

"A vampire?" Jon asked slowly. "Lady, I don't know what the hell is going on, but I need to get back to my apartment."

"I'm afraid you won't be able to do that," the beautiful blonde replied, "or at least, not yet. It's the middle of the day and..."

"Middle of the day?!" Jon practically roared, rushing to his feet. "How long did I sleep?"

"Fourteen straight hours," Shiera replied.

"Shiera was counting," Daenerys chimed in, earning another glare from her.

"Fourteen..." Jon stammered.

"Your injuries needed healing on top of the transformation," the third one explained. "It's actually quite normal for..."

"I could lose my bloody job!" Jon exclaimed. "I need to get to the hospital."

"Jon, you can't!" Shiera exclaimed, rushing in front of him as he went to leave. "It's..."

"Look, you were really nice the other night, you're stupid hot, and under any other circumstances I'd happily play along with whatever game you and these other two are playing, but if I don't get to St. Hugor now and somehow find a way to explain to the chief resident why I missed hours of my damn shift, I'm fucked," Jon said. "I worked too damn hard and put up with too much bullshit to let it all fall away on me."

"Jon, you..." Shiera went to say when the other blonde grasped her shoulder and pulled her aside.

"Some lessons need to be learned, not taught," she said. "I'm Rhaenyra, by the way, Jon."

"Wish I could say it was a pleasure," Jon muttered, rushing outside.

"Are we really just going to let him become a Kentucky friend hunk?" Daenerys whispered, and Jon was too focused on trying to get to the hospital to wonder what she meant or how the hell he even heard her from the next room as he sought a way out.

"You know it takes prolonged exposure for that, Dany," Rhaenyra replied, "and no words any of us could speak would serve to teach this sort of lesson as well as seeing the sun will."

"They actually think they're fucking vampires," Jon thought to himself, sighing in relief as he found the door. "Why couldn't I have met them back in uni instead? I wouldn't have been as busy, and girls that hot and nuts must be absolute fire in be..."

He trailed off there, throwing open the door to the mausoleum as he tried not to picture what the three crazy women looked like naked, and was met with instant pain. The sun was brighter than he'd ever seen it before, brighter than it was on a clear winter day in the North, when all the world around him was a blinding, reflective white. It was also hotter,

significantly so, burning him more than it had that time he took a trip to Dorne, and before he could even wonder what was going on, the pain intensified and he began to smoke. His instincts took over, and he jumped back inside the crypt, but he jumped far further than he thought possible and crashed into the wall hard.

"I'll get it," Daenerys sighed, throwing a towel over herself and rushing over to pull the door shut as Jon stood up.

"What the fuck?" he asked, looking down at his arms in horror.

Dressed in a t-shirt, they'd been completely exposed to the sun and had burned worse than any sunburn he'd ever had. They looked less like the sort of pale red that skin turned when overexposed to the sun and more like his hand had that time he finished steaks in an oven-safe skillet in the oven and then forgot and grabbed the handle.

"These are...second-degree burns," Jon breathed, figuring that shock had to explain why they didn't hurt more than they did. "How the hell is that po..."

He went silent, watching in shock as, before his eyes, his skin seemed to heal itself in mere moments, the blisters that had formed disappearing like they hadn't even been there and the angry red skin turning a simple pink, and then finally back to his normal pale tone.

"That's why you can't go out," Rhaenyra explained. "Vampires burn in the sun, and it will remain in the sky for another few hours."

"Vampires don't exist," Jon spat, wishing he'd just wake up from his bizarre dream.

"Well, of course you'd think that," Daenerys chuckled. "We go to great lengths to make everyone think that we're just dumb myths, but if we aren't vampires, explain this."

She grinned widely at him, revealing her teeth, and Jon watched in shock as her top canines extended. Thinking it a trick of some kind, he looked into her eyes, intending to snap at her, only to flinch when he saw them change color. The iris remained the same shade of purple and actually seemed to start glowing, but the sclera rapidly became bloodshot until it was entirely red. He looked over at Rhaenyra and Shiera, wondering what the hell was going on, only to take a step back when he saw them looking the same way.

"I know it's a lot to take in," Shiera said softly, "and I'm sorry that you were thrust into our world in the way that you were, but we are vampires, Jon, and you are one too now."

"Ramsay slit your throat," Rhaenyra explained, "and while I should have been able to heal you by feeding you my blood, he poisoned you with something that made that impossible. My options were to let you bleed out or turn you into one of us, and after Shiera explained how you rescued her, I couldn't just let you die."

"Ramsey," Jon growled, feeling rage like he'd never known before bloom inside him, and he stared down at his right hand in shock. It had all been real: the lunatic who abducted him from his car, tied him up in his own house, and tortured him for information he hadn't had.

"He broke four of your fingers, but they healed while you turned into one of us," Shiera said, reaching towards him, only to stop as he flinched.

"How is any of this possible?" Jon asked.

"That is a very long, very complicated story," Rhaenyra replied, "and one probably best discussed another time."

"My life is over," Jon said numbly, sinking back against the wall until he sat down on the floor. "I can't be a nurse like this; I can't do anything if I can't go out during the day."

"I'm sorry," Shiera sighed, and he glared up at her.

"Why did that monster even come after me?" Jon spat. "We barely even knew each other."

"There are numerous vampire families out there, some of which are far less pleasant than others," Rhaenyra explained. "The Boltons are among the worst, and their patriarch, Roose, would like nothing more than to see me dead. Ramsay went after you likely because his master thought he could find Shiera through you and get to me through her."

"Is he the one who sent those men after you?" Jon asked.

