

Silver

by Yara Gharios

Chapter 1

Seven Years Ago

Day of escape

Shiloh didn't want to run anymore.

It felt like she had been at it for years, and she was so tired. A stab went through her chest with each painful gasp of breath that went through her dry lips. The soles of her feet were aching from the repeated impact on the ground. If she didn't take a break soon, she would collapse.

However, the single remembrance of what was behind her was enough to keep her going. Pushing the physical pain to the back of her mind, she ran without ever looking back, hoping never to see that place again in her life.

The first time her legs gave way, Shiloh scrambled to get back up and took off again at a noticeably slower pace. It was only after she tripped again multiple times that she allowed herself to slow down into a regular walk. Though it was a long time ago, she still remembered what her father used to tell her about how stopping after having run a while was unhealthy, and that she needed to keep walking until her heart rate slowed.

Though she had been running nearly all night, walking felt like a much harder chore. Shiloh dragged her feet and struggled to keep her head up. Every part of her body felt heavy and burned with pain. She had exhausted herself way past the point that she was used to, and as a result, she was suddenly overcome with an overwhelming and nauseating dizziness. She barely made it on all fours before the contents of her stomach all hurtled out of her unwilling body.

Once the heaving stopped, Shiloh's arms could no longer handle her weight, and she collapsed sideways. She laid there for a moment, waiting for the cold sweats to pass as the Earth spun around her and her stomach slowly unclenched. All she wanted to do was pass out, but she had to find a safe place to stay first.

Suddenly, without fully knowing how she was doing it, a part of her instinctively tapped into the power that was usually dormant deep within her, which she had been trying and failing to control for weeks. Though there was no reflective surface nearby that she could use to witness the change in her eyes, she could feel her magic finally responding to her call. Warmth spread through her body, mercifully erasing the cold clamminess brought on by the queasiness and easing some of her muscle aches.

Feeling better, Shiloh stood up shakily. The world glowed with color when she was still in touch with her magic. Sensing an opportunity, Shiloh analyzed her surroundings and was relieved to see that the only sign of human life was a small town not too far from her. Nobody was on her trail.

The magic dissipated after a moment, returning her eyesight to normal. In direction of the town, Shiloh could see flickers of light coming from people's homes. The semiarid open land of the Sonoran Desert made it impossible for her to take cover,

and she had to keep a watchful eye for anything coming her way as she continued walking.

A while later, she reached a lone road and slumped down on the side to rest her sore limbs, hidden behind a wild thorny bush. Before she knew it, she had drifted off to sleep, finding herself back at the estate. She relived the moment when she had willingly dropped herself fifty feet from the window of her private quarters, intending for the impact to kill her. As it were, her magic was the only thing that saved her life, and that was the first time she had used her powers without intending to. Shiloh had been momentarily frozen with shock, but the desperation to get out of Master's grasp soon spurred her into action. She needed to get away before anyone could think to check on her and realize that she was gone.

But then, the dream took on a different quality, a hopeful tone to fight off the terror and despair. Shiloh saw a pair of amber eyes with a speck of green in the right iris, staring back at her with intensity. They flickered out of sight and were replaced with the night sky, starless and pitch black except for the full moon glowing behind the clouds.

That was when Shiloh began to regain consciousness. She was still not used to the strange feel that her dreams seemed to have taken on as of late. It was a disorienting process, so she stayed unmoving in order to adjust. Her mind was so muddled that she didn't become aware of any presence near her until they started sniffing her.

With a jolt, she sat up and came face to face with two grey wolves. Shiloh's heart hammered in her chest as she crawled back away from them. She braced herself for them to lunge at her or attack in some way, but they stayed rooted in their spot, staring at her.

It was the eyes of the one on the right that alerted her. There was awareness in them that didn't seem entirely animalistic, but it was more about their color. It was the same amber she had just seen in her dream, right down to the speck of green. Seeing her falter, the wolves turned their sights upwards, pointing their muzzles in the direction of the moon. Part of the sky was turning a dark orange with the sunrise, but the moon was still visible. And just like in her dream, the moon was full.

The wolves then turned back to Shiloh for a moment and walked away. They took a few steps then looked back at her, as if waiting for her to follow. Her fear had subsided when she realized what the wolves truly were, but it was now replaced with wariness. Sensing her hesitation, the wolves stared at each other. The one with the amber eyes walked away while the other stayed behind with her.

Although everything she had been taught about skinwalkers pointed to them being dangerous, Shiloh couldn't help her fascination. She had never seen one in real life and had only heard stories. She knew they could only turn to wolves at the full moon but that most of them would turn feral quite easily and lose their humanity until they turned back. She also heard that they had a way to communicate when in their wolf form, and she guessed that they had done just that.

In spite of herself, Shiloh was curious, so she lifted herself on all fours, intending to crawl closer toward the wolf. However, the action seemed to alarm the creature, who growled at her in warning.

"Easy, Quinn," said a man's voice.

He was walking from the same direction where the first wolf had gone. The other wolf calmed down in his presence, though it still glared at Shiloh. The man was dressed in loose clothing, matching brown robes and pants, but he walked barefoot. Part of his chest was exposed due to the robe not being wide enough to cover all of his body. Shiloh guessed he had dressed simply in order to return quickly.

Lifting his hands, he pulled his coily black hair, which almost reached down to his shoulders, into a bun. There was something firm yet gentle about the way he carried himself. He appeared to be in his late thirties or early forties, but given that skinwalkers aged differently from humans, Shiloh guessed he was likely older. His eyes were now the same green as the speck when he was in wolf form. They fixed her with an intensity that rooted her to the spot, but they were also filled with a warmth that put her at ease.

“Are you guys skinwalkers?” she dared to ask. Her voice was tired and croaky after her long ordeal.

“We are,” the man confirmed. “The real question is who are *you*? Obviously not a human, but you’re not a vampire or a mutt, either. Is there a Master that you serve?”

Her jaw set in an angry manner. “I don’t serve anyone. Not anymore. I belong to myself, now.”

He nodded thoughtfully, seeming pleased by her answer. “I’m Levi. Do you have a name?”

“Shiloh,” she revealed without thinking.

“Is that your true name?”

She realized with alarm that maybe she should have given a false name. Skinwalkers weren’t usually the friendliest to other supernaturals, but who knew if these particular skinwalkers were any different? Perhaps they knew Master and would report to him that they had found her.

Levi noticed her apparent distress and smiled softly. “Don’t fret. I’m only asking because runaways typically adopt a new name after they leave an estate.”

Shiloh raised her eyebrows as she mulled over his words. “Do you know a lot of runaways?”

The side of his lips twisted in a small, amused smile. “A few. The way I see it, Shiloh, you have two options. You can keep going on your own, and I promise you neither I nor Quinn will stop you. Or you can stay with us for a while. You’ll have a safe place to rest until you’re ready to leave again.”

Shiloh took a moment to think about what she should do. On the one hand, Devon had told her that skinwalkers weren’t to be trusted. They didn’t look dangerous, but they would certainly outmatch her in a fight. On the other hand, she needed to hide, but she had no idea where to start. She hadn’t exactly thought about what to do beyond finding shelter. Perhaps this was her best shot at survival.

Shiloh had slept enough to be able to walk again, but she was longing for a bed to rest on again. “How far is it?”

