

The halfling

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James has always been different from evryone else but when Melexa the vampire tells him why his life takes an entirely new dirrection. Enimies will be made and eventually James will be forced to make a decision.Can he make the right choice.

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Chapter 0 - Prologue	3
Chapter 1 - Craveing	5
Chapter 2 - Bond	10
Chapter 3 - Bonds broken	19
Chapter 4 - The two great blood wars	21
Chapter 5 - Curch	23
Chapter 6 - Tyler	29
Chapter 7 - meeting the Thorn	31
Chapter 8 - An attack	36
Chapter 9 - Happy fourteenth	38
Chapter 10 - Unexpected changes	42
Chapter 11 - The dreams	44
Chapter 12 - Missing	46
Chapter 13 - A plan	48
Chapter 14 - Who knew?	53
Chapter 15 - It's amazeing what you find face to face	56
Chapter 16 - Home	57
Chapter 17 - something different	59
Chapter 18 - I like where we are	62
Chapter 19 - Bad news	64

Chapter 20 - Realizations	67
Chapter 21 - Rescue	72
Chapter 22 - End	76

0 - Prologue

James ran around the room of the center, he was playing tag with the older kids.

The Center is a welfare institution for the disabled. His little sister July is autistic and she had just turned one, James was five and the babysitter was busy. Times were complicated as his mother Jane was having a hard time getting July to understand. So she decided to seek aid in Christopher's aid facility for the disabled. They had a good program for the autistic and Jane was glad she had joined with July.

Unlike his family James was a tan color. His hair was a darker brown and his eyes were green.

Strangely when Jane had decided to adopt his eyes were pink, they had changed color over the years.

Many of the sisters who worked at the adoption center called him a demon because of that.

James was found screaming like crazy in an abandoned old house; there was no single of anyone else living there so they took him in. Demon or not he was still a helpless infant. At first they didn't know what to do with him. He cried allot and no one would take him because of his eye color. "How sad" Jane had thought. "To be abandoned and hated and feared by the ones you love."

So she and her husband decided on him. But soon she almost regretted it. James cried every night for no reason at all. "He'll calm down once he gets used to his new life." She thought. But he didn't.

James was generally a happy baby so it couldn't be depression. She had tried everything but she could never find what he wanted on those nights. Neither could his father and it was irritating. When he turned one the long crying nights slowed. The doctor had thought he was suffering from withdrawal symptoms but dismissed it after the tests were negative.

He was always a happy little boy and when he was two his eyes had changed color and the crying stopped. They had changed to a bright green. He liked being by himself but always played if kids asked him to. At the park he would always give Jane flowers and wasn't against any of the playground children. He'd even play dolls if one of the little girls asked him to and they were always fond of him. He liked bright colors and rarely got sick. He couldn't take naps simply because he had too much energy and he liked being outside at night. He was never afraid of the dark. One day when he was three he twisted his ankle. It was completely healed in only five days but Jane thought nothing of it.

James was always pretty strong; he could jump higher and out run the other kids. When he was four and his father was teaching him how to play soccer he kicked the soccer ball through a window on the third floor. They moved out after that and July was born. July helped James in a way only a little sister can, she taught him how to be gentle. When he realized how fragile she was he was afraid to touch her but she always wanted his attention so he eventually learned to be careful.

Now they always played and he helped her whenever she needed him. He was always the first one there with a bottle of a blanket. Jane was happy that he was becoming a good brother and things had gotten easier. But July was still pretty hard to handle. She didn't like being near strangers and threw fits when she didn't understand.

James looked over at his mother and sister, gave them a big smile, and continued to play. Jane turned back to the meeting. It was a hot day but the inside was cool. The women continued to talk about how to teach their children about tasks involving communication. She tried, she really did, but Jane couldn't get July to pay attention to her. Which made it hard to do things out of schedule and if she didn't at least try then July would panic even more.

This was expected though, after all July was only one. The meeting ended and Jane looked around but James was no wear in sight. She held July and wandered to one of the aids. "No I haven't seen him," Mayomi said. Mayomi was a kind woman and would help anyone who asked.

James eyes widened. Where could James have possibly gone? At that moment one of the older kids approached shyly. "Outside" he said. "What?" She asked.

"Outside asleep." He repeated. Jane then ran out the door, July still in her arms. She seemed to know something was wrong. "James!?!!" she called. She looked around.

He wasn't anywhere. "In the shed." The boy said as his mother led him outside. "I can take July for you." The mother said. Jane handed her daughter to the other women; she was someone Jane could trust. She sprinted over to the shed and tried to open it but the door was locked.

She kicked it and when that didn't work she grabbed a nearby shovel and broke the doorknob off. The door opened easily but what Jane saw made her scream. James was lying by the door, he was still conscious. He had an all-over sunburn. When the ambulance had taken him to the hospital they said he had suffered a massive heat stroke.

It wasn't fatal and there was no permanent damage but it could have been much worse. He was lucky to be alive. There were only two things that couldn't be explained. How could he have gotten sunburn so quickly in a room with no windows? And the second there was no explanation for.

His pink eyes had returned.

1 - Craveing

James slowly walked down the stairs, July following him, and although others thought it annoying James thought it was nice. She was now five and James was ten. "Dad!?" he called. "We're ready to go to school!" he called. His father looked up from his work in the other room and smiled.

"Good job" he praised. July smiled at him, she had actually picked out her own cloths this morning. No small feat since she didn't like making decisions, but it was a start. "Lets go to Day care," her father said getting up. He said the same thing every time they went to the school.

It was the only way she understood. She quickly walked to the door and put on her shoes. In seconds they were already out the door. They said goodbye to their father and entered the building holding hands. "Good morning July." The teacher said.

"Good morning" she replied. "I will meet you after school" James told her. They said and did the same thing so many times it was almost automatic. James left the building and crossed the street to meet up with a group of kids his own age.

He always trailed behind them until Steven showed up.

Steven is his best friend. They met at a summer camp when he was eight. The other kids had all made fun of James for the letter he wrought home. He had simply been feeling homesick. The kids didn't leave him alone though.

To them it was fun to pick on him. Then out of the Blue Steven stood up for him and they soon became friends. James wasn't very self-confidant and had grown shy over the years. In fact Steven was his only friend. Steven liked starrng at the moon and was usually hyper whenever he was outside.

He had a hard time sleeping like James did and loved to run. They had lots of fun and for a time it seemed that they had been joined at the hip. At the end of the summer their teacher had instructed them to weave bracelets and give them to their best friends. Both were still wearing theirs. They made fun of James but Steven always stood up for him.

He had a temper. Once the two met up they headed to class. "So July is starting hear tomorrow?" he asked. James nodded. "That's great!" they were both ecstatic.

Steven started to bounce excitedly and James couldn't help but Join in. no one was sure that July would even be able to go to school so it was very exciting. The two looked pretty funny. "Wow, what a bunch of girls" Tyler laughed. "Kiss my boot!" James pointing at his shoes said kicking in his direction. His foot stopped about for inches from Tyler face. "Boy's calm down. Whatever it is save it for recess." Their teacher replied. "Yes sir" the two boys said in unison before separating. Like Steven, Tyler had brown hair and was Caucasian. But like James Steven wore his in a short ponytail. Tyler had earned the title class bully.

It was because he had always been one to point out someone's flaws; which was why James and Steven were his main target. Steven wore glasses and was hyper at times. James was shy. Whenever he was with Steven he never cared about what people thought of him but when he was alone he was very self-conscious.

While he was in class James wondered how July would handle her first day in school. She never liked crowds of loud people and the schools special Ed' program wasn't as high strong as the day care. She screamed whenever someone touched her shoulders and couldn't form long sentences. As far as James new she didn't like being touched on her shoulders because that was were his mother would grab her when she didn't listen.

She hid whenever she was upset and fire drills would only scare her. She also tended to disappear at

times. She didn't share a lot either. July knew what the word danger meant but she didn't always understand danger itself, this was why someone always had to be holding her hand when they left for walks. July wouldn't read out loud either, so school would be tough.

Right now however school was boring, and James continued to stare into space, wondering if his sisters new classmates would accept her. The day was long; so long so that both boys nearly jumped nearly jumped out of their seats when the bell rang Steven almost sprinted to the cafeteria. "That was boring." Steven said grinning. "I almost fell asleep." James said. The two headed for the lunch line. Today was garlic bread, corn, and some sort of random meat that resembled meatballs. James didn't like Garlic, he had never touched the stuff but he didn't need to. It smelled horrible and made his senses act up. Sadly it was part of the main dish and he wouldn't get outside without eating it first. James scrunched his nose worriedly.

"Don't worry it won't kill you." Steven teased. James knew that but he was more worried about how his stomach would react. They silently walked over to the last table available. Regrettably Tyler was sitting there with his friends. "You can't sit here." Tyler said getting up.

"Nobody wants you go away." "Bite me." Steven said dropping his plate on the table. James sat down he knew a fight was coming. Tyler Glared and Steven glared harder with an icy emotionless face. The two starred, refusing to back down. James hurriedly ate his food while the two faced each other. After about five minutes of the tension James spoke up. "Maybe we should leave. This table is packed," he said. "There's no where else to sit, besides he can't boss us around." Steven was right; no one had left for recess yet. "And why not?" Tyler mused. "Because we don't work for you, we don't owe you anything, and both of us are stronger than you are." He replied stubbornly.

"Oh really?" Tyler said. "Don't cause trouble, you already got yelled at, once is enough." James said. "The coward's right." Tyler said. "I want talking to Steve." He mumbled before he could stop himself. "What was that?" he asked.

Uh-oh. "I was talking to you." James said louder. "Crap. Well you heard him, step off." Steven said. "You can't boss me around and neither can James. Move."

"No."

"I said move."

"And I refused" Steven then planted himself next to James. "You'll have to pick me up and throw me." He said stubbornly. Tyler Glared at him. He wanted to grab him but he had a better idea. "Teacher! James and Steve won't eat!" he shouted.

Their teacher got up from the staff table and walked over. "Is this true?" he asked. "No, I haven't gotten a chance to eat because we were arguing." Steven said. "Not they weren't" one of Tyler's friends piped up. "Boy's you need to eat or you'll get sick." He said.

"And Tyler, you shouldn't talk when your eating until both parties have finished." He said sitting down.

"Now go back to your seat." Tyler scowled at having his plan backfire and took his seat. The teacher didn't leave so James was forced to eat the Garlic bread. It itched his touched and anything it touched, and he felt nauseous while his head was stuffed up. "Maybe your allergic to it." Steven said. By now his mouth and hands were almost scratched raw and swollen like a bug bite. He had given up on breathing through his nose and just settled for facing the wall and letting it run while lying on the ground. "Crap, you look horrible" Tyler snickered. "Shut up. This is your fault!" Steven shouted. "My fault?" "Yeah! If you hadn't tried to get us in trouble he wouldn't have been forced to eat it!" Steven said.

"Hey, I didn't know he was allergic, if I did I would have left it alone! If anything it's your fault, you wouldn't leave so I had to force you to."

"My fault!?! Could you be anymore of a jerk!"

"You're the jerk who got your friend sick!"

"At least I'm not a bully!"

“ I’m no bully! I just don’t like you! ‘Cause you’re a jerk!”

“ So basically your just a loser with lots of time!”

“ You’re the loser!”

“ And you’re the jerk!”

“ AND I’M THE UNICORN!” James shouted Exasperated. Both boys froze. It was extremely rare for James to shout they had never heard him yell before. James lay back down. He was getting dangerously close to throwing up.

“ Maybe you should get him to the nurse. This could get serious.” Although Tyler was a bully he knew were the line was.

“ He’s right” one of the nearby girl said. “Can you get up?” Steven asked. James whimpered and gripped the wall. The second he was standing he violently vomited all of his stomach contents onto the ground. The girl Screamed and Tyler said, “Cool!” as Steven Grabbed James and helped in inside.

“ I think you started a chain Reaction.” Steven said looking back. James was sent to the hospital and he couldn’t eat for two hours. He hated the hospital: the smell of, blood, sickness, and death were everywhere. The air was making his through dry, he slept while they tested him. Yup, he was allergic to garlic.

The fact that no one had spotted his condition when he had gotten outside made his mother furious. She would have sewed the school if she could have but luckily James had thrown up everything at the school so there was not sever damage and his stomach didn’t need to be pumped. Staying in the hospitable was hard on him because he couldn’t move around. “ Miss?” one of the doctors said pulling Jane aside. “Your son has an extremely low iron count.” He said.

“ You did a blood test?” Jane asked. “ We found his sudden fatigue a little odd, and allergy like this takes awhile to wear a person down.” “ But that’s Impossible, We had spinach yesterday for supper.”

She replied. “ We also found a few oddities.” He said. “ How many tests did you do?” Jane asked.

“Only the blood. His white count it high which could mean an infection, however, his Red count is low so I believe it could be something more.” He explained. “ Do you know if the school uses any unorthodox products?” “ No. Is His condition serious?” She asked. “ Not yet, he doesn’t have any symptoms of serious infection and he doesn’t have and cuts or scratches either, so I’m not sure what’s going on, Id like to send an investigator to the school and run some more tests on James.” He said. Once she

singed the paper work they did more tests including a D.N.A. test.

If it were genetic they would need his birth parents medical history. They decided to keep him overnight, which had July concerned, but luckily she didn’t put up a fuss. She mostly sat around and drew until it was time to leave. Meanwhile the D.N.A test finished. James didn’t have a match.

When the other tests were reviled what the doctor saw was astonishing. His white cells were feeding off of his red cells in order to heal him. It was as if the red were a food source. This couldn’t be a coincidence. He immediately called Jane and said he needed another day of tests.

He blamed it on a nurse’s mistake. He didn’t know what the regulations meant but it said if he found anything like this he was to keep it secret and destroy the evidence. It was the government’s orders.

The next day was spent doing Brain and stress tests. There was nothing new with his brain but his strength matched an adult on steroids.

“ My God! This boy could be evolving past regular human rates!” However he kept his suspicions to himself. He had been informed not to ask questions on this subject and that this information on James would be hidden in a top-secret file. His medical records described his pink eyes and the times when they disappeared and reappeared and James was submitted to a full eye examination. His night vision was very sharp but not above normal. His eyes were perfectly healthy, too healthy.

The doctor tried multiple things to get them to cause a reaction but they never changed color. “ S-so I’m different?” James asked. The Doctor diced it would be best to be honest with him. No need to make the

poor boy paranoid or nervous. Beside legally he had the right to know what was going on. Especially since he wasn't sure if it would be a good idea to clue in his mother on this. When it came to the children Jane was brutally honest and something like this needed to be kept as quiet as possible. James was a smart kid, James knew that if his mother needed to know he should tell her, and that was why the doctor trusted him with this. "Yes, I believe that like your sister; you were born differently. It doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with you; just that in some areas you're a little advanced than others. But like others who are different; you may find challenges and obstacles that are hard to overcome." He explained. "Like what?" James asked.

"Your strength, it's important to test your limits but if you're not careful you could end up hurting someone." He said. James already knew this. One time when he was younger he had tried to hug July and she screamed. He had hugged her too tight and left bruises. Since then she had an aversion to hugging him. "Whether we should tell your mom is up to you but keep in mind I'm obligated by law to be as truthful as I can be." He said. James nodded. He wanted to tell the truth, if something went wrong his mom would need to know. "Is that why my teeth are so sharp?" he asked showing his canines. "It could be but I've seen other people like that too so I don't think it's anything to worry about. Either way keep an eye on them." The doctor said.

It was true others had extra pointed canines like that but they were really dull. Grabbing his tools and putting on some gloves, the doctor inspected James's mouth. His gums were sensitive and they seemed to leak fluid when he pressed on the canines. It was only a light touch but it caused James to slam his mouth shut. He yanked his hand out as fast as possible.

"Oh bother," he said to himself. He removed his glove and was about to get a Band-Aid but froze. James's eyes were turning pink. "James? Are you alright?" the boy's heart rate had doubled on the monitor. "I-I don't know." James said.

"I don't like blood" he said, starting to shake.

"It'll be alright just calm down." "I don't think I can!" James bolted for the bathroom door and leaned against it when he got inside. He slowly slipped down to the floor and wrapped his arms around his knees. He was scared. Something in him wanted it and it was close to winning.

* * *

James sat in the doctor's office. His mother and sister were outside listening. The doctor had wanted to experiment more but given James's reaction he decided against it. His mother was furious and she threatened to sue the hospital. Not good.

Eventually the choice was left to him. "I-I just want to go home." He had said. And that was that. So they went home. July was stacking cups while he was lying in bed staring up at the ceiling. His eyes were very wide. He honestly didn't know what to do. He had felt this bizarre thirst before, but not like this. July walked over to his bed and curled up next to him. They sat like this for a while before he got up and left.

Steven was at the river sitting under the bridge bare-foot while watching the water go by. He had also taken his hair down so it sat just above his shoulders. "Hi!" he chirped when he saw James. "So why weren't you at school yesterday?" he asked. "More tests." James replied.

"I see. You're okay right?" Steven asked. "... I don't know." He said dropping to his knees beside

Steven. " I don't know Steve! I just don't know!" he sobbed. Steven put a comforting hand on his friends shoulder. " Why are your eyes pink? Was it the tests?" Steven asked.

" I don't want to be a cannibal!" James sobbed out. " Eh?" This was confusing. "But the cravings wont go away! And they found out!" " What cravings?" okay now this was getting weird. Eventually James told him everything.

He had been having cravings for blood ever since he was little. Only now they were getting stronger. " Well I guess that would explain your teeth." "Huh?" " Your top canines are extra sharp." Steven replied.

He was right. They had been that way for a while now too. " Maybe you're a vampire." Steven mused. James started sobbing again. " Aw crap! I didn't mean it!" Steven said.

" I'm sorry!"

" Gah! I don't want to eat people!"

" Well...no one said you had to." Steven said. This was starting to worry him.

* * *

" Goodness this kids got the demeanor of a girl," Melexa thought. He (or she) had been standing on the train tacks built into the bridge wobbling back and forth. He (or she) was wearing a black hat with a sharp looking feather in it. He (or she) was also wearing a long leather trench coat that went down to the knee and sort of looked like a dress. Whether this person was wearing pants or a skirt was unknown but they were wearing healed, lace up, leather boots that went up to the knee.

They were also wearing matching leather black gloves. His (or her) skin was very pail and their eyes were red. He (or she) had blond, straight, hair that went down to the small of the back. Melexa leaned agents the rusted side of the bridge. Why the Thorns wanted him in their little coven was unknown to Melexa.

James was shy, self conscious, and just a sniveling whelp. He didn't seem to have the capacity to defend himself, let alone anyone else. " Then again, I use to be a sniveling Girl!" Melexa thought. " B-but they're getting really bad! I almost lost it in there! I don't know what to do!" James sobbed. Steven hugged him. He didn't know what else to do himself.

His eyes flashed up to Melexa who quickly jumped and disappeared before Steven got a good look at him. Melexa knew what Steven was, and if Steven knew it himself there friendship could be trouble.