"No," Shiera sighed. "They were vampire hunters, mortals in the service of one who despises our kind. Normally they'd have been no match for me, but I fed carelessly and paid the price for it. If not for your help, I'd quite likely be dead."

"No good deed," Jon grumbled, burying his face in his hands.

"Hey, it's not all bad," Daenerys smiled. "You're stronger, faster, and ageless now, and you'll soon learn that all the fun parts of life are quite enhanced by our condition. Becoming a vampire is the best thing that ever happened to me."

"I had a life!" Jon exclaimed, making her flinch. "I had friends, I had a career, I had passions and now what do I have? A life of darkness and...oh, fuck, I need to drink blood to survive now, don't I?"

"You do," Rhaenyra replied, "though you will be taught how to do so without hurting anyone."

"Really?" Jon asked skeptically.

"Think about it," Shiera replied. "If we left a trail of bodies every time we feasted, no one out there would believe that we existed."

"That...makes sense, I guess," Jon muttered, and Shiera sank to her knees next to him, gently resting a hand on his shoulder.

"You were targeted because of me, and for that I am so sorry," she whispered, and he just scowled at the ceiling.

"It's not your fault that madman is what he is," Jon muttered. "Why did you insist on coming to my place the other night?"

"I needed a place to stay while I recovered and a source of blood," Shiera replied. "I elected not to feed on you because you saved my life, and when you told me about your rat problem, I figured we could help each other there."

"Rat blood works for you too?" Jon asked.

"Technically any blood will suffice," Rhaenyra replied, "and there are those among us who feel so strongly about the idea of feeding on humans that they elect to survive entirely on animal blood."

"Human blood tastes the best though, and unless you're a total idiot, it's not hard to avoid doing any permanent damage," Daenerys chimed in.

"I finally get my rat problem dealt with only to lose my life in the process," Jon sighed. "I am dead, yes? I mean, do I even have a pul..."

He trailed off as he checked his pulse and cocked an eyebrow at Rhaenyra when he felt his heart still beating.

"We're not walking corpses," she clarified. "We did all die to become what we are, but we're not cold, we don't need to sleep in coffins, and so long as we consumed blood regularly, our heart will continue to beat."

"What if we don't?" Jon asked. "Do we die?"

"That would be a kindness," Shiera sighed. "Refuse to feed and you'll desiccate over time, drying out more and more until you begin to look mummified. Eventually you'll be unable to move a muscle, but you will not die, and consciousness will return to you often enough to drive you mad. I experienced that once when Nyra and I got stuck in a cave in, and trust me when I say, it is not pleasant."

"How did you get out of that?" Jon asked, curious.

"One of my thralls at the time found us and got us out," Rhaenyra replied. Seeing him looking like he was going to ask a question, she said, "Thralls are what vampires can turn humans not of their bloodline into."

"Bloodline?" Jon asked.

"Vampires can only turn those related to them by blood into other true vampires," Daenerys explained, "and even then, only those among them whose blood doesn't repulse them."

"I'm sorry...what?" Jon asked.

"Shiera and Daenerys here are both descendants of my long-dead mortal siblings," Rhaenyra replied, "as are you."

"That's...we're related?" Jon asked.

"We are," Shiera replied. "I smelled it in you the moment you cut yourself on that bottle."

"Wait, did you target me?" Jon asked, his eyes narrowing suspiciously as he stood up. "Was that whole damsel in distress thing just an act?"

"No, it wasn't," Shiera replied, scowling at the implication. "I really was in danger, and you really did rescue me from those assholes. I had no idea you were one of us until you bled in front of me. Aside from your eyes, you don't really look much like us."

"They are very pretty eyes, though," Daenerys practically purred, and Jon swallowed thickly, her breathy tone making him twitch in his pants.

"At least I know that still works," he thought to himself. "Um, how old are you, exactly?"

"That's a rude thing to ask a woman," Daenerys grinned toothily. "If you must know, I'm twenty-six, though I've been a vampire for ten years."

"We're the same age," Jon said, trying not to notice the way this eternal teenager was staring at him.

"We are, but you look so much older," Daenerys purred, tracing a finger down along his chest. "Could I call you Daddy?"

"What?" Jon spluttered.

"Okay, I think Jon's been overwhelmed enough for now," Rhaenyra sighed. "Come, Dany."

"But...fine," Daenerys huffed, marching off after the older vampire.

"I'm sorry about her," Shiera muttered. "She's a sweet girl, really, but she's..."

"Immature?" Jon asked. "If she doesn't age, does that mean that her brain and hormone levels are perpetually stuck at teenage levels?"

"You'd know more about that than I would," Shiera replied. "I've studied many things over the decades, but medicine and the science of the human body aren't among them."

"This is so fucked up," Jon groaned. "What the hell am I even going to do? Unless I find a way to explain that I can't go out in sunlight anymore without tipping them off to the real reason for that, I can't continue to work at St. Hugor..."

"That would be ill-advised for the foreseeable future anyway," Shiera replied. "Self-control is something that you're going to struggle with for the first few months, and being around wounded, bloodied people all the time would be a recipe for disaster."

"My life is over," Jon muttered, his voice sounding hollow. "All my life, all I wanted was to help people, and now I'm stuck feeding on them to survive."

"You'll still be able to help people in various ways if you want," Shiera said softly, "but you will need to take time to adjust to what you've become. I'm sorry..."

"Stop saying that!" Jon hissed. "That psychopath is the one who killed me. You guys are enemies, yes?"