Shiloh was disheartened when she was told she would have to run again, but the promise of safety spurred her on. Levi and Quinn took her to what seemed to be a

primitive village. It was a safe distance from the human town and was well-hidden between the hills, hence the need to run to make it there quickly. Wooden huts were built here and there, about a dozen in total, some smaller than others. They were spread out in semicircles around one specific area which seemed to form a gathering point for everyone in the village. Logs were laid down for people to sit on around a central campfire. The layout was almost stage-like, and Shiloh could imagine Levi standing in the middle of the circle to give a speech.

However, the thought reminded her too much of the life she had just escaped, and a wave of sorrow overcame her. All night, she had held back from thinking about anything other than reaching safety, but now that she had, it was hard to ignore the thought. Tears sprung in her eyes, threatening to spill over, and Shiloh longed for a moment alone to let them out.

Finally, after much walking, Levi stopped in front of one of the smaller huts in the back semicircle and gestured for Shiloh to go in. "You can freshen up in there. When you're ready, come join us for breakfast."

She gave him a grateful nod and went inside the hut. She waited a moment, making sure that their footsteps receded, before she allowed the tears to gush out and collapsed to the ground.

Broken, uncontrolled sobs escaped out of her lips. Shiloh cried for herself first, for the freedom which she had fought two years to get and finally reached. She cried for the lover that she had lost because of Master's cruelty. Finally, she cried for all the innocent people she had left behind, first of which was Devon, her best friend. Her guilt over being so selfish as to not even consider his fate should Master blame him for her escape threw her hard.

She tried to remind herself that Master would not be able to hurt Devon any more than he could hurt her—at least before she left him. That much she was sure of. However, the same couldn't be said for the others; Adam, Billy, Shauna, and all the humans she had abandoned at the estate—even Vince, as insufferable as he was. What would happen to them now that she wasn't there anymore? No matter how dangerous it was for her to stay, her freedom had come at a terrible cost that she never wanted. She felt foolish for not considering all of this before now.

Shiloh grieved for a long few minutes before pulling herself together. She wasn't out of the woods just yet; she still needed to make sure that trusting Levi was a sound choice. Everything she knew about skinwalkers would suggest otherwise, and yet, something compelled her to believe that he was an ally.

With a jolt, Shiloh realized that her dreams had been leading her here all along. She hadn't run from Levi because he seemed familiar after she dreamt of him. She had tried to kill herself because of a recurring dream urging her to jump out the window and make a run for it. Perhaps prophetic dreams were one of her powers. It had even guided the direction in which she ran, so meeting Levi couldn't have been a coincidence, either.

Feeling slightly renewed, Shiloh lifted her head and cast a look about the hut. The interior was simple, with just enough living space for a single bed, a closet, and a tiny bathroom. There was even a small mirror above the sink. As she stood in front of it, Shiloh got a good look at her reflection. Her usually straight hair was disheveled, their color faded into a powdery look from the numerous times she fell. Her face had

somehow remained spotless after the fall, though her clothes were all torn up. There was also a wild look in her hazel eyes, the color of which contrasted sharply with the dark circles under them.

A curious sensation came over her as she stared back at herself. She had only seen the effects of her magic once, when she had first used it at the estate out of her fear of Master. Part of her was curious to see the change for herself. She still didn't know the extent of what she was capable of, let alone how to control her abilities. Everything she'd learned so far had come from a natural instinct for self-preservation.

Nevertheless, as she concentrated on those she had left behind and her desperation to protect them, Shiloh felt the moment when her magic was awakened. It coursed through her and allowed the feeling of comfort and power, which she had been subconsciously resisting up until that point, wash over her. When the magic reached her eyes, their hazel color faded as the center irises dilated and changed to a brilliant silver color, like perfect round pearls. As she blinked, she was pleased to see that the act didn't revert her eyes back to their human color.

Out of nowhere, she heard Devon's voice from a memory that seemed so long ago.

"One big flaw in us humans is that we don't realize how important our loved ones are in our life until we lose them."

I won't make that mistake, she resolved and wiped the drying tears from her cheeks. *I will not let myself forget.*

Shiloh could feel a change within herself. She would not allow herself to cowardly run into a safe corner while Devon, and everyone else she cared about, were still trapped in that place. Her lover may be gone for good, but she wasn't going to let it be in vain.

Then and there, Shiloh vowed to avenge the boy she once loved and rescue all the humans from Master's grasp. It would be nearly impossible, but she had all the time in the world to prepare for that.

Straightening up with a dangerous look in her eyes, she felt her powers shifting, letting the old Shiloh crumble and make way for Silver to rise.

Chapter 2

Present Day

Silver slowly marched through the half dozen bodies scattered on the ground. Keeping a tight grip on her weapon at her side, she looked for any sign of life among the dead. Nothing. Not even a twitch. It was both a dreadful sight and a sign of someone's victory.

A grunt in the distance made her halt and snap her head in that direction. The sound hadn't been clear enough for her to properly locate the source. All was still. Concentrating, she closed her eyes for a second and then flung them open. Her pupils turned into silver pearls, and her vision transformed.

Silver could see the bodies devoid of the glow that usually indicated life, although a few were still dimming and would be out in a matter of seconds, no matter what she tried to do to save them. One particular individual caught her attention; it was still glowing, though it was flickering as if running low on energy, but alive nonetheless.

Gathering her weapon strongly in one hand, she walked towards him. She kept her eyes in their form, having learned over the years that it usually got her answers faster. She examined the man's surroundings, looking for anything he could use as a weapon against her. The possibilities were numerous, so she decided to move the questioning to a more secluded location.

Carefully letting the power wash through her body, Silver effortlessly lifted the man with one hand on his shirt, holding him parallel to the ground. He let out a scream in fear and vainly tried to get out of her grasp.

"Please," he gasped, struggling just to let the words out. "Please, don't hurt me." He whimpered some more.

Silver didn't feel the need to elaborate that she had found the scene this way. All of these men were human, a specie she was focused on protecting, not destroying.

She took the man to an empty corner of the street, set him down on his feet and observed him with her silver eyes. He was frightened and retreated toward the wall, covering his face but still unable to stop himself from looking at her. She knew the feeling of being scared and hated that she had to force it into him. When she was done interrogating him, she would make sure he didn't remember any of the horror he saw and would heal him of any injury that was repairable with her magic.

"What's your name?" she asked him in a carefully composed tone that revealed nothing of her true emotions.

The man's shaking hands retreated slightly away from his face. "If I tell you, you won't hurt me?"

Silver cocked her head to the side. "I won't hurt you either way. I just need some answers from you. It would be easier and faster for the both of us if you cooperate."

She didn't mean for it to sound threatening, but it did. The man backed up further until he was pressed against the wall. With no way to go, he panicked and looked around for an escape. The magic was starting to push from inside her, her instincts dying to act against her will so he would forcibly start talking, but Silver held it in. She was the one in control, not her powers.

“What is your name?” she repeated, enunciating clearly.

He looked at her eyes once more, both amazed at the color and dreadfully afraid. “Carl,” he finally let out in a grunt.

Silver nodded. “Carl, nice to meet you. Can you tell me what happened here before I showed up?”

Some of the fear in his eyes dissipated, allowing him to truly think about her words. “You...” he hesitated. “You mean it wasn’t you?”

“I wasn’t here until a few minutes ago, like I just told you. Why? What do you remember? Was there someone who looked like me?”

The prospect of finding another of her kind made her resolve waver for a small second, but Carl was quick to shake his head in denial.

