. He hadn't seen Edgar all morning.. but it wasn't really his worry. *"I can't trust that Mr. Sarai or Kevin.."* He thought.

"He's with the Exorcist for today. The captain said he wanted to help you get ready for court." Mrs. Demi answered. "Eat a little, please?"

Victor looked at the plate and sighed. "I'll try.." He mumbled. He picked up his fork and began to eat quietly, momentarily glancing up at Mrs. Demi, who was busy setting up for the day.

When Victor finished, he disguised himself and helped Mrs. Demi with the last bit of setting up. The door opened as guests came in and began to order food and drinks.

*"This early?"* Victor thought, watching everyone come in.

Among the customers was Frederick. He walked up to Victor and smiled. "Good morning, Victor. Are you ready to get set up for court?"

“Sure.” Victor smiled.

Frederick and Victor left the bar and began to walk through Greenwood. The two walked to the tailor shop and waited for their turn.

“And what’ll it be for you two, men?” A woman asked.

Victor looked down at the woman and studied her appearance.

The woman wore a long, velvet dress with frilled cloth, covered by a white apron with different sewing tools in the pockets. She wore her white hair in a bun with around four pins stuck in the curls. The woman sat in a small wheelchair with a table attached to the right side.

“One suit, please.” Frederick said. “It’s for my friend here.” He motioned to Victor.

*“He sees me as a friend..?”* Victor thought, giving Frederick a confused look.

“Well then, sir. Come with me! Take a look at your options first and if you need us to, we’ll tailor you a custom suit!” The woman smiled.

Victor stood up and followed her to another room. He looked around at all of the different suits, gently placed over strange wooden sculptures of humans.

“Feel free to try them on.” The woman said.

Victor observed each suit closely. Black, gray, blue.. Which one would be appropriate for court? He decided to ask that question. Victor looked towards the woman. “What would be fitting for a courtroom?”

“Hmm.. is there a court summoning happening? That’s interesting.” The woman said. She rolled towards a black tuxedo jacket and pants that were accompanied by a white undershirt and black bowtie. “What is the case about, if I may ask?”

Victor gently took the outfit from the sculpture and looked at the sizing. “*It should fit me perfectly..*” He thought. “I don’t think I can say. I’m sorry.”

“Oh don’t worry.” The woman smiled. “Do you like the choice, sir?”

Victor nodded. “I’ll take it.”

“Wonderful!” The woman clapped her hands before rolling towards a small cash register. “That will be thirty gold coins, please.”

Victor fiddled around in his pockets before handing over the amount.

The woman stared at the gold coins for a moment and looked back up at him. “Sir.. that gold is worth more than what you’re charged.”

Victor raised an eyebrow as the woman pushed back the twenty-nine remaining golden coins. “What?”

“Sir. These are all from Old Greenwood..” The woman explained. “How did- How did you find these!?”

“I guess.. It was passed down in the family?” Victor lied, shrugging.

The woman became speechless for a couple of moments. “You... you’re free to leave.” She grabbed a small paper and handed it to Victor, along with the outfit he had purchased.

Victor simply blinked. "Bye!" He said, walking out of the room and towards Frederick.

"How'd it go?" He asked.

"I think.. I scared her." Victor sighed.

Frederick raised an eyebrow.

"I just handed her one of the golden coins I had which were apparently from 'Old Greenwood'.. And now she's gone quiet."

Frederick stopped and looked at Victor. "Those things.. You know what. You're a vampire. Of course you're gonna have priceless stuff."

"Priceless?"

"Those things are worth more than anything else here now." The captain explained, opening the door and holding it for Victor.

"Oh. I see." Victor nodded, walking out of the tailor shop and closing the door for Frederick. "What now?"

"I need to get to the base. I hope to see you soon." He began to walk towards the vampire hunting base, leaving Victor on his own.

Victor looked at the bar and walked inside. He walked up to his room and placed the suit into a cabinet. "*I don't trust Edgar being with the Exorcist on his own..*" The vampire thought. He left the bar and walked over to the Exorcist's house. Victor knocked on the door and waited patiently for the Exorcist to answer.

Not long, the Exorcist opened the door and stared at him. "Yes?"



“How is Edgar doing?”

The Exorcist sighed. “Good as he *can* be.” He looked at Victor. “I’m assuming you want in?”

Victor nodded.

The Exorcist sighed and moved out of the way, eyeing Victor as he walked into the house.

The house was average sized and opened up to three different rooms on the first floor. Right in front of the door, sat the living room with a table and a couple of couches. Behind the living room was the kitchen that had counters and usual cooking equipment. And to Victor’s right, was the library that had bookshelves similar to the ones at his own house, and a couple of couches and tables.

Victor found Edgar reading a book by the library and walked up to him. “How are you doing, Edgar?” He asked.

Edgar looked up at Victor from his book. “I’m doing good. Did you get clothing for the case?”

“Yep!” Victor dragged over a chair and sat next to Edgar. “What are you reading?”

“A book on werewolves.” Edgar said. “You’re worried about the Exorcist.. Right?” He whispered.

Victor nodded. “Something about him puts me in a bad mood.. I’ve said he doesn’t seem human but I’m not kidding.”

Edgar looked at the Exorcist, who began to brew tea in the kitchen. “Are you sure? He’s been around for a while.. And if he was a monster we’d all know by now.”

Victor gave Edgar a look. “Edgar. I’ve been able to disguise myself as a human for a couple of months almost a

hundred years ago. And I'm doing it again. I don't think your village is really smart."

Edgar opened his mouth to speak, but closed it when the Exorcist walked into the room.

"I made you two some tea." The Exorcist said, placing down a tray that held two mugs of hot green tea.

"Oh- Thank you." Victor said. He reached for it, but his hands were pushed back. "I-"

"I'm not done yet." The Exorcist said. He reached towards the honey bottle on the tray and poured some into the tea. He then handed it to Victor and looked at Edgar. "Honey?"