"Rivals more so," Shiera replied. "I personally doubt that Roose Bolton personally ordered Ramsay to abduct me or anything like that. He's always been a mad dog, and I could see him doing this on his own, thinking it would curry favor with his master. Don't get me wrong, Roose is awful, and I've always loathed the man, but he's not generally stupid, and going after me like he did was stupid."

"Is there any way I could pay him back for what he did to me?" Jon asked.

"As far as I know, he's been a vampire for about twenty-five years now, so he'd be far stronger and more capable than you as you are," Shiera replied honestly. "We grow stronger the older we get."

"So Daenerys is stronger than me, you're stronger than her, and Rhaenyra..." Jon went to say.

"Is in a class of her own," Shiera said. "I've been a vampire for over eighty years, and Rhaenyra has a full four centuries on me."

"She's nearly five hundred years old?" Jon asked in shock, and Shiera smiled.

"Daenerys wasn't wrong when she said we were ageless," she replied. "So long as you avoid the sun and don't take any wood to the heart, you could live forever."

"What about garlic or silver?" Jon asked. "I have read a few vampire myths over the years."

"Garlic is delicious, and silver on its own isn't a problem, but silver objects blessed by septons can burn us like the sun and strip us of our strength," Shiera replied. "If those idiots who took me had properly blessed silver on them, I probably wouldn't have been able to escape."

"How did they get their hands on you anyway?" Jon asked.

"They left a tempting mortal out as bait," Shiera spat. "She had drunk blessed water, the same thing that they soaked their ropes with, hoping that that would suffice. They didn't."

"So blessed water, blessed silver, sunlight, and wood," Jon murmured, mostly to himself. "I still can't believe any of this is fucking happening. I...I have no idea what I'm going to tell anyone."

"You can't tell them the truth," Shiera said firmly. "You would make an enemy of every other vampire in the world..."

"Including you?" Jon asked.

"Our secrecy is vital," Shiera sighed. "There are enough people out there hunting us as it is."

"That's...fucking great," Jon muttered.

"Think of it this way," Shiera sighed, ghosting her fingers over his hand. "You were killed, but rather than simply dying and going off into nothingness, you were given a new life instead. It will be different and come with its share of challenges, but if you let it, it will give you joys as well."

"Is that how you coped with it when it happened to you?" Jon asked.

"By the time Rhaenyra found me, my life had fallen apart so much that I was willing to welcome either outcome," Shiera said, her eyes darkening as she recalled her former life. "My father had been a wealthy man, and I enjoyed all the perks that came with being his daughter, but he was a shortsighted one too, one who made many enemies, and when he died, all of my protections went with him."

"Shiera," Jon said softly, her haunted tone breaking through the wellspring of self-pity he was wallowing in.

"Men whose hearts I had toyed with before then, fully convinced that they'd never dare lay a finger on me for fear of my father's power, were suddenly emboldened," Shiera muttered, swallowing thickly. "Nyra found me close to death and tore them apart in front of me. Their agonized screams, I thought, would be my funeral march, but then she gazed into my eyes, her entire face covered in blood, and offered me a new life, one where I would never again have to rely on any power but my own to keep me safe. I haven't regretted the decision I made that day once in all the years since."

"Fuck, I'm so sorry," Jon sighed, being reminded all too much of the various patients he'd helped tend to over the years who had been grievously brutalized.

"Your life didn't turn out how you wanted it to," Shiera whispered, staring up into his eyes. Brushing her nails through his hair, she added, "Your dreams of becoming a doctor were ended by your bitch stepmother, and though you found a way to still do what you wanted to in a way, I got the sense that you weren't truly satisfied."

"I was still able to help those in need, but...I'd be lying if I said that I was at all happy with how things turned out," Jon admitted.

"I saw no evidence of a woman in your life either while I was at your apartment," Shiera continued, and he grumbled, being unable to deny that. "This life might not be what you want either, but you will not know loneliness with the three of us; you'll never again have to feel the sting of your stepmother's cruelty or the disappointment over what she cost you, and in time, you'll gain power and strength beyond imagining."

"I haven't had a girlfriend since I broke up with my ex six months ago, and the only friend I have left who hasn't moved away for one reason or another recently got married and had a kid," Jon admitted. "I'd be lying if I said I hadn't felt rather...lonely for a while."

"I know we just met, but I'd like to think that we'll make better company than the rats," Shiera quipped, and he smiled despite his lingering conflicted feelings.

"AHHH!" Daenerys screamed, and Jon practically leapt forward when Shiera grabbed him.

"Don't," she warned him.

"But..." Jon went to argue when further screams reached his ears, making him freeze in place.

"Yes, yes, YES!" Daenerys squealed, and it became entirely obvious what she and, presumably Rhaenyra were doing.

"Those two..." he stammered, groaning as he felt his cock harden in his pants faster than it had since he was a teenager.

"Daenerys can be a bit of a handful if we don't help her out regularly," Shiera sighed, and he stared at her in shock. "Is that so surprising?"

"So the three of you are...what, in some kind of triad relationship?" Jon asked, trying desperately to calm his raging erection as more pleased cries assaulted his ears.

"Rhaenyra and I became lovers not long after she turned me," Shiera explained. "She'd been alone for quite a while at that point, having only the odd thrall to entertain herself with. When we met Dany and realized what a little sex addict she was, we were more than happy to bring her in, in part to stop her from seeking out someone she'd hurt."

"What's her deal anyway?" Jon asked.

"That's her story to tell, not mine," Shiera replied. "Word of warning, though, she is absolutely going to try to seduce you."

"But she's..." Jon went to say, and Shiera chuckled.