2 - Bond

Steven ran home after what happened. His house was in a clearing near the forest. Steve was stumped. He wasn't sure what he should do about James. He was obligated to tell the leaders but if he did he'd be betraying his best friend. And if the leaders found out that he was keeping this a secret he could be severely punished. But James didn't have to be their enemy; if they got to him first he could be protected from the vampire clan that had just taken interest. Steven had no choice. He had to tell them. As soon as Steven entered the house everyone was already there.

He knew by the two wolves guarding the front door. He was sneaking by the living room when the eldest man in it called him over. The elder was an Indian named Skyhawk, descendent of the one who started the pack. "Steven" he said just as the boy had gotten past the doorway. He froze and stepped back into the doorway of the living room.

"Come hear." The elder said. Steven hesitantly walked into the room. "A coven has sent someone out on reconnaissance. We're not sure why, did you do anything to anger the Coven of the thorn?" his father asked. His hair was the same color as his sons but cut short. He also had a stubble growing.

"No" he said turning to leave. "I sense you are holding back." The elder stated. The gaze of the men and women in the room turned to him. The smell of smoke was strong in this room. There was a short pause.

"Tell me, what do you hide?" The elder asked leaning forward. "... Someone was watching me. I was under the bridge at the river. I didn't see who it was." Steven said. "You were with someone?" the elder asked him. "...No." Steven replied. He left for his room after that.

They all knew he was lying. James's scent was still on him, just another downside to being a were-wolf.

* * *

James sat on his bed while July painted his toenails. Today was light purple. Although James would never admit it he like painting them. July had gotten him into the habit of it. James heard his window open and his head snapped up.

He didn't move, he didn't scream. His eyes were wide with fear. A young man with red eyes and blond hair was standing beside the window. He was casually leaning against the wall. "G-go get mommy." James said to July, pointing to the picture on his nightstand.

She immediately got up and left. "Hm, I like purple." The figure said sitting on the bed, casually taking the nail polish and painting his own nails. James didn't move. "Sleeping" July, said when she came back. "I knocked her out." The stranger explained.

"Who are you? What do you want?" James asked. "Melexa. And I want you." Melexa said poking James's nose. He yelped and jumped back, hitting the wall. Melexa laughed. "Relax, I was only kidding" He chuckled.

"You'll be fun to tease." He said. There was a short pause as Melexa admired his left hand. "Why are you here?" James said. "I was sent to explain your condition." Melexa said. "Condition?"

"Let's just say you're not completely human." Melexa replied. James's eyes widened. "Ironically your friend was right." "No..." James mumbled shaking his head. "I know it's hard to except but" –

"GET OUT!" James shouted. "Get out! Get out! Get out! Get out!" He looked angry. "Whoa, take it easy I'm just trying to" – "Why should I believe you! You knocked out my mom and broke into my room! I should call the cops!" he yelled. "Now listen" – "No you listen! Get out! You're a crazy liar! Crazy

liar!" At that James couldn't hold back the tears anymore.

"Get out!" he sobbed. James curled up in a ball and shook, trying to choke back sobs. The poor kid obviously knew but didn't want to accept it. Melexa put his hands on James's back in a comforting manner. "You're only half. You still have a choice." James looked up at him. He wanted to deny it but he knew it couldn't.

"I know how much it hurts." Melexa said. They sat like this for about twenty minutes in silence. James knew he couldn't be lying. How else would he know? "I used to be just like you." He said changing the subject.

"Only I was a girl." "You were a girl!?" James's head snapped up in surprise. Given his slim appearance it made sense. "Yeah, something went wrong with my transformation." Melexa said. "I'll explain the details when you're older until then I should explain things to you."

James looked at the vampire confused. "You see pure-borns are rare. It's almost impossible for a vampiress to get pregnant. So most have human wives. This creates a Halfling much like you self. Then when they come of age (usually twelve) or decide to join a coven we make them full bloods the same way we adopt humans." Melexa explained.

"So you're here for me?" James asked. "Your case is different. We don't know which clan you belong to or even if you belong to one at all. There for, unless we want to star another blood war we cant forcibly take you. And even if you weren't in a coven or a clan our coven doesn't want to smear its name." Melexa said. "Oh" James replied confused. "We'd like to except you into our coven so the door will remain open until you decide." Melexa put his hand on James's head. "You're still young so it would be best if you thought allot about it"

"was that what you meant when you said I had a choice?" James asked. "No. You can stay the way you are sense you can still produce red blood cells. Full vampires cant do that without all the components which is why we drink blood in the first place. But you have to be careful. The reason why vampires run through it so fast is because out white cells have to feed off of the red to heal wounds. It' the same with half lings like you. And if you stay this way then once you become an adult (20 not 18) your ageing process will slow. And as you get older the cravings will become stronger and harder to control. Which is why it's a good idea to join a coven so if you decide to drink blood then you can be well fed. You should know, it's forbidden to kill humans for food so watch yourself. But if you decide to go the other way then you should eat a lot of, vitamin C, Protein, Iron, and sugar based foods. That should keep your red levels up and your cravings down." The Vampire explained.

"But listen, if you plan to do that then you can never taste another's blood. If you do it'll become an addiction." "... It also might be a good idea to stay away from that friend of yours. He'll be trouble." Melexa said after a short pause. "Why?" James asked. "I'm not allowed to say, the Thorn (my coven) want you to figure it out on your own." He said getting up. "I'll be stopping in near the end of every month." And with that Melexa left.

He moved so fast that James didn't get a chance to speak. "James, honey? Are you alright?" His mother asked poking her head through the door. She didn't seem to remember anything, like it had never happened. "I-I'm fine" He said. "Well close the window before the mosquitoes get in." She said shutting the door. "Was it all a dream?" he wondered.

* * *

Melexa walked into the underground compound of the thorn. Most of there little hideout was made of stone but they had managed to make it homey over the last few decades and had added steal doors.

The compound was underground simply because it was away from sunlight and easily hidden. “ I like this one, he has potential.” Melexa said leaning backward onto a shelf. “ He’s mine if he decides to join” the blond said seriously.

“ That’s the heads decision,” a male vampire said. He had purple neck length hair and his eyes were red. He was sitting at a round table. His name was Leks. “You’d think I wouldn’t ask him?” Melexa answered.

“ Besides I need a fledgling, and James is someone I can understand.”

“ You sure that’s not just your hormones talking?” another said jokingly, appearing from the shadows. His name was Navy; he had green hair that went down to his back, blue eyes, and a skinny build. He wasn’t affected by sunlight. He usually wore jeans with a matching jacket but had decided on a plain white T- shirt. Unlike Leks who was normally wearing a black gothic looking overcoat with a hood.

“ I’m not a pedophile.” Melexa smirked. Navy nodded. “ Don’t get too attached.” He said. Melexa glared at him again. Only this time it was in a lighter manner.

“ I’m not that kind of person.” Melexa said turning to the side. “ How much have I missed?” “ Not much.” Leks said. “ The ware wolves are onto us, they know we’re looking for something” “ Steve” Melexa whispered.

“ Who’s Steve?” Navy asked. “ One of James’s friends, probably his best.” Melexa said. “ He’s one of them isn’t he?” Leks asked, a look of disgust crossing his face. “ I’ve advised James to stay away from him for awhile, but I cant be sure he’ll follow my advice.” Melexa explained. “ Why don’t we just kill him!?!” Leks piped up.

“ You really think that will earn his trust? Besides this is his choice. He doesn’t know yet but if he wants to go into the protection of the wolves we cant stop him.” Melexa stated. “ Who knows, maybe he’ll make a good playmate for you.” A Blue haired vampiriss joked. She was standing in the shadows next to a doorway. Melexa slammed his fist on the shelf and left through the doorway beside her. “Chill” Navy said.

“ You started it.” She retaliated. “ He just finished the transfer to a he, Melexa doesn’t know what preferences are his fit yet.” Leks stated. “ So, doesn’t change the fact that he was a she.” The blue hair said. “ That’s what I’m afraid of.” Leks replied, grimacing. “It’s not that bad” She argued.

“ But that’s what Melexa’s afraid of.” Navy said exiting the room. No one questioned this. They had been friends since “she” was still a Halfling. They both grew and learned together, although Navy was learning a different set of rules. He was only part vampiric; the rest of him was human.

Which was why the sun didn’t burn his skin. No one knew why, not even him, but he didn’t feed off of blood but ecstasy wish was why the Thorn hadn’t made him full blooded. There was no telling what could happen. But despite that he liked having a tether to the human world. Even thought it drove his human side crazy. Senses like his did come in handy though, but complicated. For one, he knew just the way that people (humans particularly) looked at him. He already knew everyone’s love interest on which they were lusting after. He could smell different hormones and pheromones. And whenever someone was turned on he knew it. So he could sense Melexa’s confusion. Not only that but humans in particular seemed to flock to him. But despite all of this he and Melexa were still pretty close friends.

* * *

For the next day James maintained a distance from Steven, trying not to look too suspicious, he figured that even if it was a dream or a wired hallucination that it would be better to let go of his friend than to drag him into trouble. He tried righting a letter but after the first sentence of trying to explain he couldn’t

Wright anymore and cried. He didn't know why it bothered him so much but he didn't want to know what would happen when they weren't friends anymore. So instead he tried to stay his distance while trying to figure out what Melexa meant. Who knew, maybe it really was a dream and James was a sleepwalker.

That would explain his window. He honestly didn't understand why Melexa had said that. Why would having Steven as his friend be a bad thing? Or maybe it was the other way around. James gripped his pencil.

Why did he have to be a Halfling? Why couldn't he be human? Who knows. This was worrying him; it had brought up so many questions that he couldn't answer. What would happen when he got older, what if someone found out and told everyone.

Would his sister ever tell anyone or Melexa? What if Steven told someone? No, he wouldn't do that, besides he was a kid, who would believe him? But what if he told someone when they grew older? If there weren't any proof Steven would be locked up.

But James was more worried about something else, What if he hurt Steven. He tried not to think about it but it was all he could think about. Although Steven wasn't very clumsy he still managed to get scraped up once in awhile. "James?" a teacher by the door asked. She was from the special Ed class.

"You should come see your sister." "Why? Is something wrong?" he asked getting up and walking to the door. July had had a fit and was hiding under a table crying. She hadn't stopped and her tantrum had started early on into class. They had thought since her autism made adjusting to a new environment difficult that it would be best to let her get it out of her system but she only seemed to get worse.

They had tried to calm her by playing music she liked and giving her a snack, they had even tried to get her to join in on a game, but she only shrieked away from people. When they entered the room she was under a large table holding her pink rabbit. "July?" James asked. She stopped crying looked up at him and out stretched her arms, crying again. James crawled under the table and hugged her.

They sat under the table for a while before he asked what had happened. "A student tapped her on the shoulder and she screamed and ran. He didn't understand what was going on so he tired again, but she only hid under the table. He asked what was wrong and tried to force her to face him but that only made things worse. When the teachers saw what was happening they separated them and when she calmed down enough they tried to approach her again the same way like her booklet instructed. "The teacher said.

"She doesn't like being touched on her shoulders, that was were mom would grab her when she was in trouble or wasn't paying attention." James explained. "Strange, that wasn't in her help book." The teacher said. "She wasn't sure when we made it, I'll make her make a new one." James said. By this time July had stopped crying. "Thank you James, I'm sorry this happened I hope things will be better for her tomorrow." The teacher replied.

Eventually July got involved with another game and James headed back to his class. "He's a nice kid." She thought as she watched him leave.

* * *

"What happened?" Steven asked as James walked into the classroom, it was almost the end of the day. "Nothing, July just had a fit, that's all, nothing more." James replied sitting next to him. "Oh, well uh... wanna hangout after school?" He asked. James forgot to answer.

"There will be food." Steven said trying to tempt him. It never worked but James threw him a Glance. If Steven was making an excuse like that it could be important. "What's up with you? All you've done today is sit around." Steven asked. "You know you can tell me anything right?" Steven said. James

didn't answer.

What could he say? You were right, I met a vampire who invited me to join his coven and he explained everything? Also what exactly did that word mean? How would he take that? Steven knew he was hiding something, he just hoped it wasn't anything big.

"Is it your cravings?" "No." Steven replied snapping to attention. In fact, now that he was eating right he felt better. "Okay then let's hangout at my house." Steven asked. "M'kay" James replied.

He knew it might be a bad idea but James couldn't exactly listen to a total stranger. Also Steven hadn't had him over in awhile. "It's Friday so you can spend the night if you want." "Okay." James said with a little more enthusiasm. When they had gotten to James's house his mother agreed.

James was hurriedly packing when the window slid open. "Hm? Going somewhere?" Melexa asked. James yelped and gasped in surprise. "James?" his mother called. "I'm fine?" James said closing the door and blocking it.

"What are you doing hear!?" he whispered. "I'm stopping in remember? I'm supposed to stop in on Fridays at the end of each month." Melexa said. So it was real. James wanted to kick himself. "So were ya goin?" Melexa asked stepping through the window.

"Steve's" James said looking at the floor. "...I see. Well be careful." Melexa said. "Eh?" "You're old enough to choose your own friends, just don't let the secret get out." "Ehm well..." James stammered, shifting uncomfortably.

"James? Whom are you talking to?" his mother asked, twisting the doorknob. "Don't come in! I'm not wearing pants!" he said grabbing the knob. "Why, whom were you talking to?" "Em, I split a hole in them while I was talking to my imaginary friend, Bob!" James Blurted. Melexa had to bite his tongue to keep from laughing.

"...Okay." His mother said more then a little confused. "I'll come back tomorrow," Melexa whispered. With that he stepped out the window shaking his head. As soon as Melexa was gone James Practically tore off his pants and ripped a hole in them. This day couldn't get any worse.

Not only did he need new pants but also he was pretty sure that Steven had the letters W.T.F.? Stamped into his expression.

* * *

Steven lived on the edge of the forest. His father and the rest of their "pack" had inherited it from their ancestors. He was happy to be out of the house and running on the dirt road. James mother might not be very sharp but he was. He could hear everything they were saying and James's room smelt of another person.

Steven wanted to, but he didn't ask. When they reached the house his father was sitting in the living room with his uncle. Said uncle was only wearing dirty jeans and no shoes. He had brown hair and tan skin and a muscular build. They weren't really related by blood but they might have well have been since they were pack mates.

"Hey" he said from the living room. He said when the boys ran past the entryway. "Don't I get a hug from my nephew?" he said standing. Steven ran back to the doorway, grinned and tackled him, slamming the man back into the couch. "Stronger?" he asked.

"Yeah" his uncle laughed coughing. "I told you." His father said. "Uncle this is James, my best friend. James, my uncle Rock." He said. "It's nice to meet you James." The man said politely. "Nice to meet you too." James said quietly.

He looked friendly but there was something about Steven's dad today that said that he should stay in the hallway. "Your cousins are upstairs in your room." Rock said. "Crud, and I just cleaned it too."

That made the two men laugh as Steven and James rushed upstairs. After the chuckles had ceased Rocks face went serious.

“ That’s him isn’t it?” The other nodded.

* * *

When Steven opened the door James saw what he meant. Toys were strewn on the floor and both children were jumping on the beds, which were on both sides of the room. On the wall in front of them there was a curved window with a window seat. To the right was a girl in an oversized t-shirt tailored to be like a dress. Her hair was a dark brown, almost black and she had Indian features that made her look a little Asian.

She was at least eight. Her brother on the left was nine, soon to be ten and his hair was a dark brown. He only wore pants like his father and both children were wearing stretchy black ankle bracelets. “ Hi Steve!” the girl chirped, Jumping onto the floor. It was a miracle that she hadn’t landed on anything. “ Who’s this?” She asked gesturing to James. “ This is James” Steven said. “Nice ta meet’cha.” The boy said landing beside his sister. Again it was a miracle he didn’t land on anything. “ I’m Rent this is my sister Rose.” He said extending his hand.

When James shook it the boys’ nose twitched. Rose was studying him curiously. “ Lets go outside” Steven said. “ We can race to the stream.” The two kids shouted an “O.K!” and the four were off and running. The men Glanced up as the kids thundered by.

“ That’s going to be tough. Especially if we cant get James on out side.” Rock said once the door was closed. “ I don’t know. I can’t believe this. I mean I let him hang around my kid. If something happened...” “ Don’t talk like that.” Rock said to the other man. “ Steve is a smart kid, he knows the rules and he can stay out of trouble. And as for James he seems like a nice kid. I’m sure we can get his to our side.” “ I know, but lately Steven has gotten into trouble. His teacher called saying he didn’t want to eat his lunch and you know his appetite. I’m worried something’s wrong with him.” The concerned father said.

“ Maybe it’s a phase. You never know with kids. Who knows? Maybe he’s just sick of school food. Rose refuses to eat anything that looks off,” Rock said. The other sighed. Maybe Rock was right.

* * *

The run to the river was short. James was surprised at how fast Stevens’s cousins ran through the woods, especially since they weren’t wearing shoes. They were even a little faster. Now that was something. However the two were acting a little strange. Rent seemed to be subconsciously avoiding James while his sister favored him.

It was odd but maybe it was because girls understood him a bit more then boys. (Excluding a few) “ We should play tag team,” Rent said grabbing Steven and jumping across a line of rocks. The two disappeared leaving James to wonder how the two hadn’t tripped over each other. “ What’s tag team?” James asked curiously. “ We split into two teams and tag the others. Like freeze tag.” She explained. Rose jumped over the rocks and James followed, crossing the river. “We’ll catch them faster if we split up.” She said.

“Alright.” James said. She ran to the left and he went to the right dodging branches. Rose seemed to be planning something but he didn’t know what. So he searched for Steven, he wasn’t sure about running

into Rent. Something about him seemed... hostile.

James didn't want a fight but it seemed inevitable as he picked up their voices. The strange thing was, they weren't talking about the game. "You knew!?!?" Rent practically shouted. "Of course I knew, he's my best friend." Steven replied. "And you didn't tell anyone!" He seemed upset.

"I thought we could trust you." He said. "Rent." "No! You know what Happened, You know what they did and he's one of them! How can you be friends with that thing!?!?" Rent shouted. "I just can, he's not like that!" Steven replied. "How do you know that!?!?"

"Because he's not full!" "So, that doesn't change anything!" "But that doesn't mean he's bad!" "That doesn't mean he's good either!" "Will you shut up and listen! I've known James since we were seven! If I say he's good! He's good!" Steven shouted.

James was utterly shocked. Why were they talking about him like that? Did Steven know? There was a short pause, he wanted to run but he just couldn't move. "Well if you're choosing him over your family"- "I'm not choosing anything! ... And you're not family!" Steven interrupted. Judging by Rents expression Steven had crossed a line.

"How can you say that? We're pack!" Rent was just as shocked. "Dad and Rock are pack, you and Rose are pack. We are not pack." Steven said. He stomped off in the other direction. "You can't change that Steve!" Rent shouted after him. James slowly backed away and then broke into a sprint. Pack? What were they? James didn't have time to figure that out as he crashed into Rose.

* * *

Dinner was silent. Rose seemed to know what was going on, James and Rent refused to acknowledge each other, and Rock tried his best but they refused to speak. Meanwhile James was preoccupied with his own thoughts. Steven was hiding something, something important. They never kept secrets, well except for the toenail thing but wasn't important, this was.