"No thank you." Edgar said. He grabbed a napkin and placed the mug of tea onto the nearby coffee table.

"Can I get mine..?"

"Of course." The Exorcist reassured, handing the mug towards Victor.

*"Weird.. I didn't even ask for honey."* He sniffed the tea. *"There's a hint of milk in it."* Victor glanced at the Exorcist, who waited patiently. Victor sniffed the air once more as he placed his mug down on the coffee table as well. *"He really doesn't smell human. How did he know I like green tea?"*

"So, how were the preparations, Victor?" The Exorcist asked.

"Good. I should have everything."

"Evidence?"

Victor looked at Edgar, who simply waved from his book.

"That's interesting.." The Exorcist remarked. "Edgar and I have been talking about the case as well. The jury will be

people I handpicked from the village, as the captain is clearly on your side. There haven't been any court cases in years, but the captain would originally choose the jurors, but it usually results in bias. To avoid this, not only will I be placing my own opinion, but also the jury." He explained. "Dress formally and have no foul play, or risk execution."

"Execution..? Isn't that too far?" Victor asked.

"Depending on the severity.. I apologize, I forgot to specify." The Exorcist corrected.

"I see.."

"Will we know who the jurors are?" Edgar asked.

"No. I won't tell you. I've already had the request sent to them." The Exorcist smiled. Suddenly, he sat up and turned his head quickly towards the door. "Who's there?" He called out.

Gently, the door opened and Luca walked inside. "I.. got your request."

The library went quiet.

Victor gave The Exorcist a look of anger.

The Exorcist gave Luca a threatening look.

Edgar looked up with a face of worry.

"..Alright bad time." Luca quickly closed the door and left.

"EXORCIST!" Victor yelled. "THAT MAN KIDNAPPED BOTH EDGAR AND I!"

The Exorcist looked back at Victor, his face changing to an upset one. "I'm sorry."

Victor's eye twitched. "That's a-"

“Victor.” Edgar said, looking up at him. “It’s okay. You handpicked people that we haven’t told about our case yet, right? So they would go in blind.”

“That’s.. Correct.” The Exorcist sighed. “I did not think he did that to you two.. I apologize. Greatly.”

Victor sighed. “Whatever. You didn’t know.. It’s fine.”

Edgar looked up at the Exorcist. “What were the Wolves of Day and Night?”

Victor looked at Edgar with curiosity at the sudden topic change.

“Ah. Those.” The Exorcist began, his face changing from shame to a more neutral one. “They were the first two werewolves in the forests around us. Rumors say they give advice to people who bring them offerings.. And that they were created by a witch.” He paused briefly. “But I don’t believe in childish rumors.”

Edgar nodded.

“I suppose you two should leave now and prepare yourselves privately for tomorrow. My door is always open if you’d like to talk.”

Victor nodded and stood up, gulping down his tea. “I didn’t want it to go to waste, I apologize.”

The Exorcist shook his head. “It does not matter. Don’t worry.” He looked at the two. “Farewell you two.”

Victor stood up and looked at Edgar, who looked at The Exorcist.

“Can I borrow this?”

“Of course.” The Exorcist answered.

Edgar smiled and waved, leaving the house with Victor.

~

“He knows too much about me.” Victor sighed. “It’s scary.”

“What?” Edgar looked at Victor in a confused manner.

“He knows I like green tea.. And that I like putting honey in it.” The vampire answered with a shiver. “He wouldn’t let me take it without putting honey in it.”

“It has to be a coincidence.” Edgar said. “The Exorcist is strange.”

The two began to walk towards the bar, until Edgar paused.

“I need to head home.. Sorry.” Edgar sighed, beginning to walk away.

“Why?” Victor asked, grabbing Edgar by his wrist with a worried look. “I don’t want you to go there. Especially with Mr. Sarai knowing about this.”

Edgar shook Victor’s hand off of his wrist. “I have stuff to do.. Evidence to gather.” He said. “I really wish I could stay, but I can’t.”

Victor looked at Edgar worriedly. “I..”

“I’ll be fine.” Edgar said, giving Victor a smile. “You’ll see me tomorrow.”

Victor sighed. “Fine..” He knelt down and hugged Edgar. “Promise me. You’ll be alright.”

“I wi-”

“I said. Promise me.” Victor looked at Edgar in the eyes.

“I promise I’ll be alright.”

Victor let go and began to walk to the bar, watching Edgar walk towards his house.

*“Just make it to tomorrow.. Everything will be over. He won’t be able to hurt you anymore tomorrow.”* Victor thought. He opened the bar’s door and put on a smile, walking inside.

# Part Six, Justice of a Blind Circus

## Chapter Forty Nine

Victor put on the suit he had bought the day before. It was time for the court case. He exited the fitting room of the old church the case was taking place in and looked at Edgar, who sat nervously on a chair by the entrance, fiddling with his fingers and accompanied by a worried look.

The church was large and gothic-styled. With stone walls and arches over the doors and windows, the church was able to withstand years of rain, wind, and any other weapon the weather threw at it.

Edgar was dressed in a black suit and tie, his hair tied back with a black ribbon.

“How do I look?” Victor asked, trying to calm his and Edgar’s nerves.

“You look good.” Edgar answered.

Victor sat down next to Edgar, glancing at him. “Are you nervous?”

Edgar nodded silently.

“Me too..” Victor’s voice trailed off as he gently patted Edgar’s head. “We should be able to win this.. and that monster will go to prison.”

“But what if he wins..? You know how the villagers are when it comes to monsters..”

Victor pulled Edgar into a half-a-hug, his hand gently resting on Edgar’s arm. “I won’t let him near you.” He looked

into Edgar's eyes with a determined expression. "I won't let him lay a finger on you. You can trust me on that."

Edgar nodded.

Soon, the vampire hunting captain entered the church. He wasn't allowed to decide the final vote, but he was allowed to watch. "It's time to go in." He said.

The two stood up and were escorted to the front.

"Victor, stand over here." Frederick said, motioning to a small stand up front.