"Rhaenyra was eighteen when she was turned, and I was twenty-one," she explained. "Dany was a little younger, but that hardly means she should be stuck living a life of celibacy, something she'd sooner meet the sun than even contemplate, anyway."

"Bloody hell," Jon muttered, shaking his head. "I guess after dark I'll have to stop by St. Hugor, tell them something other than the truth, and then go by my apartment to grab my things."

"Dany and I cleared it out last night while Rhaenyra brought you back here," Shiera said, and he looked at her in surprise. "Your things are piled neatly in one of the rooms nearest

the door, and your car is waiting in the parking lot. We charmed the employees here not to question it.”

“Charm?” Jon asked, and she smiled.

“One of the many abilities that you’ll learn how to use in the coming nights,” Shiera replied. “Your phone is in there too if you want to call the hospital.”

“At this point, it would be better to just go in person when I can,” Jon sighed, following her as she led him towards the room she’d mentioned. “Doctor Stokeworth, the chief resident, will still be there today after sunset, and I can...I guess tender my resignation.”

That thought still hurt deeply, and thinking that after spending so much time learning how to help the sick and wounded, settling for becoming a nurse when he could no longer become a doctor, and putting up with the genuinely insane hours, he’d have to give it all up in his mid-twenties was nothing short of infuriating. His father had always stressed the need to play the hand life dealt you, no matter how much it sucked, though, and he was trying desperately to remember that nugget of wisdom when all he wanted to do was scream at the sheer injustice of it all.

Speaking of screaming, Daenerys’ shrieks of pleasure got louder and louder as they continued walking through the hall of the surprisingly large mausoleum, and while Jon tried to tell himself that he wasn’t going to look, especially as he realized that there was no door to give the pair any privacy, he felt physically drawn to them as he passed them and came to a halt at the sight. They were the hottest creatures he’d ever seen in his life, bar none. Rhaenyra was still clothed, wearing the form-fitting red gown he’d been too freaked out earlier to truly appreciate, but Daenerys was completely naked and sprawled out across the lid of a sarcophagus as the older vampire knelt in front of her, lapping at her folds. Her face was a picture of pleasure, flushed and smiling widely, and as she spotted him, that smile turned into a grin and her eyes grew bloodshot.

“Please bite me, Mummy,” Daenerys cooed, her eyes never leaving his. “I love it when you bite my thighs, just like you did that night.”

“You are a very naughty girl,” Rhaenyra chuckled, spreading the younger girl’s pale legs wide before sinking her teeth into her femoral artery.

Daenerys screamed, her back arching off the sarcophagus as her orgasm hit like a freight train and her climax finally shocked Jon out of the trance he felt like he’d been in. Blushing scarlet and forcing himself to look away, even as the sight of her impossibly perky breasts jiggling as she writhed made that all the harder, he muttered an apology and rushed away. Shiera had already reached the room and looked more amused than anything, something that did nothing to help his mortification.

“She took it as a compliment, I assure you,” she replied. “Dany and I didn’t take everything from your apartment, but anything that looked expensive or sentimental, we made sure to get.”

“Did you grab the pictures I had?” Jon asked, looking around, and she nodded.

"They're in the trunk of your car alongside a few other things that we didn't think were worth dragging in here," Shiera replied. "Your phone, your wallet, and a few changes of clothes are here, though."

"Do you spend your days exclusively in crypts and places like this?" Jon asked, and she chuckled.

"Goodness no," Shiera replied as he picked up his phone. "This is a place Rhaenyra picked while she was looking for me. We have a more permanent home in the mountains of the Vale and a few actual safe houses scattered through the continent, but we rarely ever come to King's Landing, and when the safe house he did have here burned about a decade ago, we just never got around to replacing it."

Jon furrowed his brow at that and was about to ask questions when he noticed the numerous calls he'd gotten from Sam and sighed, calling him, figuring he'd leave a voicemail for him to listen to on his break.

"Where are you?" he asked, picking up immediately. In a hushed tone, he added, "Stokeworth is furious, and even Thorne has been made aware of your absence today."

"Fuck," Jon muttered, knowing that the chief of medicine at St. Hugor already didn't seem to care much for him. "It's been a crazy day, Sam."

"Are you alright?" Sam asked.

Jon took a deep breath, unsure as to how he should even try to answer that.

"I got some news last night that I've been dealing with the aftermath of ever since," Jon replied. "I'll explain later, but I don't think I'll be able to get to the hospital earlier than six."

"You know how much they don't tolerate this kind of..." Sam went on to say, and Jon sighed.

"I know, but as things stand right now, I'm going to have to resign anyway," he muttered.

"Resign?" Sam asked, aghast. "What's going on?"

"As I said, I'll explain later," Jon sighed. "I just called because I finally got a chance to look at my phone and, seeing how many times you'd called and texted, figured I should let you know that I wasn't dead in a ditch or something."

"I had started to wonder," Sam muttered. "I hope you're okay, Jon."

"I'll be fine," Jon lied. "I'll see you later."

"See you," Sam said, and Jon hung up.

"Hopefully by then I'll have some clue of what I'm going to say," he muttered, looking through the other missed calls and texts he had.

"We'll come up with something believable," Rhaenyra said, and Jon nearly jumped, having not heard her approach.

"How is it that my hearing seems to be enhanced compared to normal, but I can't hear you walk?" he asked.

"I'm very stealthy," Rhaenyra replied. "When you go to the hospital, Shiera will go with you."

"Yes, I will," Shiera said before he could reply. "You've never felt the hunger for blood before, and it will test you in a place like that. I'll come along to make sure that you don't do anything unfortunate."