“No, not like you,” he told her, his voice shaking. “Nothing like you. But I thought... maybe you were here before and I just didn’t see you. It was all moving so fast.” He hesitated again. “Are... are you sure you won’t hurt me?”

Silver raised her eyebrows. “I’m true to my word, and I said I wouldn’t. But I still need you to tell me everything you know.”

Carl examined her for a moment, though it was obvious he couldn’t really concentrate with all the panic seeping through him. Silver decided it was safe to let some of her magic out to make him relax and calm down enough to be able to talk properly. She could see his body visibly slump. The shaking ceased, and his eyes stopped darting left and right and focused on her instead.

Finally, he nodded. “Okay. I’ll tell you.”

“Thank you,” she acknowledged.

Carl swallowed once and started his tale. “I was out with my friends, and suddenly, these... things... attacked us. They bit my friends in-in different places each, and... me in my shoulder.”

No wonder he had been whimpering; her grip was causing him pain.

“Everything is dim after that, until the moment the thing let go of me. That’s when the pain hit me. I must have passed out, because the next time I opened my eyes was just before you grabbed me.”

At a moment like this, he should have been too terrified to speak. Her magic was the only thing that kept him going. Silver considered this information before asking him, “What did the creatures look like?”

This time, the fear flashed back in his eyes, and Silver had to strengthen the magic cord to calm him down again.

“They didn’t exactly look human. I mean, obviously, they *weren’t*, but they didn’t even look like it. They had... fur on their bodies... too much to be normal... and their backs were crooked. They were hunched over and couldn’t stand up straight.”

So Master was experimenting with hybrids. From Carl’s description, it seemed they had traits in common with their parent species, but with some differences. Fur covered bodies and crooked backs. Well, werewolves and hybrids always were known

as mutts due to their appearance. Apparently, the latter didn't opt for the simple bite in the neck that vampires preferred.

Silver wanted more information, and to get it from Carl, he needed a little push. She took two steps towards him, and he flinched a little. Taking over his mind, Silver watched as Carl's mouth fell open, his eyes going blank.

"What did you see when the creature was biting you?" she asked calmly.

He blinked and spoke in a monotonous voice. "They were talking."

"How many of them were there?"

He thought for a moment. "Six."

"What were they talking about?"

"Someone they needed."

"Who?" she pressed, her power building so much, she had to restrain it again.

"I don't know," he answered honestly. "Someone... a girl, maybe. They had to lure her, and they had a backup plan in case it didn't work. That's why they attacked us; they weren't feeding, they just wanted to make a scene, and they were pretty sure she would know about it and would come to investigate."

He wasn't aware of what he was saying; he was simply replaying the words he had heard in the mind of his attacker as he was being bitten.

Silver's heart dropped in her chest. This was a trap. She had to get out fast, but she still needed one more thing.

"What was their second plan?" she asked in a rush.

Carl frowned, straining to remember. "I'm... I'm not... sure. There's... a person. I'm not sure if it's a girl or a boy, but it's definitely human. They think this person has an ability that would help them find the girl, so they're going to capture them."

This bit was odd. A human that had special abilities? Something to help the hybrids locate Silver? How was that possible?

"If it doesn't work," Carl went on, "they've decided to kill the human."

"Give me a place!" she demanded.

Stuttering, Carl gave her the address. "It-It's an abandoned building about f-fifty miles north from here."

Relieved, Silver let her magic flow through him in a different way, making him sleep. Quickly, she healed the wound on his back, along with any other injury he might have sustained in the attack, and erased his memory of the last couple of hours. Turning around to the scene behind her, she only hesitated for a moment, acknowledging her sorrow over the human life that was lost in these grounds. A quick throw of magic disintegrated the bodies and put the place back in shape.

As fast as she could, Silver then ran from the scene, going in the direction Carl had given her. It was not very far, and with her speed, she could catch up to them in less than half an hour on foot. She just hoped she wouldn't be too late.

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The eerie silence was a bad sign as Silver examined the abandoned building from afar. Still calling on her magic, her figure shimmered and disappeared behind a drape of invisibility.

Her vision told her there were five people inside the building, four of which had the extra supernatural sign to their signature glow. The last one was human, and it was surrounded by the rest. Silver remembered that Carl had told her there were six of them, not counting the human, so she searched for the remaining two hybrids. She found them poised at the back entrance, the extra brightness in their glowing signature indicating that they had shifted to their supernatural form. This would make it harder for her to approach them undetected since they would be able to smell her. There was nothing her magic could do to hide that, and she was too far to use her powers to her advantage at such a distance.

There was only one thing to do. She carefully moved toward them, keeping her steps light and the invisible cover up around her protectively. When she was close enough for them to detect her scent, she saw them raise their heads, noses pointed in her direction. Silver didn't stop or hesitate once, not even when they bared their teeth in a menacing growl that she couldn't hear yet from the distance she was at.

Launching herself at full speed, she sprinted in a run, and made it next to them in less than 20 seconds. They heard her approach, and although they didn't see her, her scent told them her exact position.

They were fast as they lurched at her, but she was faster and had anticipated what they would do. Her advantage was that her weapon was also invisible. In a swift movement, Silver had one of them pinned to the wall with the staff piercing him in the chest. She braced herself against him and lifted her body effortlessly over her staff to avoid the second one's attack. Then she flung her legs full force at him, her heels coming in contact with his chest and throwing him back ten feet. This momentary distraction gave her the time she needed to finish off the first one by sliding her weapon until it reached and tore his heart. She disintegrated his body straight away.

The rest was easy from there. The other hybrid on the ground had fallen unconscious. Silver walked toward him with determination, staff poised and ready to strike. She stopped short when his unconscious body shifted back to human form. Because she was still in touch with her powers, the hybrid's shape suddenly seemed like crystal shining in her eyes.

Something about him seemed familiar. Silver had to let go of her magic for a moment to get a clear view of his human form, but what she saw horrified her; it was Adam, one of the human friends she had regretted leaving behind. Only now, it appeared that he was no longer human and had joined the squad hunting her.

Rage filled her, directed at Master for even daring to destroy the innocence and purity of a human like Adam. Most likely, Master thought he was rewarding his oldest and most loyal servants by granting them a supernatural life, but she didn't remember Adam ever showing interest in such "honor."

As powerful as she was, Silver could never cure any of the creatures of darkness and revert them back to human. All she could do for Adam was make him forget he saw her, planting a false memory to convince him that he had simply fallen asleep while on watch. She didn't want to take the chance to heal him, in case he woke up and tried to kill her again.

With one last look at his unconscious form on the ground, she silently made her way inside the building. She tapped into her powers again, looking up as she walked. She found only four people on the level above her, and a struggle seemed to have ensued between them as two of the hybrids seemed to be restraining the human while the third one watched. Picking up her pace, she kept a watchful eye around her for any signs of the last hybrid.

Unfortunately, her human-level hearing was a weakness her magic couldn't do anything about, and it didn't help her anticipate the creature jumping at her from behind. Silver yelped once in shock before springing into action. She covered her head with her arms and waited for them to crash into a wall. It crumpled to the ground and they fell on the debris, the creature on top of Silver.

Unharméd, she fought with the hybrid, who kept trying to bite her arm. She managed to slip her legs between their bodies and pushed with every ounce of strength she had in her. The creature waved his arms and fell back a dozen feet. Quick as she could, Silver was back on her feet, her staff held parallel to the ground, and then she charged at him. His face contorted in pain as she pierced his torso, the tip of her staff landing far enough from his heart for the move not to kill him. Grunting, he tried to remove her weapon, but Silver twisted and twirled it around inside him, knowing it would hurt even more.