He had the hunch that Steven knew. He knew what James was but he hadn't told him. James felt like he had been lied to. But in reality Steven hadn't said anything. Just nothing.

And James didn't know why. "You're all unusually quiet tonight" Stevens father said. "Especially your friend." Rock gestured to James. "Eh, my mom's actually thinking about putting a bell on me." James said shyly, making everyone laugh. "Well kids, it's about time we left." Rock said putting his kids plates in the sink. "Thanks for having us over." "It was nice meeting you James" Rose said as they left. There was a short pause. "So, who wants ice cream?" That got the boys to perk up. After the ice cream the boys went up stairs to listen to the radio.

They were both sugar high and jumping from one bed to the other. Steven was currently banging his head and playing air-guitar to the music. The two switched after the song. "...Rent thinks Rose might like you." Steven blurted. James gave a startled yelp as he slipped off the bed, making Steven laugh.

"But she's two years younger than me!" Steven paused. Two years was a big difference. "That's probably why he wanted to warn you. I don't think she cares." "You're starting to sound like Rent." That got Steven to stiffen. "Kids, it's time you got to bed, it's eleven thirty." Said Stevens father as he poked his head into the room.

"No more jumping on the beds either, you'll both break them." He laughed. James Plopped onto the bed while Steven turned off the radio. "Night." Steven said as his father left. "He's right it is late..." "Yeah but I'm not tired at all." Steven sighed.

There was a long pause. "Didn't you have a T.V. in hear?" James asked. Steven smiled, picked up a portable T.V. out of a pile of cloths and set it in the window seat. James got up and joined him. After hurriedly turning it on the screen turned static.

“ Darn it” Steven said giving it a good whack. It only flickered. He tried moving the antennas but it did nothing. “ This thing’s older then I am.” He explained. They sat in silent, listening to the white noise and enjoying the glow.

The light flickered off, startling James. “ They’re timed” Steven said with a grin. They continued to stair at the screen. It flickered and the channel came in, showing a horror movie. “ Alright.” Steven said satisfied.

He continued to stair at the screen excitedly. James watched as the killer ripped tore apart a persons chest, making blood splatter everywhere. He knew it was fake, but that didn’t stop his heart from racing at such a site. After all it was scream three. He felt no craving but James’s breathing quickened. Steven glanced at him “ James? Are you okay?” Steven asked touching his shoulder. “ I’m fine.” He blurted. “ Am I...excited?” he thought. James honestly felt like laughing like a maniac. He had to suppress a smile.

“ We should sleep” Steven said and turned off the T.V. James looked up at him as he walked by. Steven got into bed as James walked to the right. When they were both settled Steven put his hands behind his head. He had taken his ponytail out and set his glassed on the nightstand being him. James stared at the ceiling, a worried expression crossing his face as thoughts of before crept into his mind. “ Whoa!” “ What?” “ Your eyes, they glow in the dark.” Steven said as he watched the green orbs blink. “ Hey yours do too!” James said facing him. “ Wow.”

They both stared, Green, looking at yellow. “ You remind me of a wolf,” James blurted. “ Really? Huh... a were wolf eh?...” Steven said staring up at the ceiling. “ Then I guise that means I’ll just have to eat you!” He said jumping up and tackling James. He yelped and dodged.

They chased each other around the room, Laughing and yelling and screaming. “Guys!” Stevens father shouted from the hallway. They immediately jumped back to their beds. There was a short silence before James burst into giggles. Eventually they settled down into staring back up at the ceiling again. “ Hey, where’d my hair tie go?” James said rubbing his now messy hair. “ I think I pulled it out.”

Steven said sending them both into a fit of laughter. Once the laughter had seceded they both silently stared at each other. By now it was midnight. “ I really remind you of a wolf?” Steven asked.

“ Yeah, I think it’s your eyes, they’re yellow.” James replied. Steven looked up at the ceiling as if thinking of something. James silently wondered why a movie like that had seemed so exciting. Gory violence wasn’t something he enjoyed. Maybe it was some sort of instinct?

Who knew, it was something he would have to ask Melexa later. The two laid there, not speaking, wrapped up into their own thoughts. James had so many questions but was afraid to ask. What did Steven mean by full, and pack? And how did Rent know what he was.

He wasn’t even aware Steven really knew until this afternoon. Why didn’t Steven tell him? What were the two boys hiding? James wandered in his thoughts, trying to decide if he should risk asking it. But if Steven was keeping a secret did he really want to know?

He wasn’t sure. The two lay silently until the sun came up without saying anything. Neither slept. The faded light was hurting James eyes. “ S-Steve?” He stuttered out.

“ Yes?” Steven said facing him. “ What did you mean when you fighting with Rent?” He asked sitting up.”...I over heard.” James said guiltily. Steven didn’t know how to answer, he was obligated to keep that a secret, but he couldn’t if it was about James. “...My cousin thinks you’re the enemy.” Steven sat up.

“ Enemy of who? ... You?” “ Us.” Steven didn’t want to look at his friends face.

“ What do you mean?” James asked. He was testing Steven. James already knew the answer. Steven sighed. “ ... You’re not human!” Steven blurted.

“ Not...? And you weren’t going to tell me!?” Steven didn’t say anything as James got up. “ I was freaking out and you didn’t say anything!” James was hurt by this new discovery. Steven was ALWAYS

honest with him. " Steve! You can't hide these kinds of things from me! It's not fair! You know that! I was really scared! I...I could have hurt someone!" He was nearly in tears by now.

He knew what he was but Steven didn't say anything. He put every one at risk. "STEVE!" Steven didn't say anything. " You already know don't you?" Steven said without looking at him.

" Yes I do. I can't believe you kept this a secret! I COULD HAVE KILLED JULY!" Tears ran down James's face. He simply couldn't take it anymore. There was a long silence. " ... What did you mean by us?" " I cant tell you." Steven said.

" Why not! We never kept secrets! You promised after we met!" Steven felt like hiding. " You had a secret." Steven said. He was right, there were things James had never told him. " But I told you." " You still had it!" Steven shouted.

" How can you be mad at me when you're hiding something yourself!" " That's not the point! You were always hiding something! Always! And Besides that not my secret to share!" Steven shouted. " Steven..." " I'm sick of you! Just drop it!" Steven Shouted. James eyes widened.

The expression on his face made Steven want to cry. James bolted for the door. He ran down the stair, grabbed his bag, and left. Stevens father tried to catch him at the door but James was simply to fast. He ran home in a full sprint despite the fact that his vision was too blurry to see.

When he entered the house he burst into the living room, startling his mother and sister who had gotten up early. The two were playing with a set of wooden blocs to pass the time. She took one look at him and softened instantly. " Oh James" she said walking around the couch and hugging him as he sobbed. He had just lost his best friend, and he sobbed harder then he had in his entire life.

3 - Bonds broken

It wasn't that they weren't best friends anymore that bothered him; it was the fact that Steven was his only friend. James didn't have any other friends and was picked on a lot. Steven had to constantly fight off the urge to go help him when Tyler got in his face. Steven was angry and simply wished that he could go and apologize but his father had told him specifically not to be alone with James. If James knew what he was then that meant that a coven had decided to make contact.

If said coven knew that they were friends they could direct James to spy on them or they could kidnap Steven to manipulate their pack. Steven wanted to explain everything, about his origins as a werewolf. But if James knew, the coven who was trying to adopt him would find out, whether James told them or not, and would strike before James could be brought to their side. Stevens's pack was basically protecting the humans from the vampires and halflings were also their jurisdiction. They were simply trying to maintain a balance so neither side could take over.

Under law no one could force James to go into the protection of the wolves. He was half human and the wolves had no control of the humans. They were free to choose. The werewolves' weren't law; they were just doing their best to maintain a balance. If the vampires were getting out of control they would interfere, although not all vampires were against law.

The head vampire had set laws for their people to abide by. Over the next two years Steven and James tried to simply pretend that they didn't know each other. Melexa visited at the end of every month while the rest of the coven fended off the wolves. They had only made small advances so no lives were lost; in fact there were hardly any fights. James tried to make friends but was mostly in the background.

Despite what her cousin, brother, and what most of the pack said, Rose clung to him during recess and was almost willing to do anything he asked. She was ten, he was twelve, but somehow she had managed to keep the other kids from picking on her. All but one. She and James had settled into their usual spot by the building when Tyler's basketball hit James in the side of the face.

"Sorry girls, it was an accident. Oh wait you're not a girl." He said pointing to James. "Sorry I must have mistook you." Tyler said. James had let his hair grow over the years, it was past his shoulders now and Tyler was willing to use almost anything to get to James. "You know full well that James is a boy." Rose said. "Hey it was a simple mistake, no harm done." Tyler laughed.

She was about to yell at him when James stopped her. "No, just leave it be." "But James..." "He wants me to fight back." Tyler threw the basketball his head again.

James tried to ignore him. "You can't just let him pick on you!" Rose said. Tyler was about to throw it again when Rose ran in front of him. "Oooh, it looks like James has a new girlfriend." Tyler laughed. "Shut up!" Rose shouted.

"Oh, so he is a girl?" "Rose..." James urged. "No, I know it's not my fight but I can't sit here and watch him hurt you, it's unfair." Rose said. "Oh, so you want me to hurt you too?"

"Leave us alone! We didn't do anything to you!"

"You're too noble for your own good Rose, be a good girl and get out of the way!" Tyler said in a mocking tone. Rose slugged him. There was a crack as her fist made contact with his nose. Tyler stumbled backwards as blood dripped down his face. He lunged and it broke out into a fight, within seconds other kids had started cheering them on.

Someone shoved through the crowd and pulled Tyler back, "Keep your hand off my sister!" Rent shouted pushing Tyler back. Steven stood beside them. "She's not worth my time!" Tyler said stomping off. "Thank you"

“ You idiot!” Rent shouted at his sister, dragging her into the building. Once they were safely inside he continued yelling. “ You could have killed him!” “ At least I was trying to help!” Rose shouted. “ Steven can handle him self” Steven said closing the door. “ A basketball to the head is as harmless as a pillow to him.”

“ You’re supposed to be his friend!” Rose said pointing to his wrist. Steven didn’t want to take it off. He didn’t know why but he was attached to the bracelet James had woven for him. Rose stomped away.

“You’re setting a bad example for her.” Rent said.

“ You’re her brother, do your job.” Steven said.

Meanwhile James was in a janitors closet trying to calm his breathing. He hadn’t drunken blood yet and he didn’t want to start. He could still smell it. A tremor wracked through his body and without hesitation he opened the nearest bottle of bleach. Breathing deep, James forced the smell into his nose.

Bleach was one of the few things that James found that could completely eliminate the smell of blood from his system. He sat there until it started to sting his nose (which wasn’t too long.) and capped the bottle. James left the janitors closet and walked back to class. As he walked down the hallway he saw Steven leaning against a display case. He didn’t look happy.

“ I don’t want you around my cousin.” Steven nearly shouted. He stalked off into their nearby classroom. James starred at his shoes. Steven had every right to be angry Rose had almost gotten hurt because James wouldn’t stand up for himself. She didn’t know Tyler couldn’t hurt James, at least not a lot.

He could try as much as he wanted but Tyler could never put a scratch on James. James sighed and walked into class.

* * *

Steven was mortified beyond all reason. He quickly stomped up to his room and slammed the door. He hadn’t meant to but his mind was preoccupied with other things. “ Steve?” his father said poking his head into the room. “ ...They showed the Health video, didn’t they?” He asked.

“I am never having kids” That made his dad, laugh. Apparently the school hadn’t spared any details. Steven already knew the specifics, he just hadn’t seen anyone give birth before.

4 - The two great blood wars

James didn't know what was worse; the video he saw, or that the birth Sean was so bloody that his nails had left marks in his chair. The first birth they showed was a regular birth, the second was a C-section. He also had to have an awkward talk with his father. It was nice to see him since he was normally busy but the weirdness of it all took him off guard. And of course Melexa didn't help anything either.

Apparently vampires had trouble conceiving and the blond figured he should explain it while the topic was still fresh in his mind. James wanted beat his head agents the wall, and then the topic of how Melexa switched from one gender to another came up. By this time James was supposed to be asleep. "It...just sort of happened after I became full blooded." He said. "No one knows exactly what caused it, something in my mentors venom changed and his venom glands had to be removed. He hasn't had another fledgling since. At first I tried to keep what was happening a secret but Navy found out and forced me to confess to him"

"Who's Navy?" James asked.

"He and I are in the rose seven." Melexa explained. "We're a little group pf oddities in the coven. Like outcasts only liked. Leks it the third to join. He's like a berserker. If you get him too mad he'll turn into a monster and go into rage. He's got so much strength it's hard to control him...And Navy is only part vampiric, He feed off of a chemical called ecstasy, He can smell and taste your hormone levels in the air. He can also turn into a puddle of blood. It's an odd skill."

"Is that how he found out?" James asked. Melexa nodded. "He knew something was up because I had an unnaturally high amount of testosterone. I think he was the second to join. I was the fourth and then there's Blue...Her real name is Moon shadow, She can get into a persons dreams and control them. She's the most recent to join us and she's been one of my best friends since we were girls." Melexa said.

"...That sounded wrong." That made the vampire laugh. James was right, it did sound odd. "What about the others? There are seven right?" James asked. Melexa nodded. "The other three are the ones who started the gang. Jack (short for Jackobo) can hide in shadows and create demons from them. Reno (his twin) can do the same thing with sunlight. But instead of demons he can heal people. He also can sprout wings on occasion. They nicknamed him the white vampire, and then there's Venda. She can control fire. They were called the Rose three after they destroyed a castle during the last war. (Which was a century ago) The groups grown ever since." Melexa said.

"So the wars... when did that happen?" James asked. "The first blood war started in the dark ages. Back then we didn't know what we were. There isn't a lot written about it, just bits and pieces."

"The first few vampires got together as a way to survive when they discovered that they weren't alone. Others from around the world started to do the same and pretty soon they all started to fight over "food,"

"The Black plague contaminated humans and killed them off so it was hard to find blood. A normal Vampire can get the plague from Drinking contaminated blood or being exposed to it in sunlight. It's because are defenses are devoted to keeping us alive long enough to get out of the sun light."

"Anyway; because of this it was hard to find adequate blood to keep us alive, as I'm sure you remember, we cant create our own red blood cells, only white. Our bodies can't create them without absorbing the right components. The fights kept going on and pretty soon more vampires were being created so groups had more forces."

“ The fighting eventually humans in and it turned into a war between the two. There were few surviving humans and since werewolves came from humans they eventually joined the fight.”

“ Were-wolves?” James asked.

“ I forgot that you haven’t gotten to that yet. I’ll explain werewolves the next time we meet; it’s getting late. Anyway it soon became the vampires’ agents everyone. Most of the wolves thought of humans as lesser back then but some protected them. In the last great battle the humans won. They had the aid of some of the werewolves and forcibly recruited the few halflings they could find. They won using strategy.”

“ Back then halflings were looked at as scum, humans were “food”, not mates. It was looked at as a sick betrayal for a vampire to have a human mate. Halflings and their parents were normally executed.” James took a deep breath. How horrible to be a halfling in the dark ages. “ The war ended just as the renaissance began. The vampires and werewolves went back into hiding and eventually they were only remembered as myths. The second war was how the laws were put into place.”

“ It began just after the renaissance. It was between the vampires and the werewolves. Both were fighting over territory constantly. We were sick of hiding but it was a new era. If the Humans got involved we’d be obliterated or in later times captured for study. But because of the baby boom there were more mouths to feed and halflings eventually grew in number. Then there was a massacre called the half blood holocaust”

“ Two wars at once, a war within a war. The few halflings that weren’t killed went into the protection of the werewolves. A few humans became involved again but no one believed their warnings. Then awhile later it was discovered that halflings could be integrated and turned into full-blooded vampires. The war had decreased the vampiric population and when this was discovered the half blood holocaust ended. This was around the time world war one ended.”

“ But we weren’t the only ones experimenting. When the halflings went into the protection of the were wolves a new breed was discovered.” The triple breed; a mix between humans, werewolves, and vampires. There were only two hundred so it’s extremely rare to find and when the wolves caught wind of our discovery they experimented with creating double breeds by trying to integrate halflings. Only one survived it but he disappeared. No one is sure if he’s even alive. There are rumors that there is a second but no proof of it. An even rarer breed was discovered just as world war two began. A naturally created double breed. Both sides were outraged by this. Of course the vampires were executed for blasphemy and some of those few children were taken in for war purposes and killed when their usefulness ended”

“ The same went for the were wolves only they didn’t execute the parents. They exiled them and their children into their protection.”

“ Eventually the few humans that were involved stepped in. All three parties negotiated a government of laws and the second blood war ended. Those few humans decided that it was time to set up a democracy for the world they had forgotten. The second blood war ended near the end of the great depression. After that war I was born.” Melexa concluded.

“ Wow... There’s so much I didn’t know about!” James exclaimed. “ I know, and you’ll be learning the specifics too. I should get going though, I’ve kept you up long enough.” Melexa said ruffling James’s hair. Within a flash he was gone. James got under the covers and stared at the ceiling. It was a lot to take in and there was still a lot more.

5 - Church

When James woke up on Sunday it was time for Church. James liked church, being there gave him an odd sense of purity. It brought his family closer and his community together. He felt bad about keeping this secret, especially hear, but at least he could be a little more honest. Although he had mixed feelings about it, being half vampiric brought up a lot of questions.

Like what side was he supposed to be on? Should he really be hear? Was it right to be parts of the Christian community when you knew you were something that was wrong? And even if it was only a part of him, could he really deny its existence?

Vampires were always viewed as evil, even in myths and fables, but something inside James couldn't believe that. He wanted to but he knew that wasn't true. Was it? Melexa had told him from the beginning that the Thorn didn't kill humans for food. It was forbidden.

James wanted to embrace Christianity but being Vampiric kept him from that, and he wanted to embrace being Vampiric but humanity kept him from that. He felt like he was being tugged at by all sides and it was horrible. However, going to church made him remember why he didn't drink blood, why he was still fighting even though it hurt like crazy. It gave him strength even though he felt like he didn't belong. But was it right?

James and his family entered the old church and took their seats. Today was going to be his third time in the youth group. The way things had been going for the last few days he could tell that there was going to be another awkward conversation. But at least he knew all of the scientific stuff, the school and Melexa had seen to that.

Morning prayer was the first thing they always did; were others would ask for support to help them face their own problems. James only wished he could ask for that kind of help. But he would gladly give it himself. As much as he could anyway. Then they would drink juice in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. The cups were smaller then the ones that came with medicine.

After this they would sing songs of worship and kids would be called down to Sunday school and youth group. The first day hadn't gone well for July. Since James wasn't there she was more confused then ever. Mostly because she didn't know whom to ask for help and no one understood her that well. She had adjusted quickly but was still on shaky ground.

When youth group got called it confused he even more. They were called on the beginning, middle, and end of each month, but to her it was completely random. July watched as her brother left for the group. She knew why, but something else was telling her that he would be the one coming out of this confused.