"You make it sound like I'm a rabid animal now," Jon muttered, and Rhaenyra smiled softly up at him.

"The urge is strong, but it is controllable," she assured him. "At first, though, it will feel like a compulsion, and you'll need a little help managing it; that's all."

Jon sighed at that and looked over as Daenerys walked in, miraculously having gotten dressed.

"Did you like the show I put on?" she purred, and he forced himself to look away, not wanting to harden again.

"Dany, behave," Rhaenyra said firmly. "Jon's new to vampirism and doesn't need any distractions just now. Now, it will be some hours before you feel even a hint of hunger, as the blood you took from me will sustain you for a while, but you will need to feed tonight, and we should go over exactly what that entails."

Jon nodded at that, happy to be able to focus on something other than the seemingly perpetually horny teenager currently pouting in the corner.

"AHHHH!" Ramsay screamed, agony assaulting his senses as Roose slowly and methodically flayed a strip of skin from his back.

"Your orders were to ascertain the veracity of the report I received about Shiera Targaryen's disappearance," Roose said coldly, his icy eyes filled with cold anger as he glared down at his wayward progeny. "I specifically told you not to engage with her or anyone of that family."

"I didn't!" Ramsay roared in anger and pain. "I just tortured a fucking mortal! How was I to know the entire silver-haired bitch pack would show up and object?"

"Don't lie to me," Roose hissed. "I thought you'd overcome your puerile infatuation with that woman, but clearly, I was wrong. You tortured the mortal because you thought he might lead you to her and let you take her while she was still weak, didn't you?"

"I tortured him because I thought he meant something to her!" Ramsay shouted. "I thought he might give me something useful."

"All you got was a fight with Rhaenyra, one in which you cost me dearly," Roose hissed. "Saving her life back in the day was a calculated move. I figured she'd escape from that burning sept and acted purely to ensure that she owed me a favor, one that she spent sparing you."

"I'm sorry," Ramsay whimpered, screaming as Roose finished removing the strip of skin, which he quickly handed to a thrall.

"Set that on the drying rack," he commanded, and the man nodded.

Roose washed his hands, glaring at his quivering, whimpering childe, and snapped his fingers at one of his other thralls, gesturing for him to free him. The moment Ramsay's chains were undone and he fell to the floor, he set upon the thrall and drained him dry, eager to force his skin to grow back.

"You're lucky, boy," Roose muttered. "My sire, Belthasar, would have flayed every inch of skin from your frame and left you up for days after a fuck-up of this magnitude. Never let it be said that I am not merciful."

"Master," Domicer breathed, kneeling before him.

"What is it?" Roose asked.

"Another gem has appeared on the chalice, master," Domicer said, and Roose went still.

"Which gem?" he asked.

"An amethyst," Domicer replied, and Roose swore as Ramsay jumped to his feet.

"What?!" he shouted.

"You fucking idiot," Roose muttered, shaking his head and sitting down.

"There...we don't know that the man I tortured was..." Ramsay stammered, paling even for a vampire as his sire's cold eyes narrowed at him.

"Did he have purple eyes?" Roose asked.

"He had brown hair, and..." Ramsay went to say, and Roose grabbed him by the throat, baring his fangs and snarling.

"Did...he...have...purple...eyes?" he asked, pausing after every word, and Ramsay whimpered as he nodded.

Roose threw him across the room, glaring as he crashed through the wall of their manor and growled.

“Not only did you cost me a favor I suffered burns acquiring, but you made an enemy of Rhaenyra Targaryen’s new childe!” Roose shouted. “Get out of my sight.”

Ramsay ran as fast as he could as Roose growled, marching into his study, sitting behind his desk, and pouring himself a glass of whiskey-infused blood.

“Should we prepare for war?” Domic asked.

“Rhaenyra’s no fledgling,” Roose replied. “Aside from the couple remaining first-generation ones, she’s the oldest of us and capable of remaining cool even in the face of outrageous nonsense. This newly turned one could be a problem, though. He’ll want blood more than he does already and may well do something regrettable. If I could trust Ramsay not to make a bad situation worse, I might not care, but I can’t. We’ll return to the north immediately, and I’ll send Rhaenyra a little apology gift to soothe her ruffled scales. If the rest of what Ramsay told me is true, she’ll have enough problems to deal with soon.”

“Oh?” Domic asked, curious.

“The men who managed to abduct Shiera appear to have been acting on the orders of the Hunter,” Roose replied, and Domic paled.

“He’s back then,” he muttered. “All the more reason to put as much distance between us and the Targaryens as we can.”

“Indeed,” Roose replied. “Even Belthasar couldn’t stand against that one.”

“Do you think he’ll finish Rhaenyra off this time?” Domic asked, and Roose chuckled, knocking back the last of the spiked blood.

“I learned a long time ago not to underestimate that one,” he replied. “She’s managed to escape him before and nearly ended him the last time they fought.”

“She failed, though,” Domic sighed, and Roose nodded.

“She did,” he said. “Order the thralls to start packing up; we leave at sunset.”

“Yes, Master,” Domic nodded, and as he left, Roose sighed, pouring himself another glass.

“I got what I came for, and while it might have been nice to get Rhaenyra under my thumb, the Bloodstone Chalice is enough of a prize to consider this trip a success,” Roose chuckled to himself, wondering whether or not his longtime rival and her greatest enemy would manage to finish their long war this time around.

“Oh, fuck,” Jon gasped, smelling it before they even reached the main door of the hospital.