Then, with a simple tap into her powers, she silenced his complaints, and he abruptly went limp as the life left his body. Silver didn't find any difficulty holding him upright, and then she disintegrated him.

Suddenly, she felt watched.

"That was pretty quick," a voice behind her said.

Silver whirled around and faced the four pairs of eyes watching her. The human was a girl; small, though not very young, around the same age as Silver's body, with wild blonde hair and warm brown eyes. Her hands were tied behind her back, a piece of duct tape covering her mouth. Only one of the three remaining hybrids was restraining her now.

Silver only recognized the apparent leader of the three. Another human she had left behind but who had showed more interest in the supernatural world.

"Vince," she muttered.

All three hybrids were in their normal human-like appearance, which in her pearly eyes appeared to be sculpted in crystal which reflected the light as the sun shone on them through the window. She wouldn't see them that way if she was looking through her normal human eyes, but she would still be able to tell them apart from humans even then.

The crystal shimmering in her eyes was uncomfortable, so she dropped the magic from them, and her eyes returned to their normal hazel color. Vince was the only one who didn't show a glimmer of surprise at the change. He instead smiled sardonically and pushed his greasy black hair out of his face.

"You're looking good."

"Wish I could say the same," she retorted.

Vince chuckled. "You've given us quite a hard time, Shiloh," he said, using her human name in an attempt to irritate her. It didn't work, though, because she knew his games. "Master wants his jewel back. He hasn't seen you in seven years. You broke his heart when you left. He misses his silver pearl."

Unlike the use of her old name, the intended pun did manage to irritate her. "Guess he'll have to survive, because I'm never going back," she lied easily.

They all believed she was running. It was best to sustain that belief. Nobody could know her true intentions or her plan would be ruined.

"He'll be disappointed to hear that," Vince went on, putting on an almost convincing sad face. "He went through hell, agonizing himself trying to find you. The only issue now is whether you will agree to come quietly or not."

As a way of answering, Silver split her staff into two smaller steel swords, a defiant look in her eyes. Fighting without her magic was much different from with it, much harder, and they knew it, too. Add to that the fact that she was outnumbered, and that was enough to make the hybrid confident in his odds.

"So be it," he sighed.

They didn't shift, knowing that the moment they did, she would call on her magic and gain the advantage. It was near impossible for her to fight off apparent walking crystals, and if they shifted, she would be able to see them better. The one restraining the human pushed the girl into a corner as the three of them faced off with Silver.

And the dance began.

They lurched at her all at the same time. Silver twisted with her arms at her side in a graceful way and flew right out of their grasps, their extended hands clutching empty space in her wake.

Another twist with her arms open, swords out, resulted in cutting them over the edges of their shoulders. Then she handled them one by one, taking out the biggest one's head first, then using their torso as footing to jump herself backwards in an upside down circle, taking out the second one while in the air, who had tried to take advantage of the fact that she had her back turned.

They both fell to the ground. There was only Vince left now, but when Silver looked around, he was nowhere to be seen. She quickly called on her magic again but couldn't immediately locate his supernatural glow.

There was another glow, however; the human girl. She was still slumped in the corner. Thinking quickly, Silver decided that Vince would have to wait until she made sure the girl was unharmed. She joined her swords together again by the hilt and placed her staff back in its harness on her back. Carefully, she let the magic drop, and went to the girl's side with deliberate slowness so as not to alarm her.

"Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you," she assured her. And then she proceeded to remove the tape from the girl's mouth.

"That was so freaking awesome!"

### **Chapter 3**

The human's squeal was so loud that Silver flinched. "Are you okay?" she checked, proceeding to untie the restraints from behind the girl's back.

The girl apparently hadn't heard her question. "I mean the way you just fought them all off, that was the most incredible thing I've ever seen! I'll be honest, for a minute there, I thought you were dead meat. But wow! You don't go down without a fight, do you? I mean, it's like you're some sort of warr— hey, where are you going?"

Now that she knew there was no immediate danger, Silver thought she was free to leave the ranting girl behind. More importantly, she was free to be left alone. She walked away with deliberately more speed than the normal human pace, willing the girl to leave it at that.

It seemed she didn't get the hint. "Hold up! Where are you running off to?"

Silver didn't even bother looking back.

"Can you at least slow down?" The girl's voice was distant now, and Silver could feel herself almost sighing in relief at being away from her.

There were humans who believed in the existence of mystical creatures such as herself, but those who did know were usually used as servants to the powerful lords, like her old master. Being in the twenty first century unfortunately meant more stories were spreading about the different species, and many humans had a sort of obsession with them. They were more accepting when it came to revealing the truth to them when they were captured and generally almost eager. Some, like Vince, even served willingly with the hope of one day being turned themselves. But none had the enthusiasm she had just witnessed in that one little human.

Knowing everything Silver did about that world, it disgusted her how anyone would find any kind of pleasure in discovering it. There was nothing wonderful about it; it was survival of the fittest, and it was sickeningly brutal. This human's fragile mind, no matter how eager it was, would not survive such trauma. Leaving her behind was for the best.

"Wait!"

Silver froze, looking up. By now, she was at the entrance of the building and was making her way in the direction she was searching for, when the sound of the human girl's scream reached her ears.

The girl had a death wish! She was going down the fire escape, only the stairs were stuck and couldn't be pulled down. Two stories high above the ground, and she just figured she could jump down levels like that!

"What do you think you're doing?" Silver demanded, her anger flaring.

"Just wait one second, I can do this," she called out, way too overconfident.

Silver had sworn to protect humans against creatures of the night, but nothing prepared her to protect them against themselves. How was she supposed to get the girl calmly down and still manage to evade her?

Any doubt was cut short when she saw the girl's hands start to slip. Right away, instinct took over, and she let her movements flow without thinking about what she

was doing. Silver launched herself in a jump, reaching the second level in no time. She grabbed the girl, cradling her, and let herself fall back to the ground, landing lightly on her feet.

The girl had squeezed her eyes shut, but once Silver set her back on her feet, she tentatively opened her eyes and looked around, wonder filling them not long after. Then her gaze went back to Silver, and she regarded her as if looking at a goddess.

“You are *amazing!*” she exclaimed.

“Thanks,” Silver mumbled. “Now leave.”

Hoping with all her might that she would be left alone now, she resumed walking.

“Hold *up!*” the human called again, her voice taking an irritated tone this time. “You can’t just leave me here!”

Silver kept walking. *Watch me.*

“Please! Where am I supposed to go? I don’t even know how I got here.”

That got her attention and reminded Silver of what she had discovered through Carl’s mind. In the fight, she had focused on rescuing the girl and put all other thoughts aside. Quickly making a choice, she sighed and walked back. Once she reached the human, she planted herself right in front of her. Her eyes instantly turned to pearls as she studied her, analyzing her both on the outside and from within. For once, the girl was quiet, mesmerized by Silver’s eyes.

At first glance, there was nothing special about the human. She didn’t emanate any magical signature, nor did she have any physical features of the supernatural creatures that Silver had grown to know by heart. It was strange that the hybrids would go to so much trouble, potentially risking attracting the attention of human authorities and the wrath of the skinwalkers, just to get this one, ordinary human. It had to have been a ploy to lure Silver, a desperate attempt by Master, which was why she had decided to leave the girl to fend for herself in the first place.