James was silent on the way home. Today's discussion had been about sexuality. There was a short briefing about what it was in the health video what the different terms meant, and the different laws concerning it. But that was it. The youth group discussion was about the different things that went with it. Lust, the rules concerning it, abstinence, and what was right or wrong concerning sexuality.

James understood abstinence before marriage and the different rules concerning lust but other things confused him. Homo and bi sexuality were one. The video, teachers, and most of the school staff that there was nothing wrong with "swinging" in those directions. But the youth group leader said it was a sin. The teachers and the youth group had said that they didn't know what caused it.

So James had no idea what was right. When they got home James went to his room. He wanted to ask

someone but he wasn't sure about how they would react. Not only that but it seemed like everyone had their own opinions about it, so he didn't know how to get a straight answer. James sat down on his bed and sighed.

Shortly after July entered with paper and a box of crayons. She could tell that he was confused about something and she wanted to help him but she didn't know how. So she sat down and drew things. James thought, and thought, and thought. He knew he shouldn't question God and that God might be mad if he did.

After all God had his best interests at heart right?

"But I guess he (or she) would want me to try and figure it out instead of being confused right? Or at least to ask someone. But how do I know if they're right? I could ask God, but for some reason I keep missing the answers. Every one says you get some kind of sign but all of the questions I've asked him I already know the answer to or I missed the sign." James flopped backward and stared at the ceiling.

"How could being homosexual be a bad thing? What's so bad about it? I can understand why someone would find it gross but a sin? The passage the group leader made us read. 'It is a sin for a man to lay with another man as if they were a woman' or something. It means sex right? How is that physically possible? And what about women?" James thought.

There was a long silence. July drew a question mark with her crayon. "agh! How the heck do you even tell!?" James thought as he got up to pace. After a few minutes July stopped him and handed him a crayon. She wore a worried expression.

Whatever she was trying to say she was right. Worrying about it wasn't going to help. James sighed; maybe drawing would clear his head. That was when he noticed the paper strewn all over the floor. Most of it was colored a bright shade of Blue.

He laughed; maybe she just liked the color.

* * *

Melexa sat in the group hall of the underground coven. Besides the three leaders the thorn seven were sitting at their usual table silently drinking coffee. Yes, vampires could eat and drink regular food but since their bodies absorbed and stored everything most could only have one meal a day excluding half lings.

"So how is your potential fledgling doing?" Melexa asked Moon shadow. Most vampires could take fledglings. The only ones in the thorn seven who didn't have fledglings were the three leaders, Navy, and Leks. Navy was normally busy and Leks simply wasn't a kid person. The other three had no excuse.

"I saw through one of her dreams that she's thinking about running away from her human father. She's been isolated at school too and it's making her depressed. From what I've seen out of her dad no one seems to understand her needs. Poor girl feels like she's trapped in a cage. She's even afraid she's going to start cutting herself, and her father won't let go so it's making everything worse..." Moon shadow sighed.

"I think I need to get her out of there. She needs to find her mother. The closer would help." There was a long pause. "How's James doing?" She asked. "Well... I just told him about the blood wars and the awkward stuff so that's all out in the open. He seems fine although he's still a bit of a loner." Melexa said. "Damn you're lucky, most kids are really depressed and angsty at this age, I'm impressed."

Moon shadow said.

"Well you know how it is with the quiet ones. One minute they're fine and then the next they drop a bomb on you."

* * *

Steven sat on the couch, watching T.V. with Rent. “ Rent where’s your sister?” He asked. “ She left, you didn’t hear her?” Steven shook his head. “ Man you need to get your head out of the gutter. You’ve been zoning out all day.” Rent shook his head. He was right.

The health video brought up a few questions that Steven didn’t know how to answer. Things he knew that his father might not know how to answer. And the fact that Valentines Day was tomorrow didn’t help at all. “ You okay?” “ I’m fine.” Steven replied.

At that moment the front door swung open. “ Rent! Come on! We need to get home. I’m freezing.” Rose called. “ Why? ...Do I smell chocolate?” Rent asked sniffing the air. There was a short pause. “ You like a boy don’t you?” Steven and Rent said in unison, both raising an eyebrow.

“ S-Shut up, that’s none of your business!” Both boys rolled their eyes at each other. “ Come on Rent! You know I’m naked.” Rose mumbled, rubbing her bare arms. Rent sighed. Nudity was a regular part of being a were-wolf and it was faster to travel in the form of a wolf. Rent undressed in a corner, strapped his cloths to one of his leg with a stretchy headband; within seconds he was a brown wolf only slightly bigger then a regular wolf.

A black wolf appeared with a paper bag in her mouth, she also had cloths strapped to her leg. “ What’s that?” Steven asked gesturing to the paper bag in her mouth. Rose growled at him. Steven shrugged. He knew he would find out later.

The two wolves raced out of the house and Steven closed the door after them. Something told him there would be trouble soon.

* * *

“ Give this to mommy” James said handing July a card and pointing to a picture of his parents on his nightstand. His sister took it and left his room. However she interrupted her parents who were making out on the couch, they immediately separated. “ Oh! July! Uh...” Her mother stuttered. James shook his head as July handed his mother the card, completely unfazed.

“ From your eldest son and first born, happy anniversary.” Jane read aloud. Valentines day was the day their parents had met. “ Aw thanks you guys. Come hear” their father said and July promptly sat on top of him. James was surprised when his mother grabbed his shoulders and turned him around. He hadn’t even heard her enter his room. “I don’t care if we’re not physically related. You are still our son,” She said hugging him.

Even though he hadn’t really meant anything about it in the card it was still nice to hear.

James walked into the school with July and led her to her classroom. When he caught a glimpse of rose he couldn’t help but notice that she was in a dress. “That’s unusual.” He thought to himself. Most of the day was spent in class. Everyone seemed to be confessing to crushes today. Even Tyler had stepped out of his comfort zone, of course not until after he mad a few smart comments at James, who simply ignored them.

But James also couldn’t help noticing that although someone had confessed to Steven, he turned her down. Most kids didn’t want to be alone on Valentines Day: they all jumped at the chance. So why hadn’t Steven? Few were left alone. Even some of the shyer kids were stepping out of their shadows. As James sat down in his usual spot at recess it seemed like every rejected kid in his class flocked to the area and joined him, looking depressed. “ Love sucks,” One of the girls said. “ Amen!” another replied. “ I’m swearing off women,” Tyler said. “ Why? You’re like, twelve.” The first girl asked.

“ Yeah but it’s not like I’ll live this down anytime soon.” He said. “ At least you almost had someone, I

never stood a chance,” A dorky looking boy said. “...What about you James?” The second girl asked. “Do you have a girl to be with on Valentines Day?” James blushed a bit. “ I don’t really have a love interest right now. I never have.” He admitted.

“ WHAT!?!” almost the entire group shouted. “ James” Tyler said, grabbing his shoulders and forcing him to look at him. Tyler looked dead serious. “ Pleas answer this seriously...are you an asexual?” There was a short pause.

“ What the hell is that?” the first girl asked. “ Didn’t you watch the video? An asexual is someone who neither likes boys or girls, or anything else that’s possible. I was reminded about it by the discovery channel.” Tyler stated proudly. “ You watch the discovery channel?” the first girl asked. “ Hey I have allot of free time.” He replied.

“ Well?” the dorky looking boy asked James. “ I-I doesn’t think so?” James replied. “ Ha! So it’s true! You really are gay!” Tyler said. James was about to retort but Tyler was hit in the head as soon as he finished the sentence. Rose had appeared out of nowhere.

“ Tyler stop being stupid!” She said. “ Wha- Holy crap she’s in a dress!” Tyler gasped. She tried punching him but he dodged. “ You deserved that you know.” The first girl said. “...Look a giant cow!” Rose shouted.

When some of the kids looked in the direction she was pointing James was hauled to his feet and dragged into the building faster then he had been in his entire life. “ That was pathetic” Tyler said, unamused. When she stopped running James almost bumped into her. “ Eh? Rose?” He asked, something told him this would turn out badly. She faced him and held out a small box of chocolates. “ I-I like you allot. Will you be my valentine?” She asked. She was blushing and looked like she was going to bolt any second. “ Rose...” James thought. At that second James had the urge to hug her, because he knew he was about to stomp on her heart.

* * *

James was standing with July waiting for the bus when he was suddenly slammed agents the brick wall. “ What did you do to my sister!?!” Rent shouted. “ Leave him alone Rent.” Steven said shoving his cousin off of James. “Rose is tough she’ll get over it.” The two glared at each other before rent stomped into the building.

There was a short pause before Steven turned on him. “ I thought I told you to stay away from my cousin?” “ Wha? ”-“ I don’t care!” Steven shouted interrupting him and grabbing James by the scruff of his shirt. “ Don’t ever go near my cousin again.” He said.

James was scared but that disappeared as soon as July started crying loudly. “Then don’t scare my sister.” James said, he was angry. Steven turned and went after Rent while James tried to calm July down. This was the worst Valentines Day he had ever had.

* * *

Stevens house wasn’t any better. He didn’t know what to do about his cousin and had been roped into another conversation over ice cream by his father. “ So... how did your day go?” His father asked him. “ Not too well.” Steven replied. “ Oh, so she turned you down?” He asked.

“ No, it was the other way around.” Steven said. “ ...So uh, he turned you down?” “ N- DAD!” Steven shouted mortified. “ Hey I just wanted to be sure hear.” His father waving his arms defensively. “ ...So what happened?” “ Rose happened, James turned her down.” Steven explained. “ Oh... Wait he’s two years older then her right?” Stevens father asked.

“ Yeah. I knew this would happen, that’s why I told him to stay away from her.” “...Maybe he didn’t because she’s his only friend. You said yourself that he hasn’t made any friends since that fight you two had. And two years isn’t that big of a difference.” His father said. “ It’s not the age difference that bothers me. It’s the fact that Rose might get involved with a bunch of vampires.” Steven explained. “ Well it was bound to happen sometime, it comes with the territory.” His father explained to him. “ Did you try to do anything about this?”

“ I told him not to go near her.” Steven answered. “ Steve.” “ I know, I can’t choose her friends for her or keep James from hanging out with her. I don’t want to see her get hurt. Doesn’t it bother you that your niece had a crush on a Halfling?” Steven asked.

“ Yes, but I cant do anything about it, and he’s human too right?” His father said. He had a good point there. There was a short pause.

“ But gosh ten, ten! ... That tares it! You’re not dating until your thirteen.”

“ That’s only a year away”

“ I’m being fair.”

Steven smiled and shook his head. His father had an odd scene of fair.

* * *

Needless to say when James got home he wasn’t happy. In fact when he got home with July, upon being asked about how his valentines day went he replied with “ It’ sucked!” and promptly ran to his room and slammed the door. His mother had tried to ask him what was wrong but he simply didn’t want to talk about it. His current best and maybe only friend had liked him and he had to turn her away. It felt like the same emptiness from two years ago had slowly opened up and was now trying to swallow him. The worst part was that he didn’t know why. Sure she was still a kid but, maybe that was it, but Rose could also be very mature at times too. Not only that but she was somewhat smart and overall a nice person. Sure Rose was small but she was also pretty strong and one of the fastest runners he had ever seen compared to himself and her cousin.

She was also his friend when he had no one, rose was there. Not because she felt sorry for him but because she liked being his friend. She kept him from feeling alone at school. She made him feel better, and it wasn’t that she wasn’t pretty. She was very pretty. Almost like the flower she was named after. So over all even though she was ten and he was twelve and the age difference was still there, it didn’t matter. So why didn’t he feel the same? James couldn’t understand it. He was losing his friend and he felt sick.

James laid on his bed and hugged his pillow. He felt like he wanted to cry so he changed the subject. He couldn’t do anything about Rose. He was as honest and as gentle as possible. If she couldn’t be his friend anymore he would have to put up with it. So in an attempt to block out the loneliness that was creeping in on him, he reviewed some of the memories of his day again, until he stopped at a certain question.

“ I don’t really have a love interest right now. I never have.”

“ What!?!”

Was that really so unusual? He was only twelve after all and he was sure he hadn’t forgotten of missed it. Love was just one of those thing you just knew without a question. James would know when he had a crush on someone. But he didn’t know what kind of girl he would like.

James had never felt any sort of attraction towards a girl for...anything. There simply was no attraction.

True girls were pretty but nothing like that right? And James was pretty sure he didn't like anyone who was older than him in that way. Plus, what else was there if not girls? And what could he like in a girl?

"... Are you an asexual?"

Maybe Tyler wasn't so far off the mark. Maybe James didn't like anyone because he couldn't like anyone. He sighed. If he didn't then it would be hard to explain to his parents. As far as he knew they had never actually known anyone like that. James got up. Brooding would do nothing. So he walked into the living room where his mom was sitting on the couch reading. "I'm sorry if I ruined your day." He said. "Oh no James, I'm just worried about you. You don't normally shout like that." His mother said putting the book down on the coffee table.

"But just because I had a bad day doesn't mean you have to." Jane smiled, got up, and hugged him. "I don't think you could ever give me a bad day." She said. "Do you want to talk about it?" she asked. James was silent.

"I don't think Rose is going to be coming over in awhile"

Over the next month Rose flat out avoided James. She had dropped the cold shoulder after about a week and was now mostly hanging out with her brother or her classmates. She gave him an occasional "Hi." or a "Hey can I borrow that glue?" but nothing more. Simply put, she seemed to accept the fact that James didn't have those kinds of feelings for her and stopped trying. They had gained an understanding without words and although James was glad that she didn't hate him, he was still alone. He tried to find new friends but he didn't seem to fit anywhere. Tyler took advantage of that.

It was around the time of his thirteenth birthday that he decided to chase James around the room with a pair of scissors. "Cut it out I never did anything to you!" James shouted. Where was the teacher? Everyone had moved to one side of the classroom and no one interfered. He and Tyler were currently trying to move around a desk.

"You can't run now can you?" Tyler mocked. "Leave me alone!" James stepped to the right and Tyler blocked his path. Then James tried to push past him when Tyler tried to get to his hair. "...Oops." James put his hand to his cheek. It was bleeding.

The classroom was dead silent. Tyler had never managed to make him bleed before and hadn't been trying. "You moron!" James pushed him back. Fine you want me to cut my hair so bad!?" James grabbed the scissors before Tyler could react, cut his ponytail shorter than the band that tied it, and threw it at him. "Take it!" With that James stomped out of the room.

A teacher was running to the classroom with Steven right behind her. "What happened!?" She gasped when she saw him. "Like you ever cared!" James shouted at her. He ignored her when she called after him. It didn't take James long to get the bleeding to stop.

It was only a small cut, only about an inch under his left eye, but the more he bled the stronger the cravings for blood got. Bleeding was not an option for any vampiric being. Spit worked well to seal the cut (a trick he had learned from Melexa) and it would be gone in about two days. James sighed when he saw himself in the mirror. His mom was going to kill him.

The front was long and the back was short. It made him look like a girl. He'd never hear the end of it from Tyler now. Rage boiled inside him and James got so angry that he punched the mirror sending shards everywhere without realizing it. He wanted to do that to Tyler but he knew it would crush his skull, it would kill him, and that was what James was scared of the most.

As he sunk to his knees he heard the bathroom door close. Someone had been watching him.

6 - Tyler

Steven felt horrible because he could understand James's frustration. When your angry, really angry, control of your strength can escape you. People like Steven and James could end up hurting someone more than they meant to. The only solution was to avoid fighting all together, but sometimes it found you anyway. Steven wanted to do something, anything, but he wasn't aloud, he couldn't be a friend to James.

He had to be cold and emotionless. He couldn't help his friend even though it tore him up inside. Steven looked away from the bathroom door; the teacher he had gotten was now dragging Tyler down the hallway by his arm.

"I don't care what your opinions are! You had absolutely no right to harass another student like that! What would have happened if you had tripped and stabbed him in the eye?" She shouted. Tyler didn't say anything. " And I don't care if you were just horsing around! Do anything like that again and you could be expelled or possibly sent into Juvenal hall! Do you want to leave your mother alone with that man? I am fully aware of you living situation."

Tyler looked like he could cry, the teacher continued to drag him down the hall without stopping. Living situation? That perked Stevens curiosity. The door to the bathroom opened. James stopped, looked Steven straight in the eye, and walked down the hall as if trying to ignore him.

His right hand was bleeding from the broken glass.

* * *

" I can't believe this." Jane said in the principles office, shaking her head. " I know it's hard to believe that one of our students- Students! Were the hell were your teachers?" Jane shouted interrupting the man facing them. James head snapped up. He had never heard her curs before. " Wa- I swear every time something bad happened to my son at this school it was because a teacher wasn't watching their students!" She screeched interrupting him again.

" Well...either way Tyler will be severally punished and made an example out of. I am also positive that if anything like this were to happen again all James would have to do is stand up for himself and the offender will leave him alone." The principle said. " HE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO STAND UP FOR HIMSELF!" Jane exploded. " A school is a safe place to learn! NOT a boxing wring. If you can't provide that then I'm pulling my children out of your program, and don't think that I'm not going to go to your superintendent about this!" She yelled.

" But ma'am I'm sure if- James doesn't use his fists to fight back because he has to set an example for his sister, and he may not be quick with words yet but at least he's not hiding like a coward! So don't you dare tell him to fight back when he's already doing his best!" Once that was said Jane yanked her son to his feet. " Good day to you sir!" And with that she dragged James out of the principles office and slammed the door.

" Holy crap" James thought as his mother drove him home. He had never seen her so angry in his entire life. The car ride was silent, and as Jane parked he car, she took a breath to steady herself. " Why don't we fix your hair?"

* * *

Steven walked down the dirt road of the local trailer park. He had heard that Tyler lived hear. All of the

trailers were soft colors. The owners lawns were well kept, the cars looked like they had been washed, and everything was neatly placed. It seemed out of place for Tyler to be living here.

Steven froze at a shoe crashed through the inside of a window and flew a few inches by his face. "Now look what you've done you little shoot!" A man yelled. Steven looked at the trailer where the shoe had come from. The building was green and not as well kept as the others, but it didn't look different from them either. The man inside the trailer was still yelling.

"You disagree with me so much? Then get out!" Steven watched as Tyler kicked open the door. He had an urn in his hands. "Tyler?" Steven asked. The boy froze. "This is none of your business!" He shouted at Steven.

Tyler ran into the woods and Steven followed from a safe distance. What exactly was going on? Eventually Tyler stopped in a clearing when he thought he had lost Steven. Tyler knew these woods well. No one would be able to find him once he hit the trees, at least no one who was normal.

As soon as he was sure that Tyler had stopped Steven kicked it into high gear, soundlessly ran around the area where Tyler was and walked quietly forward when he knew he would be directly in front of the boy. Tyler hadn't seen him approach. He was looking down at the urn with a sad expression on his face. Tyler's head snapped up when he heard a twig break.

"The hell? How...?" Tyler said glancing behind him. "I told you it's none of your business!" Tyler was right, this was none of his business, but all the same, Steven stayed where he was. "Why would you care!?" Tyler nearly shouted. "Because... you already get enough crap from me, you don't need it from your father. It's not right." Steven replied. Tyler's expression changed from anger, to sadness, and back to anger again.