Victor walked towards the stand and looked around, his eyes gazing upon the many people sitting in the church pews. He then looked at the stands themselves, realizing they were actually just tables turned on their sides. "*That's oddly creative.*" He sighed.

Up on the front of the church, where a priest would normally be was the Exorcist. He was playing around with a small wooden gavel, slamming it on the base every few seconds and smiling.

"*What is he up to?*" Victor asked, watching this.

"So you came back." Mr. Sarai's voice pierced through Victor.

Victor slowly turned to Mr. Sarai, quietly growling.

"Calm yourself. We're in a church." He smiled, speaking quietly.

"You have no right to be here."

Mr. Sarai fixed his bowtie. "So harsh coming from you. You're not even human." He grumbled.



Victor flinched and looked around, letting out a sigh of relief at the absence of stares. *“Good.. nobody heard.”*

“Don’t be too confident, Victor. Neither you nor I know the jury.” Mr. Sarai said, glancing up at the mass amount of civilians watching from the choir seats.

Victor looked at the jury as well, sighing and turning to Mr. Sarai. “Well, you shouldn’t-”

*SLAM! SLAM SLAM SLAM!*

Victor and Mr. Sarai looked up at the Exorcist, who was slamming the gavel against the base. “You need to stop.” Victor sighed.

“Are you that childish, Exorcist?” Mr. Sarai sighed.

The Exorcist threw the gavel at the two. “LET ME HAVE MY FUN!”

The entire room went silent for a moment, all eyes watching the Exorcist walk down the stairs to pick up his gavel, and return to where he was sitting.

The Exorcist cleared his throat. “Is everyone here?”

The entire room nodded.

“Good luck.” Mr. Sarai whispered with a toothy grin.

Victor returned a scoff. He looked up at the jury and studied everyone’s clothing.

The jury consisted of five people. One of them was Luca, wearing a suit. The second, was the woman in a wheelchair from the tailor. She had her hair down with a black dress and a veil. The third person was another woman with a black dress and brown hair. The fourth person was a man wearing a black

tuxedo with orange hair. Next to them, was another man with blonde hair and a black tuxedo.

“We’re gathered here today with the case of parental issues by two idiots who can’t parent. Or in other words, who will be taking care of the Valden child until he becomes of age.” The Exorcist began. “Both adults have had an impact on Edgar’s life in different ways, but there are claims which Mr. Sarai had been plotting to kill Edgar all along.” He glanced at Mr. Sarai, and then towards Edgar. “And also accusations of Victor not being human. I alone cannot decide who will gain custody, so it is up to you, the jury, to decide based on their testimonies.” He cleared his throat. “Now, you may speak Victor.”

Victor cleared his throat. “I feel that I should take custody over Edgar because Mr. Sarai-”

“Harvord.”

“*Harvord* Sarai, is a monster.”

Gasps erupted from the jury.

“A monster?” Mr. Sarai laughed. “Surely, I am human. I will even allow one of those abandoned tests to prove it.”

“That isn’t-” Victor groaned. “I mean he isn’t a good person! He abused Edgar! For years!” He shouted.

Mr. Sarai went quiet. Trying to hide the sheer amount of worry now on his face.

“Even though I have only taken care of Edgar for around a month or two, it was enough for me to realize what type of torment he was subject to for who knows how long.”

“What type of abuse or as you call it, torture, are we discussing?” The Exorcist asked as the jury’s whispers began to become too overbearing. He slammed the gavel and eyed the jury. “Shut up.”

Victor cleared his throat. “Attempted murder on two different accounts, verbal, and physical.”

“And where is this evidence? You don’t have any proof that I am what you say.. How are we so sure that what you’re saying is true?” Mr. Sarai asked. “You say that you’ve only taken care of him for around a month or two. He could simply be lying.. Or, there’s something else afoot.”

The Exorcist raised his eyebrow. “Intriguing. But wait your turn, Harvord.”

“My apologies, Exorcist. I can’t take being shunned like this by a stranger.” Mr. Sarai bowed.

*“Is this guy serious???”* Victor thought.

“Sarai? What are your reasons to have custody of Edgar?” The Exorcist asked. “I might as well ask before we get sucked into a rabbit hole of accusations..”

“It’s simple. I want to take care of him. I was his parents’ closest friend, and because of their absence, it’s up to me to raise him into what they would’ve wanted.”

*“Like they want him in a coffin..”* Victor thought.

“Victor, may you present the evidence?” The Exorcist asked.

Victor took a deep breath. *“It’s going to finally end. You just have to tell them everything he’s done to you, Edgar.”* He thought. “I call Victor up to the evidence stand.”

“Victor. You can’t just-” Mr. Sarai began, but was interrupted.

“Well how else will I provide the evidence? He is a witness, after all.” Victor grumbled.

Shakily, Edgar stood up from one of the pews by the exit. He slowly walked up towards the small wooden stand that stood beside the Exorcist. When he arrived at the stand, he stared at everyone and then at the Exorcist, sweat dripping down his face already.

“Edgar. Do you swear that everything that you say will be true?” The Exorcist asked.

Edgar nodded quietly.

Mr. Sarai relaxed his shoulders and gave a small yet noticeable smile.

Victor glanced towards Mr. Sarai, a wave of worry beginning to wash over him. “*Why is he smiling..?*” He then looked at Edgar. “*He’ll tell the truth, right???*”

Edgar took a deep breath. “It’s..” He began, his shaking voice filling up the silent church. “A lie.”

## Chapter Fifty

Victor went quiet. His eyes widened as he began to shake. “Wait.. what did you say?” He felt the jury’s eyes staring at him. Victor couldn’t escape anyone’s gaze. “Y-You mean what he was saying, r-right?”

“He’s lying..” Edgar said, slowly pointing to Victor with a shadow over his face. “Mr. Sarai.. hasn’t done anything mentioned.. to me.”

“Edgar..?” Victor whispered with a horrified look on his face. “W-Wait! What about the evidence we-“

“There’s no evidence..” Edgar said.