But then, why was it that when Silver tried accessing her mind, something which was usually so easy to her, it yielded no results? She wasn’t met with resistance, there was just nothing for Silver to grab on to, as if the girl’s mind was somehow blank. She had never met a human or a supernatural who could shield their mind in such a way. It was strange and, she had to admit, disconcerting. What *was* this girl?

Her eyes returning to normal, Silver changed tactics to interrogation and tried to put as much authority in her tone as she could, just to make it clear who was in charge. “What’s your name?”

The girl’s eyes glinted with happiness. “I’m Theresa. Well, just Reese, actually, it’s much better.”

“Theresa,” she repeated. “What are you doing here?”

Her smile was annoying. “Talking to you! What you did back there was pretty cool; I just want to know more.”

Silver gestured toward the abandoned building. “No, I mean in there. What were you doing inside there?”

“Uh, I was kidnapped? You just rescued me, remember?” Theresa’s tone implied that she found Silver strange for asking the obvious.

“But *why*? What did they want from you?”

Theresa blinked, her eagerness turning to confusion. “I thought they took me to trap you. Isn’t that the case?”

Silver felt her irritation grow by the second. “Did they ask you to do anything to find me or track my whereabouts?”

This evidently confused the girl even more. “*Me*? I mean, I was a girl scout for a few months, but I didn’t even get the rope tying badge. How would I track you?”

Was the human really this oblivious or was she just a good actress and was trying to trick Silver? It was possible that she wasn’t aware of her own powers, whatever they may or may not be. Either way, it was likely that she now had a supernatural target on her back. If there was any truth to the claim that she could somehow get Silver back into Master’s grasp, it was too dangerous to let her back out into the world without protection.

Which unfortunately meant that Silver couldn’t abandon her.

“I’m going to regret this,” she mumbled to herself before facing Theresa. “I’m only going to say this once so listen closely. This is just temporary. I’m allowing you to stay with me only until I find you someplace safe to hide.”

Theresa interrupted her. “What if the safest place for me is with you?”

Silver rolled her eyes. “It is if you have a death wish. I won’t sugar coat it for you. If you stick with me, you’ll most likely die soon, unless, like I said, I find you someplace to stay that would keep you off their radar.”

A part of her was protesting. Potential powers aside, this girl was *human*, a race that Silver was sworn to protect. She shouldn’t go around saying things that would most likely scare them. However, there was something about Theresa that irked her. Maybe it was her over-enthusiastic way of talking, or possibly the never extinguishing excitement in her eyes, which made Silver want to literally shake some sense into the girl. Whatever it was, she knew Theresa’s attitude would be distracting, and she had to make it abundantly clear that there were no ties between them. Besides, something told her that telling Theresa how dangerous hanging with her was would only motivate her instead of actually scaring her.

“As soon as I do, you’re gone, and it’ll be like we never even met.” Her tone made it clear it was the only option. “Do you understand what I’m saying, Theresa?”

“It’s Reese,” the girl corrected.

Silver ignored her and just waited for her answer. A few seconds passed before Theresa huffed out a sigh. “Fine, I get it, okay? We’ll be strangers again.”

Satisfied, Silver nodded and turned to walk away.

“Wait, what about *him*?”

Silver stopped and turned around. She scoped the distance to find whatever the human was talking about, and then she saw him. Adam. He was still on the ground, unconscious. Great. Now what was she going to do? It was a miracle he was still

passed out, what with all the noise the human girl had made on the stairs and their not-so-subtle conversation.

Why did Vince leave him there? Was Adam not important enough to check whether he was alive or not? A flash of sympathy was evident in her eyes as she stared at his unconscious body, before being replaced by anger, again.

Crouching down, she worked her magic to put him in a deep sleep to ensure that he wouldn't wake up. Then, she caught his arm and pulled him up easily, lifting him on her shoulders like a bag of sand. She made sure he wasn't on the side where her staff was poking up, so as to avoid injuring him by accident.

"What are you doing?" Theresa asked, sounding afraid as she followed after Silver like a little puppy. "Why are you taking him?"

"We can't leave him here."

"But isn't he one of the bad guys?"

The question was childish, but Silver didn't have an answer to it and just kept walking. All the memories she had of Adam—wise beyond his years Adam, who took her under his wing when she was first forced into servitude—showed that he was a good and caring guy. Even funny, sometimes. But recent events—namely his becoming a supernatural—had her doubting his intentions and actions.

She owed him for his help and guidance when she was scared and alone at the estate, and she was going to repay her debt. But at the first sign of something off, she was not going to hesitate to take him out. He was a liability. He and Theresa were both going to slow down her mission, but there was no getting rid of *her*, nor was she leaving him by himself. A lone hybrid was a dead hybrid. He wouldn't stand—

"Look!"

Theresa's voice cut through her thoughts. Raising her gaze, Silver saw nothing more than a parking lot. At the slow rate they were going, she was only a few feet away from the building. It wasn't Adam that slowed her down; she didn't really mind him, and he didn't feel too heavy anyway. She was going slowly on purpose so that Theresa would be able to keep up.

When she couldn't see what was so important, she turned to Theresa. "What?"

She was pointing frantically. "A car! We can take it. I don't really feel like walking."

Silver glared at her. Did she think she was in a movie? That she could just take any car she saw and expect it to be fine? "I am not stealing a car!"

Theresa frowned at her. "But it's theirs. It's the one they took me in."

Hmm... Maybe there was something to it; taking their car as an extra blow. But then something else occurred to Silver and she dismissed Theresa's request.

"No."

The human girl pouted slightly. "Why not?"

“Because it’s theirs,” she repeated the girl’s words against her, “and they just left it here. I know how they are; there’s probably a tracker and all sorts of bugs planted in it. You’ll just have to settle for walking until we find a motel.”

Huffing out a bitter sigh, Theresa crossed her arms. “That could take hours! We don’t know where the nearest motel is.”

“I do.” Silver had crossed one on her way to the abandoned building.

She brightened again. “Sweet! How long until we get there?”

“Running? Probably fifteen minutes, give or take a few. Walking? I’d say ten minutes, give it two more hours.”

Theresa’s eyes widened. “*Two hours?!*” she shrieked.

Shooting her a glare, Silver silenced her, reminding her wordlessly that there was a certain someone on her back who shouldn’t be disturbed from his sleep. It was unlikely that he would wake up with her magic keeping him unconscious, but Theresa didn’t need to know that. As it was, the girl did make a sheepish face and mouthed, ‘*sorry*’, as if that could help at all.

“So, since we’re pretty much stuck with each other’s company for now, how about an explanation?” she requested in a soft voice, trying to sound sweet. “I already guessed the werewolf part myself, so I’ll spare you that.”

Silver hesitated to tell her anything; one because she didn’t want to say too much and have the girl ask too many questions. And two because... well, she was *human*. It was a general rule not to reveal anything from her world to them, unless they were chosen by a lord as servants.

However, given the girl’s strange nature, the odds of Silver being able to erase the day’s happenings from her mind were slim. And since she seemed all too eager to explain away everything in her own way, Silver figured that letting her build romantic or inaccurate expectations in her mind might end up putting her in more danger. She didn’t have to share everything, but it felt necessary to equip the human with *some* knowledge to caution her against certain things.

“Those weren’t werewolves,” she began. “They were hybrids.”

“Whoa, you mean like half vampire, half werewolf?” Theresa sounded impressed, which was repulsive to Silver. “So were they born werewolves and turned into vampires?”