It only lasted a second but it was still there. "Shut up! You don't know anything about him!" "I know enough." Steven said. Tyler stood there speechless. He didn't know what to say next.

"What's in the urn?" Steven asked. "What do you think?! Why would you care!?" Tyler yelled. Tyler looked back at the urn. After watching Tyler's face Steven couldn't help but find something familiar about his eyes. Then it clicked. Memories of one of the darkest times in his life came rushing back to him. "What!?! What's that look for?" "... That's your mother, isn't it?" Steven's face was an expression of pain and understanding. "What would you know!?" "My mom is dead." Steven said.

There was a pause as Tyler stared at the urn. "They don't know do they?" Steven said. "...No."

Another pause. "No one even bothered to tell me until my dad picked her up from the morgue where she was cremated this morning." Tyler said.

Ouch. "What did she have?" Steven asked. "...breast cancer...She couldn't handle the Chemo and died in the hospital." Tears pricked at Tyler's eyes. He didn't know why he was telling Steven this; but at least he was someone who would understand. "He never told me what was happening! Because of him... She died alone!" Tyler was practically crying.

Steven swallowed, his throat was starting to ache. "Maybe...he didn't want you to watch." Steven said. "Shows what you know! My dad hated her! They were getting a divorce!" Tyler's shoulders shook and he ran. Steven stood there for a moment before falling to his knees. He honestly wanted to scream.

7 - meeting the Thorn

Since that day nothing had changed. Tyler was still Tyler, he and his friends' still bullied people, and James was still their main target. Tyler just avoided annoying Steven now. James wanted to know but he kept his mouth shut, he figured that it was probably personal. On the day before his birthday Melexa woke him in the early morning.

"It's about time that you met the Thorn." Melexa said still sitting in the window. "But it's Sunday. My family has church today." James said. "I see, another time then?" Melexa said slipping his legs out the window. James paused. It wouldn't be that bad right?

Lately James didn't feel like he belonged at church anymore. "I want to meet them." He said. "Alright, what time?" "Any." James replied. "Okay then" Melexa grinned.

"What?" his father said a little surprised at breakfast that morning. "They invited me at the last minute." James explained. "Well...- Oh let him go. Jane said interrupting her husbands thoughts. Daren gave his wife a look. "I think it's good that James has found some friends at his school who he wants to hang out with. You only live once and it's not like James is going to start skipping church." She said. Daren sighed. "Alright but be back before dark." He said. "Thank you Dad." James said. He left the table to write a note for July. Once written, he handed it to her.

"James wont be at church today. He will be with Mel. James will be back by dark."

July read it over, smiled at her brother, and then phrased "I understand." She had met Melexa before and had grown fond of him. Since she didn't speak alot, keeping this a secret would be simple. That was why she was taught the name Mel instead of Melexa. Mel was common and could be short for a lot of people. So July could say it and it could be mentioned without suspicion.

With everything set, James left. He had told his parents he would be going to a movie with a few of his classmate, but in reality he would meet Melexa in an ally down town. They had already picked the place to meet so James knew were he was going. The walk down was quiet. It was sunny, the wind carried the smell of fall with it, and people were bustling around town. James took a right into the ally they had agreed on.

Melexa was already waiting with a pry bar in hand. He smiled and opened the sewer hatch. "The sewers?" James asked confused. "It's under ground." Melexa said. James hesitantly climbed down the latter into the dark cavern.

Melexa followed and closed the entrance. Besides the water (which they avoided at all costs) it was cleaner then James had expected although it still smelt horrible. After walking straight for what seemed like twenty minutes they jumped over one of the canals. Melexa walked over to a hole in the brick wall and climbed into it. James followed.

It was about the size of a small hallway but as they continued forward it widened. The two walked until they came to a steal door. Melexa turned the lever three times right and once left, and the shoved the door open. "Welcome to the Thorns compound." He said stepping inside. As James entered, the door closed behind him.

The entry way was wide and made of stone, excluding the doors the Melexa lead him to which where mettle. There were four. Melexa lead him through the middle door to the left and then down a series of hallways.

"This compound has been here since world war two. Our leader discovered this space after a battle against another coven. Our first hideout was destroyed so we've been hear ever since." Melexa explained.

“Wow... it's huge.” James said. “Yep, the entire place is hand built and the other three doors you just saw lead to a labyrinth designed to confuse enemies.” He led James to a large room, which was crowded with vampires and half lings alike; most with pale white skin and red eyes. Most were adult, some were teenagers, and there were even a few children running around and dodging through the stone, round, tables. Most of the adults had red eyes but the few Halfling were pink as far as James could see.

Most of the younger teenagers were half lings while the older teenagers were full blooded. Only one of the children James saw was full blooded. She looked to be at least five years old and she had black hair that was tied back. Her skin was deathly pale and her eyes were a piercing red. She ran by the two as she chased after a younger Halfling.

“That,” Melexa said. “Is Flora; the only pure blooded child of her birth year. She's the daughter of our leader.” “Melexa!” someone shrieked out. A young woman with blue hair beckoned them over to the stone table she was sitting at. Next to her was a girl about the same age as James with black hair, pale skin, pink eyes, and a matching shirt.

She looked nervous. “It's about time you showed up!” She said. “That's Moon shadow,” Melexa explained. “And I take it you're James? I've heard a lot. This is Mena.” Moon shadow said, taking her seat and gesturing to the girl beside her. Mena glanced up. She seemed nervous. “I'm Leks, the lettuce head next to me is Navy.” A purple haired young man to Moon shadow's left said.

Navy and James's eyes locked. “He goes to my church!” James said surprised. “Really now. That's interesting.” Melexa said grinning at his friend as if he had just discovered a secret. Everyone looked at Navy, Leks almost looked shocked.

“With the type of lifestyle I live I need to be reminded about moral values.” Navy explained.

The others shrugged. Melexa sat next to Navy while James sat next to Mena. Navy glanced up at James. For some reason James thought Navy's expression said. “Huh.” Like he had discovered something that he hadn't expected. Something James probably didn't know about himself. Then there was a short silence. “... Sooo...how's life been?” Melexa asked. “Yeas” and “umms” followed by a “Whatever” were sounded around the table. “Where are the other three?” He asked.

“Big mission: Intel'. They refused to bring me.” Moon shadow sighed. “Odd. Then I guess we should get on with the rest of the explanations.” Melexa said. “You explained to her werewolves right?” “Crap, I knew I forgot something.” Moon shadow said. Mena looked confused.

Leks rolled his eyes at his friend. “I'm sure you both know about the blood wars right?” Navy asked. Both halflings nodded. The werewolves had been mentioned but the most James could get was a vague explanation since things had been very busy for the both of them. “Then both of you know of their existence. The myth you knew growing up is purely that.” Navy said.

With that Navy began his explanation. “Werewolves come from an ancient Indian tribe. They were mostly a clan that could take the form of large wolves and the bloodline has simply spread. The full moon myth had been a superstition as humans began to notice that they hunted and appeared more on those days. It was easier for them to hunt at night during the full moon because it reflects more light. Different packs would also gather together on those days to transform to either aid each other in battle or to celebrate holidays under the full moon.” Navy explained.

“And the silver myth?” Mena asked. This was the first time they had heard her speak. “That's a lie made so that only the people who could afford to hunt them would dare to. It was a tactic used to narrow their enemies.” Moon shadow said. “Like the way vampire clans lied about crosses and holy water; to make it easier to hunt in the dark ages.” Leks said.

“What about wooden stakes?” Flora asked. She and her friend had decided to listen. “Knives are sharper. They were annoying and harder to break.” Leks explained. “The only thing more annoying than fighting a human trying to hide behind a stupid cross is fighting one who can wield a sword.” Leks said.

Moon shadow sighed and shook her head. "Flora, Why don't you show these two around the compound?" Melexa said.

Before he knew it James was being dragged out of the room by a five year old.

* * *

The leader of the pack sighed. This was not good news; the Thorn had captured a wolf of another pack. This wolf was from an enemies pack, but despite that a group of the pack had the nerve to ask them for help. The entire pack had been summoned into the leaders cabin. It was a big cabin on the very edge of town, partially in the forest.

"This isn't good, they've got to be really desperate to ask us." Rent said, breaking the silence. "That is what I fear." The leader replied. "If they are desperate enough to stoop to this level then this member must be important to them. The mountains have never come down here without purpose before, which must mean that the Thorn must have been on some sort of reconnaissance or that this is a clever ruse meant to thin our forces." The old man explained. "The question is; what could the Thorn want with the mountains and if this is a trick what are they planning?" One of the adults wandered aloud.

"I do not know but if they are telling the truth they must be hiding something the Thorn want. Keep your scenes sharp, for we must help them, if we do not the mountains will have farther cause to cause danger here." The old Indian said. With that he sent a message to the mountain group that had asked for their help.

* * *

Steven ran at full sprint in wolf form. His coat was thick and a nice shade of brown like his hair. He and his cousins had been put on patrol simply because they were the youngest, yet they could still be useful. "This sucks. They always leave us out whenever it's important." Rent echoed in their minds. This was a common form of telepathy amongst the wolves.

"Yeah but think about it. A 12 year old were wolf, his younger sister and his older cousin up against an entire compound of vampires. What do you think the odds would be? Even with the packs help we'd be in over our heads. I don't like it either but we're just a bunch of kids. We'd only get in the way." Steven replied. He hated admitting it but he knew; if they had gone with the others there was a strong chance that one of them would be killed.

* * *

Flora however was busy dragging James and Mena all over the compound. "This is the kitchen." She said stopping suddenly and running again. James caught the scent of blood from a vampire who was drinking blood from a wine glass. "And this is the calming room." She said stopping outside of a closed door that smelled strongly of bleach. "And down the hallway on the left are the dorms." She took off again. Both Mena and James were panting by the time Flora stopped next.

She was a bundle of energy. "And this floor leads two the Rose sevens sector. It's small but they prefer their own space. With a group like that it's no wonder. I'm going to show you something special now, but don't tell anyone." She said. Flora took off again, dragging the two half lings with her. They went down three different hallways (only one that was familiar) and stopper after passing a few doors, going down a set of stairs, and passing three more doors.

These doors looked much more secure then the others. They were made with a heavy looking mettles and each on had a specific lock. "This is the prison hall. That hall over there leads to the main room were I met you guys. It's easier to transport prisoners that way. Since they got the locks, no ones

escaped.” Flora said. “ Behind each door is either empty space or a prisoner. The one behind this door” She said walking to the third door and knocking on it with her knuckles. “ Is a werewolf.” She continued.

James peaked inside the little rectangular window on the door. In the left hand corner of the room was a nude man with scratches and dark hair. His eyes were yellow. “ I thought you should know what they look like. His pack captured one of our vampires, so we’re holding him for ransom.” Flora explained. Mena move beside James to peak inside.

The mans eyes snapped up from the floor and before they could react they were face to face with a huge, snarling, growling, angry, yellow eyed, black wolf. Mena and James jumped and then backed up to the wall. “ don’t worry. He cant get out.” Flora said as the door rattled and shook. After ten full minutes of this an ear shattering, agonized, howl echoed down the hallway. James had never heard so much pain in a single sound before.

Other prisoners started yelling, one started to cry. “ Let’s go back upstairs.” Flora said, unfazed by the noise. James couldn’t believe it. Upon getting back to the main room James and Mena spent their time meeting other halflings and vampires around their age group, although Mena was still white. James couldn’t get his mind off of the prisoner, he almost felt sorry for him.

Just as it was time to leav there was a loud banging just outside of the doorway of the main room. The sound of footsteps echoed in the room as a group of scantily clad men and women entered the room; they all had yellow eyes. Some were ragged and gaunt looking, others seemed strong and fit. Most were tan and many had Native American features, save a few. However what surprised James the most was that among the crowd he saw Rock and Stevens father.

The main room immediately echoed with grows and an occasional hiss. “ We have come to take back what’s ours! Were is he?” Said a skinny black haired man said stepping forward. James stepped behind Mena; he didn’t know why Stevens father was here but he could easily imagine the disappointment and anger on his face if he thought that James had joined a vampire clan. The crowd suddenly broke in two, crating a straight path. A long silver haired vampire calmly walked forward. He looked to be in his forties or fifties.

“ And what would make you possibly think that we would yield to a pack of dogs.” He said with an air of seriousness. He stopped face to face with the other man. “Especially when you have done much worse to one of our own.” “ Your man is worthless.” “ So is yours.”

The two stared angrily into each other’s eyes. “ I propose a trade. Thursday at eleven pm.” The skinny man said. “ That wont be necessary.” A female voice said. A red haired, tan, vampireress pushed through the crowd blocking the door; followed by two identical looking men, one with black hair, and one with white. He stepped into his masters’ view and he was holding something.

Gasps, hisses, and shrieks of horror rang out in the crowd. In the white hairds arms was an extremely gaunt white haired vampire curled up into a ball. Hit face was twisted in agony; his fangs had been ripped out. He only wore a small cloth around hit wais and he was so pale and skinny that James could see the complete outline of his skeleton and all of his organs and. He could also make out the vampires purple veins.

Tears stung at the corners of his eyes. He no longer felt sorry for the wolf that had been locked up. He had seen starvation in picture at school but never anything close this. If the figure shallow breathing weren’t so loud he would have looked as if he were dead. James could see Leks shaking with an intense rage out of the corner of his eye.

He heard the silver haired vampire drop to his knees. “ Do to the lack of security we were able to brake him out on our reconnaissance.” The red hade said. “ The mountain pack has been starving and torturing him this entire time.” The white haired man holding the figure said. Some of the group blocking the door gasped and backed away from the leader, including Rock and his supposed brother. “You

failed to mention this!" One of them said, voice dripping in hatred.

They automatically separated themselves from the group. Angry faces surrounded the supposed leader of the mountain pack. "Release the prisoner." The silver haired vampire said. Only a moment later the man being held prisoner was being dragged into the room. He was thrown at his leader's feet.

Before said leader could react though, the silver haired vampire spoke. "Let this be a warning." He said. "If any of your pack causes harm to one of our own without proper cause, we will slaughter you and leave nothing behind to bury." With that he jerked his head towards Leks. Leks let out a roar that sent chills down James's spine. He sprang and where Leks should have landed was an enormous bat-like monster with purple hair and pale skin.

He attacked the pack" Suddenly large wolves appeared; black, brown, orange, black, and any other natural hair color. James grabbed Mena and ducked under one of the stone tables. There were roars and screams and growl as the wolves were chased out of the hideout. James covered his throbbing ears. Once silence filled the room again he and Mena got out from underneath the table.

Where the gaunt vampire had lain in the other white hair's arms was a bright light, the smell of rotting flesh and steam. The rest of the room (still crowded with vampires) was trashed. Melexa climbed out from under a crushed table completely unharmed. "I should get you two home. You've seen enough for today."

8 - An attack

Chapter eight

An attack

“ I can come back right?” Mena asked. “ Of course you can.” Moon shadow replied. “ This place is open to the both of you, but right now it’s not safe. You need to get back to the surface...James!” “ Huh?” James head snapped up. He had been staring at the floor, lost in his own thoughts. If Stevens father was a werewolf, wouldn’t that mean Steven was as well? And what about His cousins? “Time to go. Moon shadow, take the back.” Melexa said taking James hand. Mena took James’s free hand and moon shadow took hers. They left the compound, linked by a chain, this was known as safety formation. Melexa stopped just inside the brick wall, Glanced in both directions and took of the way they came, jumping the canal and moving fast. The only sound they could hear was the wolves and Leks fighting and their own footsteps. They were about to jump another canal when suddenly a huge, black, wolf, was thrown. Just barely missing Melexa’s face followed by a loud growl and a thundering boom as it hit the wall.

The purple haired, bat creature appeared and lunged for the wolf. Several more dark wolves jumped on top of him. “ Back way! Now!” Melexa said letting go of James and taking the red, needle-like feather out of his hat. Moon shadow turned and ran in the opposite direction, just as one of the wolves jumped towards Melexa. James rounded the corner just as Melexa sliced the wolf in half, using his weapon like a whip.

Melexa ruthlessly sliced watch wolf open as they attacked him. His feather poisoned most but the rest were killed. Moon shadow kept pulling forward, never slowing her pace. Just as she was about to turn another corner two wolves attacked. One leaping on top of her, knocking her into the wall, the other joining the attack.

She kicked it off and blocked the second bite with her arm. “ GO!” She shouted and James pulled Mena around the corner at a full sprint. Mena was as fast as James and her pink eyes reflected what little light in the sewer. Just as they were about to jump another canal, Mena froze. A gray, big, wolf was blocking their path and it looked enraged.

Both her and James stood paralyzed in terror. Then Mena’s face turned serious. In one fluid motion she grabbed the scruff of James’s shirt and threw him to the left side of the canal. “ Go!” She shouted, turning and sprinting in the other direction. The wolf went after her.

James called after her and he wanted to follow her but she and the wolf had disappeared into the shadows. James was alone. How could he survive this? He didn’t know how to fight and it was terrifying. He could only take a deep breath and run like Mena had told him.

He jumped the canal and kept running. He tried to take a left but could see the shadows of a wolf and a vampire fighting and heard the sound of a bone breaking and a scream. He sprinted forward. This part of the sewer had no hatches to escape through. It looked like there was no way out.

The smell of blood was thick and the sounds of battle were the only thing that kept him from getting distracted. A growl echoed agents the wall and James froze. A Black wolf appeared behind him with blood dripping from its mouth. James jumped the canal and sprinted for his life. The wolf chased him around a corner with a howl.

He was calling others to the hunt. James was running as fast as he could possibly go with the wolf at his heels. James screamed for help as loud as his voice would allow. He took a left only to find a long dead

end. As he was running he tripped, and fell to the ground.

He shielded his face and braced himself for the wolves' sharp teeth. But, just as it jumped to attack, a brown/tan wolf collided into it, slamming it into the wall. It bit the black wolf's nose, jumped back and planted its feet in front of James, letting loose a growl that promised death. Was this wolf trying to protect him? It looked familiar some how.

The black wolf looked even more enraged then before and growled in protest. It was about to attack when Melexa appeared from the shadow; covered in blood, and split the wolf in half with a red whip, spraying blood every were. The wolf let out a loud cry of agony and split apart. Both half's fell to the floor with a sick thud. " Thanks!" Melexa said as he dashed to James who was shaking in panic.

" Lets go!" Melexa said, pulling one of James's arms around his neck and hoisting him up. Melexa sprinted to the nearest exit he knew, leaving the brown wolf behind. At the first hatch he saw Melexa pulled James up through it. He closed it once they were on the surface. " Don't worried they wont come after you. Are you alright?" He asked.

When Melexa spoke James snapped out of it. " Who was that? Were did you come from? Why did it protect me? Were did you get that? " James blurted out all at once. " I don't know." Melexa sighed. " The wolf that protected you must have wanted you alive. Probably to bring you into their protection. As for the other; I'm not sure either."

James gasped. " Mena!" he moved to get up but Melexa stopped him. " She found Moon shadow, they'll be fine." James settled. " What do we do now?" he asked. " You go home. Don't let your family see you until you've had a shower." Melexa said. " It's four so it's a little early. You should hangout some were until the sun starts to go down."