Mr. Sarai’s grin only grew. He slowly turned at Victor. “See? I’d never do something like that to Edgar, or anyone.”

Victor stared at Mr. Sarai with pure hatred. “*That.. THAT BITCH!*”

“Exorcist? May we proceed now? I feel that an execution is in order for a liar..”

The Exorcist looked up from whispering to Edgar. “No.” He said. “That’s too harsh.”

“He accused me of-“

*SLAM!*

“I said, that is too harsh.” The Exorcist repeated. “Unless an execution is worth it, I’m not wasting my time watching someone be hanged.

“Why are you trying to execute me???” Victor yelled.

“Maybe it’s because.. you aren’t human.” Mr. Sarai said.

“Put that down!” A juror yelled. “Where did you get a bucket from!” Another screamed.

“Heads up.” Mr. Sarai smiled.

“What do you me-“ Victor erupted in a scream as water was doused onto him. He fell on the ground as his entire body began to emit smoke. His screams became demonic as all four of his wings were exposed. His disguise had faded away from the contact of holy water.

“Behold, jurors. The monster that tried to take Edgar away! And the same one that took Ella all those years ago!”

“VAMPIRE!” People screamed.

Victor looked around, the smell of blood became too clear as his skin began to bubble up. “BUT I DIDN’T!” He screamed. Everyone stared at him with horrified looks. Suddenly, Victor was held down and restrained.

Vampire hunters took Victor away and threw him into a cage in the hunting base. There were too many events going on at once for him to be properly restrained at first.

He put his hands on the bars in an attempt of escape, but was doused in holy water once more. He let out an agonizing scream as he desperately wiped the holy water off of his face. Victor couldn’t speak immediately because of the pain. All he could do was look at the vampire hunters as they began to chain him up and leave.

~

Victor was left alone for a while. He was too weak to escape on his own from his injuries and by now the court case had to be finished. Victor looked in front of him, closing his left eye from his injuries, and thought about the captain from a hundred years ago.

*“I trusted you, Victor. I thought you were a human all along.”* Marshall had said. *“No wonder you were so afraid of being reminded of that vampire.”*

“Marshall..” Victor whispered.

*“How could I not notice a vampire living this close to me?”*

“I’m sorry...” Victor held his head down. Tears began to erupt from his eyes and drip onto the floor.

*“Your wish is nothing but a silly dream.”* The Old Exorcist’s voice echoed. *“Humans and monsters aren’t meant to live together. Now get out of my village or I’ll take your wings and leave you alive.”*

Victor’s tears grew as the thoughts became too much for him. He began to cry as all the voices from deceased humans shunned him for being a vampire.

~

One hundred years ago.

Victor couldn't sleep that night. Andy's screams played over and over in his head.

The process was long, and grueling. Marshall had to ask the Exorcist to let Victor leave.

Marshall walked into the room Victor was in. "Hey.. it's over." He said.

Victor looked at Marshall with fear. "I.. I can't do this.. anymore." He said. "*I have to get out of here.*" He thought.

"I don't blame you." Marshall said. "I assume you mean you're quitting?"

Victor nodded.

"I see. Where will you go?"

"I found a house nearby." Victor lied. "I can manage."

Marshall nodded. "Do you need me to walk you?"

"No." Victor got out of bed and walked past Marshall. "I'll be just fine."

Marshall looked at Victor and nodded. "See you soon?"

"I hope so." Victor whispered. The vampire walked out of the base and in the dark on his own. He couldn't stop himself from thinking of Andy. "*I'm sorry Andy. I should've done something.*"

Suddenly footsteps echoed through the sleeping village. But they weren't Victor's.

Quickly, he looked around and asked, "Who's there?"

A small child with gray hair and ragged clothing walked into view.



Victor had seen this child a couple of times before during his patrols. He had interacted with it enough for it to feel safe around him.

“Oh.. it’s you.” Victor thought out loud. He knelt down and lent his hand out. “Come here, little one.”

“Where are you going..?” The child asked, keeping his distance.

“Home.” Victor said. “Would you like to live in a house? I would love to take care of you.. you don’t seem to have food, water, or a home. Probably no parents for that manner.”

The child nodded. “The Exorcist says I’m cursed.. and the others are too afraid to take me in..”

Victor walked over to the child and picked it up. He looked at the child and smiled. “Then I will.” He began to walk out of the village, dispelling his disguise and revealing himself. “Please, don’t fret, little one. You’re safe with me.”

## Chapter Fifty One

Current date.

“Vampire. Are you in there?” The Exorcist asked.

Victor looked up at the Exorcist, growling. “What do you want..”

“You’ve lost.” The Exorcist said. He walked up to the cage. “And you finally show your true colors.” He smiled.

“How pathetic. Hiding all of that from me.”

Victor’s growling became louder. “Get out of here. Shouldn’t you humans be celebrating?”

“The others might. But I won’t.”

Victor raised an eyebrow.

“There’s something wrong with that court case.” He said. “How could a silly vampire try to take care of another human?” The Exorcist smiled. “It wouldn’t be the first time, would it Victor?”

“What are you getting at..” Victor hissed.

“That poor child you brought to your house. Aesop, was it?”

“How do you know his name?” Victor asked aggressively. He tried to get close to the bars, but the chains held him back.

“Do you want to know why Edgar lied in court?”

“Answer my-”

“It’s because he was threatened.” The Exorcist interrupted.

Victor went quiet. First of all, the Exorcist knew too much about him. Especially about Aesop.. But he knows what happened with Edgar?? “What do you mean?” He asked.

“I don’t think it’s best for us to stall.. You wouldn’t want another person you cared for to die because of you. Right?”

Victor’s eyes widened. He looked into the Exorcist’s eyes. “It wasn’t my fault.” “*Why does he keep changing the subject?*”

“You had the perfect chance to say something.” The Exorcist leaned against the bars. “You could’ve stopped them from taking him away.” He stabbed the bar with his nails and slowly scratched the metal. “But you just watched.”