“Not exactly,” she said monotonously. It used to be a habit of hers, not showing any emotions at all when she talked about this; it was still stuck with her. “They were born humans, and turned into werewolves, then into vampires.”

Theresa frowned, confused. “How does that even work? My theory about being born a werewolf then turned into a vampire sounds way cooler.”

“*Cool* is not how things are,” she snapped involuntarily, hastily changing back to a neutral mask. “There are two kinds of werewolves; born and turned. Born werewolves are called skinwalkers. They’re killed by vampire blood just as well as vampires are killed by skinwalker blood, so they can’t become hybrids. But a werewolf is turned instead of being born into it and can be turned into vampire, thus making a hybrid.”



“How do you turn a human into a werewolf?”

As they continued their march, Silver explained to her part of the information she had learned from Adam himself during her first week at Master’s estate.

“You need a vamphyr lord.”

“That’s a word I’ve never heard,” Theresa admitted.

*I’d be surprised if you did*, Silver commented to herself.

“A *vam-peer*?”

“It’s spelled like *vampire* but with *hy* and no *e* at the end. And to answer your question, if a blood exchange happens for long periods of time, so much that there’s almost more vamphyr blood than human blood in the human’s system, they turn into werewolves.”

Theresa’s eyes widened with her objection. “What?! That’s it? That doesn’t even make sense. Shouldn’t vamphyr blood turn you into a vamphyr?”

“That’s what happens with common vampires,” Silver agreed, “but vamphyr lords are different. They have certain abilities that make their blood unique.”

“Wait, wait, so there’s two kinds of vampires, too?” she repeated incredulously.

She gave her a look. “That’s what I just said.”

Theresa was speechless for a moment, but then she was just as bubbly as ever. “What’s the difference?”

Silver sighed miserably at how much wonder there was in the human’s eyes. “Well, for one thing, regular vampires are more common. They’re the ones you’ll most likely have read about; drink blood, burn in the sun, heightened senses, heal fast, don’t age, can turn any human into one of them, stuff like that.”

There were other points worth mentioning about the race, like how they could be killed and the mental interaction they had with the humans they fed on while drinking from them, but Silver didn’t feel the need to explain it all.

“And the vamphyr lords?” Theresa asked, a soft sigh escaping her lips when she said the word. “Do they have all that, too?”

She shook her head. “Not all of it. They drink blood, heal fast and don’t age, but other than that, they have nothing else in common with the regular race.”

This wasn’t good enough for the girl. “But there must be something more about them, right? I mean, why else are they called lords?”

“They’re called that because they’re as close to royalty as you can get in the supernatural world. But, yes, they do have something regular vampires don’t have. However, it’s a horrible thing, and you don’t need to know it.”

The finality in her voice was unmistakable, but unfortunately, Theresa didn’t get the message. “There must be *something* you can tell me.”

Silver had to repress her anger. Theoretically, she *could* tell her more about vamphyrs, like how they didn’t need sleep as much as other races and could even eat

human food, though they needed to drink human blood to survive. But she didn't have the patience to.

Sensing Silver's stubborn refusal, Theresa pouted. "Please? Forty-five minutes is a long time. You'd be surprised how persistent I can be."

Truly angered now, Silver shot her a death glare. "You'd be surprised how strong and fast I am. I could easily knock you out and carry both of you to that motel so that I won't have to listen to you whine anymore."

"I don't think that's true, or you would have done it already," she smugly pointed out.

Her defiance crossed the line. Seething, Silver lowered Adam to the ground and prepared to advance on Theresa. That was when the human understood her intentions, and her eyes widened in alarm.

"Whoa, okay, okay, I'm sorry, please, I'm sorry," she squeaked.

Finally, Silver got the reaction she was hoping for. The normal human reaction didn't make her relieved, but it did halt her anger.

"How about this?" Theresa suggested. "You tell me only what's necessary, and I won't push for more?"

Narrowing her eyes, Silver contemplated her options. She wasn't lying when she said she could carry both of them, but she wasn't truly honest about the part where she would be able to run with the weight of two people. The fight drained a lot of her power, and she was using up what was left of it to carry Adam and mask the three of them. Add to that the fact that she would have to also tap into enough power to lift the human and running would become out of the question. She would have to walk at a regular human pace. Since she would be invisible, it wouldn't be dangerous, whether Theresa was unconscious or not.

And yet, it really was a long walk, and Silver hadn't interacted normally with people in a long time. Theresa was irritating, but she did offer Silver a form of company that she hadn't had in a while. And she had agreed to only the necessary; that had to count for something.

Sighing with exasperation, Silver bent to pick up Adam once again, and then answered the human's probing.

"All you need to know regarding vamphyrs is that, unlike regular vampires, who can turn just about any human into one of them, vamphyr lords can only turn one human in their lifetime who will take their place as successor. They don't get to choose their successor; they just find him with their powers. Some even wait centuries before they find theirs. A blood exchange happens, and the successor starts to turn while the old lord slowly dies."

Theresa's silence was heavy with confusion. "But... didn't you just say that's how you turn humans into werewolves?"

"A blood exchange with someone who *isn't* their successor turns the human into a werewolf," Silver elaborated. "After that, you just need to have a regular vampire turn them, and a hybrid is made."

"That's not very logical," the girl commented with a frown.

Silver bit her lip, willing herself not to say more. Not that that required much effort; she was already uncomfortable enough with what little she did say.

“Where do vamphyrs come from?”

Silver finally snapped and yelled, “Oh my God! Where do humans come from? Animals? Plants? The sun? The Earth? I don’t know! They just *are*, alright?”

Theresa was quiet for a moment, chastened, before turning her attention to the man on Silver’s shoulders. “So... this one. Is he a hybrid or a werewolf? He can’t be a vampire; he’s out in broad daylight.”

“Hybrid,” Silver replied curtly, still bristling. “All of them were, back there.”

She cocked her head to the side. “How can you tell?”

“I learned the differences over the years.”

Theresa must have sensed that this was the most she was going to get for one day, and she stayed quiet for a long moment, much to Silver’s relief. Maybe she should have told her about this first. That could have spared her some time. She could already feel her anger subsiding.

Five minutes later, Silver was proven wrong when Theresa opened her mouth and sprouted nonsense yet again.

“Which one do you think could win in a fight to the death; a vamphyr lord or a turned werewolf?”

Taken aback by the strange question, Silver shot her a confused look. “What?”

Unfortunately, Theresa was starting to get excited again. “Oh! Which one do you think would be a better boyfriend; a vampire or a skinwalker? Oh, I can’t decide. It would be so incredible if I had one of each fighting over me. If that happens, who do you think would win?”

Silver waited for the girl to finish her rambling before looking at her seriously. Maybe appealing to her better judgment would work on bringing the girl to focus on the reality and horror of the situation. Yelling at her didn’t seem to work, and trying to scare her definitely didn’t.

“This isn’t a game, Theresa. It’s horrible!”

“It’s *Reese*!”

Silver’s hands started shaking, and she clenched them into fists until her knuckles cracked. She decided to ignore the girl and looked on ahead. They walked for a dozen more minutes –thankfully, in silence– before Theresa found another question to ask.

“So which one are *you*?” she asked.

“What?” Silver was alarmed by this new line of questioning. It completely disarmed her, replacing her anger with sorrow.

Theresa didn’t notice and kept on talking. “My guess would be a vamphyr lord, because you have that thing you do with your eyes when they turn silver. I think that’s the extra thing about lords that you didn’t want to tell me.”