"O-ok." James replied. " ... I have to go back. Will you be alright?" " Y-yeah I will be." James replied.

Melexa disappeared beneath the hatch. This was not how he planed the visit.

Melexa honestly hoped that James wasn't traumatized.

9 - Happy fourteenth

After James switched his cloths at home he spent the rest of the day walking around town. Luckily no one in the house had herd him sneaking through and out the window again. Now he wasn't sure what to do. There weren't many interesting places to hangout in town and James was still feeling pretty jumpy. He was tempted to go back to the Thorn, just to make sure things were okay but he knew he'd be attacked again if he attempted it and James wasn't a fighter.

Images of big wolves being split in half by Melexa and the gaunt looking vampire kept flashing in his mind. Who could starve a person like that? He tried to keep his mind clear and calm but it was no use. His scenes were still keenly aware and he practically jumped whenever a shadow passed. As James walked down an ally of an apartment complex a voice made him freeze.

"Ello James!" Tyler's redheaded friend said. Keith had just moved into town after being kicked out of five different private schools. "Man Keith you really gotta work on your American accent." Tyler said. "Me an' my mates- Friends." Tyler interrupted. "Friends heard your birthday was coming up an' we thought: 'ey might as well get on with the shame'n eh?" Keith said.

"In other words; we're dishing out your birthday present early. We didn't wrap it." Tyler slugged him. James dodged. "Whoa! Did you see how high he just jumped!" Keith gasped. James had jumped to the fire escape to the right and hauled himself over the railing so fast he didn't fully realize it. When Tyler growled James jumped off of the fire escape, into the street, and booked it, earning another gasp from Keith.

Tyler and Keith sprinted after him. James knew that Tyler was no match for him in speed but what really surprised him was that Keith was faster then his friend. James jumped and weaved all through town. Over garbage cans, under parked cars, around building, and over fences; and Keith didn't slow down once. James almost had to kick it into high gear, but as soon as he saw the church he ran inside.

The two boys were so into the "race" that they followed without a second thought. Keith was about to punch James and outstretched had caught his from nowhere. "I appose fighting in the church. Pleas leave immediately." The pastor said, he did not look happy. Keith had frozen in shock. "Yes sir" Tyler said breathlessly, giving James a death glare. The pastor knew Tyler's father.

He also knew that Tyler father wasn't usually abusive, just full of rage. Tyler grabbed his friend and dragged him out of the church. He really didn't want his father to get a call from the church. "Honestly James, I have no idea how you manage to get into these situation." The pastor said with a sigh. "Nether do I." James said glumly.

"You should go home, your parents might be looking for you."

* * *

"Why do you think no ones come back yet?" "I don't know" Steven said to his younger cousin. They had all just switched shifts; the older teenagers were patrolling now. Steven and hi cousins, plus another teenage boy, were sitting in a circle with the leader of their pack. The old Indian took a smoke of his pipe in thought.

"We will have to wait for news from the others," He said. It had gotten late and the sun had gone down. "Just as Rent sighed, Stevens father knocked open the door, followed by the rest of there pack. "They tricked us!" He said, walking in and grabbing a blanket from the pile by the entryway to cover himself with. He was covered in blood; which as far as Steven could tell, was not his own.

Once the pack settled they explained everything.

Everyone was Shocked to find out the mountain clan had experimented and tortured someone. They weren't normally that rash and heartless. Only few like Rent were skeptical. " I should have known." The pack leader sighed. He looked very grim.

" Luckily none of our pack was killed in the cross fire." One of the adults said.

" There were casualties in the mountain pack thought." There was a short pause. " ...We shall offer our apologies and explain the situation to the thorn." A few grumbled but were silenced by an intense death glare.

Things definitely weren't going well.

* * *

James woke up early that morning. He had been having nightmares all night. Most about being torn apart by wolves. He was happy that there was no school this Monday. Dealing with Tyler was the last thing he wanted.

Breakfast was nice. July had drawn him a picture of there family, his mother made sure that breakfast was extra sweet, and his father got him a cell phone. His grandparents had also called him to wish him a nice day. James was setting his new ring tone when someone knocked on the door. His mother opened it to find two of the girls from his class.

James recognized them instantly. They were the two girls who sat with him and sulked on Valentines Day at recess, and had been doing so until the entered middle school. Suzan had gotten taller but was still wearing her same ponytail hairstyle just as Carrie still kept her curly hair short. " How can I help you?" Jane asked a little confused. " We're hear to kidnap your son!" Carrie explained.

" Wah?" Daren had looked up from his paper just in time to see James get forcefully dragged over the couch and out of the house by two 14-year-old girls.

" We'll have him back by dark!" Suzan shouted as she helped her friend drag a frightened James down the pouch stairs. The door closed. Jane looked surprised, Daren seemed confused, and July looked like she was about to panic and throw a fit.

How could James have forgotten? Since this was supposed to be their last year in jr. high the two girls had decided that they would throw a party for every single kid in their class including the un-popular kids. Whether they wanted one or not. The parties were mostly held at an old abandoned house that still had running water. " The guest of honor has arrived!" Suzan shouted as she kicked open the door.

Everyone glanced up and then went back to their conversations. Tyler and his friends booed, earning a death glare from Suzan. They instantly went quiet. Anyone who knew Suzan knew that her death glares meant, "knock it off! " or that she was about to tackle someone. It was easy to see that most of the kids were either hear out of respect or wanted an excuse to party.

James didn't have any friends in his class. Old party lights were hung up everywhere and a boom box was blasting pop and techno music. They were hooked up to a small generator Tyler had found in the junkyard. There was a lot of food and most of the gets looked board. James was wished a happy birthday by most of his classmates and a few kids he didn't know.

No one brought gifts, which he was thankful for. After greeting a couple of people he tried to sneak out but Suzan was keeping a good eye on him. Not good. James knew that if July didn't know were he was she'd throw a huge fit for hours and eventually try to find him. Tyler and Keith eventually found him and proceeded to chase him around the room.

Steven was there but he did his best to avoid James. At around lunch time someone had ordered pizza and everyone was dragged into a game of truth or dare. James had been truth'ed the obvious question " are you gay?" by one of Tyler's friends. James stuttered out a "no' and watched as Suzan, Carrie, and multiple other girls beat him up. Truthfully he hadn't figured out the answer himself and was praying

to be straight.

He had the strange feeling that he did like someone but he didn't know who it was. "Alright!" Suzan said as she stomped on the poor kids back. "Who ready for spin the bottle!?!?" That was it. James silently crept upstairs. There was no way he was going to play a game like that. Suzan had seen him but let him be.

* * *

Rose was disappointed to see that her cousin wasn't home. The pack was having a meeting at his house to discuss what they should do next. Rose suspected were he was but refused to tell anyone. After the short pack meeting was over the only few that were left were Rose, rent, Rock, and Stevens father.

"When the heck is he gonna get back?" Rent complained.

"It'll be awhile. Sit tight." Rose said, staring into the horizon. They had both been on the porch for an hour now. "Sit tight? Rose! He could have been eaten alive by bloodsuckers by now, why wont you tell me were he is? You said it wasn't bad so what's the problem?" Rent asked. "Because you wont understand." Rose said grimly. "No one will."

Rent sighed. "I'm your brother. You shouldn't at least let me try." He said. Rose was silent. Then her scenes perked up. She got up from the porch steps.

They were both surprised to see July walking down the road. She looked exhausted but didn't seem to care. "That's James's sister!" rose told her brother. She walked over to her. July looked up at her and held up a picture of James.

"Hear?" She asked. "No" Rose told her. "James is not hear." She phrased. July turned around looking sad and started to head back down the road. "Is something wrong with her?" Rent whispered.

"She has autism. She has a hard time talking and doesn't like it when she doesn't know were someone is. If someone leaves without telling her like her brother she panics." Rose said. "Go tell our uncle I'm going to go help her find her brother." "That's not a good idea. Her parents are probably looking for her." Rent protested. "And if I try to keep her hear she'll panic again." Rose said. She ran up to her and stopped in front of her.

"I know were James is. Lets go find James." She phrased holding, out her hand. July hesitated and then took it. The two girl headed down the road. As soon as Rent told his uncle he caught up with them. Rent knew that Rose still had a soft spot for James, and to him; Halfling weren't to be trusted.

* * *

Steven was about to leave when he heard someone shout "Steve!" and was glomped by July. By this point, the game of the hour was seven minutes in heaven and Steven had no intention of getting involved. "Hear?" July asked holding up the picture." James is here. James is hiding upstairs." Steven said.

"She came to your house looking for James." Rose said.

"Where's Suzan? I need to yell at her." "She's by the radio." Steven said as a happy July dragged him out of the room and up the stairs. Rent did not look happy. "He didn't show up, for a stupid party!?!?" Rent looked like he could explode. "Who was that kid?" Suzan asked as she walked up to them.

"And why are you hear for James's birthday?" Rent looked like he was about to kill something. Rose grabbed her brothers' shoulder and decided to explain.

* * *

James was sitting in an empty room, waiting for the sun to go down. He had though about jumping out a

window but said window was too stuck to open without breaking and James was sure that someone would see him. It was almost time to go home and he knew that he'd be sprinting. James shot up as he heard two sets of footsteps and a series of door opening. He almost expected a wolf to attack him but instead July had opened the door.

She took one look at him, went from happy to angry in two second flat, and ran at him; screaming and pounding on his chest. "You need help?" Steven asked over the screaming. "No- ouch- she's just mad." James replied. Steven shut the door. It would only make things worse if someone had heard her tantrum and decided to see what was going on.

After about a minute she dissolved into tears. Steven felt like he should leave but he was already hear and he didn't know how she would react to the change of that. So he stayed were he was and politely averted his eyes. James was hugging her and rocking back and forth as she sobbed into his chest. "She's really upset this time." He thought.

Normally James did everything to avoid causing a fit. He normally felt horrible when something like this happened. "I'm sorry" he mumbled into her hair. After a few more moments she calmed down. "Thanks" James said.

"You should thank Rose" Steven said. "She found her at my house. I-I was here." Steven shifted. There was an awkward silence. The door suddenly burst open and whacked Steven forward and he collided with James in an unexpected kiss. Both yelped in surprised and Steven jumped back. Both of their faces were crimson and James was shocked. Steven looked terrified. Suzan, who had opened the door, stopped mid-sentence with Tyler and stared. There was a short pause. "See I told you he was gay." Tyler said.

Steven slugged him. Right between the eyes, knocking him unconscious, and then stomped down the hallway leaving behind a "socked beyond any sort of recognition" James, a confused July, a surprised Suzan and an unconscious Tyler.

Suzan looked at James, Gave him an understanding smile, grabbed Tyler by the shoulder, and proceeded to drag him down the hallway and the stairs. James was still shocked. The only thought in his head was "What the hell!?!".

July looked up at her stunned brother and giggled.

10 - Unexpected changes

“ Seriously Steve, what the hell!” Rent shouted as the three of them trekked through the woods. Steven had decided to cut through instead of taking the road. Rose had tried to get her brother to drop it but he was simply too stubborn. “Skipping out on a meeting... for a party!?!” Rent stepped in front of his cousin. “That’s not like you Steven.” He crossed his arms. “ I don’t want to talk about it!” Steven shoved his cousin aside and continued forward to the dirt road.

“Steve! Tell me what’s going on!”

“No.”

Steven walked up his porch steps and opened the door. “ Steve!” “ Go home Rent!” He slammed the door. Before his father could do anything he bolted for his bedroom.

He locked the door and sank to the floor, pulling his knees to his chest. How could this happen? Steven was supposed to stay away from James. But he didn’t. Not this time.

He missed him. He missed James. He wanted to see him again. Steven couldn’t explain it but he knew. Even though it was an accident and Steven knew he shouldn’t feel this way: when he had kissed James his heart felt multiple emotions at the same time, emotions that he couldn’t explain.

But technically since it was an accident it wasn’t a kiss at all. Not a real one. However, it was enough.”

Steve?” His father asked knocking on the door. Steven got up and stood in front of his bed.

The smaller beds he had had were replaced for a larger one that had been pushed into the middle of the room. Steven knew it was no use. His father had a key. He slipped his hands into his pockets as the door clicked and opened. “ Are you alright?” His father asked.

He didn’t answer. “ Steve?” “ I don’t know.” Was his reply. His father put a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“ What happened?” “ I don’t want to talk about it.” Steven said shaking his head. His father sighed. “ Alright.” And with that he left his son alone. Stevens’s thought ached.

* * *

James’s parents were relived when their children got home. Stevens’s cousins had told their uncle what had happened which led to said uncle calling Jane and Daren. July was exhausted and hid in the house closet immediately. It was her escape from the world. As for James he was questioned.

He told them his part of the story (leaving details out) before heading to his room. “ I’m glad out daughter is safe but...” Jane trailed off. “ He seemed spacey.” Daren said concerned. “Something happened.” Jane paused in thought. Daren already had his suspicions.

James wasn’t tiered out or drug spacey or even spacey...spacey. James was holy shoot spacey. The kind of spacey that can throw off your entire week. The kind of spacey Daren encountered when he Saw Jane for the first time. Daren sighed.

“ Do you know something honey?” Jane asked. “ N-no why do you ask? ” “ Well you have that look...” Jane trailed off again. “ What look?” There was a short pause.

“...Eh I’m just being paranoid. I’ll get started on dinner and then you can spit it out.” Jane said heading to the fridge. “ The suspicion or dinner?” Daren replied. Jane threw a dishcloth at him.

* * *

That night James didn't get a lot of sleep. He couldn't stop thinking about that moment when Steven had crashed into him. James wasn't entirely sure if this could be counted as a first kiss because it was an accident and he didn't know what he should do, what he should feel. He came from a Christian family and Steven was a boy, he shouldn't be this confused, he should be grossed out. But then...why wasn't he?

The only reason that he could come up with was that he just missed Steven. And that was true, but he knew it wasn't the right answer. James decided not to think about it anymore.

During the weekend Melexa told him to meet him in the junkyard. When James showed up Melexa was wearing a black shirt and matching jeans and had his long hair tied back into a low ponytail. He had two bo staffs. "Hear." He said tossing one to James. "You're teaching me how to fight? But why? I'm not really part of the Thorn." James asked.

"No one else is going to teach you." Melexa said. "In fact..." He took a swing at James who blocked reflexively. "I don't think anyone else can." Another hit in the stomach.

"You can defend against humans easily," A hit to the knees; James jumped. "But vampires" Another hit: another miss. "And werewolves" A hit, a block.

"Are entirely different." They stopped. "The wolves would be happy to take you in, but they're fast healers. They don't normally understand what it's like to be as powerful as a vampire..." Melexa knocked James off of his feet and onto his back. "And as vulnerable as a human. That's what it is to be half vampiric." Melexa said. "Get up."

James got up. It was going to be a long day.

Over the next week Melexa taught James how to fight hand to hand. James wasn't a fighter so it was challenging and he would often have to make an excuse for the bruises for people who asked. So far Melexa had learned that James was an instinctual fighter. He fought purely on the defensive and probably didn't know how to do the same moves on purpose if you asked him to. Melexa wanted James to learn how to fight offensively but James needed a drive to learn to first. So Melexa simply continued. As for Steven he tried to avoid James as much as possible now. Which didn't bother James that much. In fact whenever he saw Steven he felt like bolting in the opposite direction of finding a hole to hide in somewhere. Both of which he couldn't seem to do. Eventually Melexa started to teach James about special abilities.

The most common ability a Vampire had was to walk up walls which was were the myth came from but James had no luck at that. As James entered high school he was pushed around more then ever. But what really surprised him was when Tyler stepped in. James was sprinting down the hallway one day as a senior chased him. He had no idea what he did to annoy him but he wasn't about to find out. James tripped and was about to be punched in the face when a hand caught the fist. Tyler shoved the senior back by his fist and slammed his own into the boys face. "Back off! James is my target, Not yours!" The two were throwing punches left and right until a teacher showed up and dragged all three of them to the principals office.

After the principle finished screaming at them they left. "T-Tyler?" James called. Tyler stopped mid-step. "Why did you?" "Don't get used to it. I owed someone a favor, now go to class before I change my mind!" With that Tyler stomped down the hallway.

James was speechless. Eventually through all of that James's sixteenth birthday came around and with it more confusion.

11 - The dreams

James had heard of erotic dreams before in health class and in other places, he just didn't expect it to be so... strange? He couldn't tell if the other person was female or male because he was blind in the dreams and the other person made no sounds. The only thing he had to go on was what he felt and his brain was normally fogged to think. The only thing he could remember was the person's smell. It was so familiar; James knew that he knew this person from somewhere but he couldn't remember where. And it was driving him crazy. Also he discovered one night to his own horror that he was loud, very loud. While he was in the middle of one of these dreams July had shaken him awake looking frightened. She had heard him from her room because both of their doors had been left open. Needless to say he switched to ice cold showers before bed and wore duck-tape over his mouth.

His parents never knew of any of this and he was thanking God for it. It was around that time that Melexa decided to schedule visits before James could fall asleep. James didn't know exactly why and personally he already had an idea and didn't want to know the details. "James" Melexa said before training one day. He had grabbed him by the shoulders and said, "You need a therapist."

"Huh?" James replied confused. The serious look Melexa gave him was the only explanation he got for this odd behavior. Melexa had looked dead serious but in reality he was doing everything he could to keep a straight face. A mischievous smirk would have freaked the poor kid out and just outright laughing wouldn't have made any sense although it was kind of funny. However all of this only led to a very rude awakening. One James wanted to forget.

The stranger's scent had completely filled the room like a calming mist. As usual James couldn't see a thing. Said stranger had been teasing him and had stopped to caress his face. "Well this is interesting" James bolted upright with a yelp. Moon shadow was resting her head in her hands with her elbows on his bed, grinning.

"Mmmf fmmmm!?! Mmmf mmmf mfm fmm!?! Mmmfmm!" "What?" She said ripping the duck tape off of James's mouth. "Ow!" There was a short awkward pause.

"Melexa found out didn't he?" "...It was kind of obvious." She grinned. James buried his face in his knees.

"Okay; so I was messing around in his consciousness and ran into a memory. But don't tell anyone or he'll kill me." Moon shadow said sitting next to him. He scooted away. "James" she said putting a hand to his forehead. "There is no shame in liking someone." "...Huh?" Moon shadow sighed.

"Normally a dream like that means you're surprising something and it can't be healthy." She explained. James paused. What could he be suppressing? "What?" Moon shadow gave an agitated sigh. "Come on James. You can't see or hear this person at all. You can't even tell if it's a she. You're obviously suppressing something." She explained. There was another pause. "Anything?" She asked. "...No." Moon shadow sighed for the third time. "Well I'm sure you'll figure this out sometime. I'm only worried about you because you seem so exhausted." "Moon shadow it's the middle of the night."

"I meant all the time." She smirked. There was another pause. "... What did you see?" He nervously asked. "Nothing; just like you. When entering a dream I can either become a part of it or I can see from the dreamer's point of view." She explained. "O-oh" James's face made him look like he was trying to pretend to be a tomato.