It was distinctly metallic, iron and something else he couldn’t quite place. He’d been around people bleeding out before enough to know that it was blood he was smelling, but

though the scent itself hadn't changed, it had never smelled like this to him before. The closest thing he could compare it to was smelling pancakes the odd time that his father made them back when he was a kid. That was a scent that had always seemed to waft right into his brain, making him hungry even if he wasn't, and as he smelled the scent of blood coming from the hospital, he winced in pain as his teeth began to feel like they were moving around in his mouth.

"Breathe," Shiera said.

"I can't," Jon whispered, holding a hand over his mouth and nose and clenching his eyes shut. "The scent..."

"Intoxicating, is it not?" Shiera whispered. "You've never wanted anything more in your entire life, have you?"

"Shiera, what the hell?!" Jon hissed, glaring at her with bloodshot eyes, and she slapped him just hard enough to shock him.

"That intoxication will never go away, but you don't have to let it rule you," Shiera said firmly. "Breathe slowly and deeply. Yes, it will make it worse at first, but it will help you center yourself. You're in control, not it."

Jon closed his eyes and did what she said, a low growl rumbling in the back of his throat as the smell of blood filled his nose. Some idiot must have come in this door while actively bleeding from some wound, he realized. The scent was too thick to just be wafting from the hospital, and he wished that the damn fool, whoever they were, had just used the emergency entrance. With each breath the intoxicating scent became more pronounced, until it took every bit of willpower he had not to drop to his knees and start crawling around the ground trying to find where the droplets of blood he could smell had fallen so he could lick them up. His heart raced in his chest, his canines growing longer until they threatened to pierce his lip, and just as he was about to run away, wherever his legs could take him, he noticed that his pulse had started to slow.

"That's it," Shiera smiled. "Just breathe through the..."

"Jon?" Sam asked, and Jon froze, his heart seeming to stop in horror as he realized that his old friend was by the entrance. "Is that you?"

"I'll deal with him," Shiera said softly. "Just focus on your breathing."

"Don't hurt him," Jon whispered, looking down at the ground.

"Um, excuse me, are you..." Sam went to ask, confused by his reaction, when Shiera stepped in front of him.

"You didn't see Jon," she said.

"I didn't see Jon," Sam replied.

"You want to go back and continue your shift," Shiera said.

"I want...my shift is over, though," Sam said, his confusion breaking through her compulsion, and she just smiled.

"Of course," Shiera chuckled, "your shift is over, and you want to get back to your wife and son."

"Right, I need to get back to Gilly and little Sam," Sam smiled.

"You will forget that you ever saw us," Shiera added before letting him go to his car.

Jon had started leaning against a nearby tree during that, keeping his face hidden, and he jolted when Shiera gently touched his shoulder.

"How are you feeling?" she asked, and he looked at her, his fangs having receded and his eyes having nearly gone back to normal.

"I'm a monster," Jon muttered.

"Jon..." Shiera went to say.

"All I want to do right now is find the source of that scent and roll around in it like a damn cat," Jon hissed. "How the hell can I ever have anything even close to a normal existence like this?"

"It's a condition, Jon, one that can be managed," Shiera replied. "Your life won't be normal, per se, but it can be good anyway."

He laughed at that, louder and longer than he meant to, and when she hugged him, he returned it, happy for her grounding touch.

"I've heard pretty much those exact words said to so many people before," Jon sighed.

"I have watched a medical show or two through the years," Shiera whispered.

"Don't believe anything you see on those," Jon chuckled. "They rarely get much right."

"I figured," Shiera shrugged. "Your eyes are back to normal."

"I can smell it still, and...gods, I don't think I've ever wanted anything more in my life, but it's not as bad as it was," Jon replied. "Is that what you felt when I cut myself the other day?"

"I did," Shiera replied. "That never truly goes away, but it does become more manageable over time. Who will we need to speak with in there?"

"Doctor Stokeworth would be our best bet," Jon said. "As chief resident, he's enough of a manager around here to accept my resignation."

"I am sorry, Jon," Shiera sighed, and he did so as well.

"You don't have to keep saying that," Jon muttered. "We met by pure chance, you didn't hurt me at all, and you can't be blamed because a psycho went after you."

Shiera smiled at that and followed him inside. A few people said hello to him, not seeming to realize that anything was out of the ordinary, and he behaved as normally as he could until finally they met someone who knew enough to call him out.

"Stark!" a tall but rather plump middle-aged man barked. "Where in the world were you today?"

"I'm sorry, Dr. Stokeworth," Jon replied, wincing. "I'd have called, but..."

"You should have done more than call," Stokeworth muttered. "You don't seem to be on death's door, so that wasn't it, and unless you end up here as a patient, you are expected to arrange for someone else to take your shift if you need time. Who are you, Miss..."

"Targaryen," Shiera replied. "Shiera Targaryen."

"A distant relative of mine," Jon added, and Stokeworth cocked an eyebrow at him.

"I thought you said your only family was a half-sister," he said.

"I thought so too, but I learned last night that that's not true," Jon explained, launching into the story they'd cooked up. "It turns out that, on my mother's side, I actually have a fair bit of family I never knew of. Another distant relative of mine recently passed, and apparently I stand to inherit quite a bit."

"Jon here is the nearest male relative we have left and, as such, factors heavily into our great-grandfather's will," Shiera explained.

"That's...odd," Stokeworth murmured, furrowing his brow in confusion.

"I need to go to Essos to sort a number of things out, and it could apparently take quite some time, so I'm going to need to resign here," Jon sighed, and the man's bushy eyebrows shot towards his forehead.

"What?" he asked. "I..."