She kept her gaze ahead; this topic made her uncomfortable on a whole other level. “Vamphyrs are only male,” she corrected her. “And no, that’s not the extra thing I was talking about.”

For just a small second, Theresa was quiet, surprised. “Oh. Then what are you? A vampire? Werewolf? Skinwalker?”

“No.”

This was where Silver drew the line. She was not going to reveal why her eyes could change the way they did, nor that she was the only one of her kind. And she was absolutely *not* saying a word about how she came to be that way.

Theresa could hear the conclusiveness in Silver’s voice and was mercifully quiet for the remainder of the walk to the motel.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Day of escape**

*The knock on the door broke through Shiloh's concentration. The interruption was a welcome one, because she didn't know how to let go of the magic on her own. Levi showing up at that moment was exactly what she needed.*

*With a gasp, she felt her hold on her power slip and saw in her reflection that her eyes had turned back to their normal hazel color.*

*"Coming," she croaked, her voice still hoarse from the crying earlier.*

*It wasn't actually Levi at the door but a woman, dressed in similar garments as he had been. She appeared in her thirties and had a cold and serious face, with sharp features that made it seem as though she was constantly displeased. Her short straight hair reached just below her chin and gave her a sense gravity, which was accentuated by her direct, unwavering gaze. As they stared each other down, her brown eyes quickly roamed over Shiloh's body, assessing her state from head to toe.*

*"You're still dirty," the woman curtly said. "Is the water not warm enough for you?"*

*Shiloh was reminded of the growling wolf from earlier and could guess who this was. She didn't care for the woman's tone or her attitude, but given the circumstances, she didn't think it would be right to pick a fight with her hosts.*

*"You're Quinn, right?" she guessed.*

*The woman frowned and gave a terse nod. Her gaze was just as intense as Levi's stare but was devoid of his warmth. Quinn's gaze was more wary than anything else. Shiloh guessed that earning this woman's respect would take hard work.*

*"I'm sorry I took so long," she said as politely as she could. "The water's fine, I just needed a moment."*

*Quinn quirked one eyebrow. "You've been in there half an hour."*

*Gritting her teeth, Shiloh bit back the retort that was threatening to break free. "I lost track of time. Shall I come with you right now?"*

*The skinwalker contemplated the option for a second but then seemingly decided against it. "Breakfast is ready. Go to the hub in five minutes or all the food will be gone."*

*Then she turned and walked away without waiting for a reply. With a sigh, Shiloh closed the door and went to take the quickest shower she had ever taken.*

*In less than three minutes, she was standing outside the hut, trying to figure out what exactly 'the hub' was. A few people passed by her in the direction of the campsite she had seen when she came in, so she followed after them.*

*What she found there froze her in place. After seeing the primitive way of living in this little village, she had expected it to be home to a pack of skinwalkers, of which Levi was the leader. Instead, she found a lot of humans and several hybrids and werewolves, huddled together on the campsite logs, sharing a meal from a large cauldron over the fire. In fact, the two skinwalkers she had met seemed to be the only ones there, and they were the ones serving food to the others.*

*Levi noticed her standing frozen. He turned to whisper something to Quinn, then poured a bowl and approached Shiloh. Suddenly realizing how famished she was, she took the food and immediately started eating it. It was warm and tasted good, so she didn't feel the need to ask what was in it.*

*"What is this place?" she questioned.*

*"A sanctuary," he told her. "For anyone in need of shelter after running away or being cast out from their lord's estate."*

*Shiloh faced him with bright eyes full of admiration. "You take care of them?"*

*He nodded. "Until they're ready to get back on their feet and out into the world."*

*"Why?"*

*He smiled and gave a simple shrug. "Stick around long enough, maybe I'll tell you. For now, rest assured that I mean you no harm."*

*Turning toward the crowd again, Shiloh studied the faces of everyone gathered. Some seemed as lost and confused as she felt, while others appeared more at ease. All things considered, this place looked like exactly what she needed for the time being.*

*But there was still one thing.*

*"I don't know what I am," she admitted. "I don't want to get into how I... changed, how I became... no longer human. But you saw my eyes, I'm assuming. You sensed that I had magic." Levi stared at her seriously, confirming her theory. "Have you ever met anyone like me?"*

*A moment passed before he shook his head. "I'm afraid not. You're quite unique."*

*Shiloh interlocked her fingers together and stared at them. "Will anyone mind?"*

*Levi understood what she was asking. "As long as you contribute in some way and don't cause trouble, you'll be treated just like everyone else."*

*She let out a small sigh of relief and nodded in thanks. Then, she recalled a piece of information she had learned about skinwalkers, specifically about the proper way to address them on the rare occasions when they associated themselves with the vampiric community. Since Levi had already proven some of her previous assumptions about his species wrong, she had to verify the accuracy of this bit of 'knowledge', as well.*

*"Am I supposed to call you Chief?"*

*His serious demeanor melted away for a moment as he smiled. "Only if you want to. Most people here have never met a skinwalker, so they call me by my name. I don't mind either way, but you might want to stick with the title when you talk to Quinn. At least until she warms up to you."*

*Chuckling, Shiloh glanced over at where the skinwalker was still standing, serving food. "Yeah, I noticed she's cautious around me."*

*"She's cautious around every newcomer. Just give her time."*

*Shiloh had already figured as much and was prepared to make that effort, so she nodded.*

*“Have you thought about changing your name or do you still want to use your old one?”*

*Without meaning to, Shiloh squared her shoulders, remembering the realization she had reached merely minutes ago. “I have, and I think I’m going to change it. I may not know what I am, but I know that I’m not the same person I used to be. A new name feels fitting.”*

*“Do you have any ideas?”*

*She smiled to herself, proud of the name, yet still a bit shy about using it. “I was thinking... Silver.”*

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Silver’s eyes flashed wide open, and she jolted upright in her chair, gasping wildly for air. Her body was tingling with the sensations she had felt in the memory; the weight of the bowl in her hands, what the food had tasted like, even the earthy and herb smell of her old hut at the sanctuary. She had to remind herself that it was only a dream –a prophetic one, but a dream nonetheless.

After seven years, Silver still hadn’t grown used to this aspect of her power. She so rarely slept at it was, because her body simply didn’t need it, but even then, she didn’t always have prophetic dreams. Reliving her own memories was even rarer, but such visions always meant something. Sometimes, it was her power warning her of an oncoming danger, but usually, it offered up a solution to some major dilemma that she was dealing with.

At the moment, her biggest grievance was the human that she was stuck with and didn’t know what to do about, and it seemed like her dream had just given her a possible option. She hadn’t thought about the sanctuary since she left it almost five years ago, and the last time she talked to Levi or Quinn was ten months ago. They would be an ideal choice to send Theresa to, because they wouldn’t turn her away. Levi’s connections would also be able to alert him of anyone coming close to finding the human.

First things first; she had to deal with the hybrid.

Snapping herself out of the memory and back to the present, Silver looked around the motel room for any sign of a disturbance that might have happened during her sleep. She was supposed to stay awake, and she scolded herself for allowing a moment of vulnerability, no matter how short it might have been. It didn’t look like anything had moved, except of course for the figure on the bed.

Theresa was in another room on her own. Silver was not worried about her running away; in fact, part of her was hoping that the human would try. Adam, on the other hand, was a different case because he could run back to his master. She couldn’t leave him in a room alone until she found out where his loyalties lie. That was why she had brought a chair and sat on it to keep watch, waiting for the moment he woke up. His back was facing her, and she had to crane her neck to check if he was still unconscious or not.