“Stop.. STOP!” Victor yelled, he covered his ears the best he could. “You’re lying! You’re just tricking me! There was nothing I could’ve done!”

“Edgar will die because of you. The cycle will repeat itself. Again and again.” He moved away from the bars and slowly took off his mask, exposing his lower face. The Exorcist’s skin faded from its normal color to a stone-like gray with sharp teeth. “I’ve been hiding this from everyone.” He said. “Do you really want to be the one to bury Edgar? To see him suffer a rather painful and bloody death?”

“Leave me alone!” Victor screamed. His horns began to show again as his injured skin began to flare up. “Haven’t you enjoyed torturing me enough!?”

The Exorcist walked into the cage and up to Victor. He put his hands around each of Victor’s wrists and pulled them away from his own head. “Look at me.”

Victor tried to look away.

The Exorcist sighed and moved towards Victor’s ear. “Do you really want Mr. Sarai to win? Do you want him to get away with all those years of abuse he did to Edgar? Do you want

him to get away with leaving you to die here, alone, thinking you are a horrible creature? Thinking that you're the reason both of your foster children have died?"

Victor shook. He slowly turned back to the Exorcist. "What are you doing..." He asked, tears rolling down his cheeks.

"So. You really aren't that strong after all." The Exorcist scoffed. He harshly let go of Victor's wrists and walked out of the cage. The Exorcist put on his mask. "I thought you were better than this, vampire. It's a shame. What would Aesop think?" He locked the cage door behind himself and left, leaving Victor alone. He didn't look back.

Victor stared at the ground, trying to breathe and calm down. That Exorcist pissed him off. Big time. "*Calm down. It's all over. You can't do anything now.. Not anymore.*" He told himself. "*Edgar.. Edgar is going to die. No.. no no.. I can't let that happen.*" Victor could feel the amount of hate and rage he had been hiding within him build up. Like a steaming kettle, his body began to burn. Those words. "*What would Aesop think?*" was the last thing Victor wanted to hear. He failed his friend. He failed his adoptive son. And now, he'd fail his friend. "*I can't let it end like this. I can't.. I..*" Victor stood up quickly, and with full force he waved his arms and broke the chains off of the walls. His wings became exposed as he looked toward the back wall. He sniffed the air for the scent of Mr. Sarai and without looking back, he charged into the wall and broke it without a scratch on his body. "*Edgar. I'm sorry.*" He thought, taking off into the sky to end everything for good.

## Chapter Fifty Two

“HARVORD SARAI!” Victor yelled. Almost immediately, he tackled Mr. Sarai to the ground. The two of them rolled in the dirt until Victor landed on top, pinning Mr. Sarai down by the neck with his arm.

“You’re.. Ali-” Mr. Sarai choked out.

Victor slammed his arm against Mr. Sarai’s throat. “Shut up you bitch..”

“Vic..tor...?” Edgar’s voice whispered.

Victor looked at Edgar, who was lying by a tree with blood dripping from his mouth.

Edgar’s eyes were slightly opened and he had pale skin.

Victor looked back at Mr. Sarai, who was struggling to remove Victor’s arm from his throat. “What did you do to him?” He hissed.

“Why would a vampire-”

Victor slammed his arm against Mr. Sarai’s throat once more, forcing the man to let out a cough. “I SAID, WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM!?” Victor yelled. He paused, hearing footsteps. The vampire quickly turned to look and saw the Exorcist, staring.

Accompanying the Exorcist was Frederick, who had a shocked face. “What are you doing..” The captain whispered.

“Well, you took matters into your own hands. I’m proud.” The Exorcist said.

“Help..” Mr. Sarai choked out, giving up on trying to push Victor off of him.

Frederick began to raise his crossbow, but was stopped by the Exorcist.

“No. Let him.” The Exorcist said. “After all. Mr. Sarai *was* the one who deserves an execution, correct?”

“Manipulation?” Victor hissed. “You exorcists are all the same.. I’m not doing your dirty work. You’re even worse than the old one!”

“Nor am I asking you to.” The Exorcist said, ignoring Victor’s remark. “I’m simply watching.” He turned to Frederick. “Get the child to a hospital.. He looks ill.”

Frederick nodded and slowly walked towards Edgar. While staring at Victor, he picked Edgar up.

In a split-second decision, Victor lunged at Frederick. He was just about to sink his teeth into the vampire, but a chain-link sword wrapped around his neck and slammed him onto the ground.

“My my. I thought you were better than this.” Kevin’s voice said.

Victor grabbed the chains with his other hand and smashed them with a squeeze of his fist, watching Frederick run off. The vampire stood up, staring down at Kevin. “I was going to look for you anyway..” He glanced towards Mr. Sarai, who stood up and began to run as well. “Oh no you DON’T!” Victor once again tackled Mr. Sarai and pinned him to the ground. “I’m going to KILL YOU.. RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!” Victor raised his claws, his face contorting into a grim, toothy smile as he watched Mr. Sarai’s face become pale with dread.

Kevin tackled Victor and began to pull Mr. Sarai away from the Crimson Vampire. “Do you really think you can redeem yourself!?” He shouted. “Even after that whole incident in court?”

“Mr. Sarai was the one pulling the strings all along! So now it’s fair for me to pull-”

“Cool it. We don’t want to scare the Exorcist.” Kevin taunted.

“I don’t care. Describe how you’ll kill him. I’ve seen it all.” The Exorcist shouted, sitting by a tree with his arms behind his head.

Both vampires paused, looking at the Exorcist. They then looked at Mr. Sarai, who was desperately trying to get away from the both of them. Immediately, both of them tossed Mr. Sarai on the ground and began to fight each other.

Victor held Kevin down by the throat, staring into his eyes. “Why do you resist, vampire? Do you not fear death?”

“You’re a traitor..” Kevin hissed. He shapeshifted into a snake and squeezed out of Victor’s grasp, returning to his regular form and digging his claws into the Crimson Vampire’s shoulder. “The real question is; why do you keep trying? You could never take care of a human.. Let alone a child.”