"Relax, I came here to see if I could point you in the right direction, and now that I have; you have someone else to confide in." She said getting up. "Have a good night." And with that Moon shadow

disappeared out the window and into the night. Surprisingly enough, James slept well that night. The next day James had been speed walking to class. (The bell had already rung) He had been pondering what Moon shadow said. James searched his emotions relentlessly but couldn't find what he was suppressing.

"It must be deep." He thought. Before he could even look up he crashed into someone. In a moment everything slowed as he fell back to the floor. The scent had filled his nose and lungs, and then he knew. Things sped up again.

"O-oh sorry." Steven stuttered getting up. He kept walking. Suddenly the memory of his fourteenth birthday rushed back to him and he remembered the way Steven lips felt against his. Up until now he had forgotten, no, suppressed it and it had come back all at once. James wanted to hide. He was terrified, ashamed, and really happy at the same time.

Then a sinking feeling filled his stomach. For the rest of the day James wandered in a daze. He had tried to deny it, saying it was only a coincident smelled the same but then he had to ask himself why he knew that. Why he had caught Stevens' scent and remembered it enough for his brain to make the connection. He tried not to think about it but it kept popping back up in his head.

After a while his parents became concerned and his little sister demanded more attention from him, Julys way of trying to get him to snap out of it. It was no use. James felt another tug at his heart. He was already being pulled in two different directions. The third however was starting to make him feel sick, and not in a good way. Things only turned from bad to worse.

Two days later he had a dream. Only this time he could see and hear every thing. The part that freaked him out the most was that Steven was completely himself, or as much a James knew. When he woke up in the morning he couldn't deny the feelings he felt anymore for the mess was proof and not only that but the old wound in his heart reopened and bled out the stinging loneliness he had felt as a child with a renewed passion. For the first time in a long time he cried, really cried.

Not only because he missed Steven desperately but also because of this new discovery. He was a vampiric homosexual. James had tried so hard to be a good Christian, all he ever wanted was to belong and be a good person. But he was something wrong, something that shouldn't exist, an abomination. And although he had done everything physically possible to change it all failed.

James couldn't change this nor could he fix it. He felt broken. After Cleaning the new add on to his laundry and taking a cold shower he watched the sun rise, completely silent until his family woke up. He couldn't look anyone in the eye especially his mother nor could he eat. Eventually when he left for school he found himself turned in an entirely different direction.

"With the life style I live I need to be reminded about strong moral values."

Navy's words were echoing in his head when James got to the building.

12 - Missing

“What?” Stevens father gasped in surprise. “ The school called, he hasn’t shown up yet and I thought that...since Steven and Rose were some of his closest friends...” “ No Jane, I’m sorry he isn’t hear but today’s my day off so if I see him I’ll call.” He replied. “ Alright...thank you.” Jane hung up. Stevens father did the same. He had no idea were James could be but he knew who could track him down. He grabbed his cote and headed out. If anyone knew were James was they would know.

* * *

Flora was sitting in the entryway when there was a loud banging. “ Open up! I need to speak to one of your vampires!” A mans voice echoed on the other side. Flora got up and listened. She could only hear one persons breathing on the other side. Flora twisted the lever and shoved the heavy door open. An off scent filled the room. “ You’re one of the wolves. What do you want?” she said. “Someone has gone missing. I need to talk to Melexa of the thorn. Now.” The seven looking year old looked him over. “ I may look young but I’m almost as old as a teenager. Don’t take me lightly, I’m not stupid.” Flora warned.

“ This way.” She said leading the man into the compound. She left him to wait outside the rose sevens sector. Stevens father waited for about twenty minutes for the girl to return. When she did a very tier and agitated Melexa was with her. “ Morning.” He said grimly.

“ James is missing.” Melexas’ eyes popped. “ We’ll take care of it.” They both glared at each other. “ He’s not hear.” Melexa said. “ Don’t kid yourself, I wouldn’t kill off my potential fledgling.” He explained. With that he shut the door.

* * *

James sat in the empty church, even the pastor was gone. James didn’t belong hear but it was the only place to go. After all this was were he learned most of his morals. He had been trying to figure out what he should do. Homosexuality wasn’t exactly a disease or a defect so there was no cure.

He thought about killing himself because he didn’t want to be this but then he remembered just how many people that would effect. While staring at his bracelet James realized he had actually felt this way about Steven from the beginning. He could never take it off because he’s be letting him go and some extremely small part of his had held out hope that it would all work out. And it hurt like hell. Because Steven wasn’t going to come back to him, nor would he ever feel the same.

James felt like someone was burning the old wound back into his heart. He felt alone and wished he could stop feeling things altogether. “ Shouldn’t you be in school?” Navy said walking down the isle. “ ... Why are you here?” James asked, his voice sounded flat. “Because I want to be.” He replied.

“Why are you here?” Navy asked, joining James in the front row. “ I...it’s just...” Navy waited. “ ...I’m all...wrong.” James managed to say. His breathing sped up and then everything came out in a rush. “I’mnotsupposedtobethis!Idon’twanttobethis!It’snotrightatall!It’ssick!I’m sick! I’m twisted and wrongand...Ga h!” James pulled at his hair and buried his face in his knees.

“Thisisn’t right!Thisisn’t right!Thisisn’t right! I’m broken!” The next sentences came out like one word. Like a language Navy couldn’t decipher. James heard Navy cell wring but couldn’t stop speaking.

He felt like his head was going to explode and he wanted to scream. “ Really?... Huh...Actually I found him at the church. Yeah...I’m not sure...Just get down hear, oh and uh...bring a sedative incase.” Navy hung up. “ James?” He said putting a hand on James’s shoulder. James was still babbling. “

Sick!wrong!insain!whyhim!” Navy forced James to face him.

Navy’s eyes widened. James was talking so fast his face had turned red with the effort. “Shut up, breath!” Navy shouted smacking him across the face. James stopped. It’ took about two minutes for his face to return to normal color and his left cheek was bruised. Then the church doors were kicked open. “ He’s fine, forget the shot.” Navy said. Melexa relaxed and took a seat to James’s right. “ Give me a heart attack.” He panted to his friend. “ What happened?”

“ He was talking so fast that he couldn’t breath. I guess he figured it out.” Navy explained. “ Wha-you knew!?!” James nearly shouted. “ Navy can read hormones; he knew when he first met you.” Melexa explained. James face couldn’t be redder. “ You better be breathing.” Navy joked.

James buried his face in his knees again. Melexa sighed and put his hand on James’s shoulder. “ It’s not that bad.” He said. “ Yes it is!” “ Who told you that?” Navy asked. “...Everyone.” Melexas eyes almost widened. “When it comes to love gender won’t always apply. In fact, it’s overrated.” He said. “ How would you know that!” James said looking up at him.

Melexa glared at him. James had almost forgotten that Melexa had started out female. He faced forward. “ Anyone who tells you different is a stubborn Jackass and/or is incapable of understanding.” Melexa continued. There was a short pause.

“ It’s not bad, just incorrect.” He smiled. “ Your Mentor is Wright. I know for a fact that you were born this way. It’s physically impossible for you to change so there’s no need to. You’re different James; you shouldn’t have to follow the same rules as everyone else. ... At least when it comes to this.” Navy said.

There was another pause. “You have to follow a different though,” Melexa said. Crap, another awkward conversation. “ So do you want me to explain this or are you going to ask you dad?” There was another silence.

It had just hit James that his parents didn’t know any of this and they might not understand. “ Uh t-they don’t know.” James said. “...Huh, well that’s a pickle. Any ideas?” “ they are your parents’ they should understand.” Navy said. “They’re Christian.” James explained.

“ Do you know if they’re really agents it?” James paused. “ I’m not sure.” He’ finally said. “ Well we know July understands”. Melexa said. “ What do you mean?” James asked.

“ She gave me this.” Melexa took out a crinkled drawing of James kissing another boy. She had started drawing these two years ago after his fourteenth birthday. It must have been new because he had destroyed the others. James wanted to scream. “ That’s creative but who’s the other – Navy was cut off as James grabbed the nearest bible and started hitting himself in the head with it.

Melexa had to fight him for it while Navy forced himself not to laugh at the scene.

13 - A plan

James went back to the school he dreaded. He told the office that he hadn't been feeling very good, had missed the bus, and passed out on the walk to school. He said he had taken a shortcut through an ally and the dizziness came on so fast that he couldn't do anything except fall over and wait for it to pass. His parents dragged him to the hospital after that but the doctors could find nothing physically wrong with him and sent him home with a recommendation for a phyciatrist. The next day the phyciatrist gave him an evaluation seemed depressed but over all fine.

After that he was sent home. His parents didn't ask any questions. They gave him his space. However he had to intercept pictures July had draw as an explanation for his strange behavior. She wanted to help.

As for the dream; they continued and James was avoiding Steven like the plague. On the off chance they passed each other in the hallway James still had the urge to bolt in the other direction. But He couldn't help the fact that he was happy to see him or the fact that he still missed him. Just seeing Steven in the hallway was enough to turn a bad day around. Steven however was at a loss.

He wanted to be near James again. He missed him a lot and was having the same types of dream that James was having. It was driving him crazy. He was worried about him because James had no friends in school, was bullied on a regular basis, and the rumors about him were getting worse. He had wanted to apologize for their last fight for so long now that his throught ached whenever he thought about it. The bracelet he moved to his ankle was a constant reminder.

Of course he wasn't the only one who knew of these changes. Suzan and Carrie had been keeping a close eye on the two boys ever since the birthday party. "We need to get them to be friends again."

Suzan had said one day at lunch. "Suzan" "I said friends Carrie, the rest will take care of itself."

"Yes, but we shouldn't mettle." Carrie told her friend. "Have you even seen James lately? Or Steven? They both seem miserable. James doesn't smile anymore and Steven has gotten so quiet. It's scary."

Suzan said. "He obviously wants to talk to him but his cousin is in the way." "Which one?" "I don't know, possibly both." Both girls sighed.

"There's a field trip this weekend for the biology class, and I know both are going, we just need to give them a chance to talk alone." Carrie said. "Which means one of us will have to switch bussed and be in the group with both of them. The other will have to run interference." They sighed. The groups had already been assigned. "I guess we just have to wait then." Carrie said. "Or..."

* * *

"NO! Absolutely not!" Tyler said. "Pleas! Pleas! Pleas! Pleas! Pleas!!!!" Suzan begged trying to lean closer to his face. "Are you crazy? Your group is full of giggly girls who hate my guts and the chess club. I can't stand those jerks and I'm already in enough trouble as it is." Tyler stubbornly replied shoving her away. "Why do you want to switch groups anyway?" "Because I want to!" Suzan answered.

If there was one person more stubborn then Tyler it was Suzan. Tyler had learned that when she had dragged him to a school dance, literally. "Okay, let me think about that. NO! Give me one reason why I should." Suzan moved closer, it looked as if she was about to kiss him before she gave Tyler her patented death glare and growled.

To Tyler this meant one of two things. One: "I'm going to kill you." Or two: "I'll maim you, rip you

apart, and then kill you.” It was easy to guess which one got Tyler to grudgingly agree. So the arrangements were set. Now she needed to fine-tune her plan.

* * *

James was glad for the chance to get away. It reminded him of the summer camp he used to go to, Camp Brookly. Only this time he didn't have a friend to be with. So it was more like a journey than a vacation, a journey with obstacles. The first; they would be dissecting things.

Normally animal blood didn't have such a strong effect on James; there was no craving because it wasn't addictive like human blood. However it still had an effect. The smell would be distracting. Not only that but James hated touching dead things. How was he supposed to cut one open?

Also, they would be using knives and scalpels, if someone cut themselves it would mean trouble. It wasn't like James could smuggle a bottle of bleach; one of the teachers had already caught him in the janitors closet once. So if they found a bottle that would only confirm what they suspected. James could already hear the counselor; “ James, is there something wrong at home?” Then there was the second problem; the dreams.

He really didn't want to explain why he slept with duck-tape over his mouth. Granted the dreams only they only happened twice or once a week these days. However he knew the more he was around Steven the more intense they'd be and the two were in the same bus group and cabin. Which brought on the third obstacle: Steven. James was increasingly clumsy around him and had a hard time paying attention.

If they were to have a conversation then James knew he would keep trailing off mid-sentence. He always kept getting lost in Stevens' eyes. He could avoid looking at his eyes but that was the only part of Steven he felt safe looking at. The thought kept confusing James so much that he wanted to hide under a rock somewhere until the trip was over. He had no solution for anything.

So James just focused on how nice it would be to get outside for a while. After all it was only a week right? He could get through this without humiliating or hurting himself, right? Honestly...he had no idea. In fact when the day of the fieldtrip arrived he was nervous as heck.

The bags had already been thrown on the bus. Everyone was waiting outside trying to decide biology groups. James was currently standing around; it's hard to find a group when you didn't have a lot of friends. However surprisingly Suzan had managed to weasel her way into his bus group.

* * *

“Steven!” Suzan shouted, pushing through the crowd of students. She bolted straight to him. “ Can you be in my biology group? Carrie bailed on me.” “ Actually”- “ Great, thanks' you're a life saver.”

Steven was about to tell her that he was already in a group but before he could do that she had spotted James. “ James! Over hear!” She shouted to him, waving enthusiastically. “Oh crap” Steven thought. “ Do you have a group yet?” She asked when he made his way over. “ No.” James replied.

“ Great! You can be in ours.” Steven tried to speak again but before he could Suzan was sprinting to the crowd toward Carrie. “ Dude, I think she's got a thing for you.” Laughed a guy in his original group. If only he knew.

* * *

“Welcome to camp science!” Boomed a middle-aged man. All of the students' groaned. The bus ride had been a long one. “ Yes well...the cabins are up that hill, boys' are on the left, girls on the right. My

assistant Jenny will explain the rules.” The man said. “Well alright!” Said the women standing next to him. She appeared to be in her thirties and had a southern accent.

“ Behind me is the cafeteria” She said gesturing to the large wooden building behind her. “ Anyone with extreme allergies or medications should stop by the infirmary next door. There will be no food fights or bullying of any kind. Please don’t bring opened foods into the cabins; the cafeteria will be closed on off hours. Everyone is to be in their assigned cabin by seven for attendance. Curfew is at eight and lights out is at nine. The in-between time is free for anything. The cabin rules are simple; boys’ and girls’ cabins aren’t to intermingle. No indecent behavior, violence or exposure. Please take good care of all of the camp equipment and absolutely no P.D.A’s.” with that Jenny took a step back to let the man speak. “ We’ll start the real learning after you’ve all unpacked your things.”

* * *

It didn’t take long for Suzan to find James and drag him over to Stevens table once dinner rolled around. Steven was sure that she was up to something but he couldn’t put his finger on it. Sadly James was too nervous to really say anything, Steven was very quiet, and Suzan (although a chatter box) was having a hard time getting a conversation going. The class was also going over the rules for the next day’s bird watch and dissection. The boys cabin was crowded and James eyes would not stop wandering while everyone was getting ready for lights out; no matter how hard he tried to focus on the floor.

“ The hell are you staring at” Said Tyler who wasn’t wearing a shirt. Crap. He was both lean and skinny at the same time. James showed no reaction as he climbed into the top bunk and tried to pretend that nothing had happened. “ Gah! What is wrong with me!?! Stupid hormones!” He thought staring at the ceiling.

“ Tch’ prick” James winced. “ Oh what, did I hit a nerve?” Tyler mocked walking to James’s bunk. “ He doesn’t exist.” James thought ignoring him. “ Hey I’m talking to you!” Still nothing. “ Listen to me.” He growled.

James was still silent. He had nearly master the “your not there trick” and so far it only made Tyler give up or get really mad. And the best part about it was that Tyler couldn’t do anything about it. If he slugged James and they ended up in a fight then all James would have to say to the principle was; “ I didn’t do anything he just hit me!” And He would be right. There would also be several witnesses to back him up on that.

Tyler gave him a death glare and went back to changing severely annoyed. That night James didn’t get much sleep. Keith kept trying to use the water trick on him and when that didn’t work he decided to snore. Loudly. That is until Steven had it and tossed a shoe at his head.

At break fest they were all increasingly grumpy. And Suzan’s perkiness’ just irritated the two boys as she had got them to sit together again. Right now they were all outside, sitting at picnic tables with dead frogs and other sharp objects. “ Alright today we’ll be dissecting frogs! I want you to jot down all of the organs and body parts.” The proctor said over excitedly. Everyone slipped on their gloves.

“ Geez this is so gross” Suzan complained. “ Hey at least it’s not something cute like a kitty.” Carrie said from the table next to them. “ Actually we’ll be doing cats tomorrow.” Jenny exclaimed as she handed them their clipboards. Everyone froze. The two girls were turning white, Steven was creeped out and James was trying to breath without throwing up.

“ These people are sick.” He thought staring down at the frog. “ James why don’t you categorize.” Steven said handing him the clipboard. James took it but forgot to answer. Ironically Suzan was the one to make the first cut. Steven took apart the entrails.

For James the smell of blood was thick. His hands were shaking in a sort of primal excitement he

couldn't explain. Despite that his eyes would wander to Steven they were glue to the organs. Staring at them made him feel sick but at the same time he couldn't look away and he often forgot to Wright down the names of the parts. " So" Suzan said swallowing for the third time.

"What's left?" "...Uh...the eyes...and the uh brain." James said. His mind was blank. Suzan grabbed the head of the gutted frog and cut. She looked like she was going to throw up.

The scalpel slipped. " Ow damn it!" James dropped the clipboard his eyes never leaving her. Suzan went to the proctor. " Uh, I cut through the glove." She explained, " Ooh, there's peroxide over by the faucet." He said. James forced his arms to the side as the wind picked up. His breathing sped up and his heart started to pound with the surge of adrenalin that hit him. His arms shook and every instinct he had was telling him to tare her apart.

It took all of his will power not to, he felt like he could explode any second. Steven glanced over at James. His eyes had already changed color and were pink. That wasn't good. What happened next threw James off completely.

When he felt Steven grab his wrist he jumped. Luckily everyone was either watching Suzan or asking the proctor questions about infection. As hard as he tried James couldn't stop the blush that form forming on his cheeks. It didn't stop the trembling but his eyes weren't glued to Suzan anymore and it focused his sense of smell on Steven. His heart was still pounding like crazy as a new feeling of affection washed over him.

" Don't think like that. He doesn't like you, he just knows what blood can do to you." He thought but no matter how hard he thought it the feeling wouldn't go away. When Suzan came back to the table she wasn't the only one who noticed that Steven had taken one of his gloves off. Carrie had a hard time trying not to giggle like a schoolgirl. James wanted to thank Steven but the truth was he was too chicken. James's heart went crazy when he saw Steven in the cafeteria.

But they weren't forced to sit together. Suzan was busy chatting with Carrie at another table.

* * *

" So what do you think happened?" Suzan whispered. " Suzan" Carrie scolded. " Oh come on Carrie, you can't deny the excitement." Suzan replied. " So what's you're Theory? I know you have one?" "...Well. We know James doesn't like blood; I'm guessing that seeing you get cut like that freaked him out and Steven was trying to keep him from passing out on the floor." Carrie whispered.

" Are you two talking about James and Steven?" another girl whispered and leaned in. Three other girls suddenly joined them at the table. " You suspect?"