“Are you checking me out?” came his voice from the other side of his figure.

Silver tried not to let it show that she was startled, but the slight jump in fear her heart made in her chest –which she was sure Adam must have heard– betrayed her. She didn't say anything, wanting him to look at her, first.

When he did turn around, a pang of anger shot through her again; he didn't look too different from when he was human, and the resemblance annoyed her. She wasn't supposed to feel sympathy for his kind. She had taught herself to ignore the fact that most creatures of darkness were once human. After all, it was easier to dispose of them when she believed they lacked humanity. Even her old friends at the sanctuary shared her belief, because they had all been turned against their will and resented their supernatural nature as much as she did.

But Adam was making it damn hard for her to forget that fact, because he had taken care of her for a year when she was at Master's estate, and he still looked the same as the last time she saw him. Tall and fit with an olive skin tone, his soft black curls twisted around his head, falling slightly into his dark brown eyes, which were now permanently ringed in silver since he was a hybrid. He didn't even look older at all, which meant that Master must have changed him not long after she escaped.

All this thinking took her a mere moment. "No," came her curt reply only seconds after his question.

He shrugged casually and moved to sit up in bed. "So, now that you're awake, mind telling me what I'm doing here?"

She narrowed her eyes at his demanding tone. "No," she repeated, sternly now. "You will know what I want you to know when I am done interrogating you."

He glared at her hatefully. The level of animosity took her by surprise, but she didn't let any of it show. "Don't play games with me, Shiloh. I'm already struggling hard enough not to strangle you, right now."

Rage filled her at the mention of her old name, but she was more so angry that he thought he could talk down to her and get away with it. With him not having shifted, she had the upper hand and could easily take him down right now. The crystal might be a major drawback, but since the curtains were drawn, she figured it wouldn't be too bad. In less than a second, she allowed her power to flow through her, her eyes instantly changing to silver pearls, and immediately sent a wave of magic over to him.

Adam's face dropped when he felt it, and she saw fear flash in his eyes. *Good*. Her power held him frozen, unable to move, unable to shift. Slowly but firmly, she marched up to his side and lowered her head at eye level with his. His eye sockets and pupils were the only thing she allowed him to move. That, and the ability to breathe. Her aim was not to suffocate him, after all, just to control him.

"Let's get a few things straight," she said in a tone that suggested he would do very wisely to listen carefully right now. "First of all, my name is Silver. Shiloh is no more, so don't you dare use that word again or I swear I will not hesitate to break every bone in your body. And you know how easily I can do that, shifted or not."

She watched his eyes for the slightest indicator of defiance. There was nothing in them that said as much, though there were plenty of other emotions, and she went on.

"Second, you will talk to me properly and not complain about it. You are under *my* command until I tell you otherwise. You will do everything I tell you to do, whether

you like it or not. Lastly, and most importantly, you will answer every question I ask you truthfully and without keeping anything out. Otherwise, I will have to resort to invading your mind.”

His stare turned murderous, and she knew he hated the idea of having her invade his mind. Anybody would, and she herself was actually not too fond of doing it. She decided she would only do it as a last resort, if he was being too difficult.

“Is that clear?” she demanded, releasing him slightly so he could answer her either with words or with a nod. He didn’t immediately respond, which didn’t sit too well with her. “You and I both know I can take you with my eyes closed, but I don’t want to fight you, so don’t make me do it. Am I clear?”

A few seconds later, Adam jerked his head reluctantly in a nodding gesture. Satisfied to have gotten her message across, she released him, slowly and warily, in case he decided to do something he really shouldn’t. Fortunately, aside from his body sagging when she let go, he remained still, his stare still boring into her, although not as hatefully as before.

“What happened to you?” he dared to ask, his voice barely over a whisper.

It carried the genuine tone of curiosity, but it still annoyed Silver to no end that he would try to speak when she just told him she had questions he was expected to answer. She chose to let it slide, since it was the first time and instead turned it into a question of her own.

“What happened to *you*, Adam?” she calmly returned.

He raised one eyebrow. “I asked you first.”

She kept her face blank, pretending he hadn’t spoken, and waited for him to answer her. But he just stared back at her in the same manner, which truly angered her now.

They remained that way for a long moment, neither of them wavering in determination nor losing focus. Since both were supernatural beings, they could have gone on for as long as they wanted to. Adam failed first as his hands started to twitch. Silver remained as unmoving and impassive as stone, her expression completely blank and unaffected.

This is ridiculous, she reprimanded herself, and then stood up abruptly.

“I don’t have time for this. There’s a human I need to get to safety, and you need to stay here until I get back, so...”

Abruptly standing up, she unleashed her powers again, this time directing it to putting Adam back into a hypnotic sleep until she physically touched him. He slumped sideways and nearly fell off the mattress. After making sure he was propped up well enough, she marched out into the hall and knocked on Theresa’s room.

It took a moment for the human to open the door for her. She was rubbing at her eyes, so Silver guessed she must have been sleeping. “Hi again!”

“Come on, we’re leaving. I know where to send you.”

“What about Adam?”

“He’s staying here.”

“What if somebody comes over?”

“I’ll lock his room and charm the cleric to steer clear of it until I get back.”

As much as she hated it, she also had to charm the man to lend her his car. Getting to the sanctuary was a long drive, but Silver would take good care of the vehicle and fill up the gas tank before returning it.

On the drive to the sanctuary, Theresa tried to start a conversation but abandoned the thought when she figured out that Silver wasn’t in a good mood. After that, she fell asleep, and a comfortable silence ensued. Silver was left to her thoughts, and she pondered on her time at the sanctuary. The place had felt more like a home to her than her parents’ house ever did, and she was both eager and apprehensive about going back there. She wondered how everyone would react to her return.

Hours passed and Silver kept driving. She stopped only once, to fill up the tank when it started running low. It was close to dawn when she finally pulled up near the campsite. Theresa was still sleeping in the passenger seat, snoring softly. Silver wasn’t looking forward to carrying the girl and running there, but she was so impatient to drop her off that she was willing to do it.

However, she stopped before she could lean over to shake the girl awake. Something was off. Silver analyzed her surroundings with a growing sense of dread. Where was the sentry standing guard outside the sanctuary? Levi never left the place unprotected.

Leaving Theresa in dreamland, Silver cautiously got out of the car and tapped into her power. There was no life glow around, aside from her unwanted companion. She took off at full speed without waiting another second and arrived at the sanctuary in less than 5 minutes. Not a single soul was there, either.

Silver kept her guard up as she walked around the huts, keeping an eye out for the dreadful sight of a dead body. It was when she reached the farthest circle of huts that she saw it. A tiny glow, not big enough to belong to a person, was emanating from the hut she once considered her home. Picking up her speed, she rushed there to read the message Levi had left her.

This was something they had discovered during the time she lived with them. Skinwalkers had an ability to leave traces of themselves behind for a short period of time. Since Silver was the only supernatural who could see life glows, she would be able to find them. Levi used this to leave her secret messages whenever he needed to send her on rescue missions but couldn’t risk communicating the information in a way that would be tracked.

Levi’s trace was left on her door, so it was obviously meant for her to see. It was also starting to fade, so it must have been a while since he left it there. Stopping dead in her tracks in front of the door, Silver read the message, and the words struck fear in her heart.

He’s watching you.