“Shut up!” Victor yelled. His wounds flaring up in flames, forcing Kevin away. He hid his injured arm behind himself and casted a quick regeneration spell. “You don’t know anything about what I’m doing!”

“Oh I don’t?” Kevin tilted his head. “How sad.” He charged at Victor once again, digging his claws into the

Crimson Vampire's other arm. "But I think you're the one that isn't knowledgeable here."

Victor tried to force Kevin away, but couldn't.

"I've managed to train myself to become *stronger* than you.. Stronger than a Crimson Vampire!" Kevin smiled. He ripped his claws out of Victor's arm and kicked him onto the ground.

Victor tried to stand up, but was pinned to the ground. The Crimson Vampire let out a scream as Kevin's nails began to dig into the sides of his neck. "And.. you plan to kill me?"

Kevin began to put pressure against Victor's neck, slowly strangling him. He said nothing, but the bloodthirsty look in his eyes told Victor everything.

Victor couldn't get up anymore. He used so much energy already. From breaking out, to tracking down Mr. Sarai and attacking him, and defending himself here. "Well.." He choked out. "As long as I know.. I died with dignity." He smiled.

Kevin let out an angered scream. "WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT DIGNITY, TRAITOR!?" He began to put more pressure.

Victor's throat began to close. He coughed and choked out another sentence. "I.. wasn't being used.." He took a deep breath, and choked out the rest of what he wanted to say. "For someone else's gain!"

Kevin removed one hand and took out the remains of his chain-link knife. He raised it in the air and aimed for Victor's neck. "I'll cut out your damn tongue for this slander.." He hissed.



It became too hard to breathe for Victor. He slowly closed his eyes as a smile grew across his face.

## Chapter Fifty Three

“What do you think you’re doing, Father?” Aesop asked.

*“He’s starting to call me ‘father’ now.. That’s cute.”* Victor thought, smiling. He turned around and looked at Aesop, who stood in the doorway of the kitchen. “I’m making food.”

“Food? But aren’t you supposed to take from the streets? Or from those big cans behind houses?”

“What?” Victor asked. “Goodness no! You poor thing..” He walked over to Aesop and wrapped him in a hug. “Don’t worry. Now that you’re in my care, there will be none of that.”

“What do you mean?”

“Come. Sit at the table.” He let go of Aesop and led him to the table. Victor pulled out a chair and offered it to the child.

Aesop slowly sat down and stared at Victor with a confused look. “What now?”

“Just wait. I’m almost done making food.” Victor said. He walked to the stove and stirred the boiling pot of oats.

“You can... make it?” Aesop asked.

Victor looked at Aesop with a confused look. “Yes.. where do you think food comes from?”

Aesop shrugged.

*“With every word that comes out of his mouth.. It makes me feel even worse..”* Victor thought. When the oats were ready, he took out two bowls and poured the oats into each. “Do you want any cinnamon? Milk?”

Aesop remained quiet.

*"I'll just give him cinnamon.."* He thought. Victor reached for the shaker and shook a small amount of cinnamon into the bowl. He then placed it in front of Aesop. "Do you know how to use utensils, little one?"

Aesop didn't say anything.

"Wait here." Victor said. He turned to his bowl of oats and began to shake a small amount of cinnamon onto the oats.

"AAAAAAAAA!" Aesop screamed.

Victor flinched and dropped the shaker into the bowl. He ran up to Aesop quickly. "What happened!?"

Aesop looked at his hand, covered with oats. "It hurts.."

"Oh.." Victor couldn't help but chuckle. "Come. I'll help you get cleaned up." He led Aesop to the sink and turned the cold faucet. "You simply burned your hand! It isn't serious, but it will hurt for a little."

"Does.. all food do that?" Aesop asked as his hand was placed under the faucet.

"No. Only hot food does. It will cool off over time, however!"

Aesop wiped his hand when the oats were washed off.

Victor had to dig the cinnamon from his bowl of oats and wash it, as Aesop began to eat using his utensils. It was times like these that Victor was truly happy. He could see humans for what they really were. Curious, naive, and so utterly adorable to observe.

But then.

The six. *Those* six. They took everything from Victor. His happiness, his child, his strength to go back to Greenwood. The threats to leave him alive after they threatened to dewing him if he ever came back. He wasn't allowed to see Aesop again.

~

"I think he's waking up!"

"Good. I think he'd be over the moon to find out what I did."

"Exorcist? It's unlike you to care so much about someone.. What is this vampire worth?"

"Don't worry about it. I asked you to keep him alive, and you did just that. I am in debt to you, Emily."

Victor's eyes shot open. He looked around in a panic as his breathing was frantic. He looked at the Exorcist, who was to his right, and then to a woman in a medical outfit, who was to his left.

The room was white with cyan-painted wood on the rims of the walls and ceilings. Victor was in a bed, connected to an IV with a bag of cow's blood.

"Where.." Victor began to ask. He sat up and looked at the bloody IV in his arm. With his over hand in a panic, he began to remove it.

"No! Don't!" The woman said, placing her hands on Victor's wrist. "You'll only hurt yourself!"

"Where's Edgar!?"

"Edgar is fine." The Exorcist said. "You should be more worried about yourself. You took quite the beating.. Not to

mention all of your burns have completely been burnt during that fight.”

“What..?” Victor questioned.

“Look at yourself.” The Exorcist said. He reached for a mirror and pointed it at Victor.

Victor didn’t appear in the mirror, but the mass amounts of bandages all over his body did. “What..” He whispered, finally looking down at his arm that wasn’t connected to the IV, and studied the bandages.

“When you passed out, I decided to step in.” The Exorcist explained. “If you weren’t burned, I’m sure you could’ve handled that other vampire on your own.”

“What did..”

“Emily, I’d like a couple of words with Victor alone.”

The doctor nodded, leaving the room. Gently, she muttered; “The thing has a name?”

Victor frowned upon his ears picking it up, but turned to the Exorcist and prepared to hear what he had to say.