"That won't be a problem, of course," Shiera said, staring into his eyes, and he calmed down immediately.

"Right, no problem," Stokeworth said, taking Jon's formal, written letter of resignation from him. "Good luck, Jon."

"Thank you, Sir," Jon replied, giving Shiera a pointed look only to receive a shrug in reply.

"Is that all?" she asked as they turned to leave.

"There are a few people I'd have liked to say goodbye to, but none of them are here just now, from what I recall of the schedule," Jon sighed. "I would have spoken to Sam, but..."

"For the time being, it's probably best that you keep contact to a minimum, at least for the first few weeks," Shiera said, and he grumbled.

"Do you do that thing to everyone you meet?" Jon asked as he led her back out.

"It's a habit we all form eventually," Shiera sighed. Leaning in, she whispered, "We can't really afford to rouse suspicion, for obvious reasons, and being able to make everyone we meet think that there's nothing out of the ordinary about us is just a good way to avoid that. Over time, it becomes your first instinct when dealing with anyone who isn't one of us."

"Wait, you did that to me that night," Jon glared, and she had the decency to look sheepish.

"You'll recall that I was in a rather bad way and couldn't let you bring me here," Shiera explained as they left through the front door. "Being wounded increases your hunger, not unlike how people can crave substances that they use regularly all the more when they're feeling particularly bad."

"I can understand tha...holy shit," Jon breathed, stopping in his tracks. "I haven't smoked since before I was attacked. I haven't gone that long without a cigarette in years."

"The transformative process heals all damage done to the body," Shiera explained. "Any addiction that you developed over the course of it will go away because of that."

"Which is hilarious because I'm probably at less risk of harm from damn things like this than I ever was before," Jon chuckled.

"They won't hurt you," Shiera replied. "Nyra hates the smell of them and insists that everything tasted better before they were introduced to the population, so I'd avoid doing it indoors at all, but you can smoke safely."

"Will I become addicted again?" Jon asked.

"No," Shiera replied. "As you are, you're only capable of one addiction, and it's one that you cannot cure."

Jon considered that as he unlocked the doors of his car and got inside.

"What are you thinking?" Shiera asked as she joined him.

"It's just that thinking of my sudden need to drink blood in the same vein as my old smoking habit actually makes it easier to wrap my head around," Jon replied.

"Same vein?" Shiera asked with a grin, and he chuckled.

"Pun not intended," Jon replied, sighing as he looked over at St. Hugor. "I'm going to miss this place."

Shiera just looked at him sympathetically as he stared off at the hospital, wishing there was anything she could say or do to make that better. There wasn't though; she knew that all too well, and so she stayed quiet, watching her latest vampiric sibling as he said his final goodbyes to his old place of employment. That hadn't been anything that she or Daenerys had had to worry about, so none of them were really going to know what to say.

"Agh!" Jon exclaimed suddenly, grunting and clutching at his stomach. "I...I feel like my stomach and intestines are all fluttering."

"That is something else that you'll get used to eventually," Shiera sighed. "Let's switch seats, and I'll take you back to the mausoleum. Driving as you get your first true taste of the hunger wouldn't be the best idea."

"Taste?" Jon asked, managing to joke even as his stomach continued to feel like it was trying to eat itself, and she giggled.

"Pun not intended," Shiera replied with a slight smile.

They quickly traded places, and she drove off as he continued to try to breathe through this latest symptom of his new condition.

"I just realized you've been alive almost as long as there have been cars," Jon forced out after a few minutes, desperate for something to distract him from his hunger, and she chuckled.

"When I was a girl, it was still common to see horses in the streets," Shiera chuckled. "The car had been invented, but it wasn't as universal a thing yet. That had largely changed by the time I met Rhaenyra, and today this world bears little resemblance to the one I grew up in."

"How would you compare it?" Jon asked, both genuinely curious and still wanting a distraction.

"If I had somehow remained an ageless human in all this time, I might have said it was better in every respect," Shiera replied. "I can say definitively, though, that humans tasted better when I was a fledgling, their diet having been less tainted by all the veritable poisons in your food today, and on the whole, outside of the cities, anyway, the planet smelled better. Rhaenyra says that it had already declined in these regards by my day and that the world of her own youth was vastly better."

"Doesn't everyone say that the world was better when they were young, though?" Jon asked, and Shiera chuckled.

"Maybe everyone has a point," she replied. "My favorite era of cars ended about sixty years ago. I used to have this gorgeous Jaguar that I utterly adored."

"What happened to it?" Jon asked, and her face fell.

"We're powerful creatures, and you'll soon learn that you're stronger than you ever could have imagined, but that doesn't mean that there are no threats to us out there," Shiera muttered, and before he could ask any follow-up questions, he saw the graveyard in the near distance.

"Should I be worried?" Jon asked, and she shook her head.

"No," Shiera replied. "We'll be leaving tonight for the Vale, and I doubt that..."

She trailed off as she parked the car, smelling the distinct scent of blood coming from the direction of the mausoleum, and Jon groaned, his hunger making his reaction to it even worse than before.

"Is tha..." he went to ask, and Shiera silenced him with a look.

"They found us," she whispered.

"Who?" Jon whispered, and she just shook her head.

"Stay behind me," Shiera commanded, getting out of the car and stalking quietly towards their hiding spot.