“It’s no secret to me that you know I’m not a human.” The Exorcist began. “I haven’t been for the past one hundred years. And I’m sure you’re wondering how I knew about Aesop, who nobody in current Greenwood knows at least well. I thought you would’ve come to this conclusion already, but I’d like you to guess first.”

Victor thought for a moment. “Aesop is possessing you..?”

The Exorcist gave Victor an annoyed look. “Are you seriously that clueless..?” The Exorcist sighed. “I *am* Aesop, father. I just cursed myself.”

“No.. no you’re not..” Victor looked away. “You aren’t him.. He wouldn’t-”

The Exorcist sighed once again. He took off his mask and stared at Victor. “Look at me. Please, father.”

Victor glanced at the Exorcist and fell quiet. He slowly moved his hand towards the Exorcist, who sat beside him, and felt his cheek. “Why..?” He whispered.

“So I could see you again.” Aesop smiled softly. “It’s been a long.. Long hundred years.”

Victor reached his arms around Aesop, but was pushed away. “What..?”

“Not- Not yet. I’m not ready to say goodbye yet.” Aesop wiped his eyes and sniffed. “Oh.. I’ve.. I didn’t think I would break this easily.” He snorted.

“How’ve you been?? I-I’ve been so.. Worried- no no.. not that.. Guilty..? I can’t-” He was cut off once more.

“Shh.. it’s okay. Was this because of what I said earlier?”

Victor nodded. “Part.. of it.”

Aesop looked Victor in the eyes. “I only said it because I knew you could get out. You’re a lot stronger than you allow yourself to be. It’s just.. You don’t release that power *until* you’re angry.” He explained. “I didn’t mean most of what I said.. The only parts I meant were about Edgar.”

“How did you know he was in trouble?” Victor asked.

“You didn’t raise an idiot, Victor. After the trial ended, I followed Edgar and Mr. Sarai and watched the kid drink a vial.” Aesop paused. “When I cursed myself, I took on the features of a gargoyle. Thus, my senses were enhanced. My smell was able to pick up on the poison Edgar drank.”

“He.. was poisoned? What did that monster threaten to do to him!?” Victor shouted. He began to get out of bed.

“Lie down. I took care of it.” Aesop said. He grabbed Victor’s shoulders and forced him to lie back down. “After Mr. Sarai took off and when I took care of Kevin, I visited two old friends of mine. Remember those wolves I mentioned earlier?”

Victor nodded.

“Not only did the Wolf of Night give me the advice to become a gargoyle, but the Wolf of Day was willing to hunt Mr. Sarai for me.” Aesop smiled. “You won’t have to worry about him anymore..”

Victor blinked. In a moment, he understood what Aesop meant and smiled. “That’s good.”

“Back to the topic, I’m not sure why Edgar drank the poison. But I have a feeling he’ll explain that himself. Wait here, I’ll fetch him.” Aesop stood up and walked out of the room, leaving Victor on his own.

Victor began to think everything over. First of all, the Exorcist was his foster son, Aesop... who was taken away from him and raised by the old Exorcist. Aesop then cursed himself to become a gargoyle because of a werewolf’s advice? Then Edgar lied in court because he was threatened and then

proceeded to drink poison? Nothing made sense to Victor. He thought over and over again, trying to get some reason in his head for why everyone did what they did, but he couldn't find one.

Not long after, Aesop came back into the room with Edgar following sheepishly. "We're back."

"Welcome back." Victor smiled.

Edgar had a discomforted look on his face and attempted to sneak away. However, Aesop grabbed him and dragged him back in.

"Go on. Say it." Aesop gave a smug look.

Victor looked up at Edgar with a disappointed look. "Do you mind explaining what that man told you?"

"I'm sorry.." Edgar muttered. He shook as he tried to form words. "M-Mr. Sarai.. Poisoned me last night.. A-and said that if I lied.. He'd give me the antidote.."

Victor's look didn't change. He sighed. "You were that gullible to fall for it..?"

Edgar nodded.

"Why- You know what. I already have my answer." He looked up at Edgar. "I understand your thought process. But you put my life at risk with your stunt. I'm not mad at you, nor do I hate you. I'm just disappointed."

"Oh and the story gets better." Aesop smiled.

"Please stop.. Exorcist." Edgar mumbled.

"He wasn't poisoned all along and just got tricked! The so-called antidote was the poison." Aesop bursted into laughter as Edgar buried his bright red face into his hands.



Victor let out a drawn out sigh before looking up at Edgar. “You’re going to make it up to me one day.”

Edgar frantically nodded. “S-Sorry..”

“How will you make it up to me? Hmmm...”

Aesop’s smile only grew as he calmed down from laughing, adding more to Edgar’s worry.

“You’re going to walk Wick for a month, finish that painting of the Crimson Moon, and tell the truth about Mr. Sarai to the people present in the old church during the court session.” Victor ordered.

“Really..? Th-That’s all..?” Edgar asked.

“BOOOORRIIIIIING!” Aesop yelled.

“You’re as childish as ever.” Victor sighed, and then turned to Edgar. “Oh, one more thing. You owe me an explanation on how you’re suddenly feeling better.”

“You’re oddly.. Lenient.” Edgar said.

“Because Mr. Sarai is dead.” Victor smiled. “And I’m relieved you’re alright.”

“Oh.” Edgar blinked. He didn’t seem ashamed that much anymore and took a breath. “Gargoyle Blood. The Exorcist had me drink his blood. It.. did not taste good.”

“Ah.. I see.” Victor turned to Aesop. “Did you patch your wound?”

Aesop nodded.

Victor cleared his throat. “I’m glad you’re feeling better.” He smiled. “Oh! Before I forget..” He motioned towards Aesop. “This is Aesop. The child I told you about.”

Edgar turned to Aesop with a shocked look. “You’re that kid from a hundred years ago???”

“Why else do you think I’m a gargoyle?” Aesop smiled.

Edgar blinked. “You know. Now everything makes a lot more sense..”

“What do you mean?”

“Your coldness and strange behavior. And that strange demon I saw in your house one day.”

“You walked in on me chasing a rat..”

“You’ve been eating rats!?” Victor screamed.

“It’s.. a snack.” Aesop looked away, putting his mask on.

Edgar walked up to Victor and looked at his bandages. “Is that from holy water..?”

Victor nodded. “It doesn’t matter anymore. Everything is over, correct?”

“I guess it is.”

Aesop nodded. He took a deep breath and walked up to Victor. “I have to go now. It was truly nice seeing you again, father.”

“So suddenly..?”

Aesop didn’t respond. He wrapped his arms around Victor tightly.

Victor froze for a moment and slowly hugged Aesop back.

Edgar silently watched from the side and smiled.

Aesop let go and stood up. “Farewell.. Father.” He coughed for a moment and left the room.

Edgar watched Aesop leave the room, and then looked at Victor. “So.. he’s really gone? Both of them?”

“Yes. Yes they are.”

Edgar’s smile grew as he let out a sigh. “Thank you.. I’ll begin to work on what I owe you now.” He walked towards the door.

“Edgar!” Victor called.

“Yes?”

“Thank you for coming into my life.”

Edgar couldn’t say anything in return. He closed his eyes and smiled once again towards Victor. He then opened the door and left the room.

~

## Part Seven, Epilogue

Victor fully recovered from his injuries in around a week. Every day he would get visits from Edgar, Mrs. Demi, and Rutin and would talk with all three of them. The vampire learned more about Greenwood than ever before, including the humor.

Edgar told the truth about Mr. Sarai to everyone within Greenwood with Aesop's help. Of course, the villagers were slightly mad about the whole ordeal, but at least a true monster was driven out of the village and wouldn't come back.

Sure, people were still afraid of Victor, but it was something he was used to by now. When he waved goodbye to Edgar and Aesop, he promised to come back some day to visit. Victor flew over to Joseph's house, where he was promptly threatened by a seventeen year old human named Ella. Despite the blood-curdling introduction, Ella proved herself to be a formidable girl and even offered to help Victor find Joseph within the house. Victor ended up working as a vampire hunter again, which was rebranded to being monster hunting to make the name have more sense. He quickly became one of the high ranking hunters along with Ella, and began to teach new recruits how to use a crossbow.

As Edgar's curiosity in Greenwood's stories grew, the more Aesop became open to visitors. Often taking time out of his day to talk with people who came to him.

Ella became a true vampire hunter according to Joseph. Although she didn't get to kill him, she was given a test on which monsters and vampires to hunt, and passed. She managed to give Joseph lethal wounds during her final sparring day. With tears, Joseph led her back to her home village of Greenwood.

Ada and Emil became an official couple and left Greenwood to travel the world for a way to turn Emil into a human.

Luca and Andrew ended up being pardoned for their "crimes" and took in Robbie. As for Alva, nobody knew where he had ended up. Luca went on to finally confess to Mrs. Demi, but didn't have any luck. He didn't let that stop him from working in the infirmary as a researcher of poison antidotes.

Andrew and Robbie tend to the graveyard together and welcome visitors with open arms, offering help with directions even if they are turned away at first.

Before vanishing, Aesop had declared Edgar as an adult. He would be in possession of his family's wealth and have to take care of himself from then on. All of this to prevent any future Mr. Sarai-like incidents.

~

On the twenty-fifth of October, a group of humans managed to sneak into Victor's house. The group; Edgar, Ella, Mrs. Demi, and Frederick. The group placed something in the kitchen and looked at their work.

“Do you think he’ll like it?” Frederick asked.

“I know he would.” Edgar said confidently.

“I can’t wait to spar with him!” Ella squealed.

“How long will it take for him to come back?” Mrs. Demi asked.

“Not long.”

The loud creak of the door echoed through the room.

“Here he comes!” Edgar whispered. Everyone hid in different places, watching the Crimson Vampire enter the room with Wick.

“There you go, Wick! Go on and run around the house.” Victor’s voice grew louder as he walked toward the kitchen. When he arrived in the kitchen, he stared at the table. “A cake..? What’s this?”

Edgar watched Victor read the letter and motioned towards his sister.

With a smile, Ella silently walked out of her hiding spot and unsheathed her sword. “Engarde, vampi-”

Victor whirled around and pointed a crossbow at Ella with shrunken pupils. “How did you get in here!?” He yelled.

Ella dropped her sword and put her hands up. “Whoops. EDGAR THE JIG IS UP HE CAUGHT ME!”

Edgar moved his head out of his hiding spot. “You wanted to spar with him!”

“Ella..?” Victor said. He then looked at Edgar. “Edgar?”

Both Mrs. Demi and Frederick came out of hiding.

“We wanted to do something for your birthday so.. Happy birthday.” Edgar said.

Victor let out a sigh of relief, putting the crossbow into his coat. "Oh thank god.. You scared me, Ella!"

Ella crossed her arms, huffing.

"Wouldn't Aesop be here..? Or is he busy?" Victor asked. "It's been awhile since I've seen him.."

"I'm.. the exorcist now." Frederick said. "Aesop, as you call him.. Turned to dust months ago."

"..What?"

"His curse.. He would've died so long ago. He wanted to see you one last time." Frederick explained. "He cursed himself to live forever, until you hugged him."

Victor's face filled with guilt.

"But don't be sad!" Frederick quickly said. "We can visit him in the graveyard later."

"We can?"

Frederick, Mrs. Demi, Edgar, and Ella nodded.

"Victor, why don't you spar with the poor girl?" Mrs. Demi proposed, changing the topic. "She's been wanting to practice against you for a while."

Victor took a deep breath. "Fine." He looked at the cake on the table. "After we eat."

"SERIOUSLY!???" Ella screamed.

Edgar couldn't help but smile. "*It's a full moon tonight.. A crimson moon. I wonder if it'll be as beautiful as before.*"

The End.