Jon followed after, salivating openly as the scent of blood became even stronger, and when the sounds of agonized screams coming from the crypt reached him, he was so overwhelmed that he barely even noticed. Shiera tensed, crouching down and creeping towards the open door, and when a man ran out, looking utterly frantic and holding a rifle, she was on him in an instant, tearing his left arm clean off to get the gun away from him. He squealed in pain, falling to his knees and clutching uselessly at the gaping wound where his shoulder used to be, as though he might be able to stop the bleeding with his hand. Shiera ran inside, and while Jon wanted to follow her, as he saw the man flailing on the ground, bleeding out from his severed arm, he found that he couldn't.

Instincts he wasn't even close to being used to flared inside him, and he approached the man slowly, breathing deeply as the intoxicating aroma of life itself seemed to light up every pleasure center in his brain all at once. His head tingled, chills went down his spine, and as he crouched by the whimpering, terrified man and grabbed his one remaining hand, he started to actively drool.

"Please," the man whimpered. "Please, I don't..."

"Shh," Jon shushed, instinctively charming the man as he stared into his eyes, and he went silent.

He swiped a finger across the man's bloodied hand and brought it to his lips, moaning when he tasted the sweet metal of his blood. It was ambrosia, thick, warm, and perfect; a flavor somehow managing to seem like all his favorites combined. His self-control already shot, he rolled the whimpering man over, holding him down as he started to struggle uselessly, and moved his mouth over the spurting blood coming from his stump. It was so fucking good, ecstasy beyond any he'd ever known.

"This is what Shiera meant by my only new addiction," he thought to himself, part of his mind still clear enough to let him. *"Cigarettes, alcohol, weed, even that one time I tried ecstasy, none of them come close to this."*

The man tried to hit him, and Jon caught his arm, pinning it down, and grabbed his throat. The fact that he'd clearly attacked Rhaenyra and Daenerys probably should have influenced his decision just then, but he didn't even consider that. All that mattered to him in that moment was that this man was full of blood and he was hungry. Before he'd even realized what he was doing, he'd sunk his teeth into his neck, eliciting further screams from him.

"I should send you back to Cole in pieces," Rhaenyra hissed as she dragged the only living assailant out of the mausoleum, letting Daenerys and Shiera clean up the butchered remains of the others.

"He will send you back to hell where you belong, demon," the man spat, and she chuckled.

"You serve a greater monster than I could ever be," Rhaenyra replied, baring her fangs as she looked out on the grounds and spotted Jon. "Shiera, darling, could you help our feral new friend here?"

"What's...oh," Shiera replied, seeing Jon continue to drain the man she'd wounded dry.

"I think I'll just leave your heart here for him to find," Rhaenyra grinned, reaching inside the man's chest and ripping it out.

As he fell to the ground instantly dead, she tossed the heart aside, intending to pin it to a wall inside the mausoleum. When she heard Jon growl and hiss, she turned and saw Shiera pulling him off of the clearly drained body.

"Jon, Jon!" she exclaimed, grabbing his by the shoulders and holding him in place. "It's done; he's gone."

"He..." Jon stammered, his senses returning to him as the hunger abated. Staring down at the bloodless corpse, he staggered back and said, "I killed him."

"If it helps, he did try to kill us," Daenerys called out, licking her fingers clean of blood. "I guess you were wrong about Cole thinking that you'd never be bold enough to come here, Mummy."

"I overthought things a bit," Rhaenyra replied. "I should have expected him to think that little of me."

"Breathe, Jon," Shiera said, "just like before. You killed someone, yes, but he was a hunter, a man who wouldn't have hesitated to kill you."

Jon swallowed thickly, the realization that he'd taken a life truly sinking in. He'd seen people die before, not just men but women and children too, and his stomach had long since been hardened to it. This was the first time he'd actually killed someone, though,

and that was a hard pill to swallow, but he found as he gazed down into the lifeless brown eyes of the man that he felt far less than he'd have expected. Looking up at Rhaenyra, he decided to focus on something else.

"Who's Cole?" he asked.

"An old enemy," Rhaenyra replied, "and one that we would do well to avoid. I meant for us to leave tonight and be shipped to the Vale during the day, but I think we should leave sooner than I had intended. Excuse me."

"Shipped?" Jon asked as the ancient vampire pulled out her phone to make a call.

"She owns a cargo ship that we travel in from time to time," Shiera replied. "There are crates on it that completely block out the sun, so we can travel safely in them. Your car will be moved as well when we sail to Gulltown."

"From there, we'll travel to the manor," Daenerys grinned. "You'll love it, Jon, I promise."

"I still have to gather the rest of my things from my apartment," Jon pointed out, and Shiera nodded.

"We'll send a pair of thralls to clean it out and bring the rest of your possessions to the Vale," she said.

"You've said that word a number of times now, but you haven't actually said what a thrall is," Jon said.

"A thrall is the most we can make of humans we aren't related to by blood," Rhaenyra explained. "They enjoy some of the perks of being a vampire but not all of them, and they require a steady supply of our blood to sustain themselves. The Balerion will be in port within the hour. Dany, Shiera, and Jon, we need to clean out the mausoleum now. When these arseholes don't report in, Cole will realize that we really are here and come himself, and we don't want to be here when he does."

"Who is he?" Jon asked.

"My greatest mistake," Rhaenyra said, her face falling. "We'll discuss that and everything else you need to know once we're back home. Now, come help me clear this place out."

Jon nodded and followed the others back inside. His old life was over, something that he was still coming to terms with, and his new life was proving to have more than its share of difficulties. If he wanted to live, though, which he did, he knew that he was going to need to continue to follow these three, at least for a while. Sighing at that thought, he checked his phone and sighed in relief when he saw that there were still several hours left before dawn.

"At least my new life isn't boring," he thought to himself, shaking his head.