" Everyone suspects." The girl replied. At that they all started to whisper and giggle. Tyler glanced over at the table of girls and rolled his eyes. " What the hell is so damn exciting?" He wandered.

* * *

When James entered the cabin he went to grab an extra snack from his bag but found a plastic bottle filled with bleach. His heart raced when he glanced at Steven who was (pretend) reading in his bunk. Apparently he knew just how hard dissection was for him. James sat in his own bunk and stared at the ceiling. How did Steven know all of this? They'd been avoiding each other since his fourteenth. Had Steven been watching him all of this time. James couldn't stop himself from looking over at him. One of the strings tugged at his heart. He missed him. James had missed being friends with Steven.

How could all of this happen? And how could Steven still care after James had yelled at him like that, after so much time apart? After there friendship had cracked and shattered. How could all of this be? James's heart started to ache and he rolled over facing the wall. How could he develop feelings for Steven after being kept in the dark?

* * *

That night James had a dream; only this one was full of both ecstasy and tears. That and Keith's loud snoring woke him up before he could make a sound. "Ugh. Damn it Keith, stop snoring." Tyler sleepily complained tossing a pillow in the opposite direction. "Tyler for the last time; Keith is over there."

Growled the boy who was hit with the pillow, tossing it at Keith's head. He woke up.

"Was I snorin' again'?" He groggily asked. "Yes." The three boys groaned. "Sorry mates" He said before falling asleep again. The room was silent. Then the snoring started up again.

"Uhgh" Tyler said trying to slam his head under his pillow. Then he remembered that he had tried to throw it at Keith. "Damn it." He growled. James buried his head under his pillow. He didn't want to put up with Tyler and the throbbing in between his legs was getting annoying.

"Why me." He whined inside his head. He tried to focus on Keith's snoring but it only gave him a headache. He wanted to grab a cold shower but he didn't want to wake everyone up. Although he wasn't sure if anyone was asleep. He felt like punching Keith but instead tied a jacked around his waist and decided to go sit in the cold grass.

As he walked down the cold porch steps he heard a loud howl.

* * *

Steven sprinted through the woods. It had been awhile since he transformed. Keith's snoring had kept him awake and even if it hadn't he just had too much energy He had been running laps around the outside of the camp for awhile now although he still had to be careful. Steven had grown a lot.

His head in wolf form could reach a full-grown mans waist when standing. When Steven was finally tired he ran to where he left his Pjs and switched forms. After he had pulled them on and left the woods he was back in camp. He almost froze when he got back to the cabin.

James was asleep on the grass. "Why is he"- Stevens thought were interrupted by a loud snore followed by a "Shut the frack up Keith!" from Tyler. "Oh" Steven sighed. James stirred and Steven froze. Just as he started to open his eyes Steven ran into the cabin and jumped into bed.

His heart was hammering in his chest and he couldn't identify why. He heard James stumble in and climb into his bunk. Why was he so nervous around James? Somehow Steven had always known.

14 - Who knew?

The next day was rainy and cold so everyone was in the cafeteria to dissect and the bird watch had been cancelled. Suzan refused to participate and actually started a riot with Tyler's help. It was rare that they ever got along. Suzan hated the idea of dissecting a cat and Tyler just liked riots. So right now everyone was pilled in the cafeteria banging their fists on tables to the beat "we will rock you".

"Buddy this aint right,
You know this is wrong,
I mean were just a bunch of high school kids!
We're already screwed up enough,
And we'll pack up our stuff,
And sit our butts back on that buss!
Sing it!" Suzan sang.
"We don't want to throw up!" the students echoed.

The teachers were dumbfounded by this protest. That is until the thunder boomed, then everyone yelled or screamed and Suzan fell of the table she was standing on. One of the teachers marched straight up to her, grabbed her by the arm, and dragged her into the kitchen area of the cafeteria. The other three teachers followed, one the counter so they could have privacy to yell at her. "Fight the power people!" Carrie shouted and Tyler started to bang on the table.

The protest started up again only it didn't last long. Carrie ran out of things to say. So instead someone turned on the radio and the juniors played a game of dare. James quickly crept off and hid in the janitors' closet. Tyler would always dare him to do something humiliating and James was not going to deal with it.

He'd had enough of being beaten up and humiliated by Tyler. But he also knew that if he fought back arguing would turn into a fight and James would end up killing him by mistake. James didn't want to be a murderer. Hiding was pathetic, he knew, but he'd rather be pathetic at the moment. James sat on the floor to ponder.

He could still hear music. He wrapped his arms around his knees as isolation set in. He hated being alone but just as it settled James could hear voices yelling and a struggle. James got up to listen. The door was suddenly yanked open and some one crashed into him.

The door slammed and a click was heard. "Damn it Tyler! This isn't funny anymore!" James froze. It was Steven. Steven pounded on the door so hard James thought he'd break it.

He kicked it in frustration. The closet was small and cramped and it didn't take Steven long to notice that he wasn't alone. "...James?" James froze again and pressed he back up agents the wall. When Steven turned to face his he almost caught his breath.

"What are you doing in hear?" He asked concerned. "I-I don't like dare." He stuttered trying to grin. Steven nodded. "Tyler was dared to lock someone in the closet." "By who?"

"Keith, who else? We might be in here for awhile." In James's opinion that was not good. There were already enough rumors flying around the school. The last thing he needed was for them to be confirmed. However he was distracted.

Steven was only an inch or two away from him as it was a very small closet. He could hear and feel him breath. James was currently trying to keep his hands from shaking. His heart was beating like crazy.

Stevens scent was all around him, pretty soon thoughts crept into his mind.

James tried not to look at him but at the same time his eyes were glued on the yellow orbs in front of him. Meanwhile Stevens were lock on glowing green and his heart was being pulled in a direction it shouldn't go. Steven could feel a burning in his chest and an ache in his throught. It had only been a short pause but the tension was driving them crazy. They hadn't been this close to each other since childhood and that was entirely different from now.

Steven was about to say something when James surprised then both. He pushed him back up agents the door and kissed him. James yelped and backed into the wall, he hadn't realized what he was doing before it was too late to stop himself. "Uh I didn't -I-I'm"- James was cut off when Steven pulled him into a tight embrace. "Don't," He said.

"I'm the one who should apologize." James was stunned. "Don't ever apologize. ...I'm so sorry."

Steven was shaking. "I shouldn't have ditched you when you needed a friend the most he choked out." Then he kissed James.

It' was passionate but chaste and James melted into his arms. When they had to pull apart they could only stare into each other's eyes. Then things turned quiet. That music that had been playing outside stopped. They both jumped when the doorknob shook and let go of each other. Steven turned around before it opened.

There was a click as the proctor pulled it open. He took one look at Steven (and James who was Trying to hide behind Steven) and shook his head. "That kids twisted." He muttered. It had been longer then they had thought. Apparently Suzan had been yelled at; after which she gave a rousing speech about morals.

The teachers couldn't argue with her. But as a result the trip had been canceled and they would be going home the next day. Steven stuck near James. Only near though. They had been locked in a closet after all; no need to get more rumors going.

That didn't stop Suzan, Carrie, or the other suspecting girls though.

* * *

Both girls were currently talking in whispers to the other girls as the cancellation arrangements were being made.

"Do you think something happened?"

"Oh definitely"

"I didn't even know James was in there."

"Why was he in there?"

"Maybe he snuck in after Steven?"

"No way. James isn't that bold. Besides the door was locked on the outside too. Remember?"

"So he must have been in there before it happened."

"But why was he?"

"Oh! Maybe he, Keith, and Tyler planed the whole thing?"

"Again; not that bold."

"Besides, Keith and Tyler hate him."

"But why else would he be in there?"

"Maybe he has a social disorder? James is pretty shy, and "Dare" couldn't have helped with that."

"Or maybe he rally is on drugs."

The group gasped.

"...I heard it from the school nurse."

“ Oh no way, he dose seem depressed but James wouldn't stoop that low; he has a little sister.”

“ And she's autistic, so he has to be really careful with the example he sets.”

“ She' autistic? Hm... maybe James dose have some kind of hidden disability.”

“ Actually; James is adopted.”

“ What!?” The majority of the group screamed earning stares.

“ You guys didn't know?”

“ Oh man! Now I really want to know what happened.”

“ Suzan I dare you to go up and ask.”

“What!? Why me?”

“ Because you're the one who came up with this odd plan which somehow unintentionally got them both locked in the closet to begin with.” Carrie said giving her friend a glare. Suzan couldn't argue agents it. She sighed, got up, and marched to their table. “ Guys?” She said grabbing the boys' attention along with the others at the table. There was a short pause.

Suzan was wearing a very serious expression. “... Thanks for being in my group!” with that she marched back to her own table leaving them all very confused. “ See, I told you she likes you.” Said the guy in Stevens original group. “ Ugh” Steven hung his head exasperated. “ What the heck was that?” Carrie asked when Suzan re-took her seat.

“You're right, it's none of our business.”

* * *

15 - It's amazing what you find face to face

That night James couldn't sleep at all. He was tired, but tired with worry. How were they supposed to explain everything? It was only a matter of time before Moon shadow or Navy found out and Melexa was bound to notice something different. Not to mention James wasn't entirely sure if they were friend or more.

So after about an hour of listening to Keith snore James got up and left. He simply wanted to hide. James headed to the woods to think, as he didn't want to get caught. Nor to talk to anyone. But despite the worry he felt really happy.

Like he had just begun to find something he thought was lost. Something important. Something he needed. James kept walking. It was as if he was on autopilot, lost in his own confusion.

He was trying to figure it out but his mind kept going in circles. A twig snapped. James stopped moving. Something big was in front of him. But he couldn't quite see it.

The thing stepped back. Then it turned and ran. James followed. Then stopped after a minute. What he saw surprised him.

In the moonlight was an oversized, big, brown, wolf. The creature had striking yellow eyes but what surprised James the most was the familiar presence in those eyes, the color of the fur, and the green and orange bracelet on its hind leg. "... S-Steve?" The wolves' eyes were wide. He slowly walked over to James with questioning and nervous eyes.

"I-I suspected but...I was never sure." Steven was terrified. James could see it. Terrified of rejection. James knew that look all too well.

Before Steven could react he was being hugged. "This explains so much." James whispered. "You couldn't tell me could you?" He wanted to cry. Steven had known but had kept it a secret from James. Not because he didn't trust James but because he wasn't aloud. He had to protect the others. "You weren't even aloud to be close to me." Steven reverted back to his human form and kissed him. When they pulled apart he and James were face to face.

"But what about now?" he asked, dazed. "I'm old enough to decide for myself. We both are. And I know the dangers involved. Screw the rules. I want my friend back." Steven said pulling him into a tight embrace. But after a few seconds both remembered that Steven wasn't wearing anything. And James's "brain" had decided to react. "U-um." He stuttered.

Both of their faces were crimson. Before James realized it Steven had sprinted in the other direction. He ran so fast that Jane couldn't tell if he had transformed or not. After about ten minutes Steven returned fully dressed but just as before his ponytail was missing. James however was literally thanking God that his "Brain" had calmed down by then.

"S-sorry about"- "don't worry about it. And didn't I tell you to stop apologizing." Steven said taking his hand. He stared when he saw the bracelet. He had nearly forgotten. "I-I never took it off. Not once. Only to"- James was kissed again and he melted into it.

After a minute they pulled apart. "I need to learn to hold off on that." Steven said. James almost laughed, catching the meaning. The two left the woods hand in hand. They were both happy to be close again and for the first time in his life; James didn't want to go home.

Neither did Steven.

16 - Home

Since the trip Steven and James were inseparable again. Steven had moved the bracelet back to his wrist. But as inseparable as they were they still had obstacles. First would be rent. He and Rose sat with him at lunch and Steven wasn't about to make James sit alone. But he knew Rent would pitch a fit if he knew they were friends again. Next would be keeping their romantic relationship a secret. From everyone. Of course there would also be the problem of keeping this from Navy; who would most likely tell Melexa. James knew, it would either be Navy or Moon shadow.

It wasn't that Melexa was agents' homosexual relationships. It was that Steven was a werewolf might not sit right. And the last would be July. She drew things she saw and if she got excited and decided to tell their parents about her brothers newfound happiness James wasn't sure how to stop her without getting into a fight over the drawings. That would end in a huge fit and July would be mad at him for weeks.

Not only that but there was also Stevens family to deal with. Steven knew that his father would be shocked along with Rose and Rent certainly would not be happy for him. Heck he wasn't happy about them just being friends. Yes the boys' certainly had their hands full.

James was currently explaining July to him during lunch. "So she draws whatever she see1?" "Heh, yeah. James replied." "Steven." Rent and rose had appeared behind him. "Hi James." Rose said trying to break the tension.

She sat down between them. Rents anger didn't diminish at all. In fact it went from red hot to ice cold in seconds. "Can I talk to you alone." "Whatever you have to say, say it hear." Steven told him.

His glare was even more fearsome then Rents. Rent looked like he wanted to break something. "Steven!" Steven ignored him. Rent growled.

He gave up and sat down next to his cousin. "What are you doing you can't trust him!" He whispered. "Yes I can." Steven said plane out. "You actually trust that...thing?" Rent whispered enraged. "That thing is my friend and he can hear every word you're saying." Steven said stubbornly.

"Make it leave." Rent hissed in his ear at a lower tone. "No." Steven said, crossing his arms. Rent almost let loose an inhuman growl. "You know what they did." Steven continued to glare coldly at his cousin. There was a short pause.

Steven was silent. Rent stood. He gave James an icy death glare. "Get up Rose." She didn't move. "Rose!" He practically shouted.

She sighed and stood. Rent grabbed her arm and stalked out of the cafeteria. "I'm sorry James." "It's okay" He replied. "No it's not." Steven said.

"Some people are just stubborn." James said. "It's not your fault." James wasn't sure why Rent hated him. He just knew that he couldn't do anything.

* * *

"I can't believe him! After everything Vampiric kind has done to us." Rent huffed. "He's turning his back on us." "No he's not!" Rose nearly shouted. "He's just being a good friend. You know that." "Oh what, ditching his family for an enemy?" He said.

"Not every Vampire is our enemy! And James is human Rent!" Rose shouted. "After everything they did!?" "That was a long time ago! And the Thorn had nothing to do with it and neither did James so suck it up!" "Yeah! Easy for you to say! You were only two! You didn't understand what happened!"

You don't even remember!" Rent yelled. He expected his sister to scream something but instead she looked like she wanted to cry. "JUST BECAUSE I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND DOESN'T MEAN IT DOSNT HURT!!!" She shouted. "...And I do remember." She turned around and stomped away. "Rose!" "Don't talk to me!" She sobbed. With that she ran down the hallway. "I do remember. ...I remember everything."

* * *

Steven and James had gotten up to walk around. They knew Tyler would pick a fight the second he finished his lunch and neither wanted to deal with him. The two had been catching up again when they hear someone sobbing. Steven knew exactly who it was. Rose was curled up in a ball next to a locker, trying to get the sobs to stop.

James was shocked. He had never seen her cry before. Rose?" Steven said putting a hand on her shoulder. "I hate my brother!" She shouted. "Rose."

"No! I'm sick of it!" She looked Steven directly in the eyes this time. "He's a raciest jerk who's holding a grudge that's messing up everyone's lives! And he thinks he's the only one in pain, What about me!? I don't even have friend I can talk to when I need advice! Girl advice! But I got over it! He doesn't seem to care that I lost some one too!"

Steven hugged his cousin as she cried. "Yes he dos." Steven honestly wanted to beat some sense into Rent. James watched the scene. He'd do anything to make it all stop.

He really didn't like Rent at the moment.

* * *

The rest of the day had gone by slowly. Even dinner moved slowly. James was happy when it was finally time to sleep. He wanted to forget. But just as he was getting into bed someone knocked on his window.

He got up to open it and was surprised to see Steven pushing up the glass. "Hi." He said. "H-hi." James replied. "Can I visit? I-I know it's late." "Sure!" James almost blushed. He hadn't meant to answer with so much enthusiasm. Steven climbed inside as the cold wind blew. It was going to snow soon. He shut the window. James's room hadn't changed much since Steven last saw it.

"What's the duct tape for?" He asked looking to the bedside table. "... Stuff." James muttered turning his head to the floor. "What kind of stuff?" Steven asked stepping closer to him. He couldn't help it; James was adorable.

James didn't want to lie but the idea of explaining that particular problem was horrifying. How was he supposed to explain this? "...Uh..." James blushed. "How's Rose?" He blurted.

"She'll be fine." There was an awkward pause. Steven brushed some of the hair out of his friends face. His eyes looked worried. He would do anything to make that go away. Before he knew it Steven pulled James into a gentle kiss.

James melted. He never wanted this moment to end. Never.

17 - something different

“ Huh?”

“You seem off today”

“ Distracted.” Melexa said, looking his pupil over closely. They were currently in the training hall; James was practicing his wall walking. Getting himself to attach to walls and walk up them (especially while wearing shoes) was not his forte and today he was particularly bad at it. Moon shadow (who had a habit of appearing out of nowhere.) stepped over and did a full circle around him; analyzing. “ You’re right there is something different about him.” She pondered.

“ It’s a girl isn’t it?” There was an awkward pause. “ ...Guy?” James knew she was only joking but oh if she really knew. James couldn’t suppress the blush. “ Aha! I knew it!” She said pointing at him.

“ It’s about damn time. You seem rather slow lately.” Melexa stated. “ Moon shadow threw him a glare.

“ Sooooo?” She said glomping James. He knew what was coming next. “W-what?” He stuttered.

“ Who is it?” James kept his mouth shut. “ God... Please kill me.” He thought. “ I-I still doesn’t know.” He blurted. Melexa looked at him curiously. Their eyes locked. “Crap.” He knew James was lying. “ A cave in? Lightning? Anything! At least make me pass out!” “ Still? Well then how did you- oh, wait never mind. I don’t want to know.” With that Moon shadow let him go and left the room. “... Should I ask?” Melexa echoed. James walked over to the nearest wall and slammed his head against it.

* * *

That night was cold and dark. Venda was standing alone in the woods at the other edge of town; neutral territory, watching the snow melt before it touched her skin. She had been standing there so long that it was probably morning. A big shadowy figure appeared behind a tree. Venda watched as it circled around her behind the trees and stopped where it had started, shifting into the form of a skinny man. “ Excuse my lack of attire.” The deep voice echoed. “What do you want? ” Venda said with a cold expression. “ What I had originally come hear for ages ago.” Venda crossed her arms. There was a short pause. “The Halfling.” The Man said.

Vendas’ eyes widened for a second. She gave him a cold Stare. “ We have many halflings in our midst.” Venda replied. “ The one I want is fledgling to one of the rose Seven. This one is...special.” Venda nearly froze.

She knew of only one fledgling in the rose seven. “ You can’t have her. Whatever you offer in return I decline.” Venda turned around and walked away. “ Oh I’ll get it eventually.” The voice echoed. “ One way or another.”

* * *

“ I’m glad you and Steven patched things up.” “ So am I.” James replied. He was currently sitting at the kitchen table waiting for his friend to show up. It had snowed so much the other night that schooled had been cancelled that Friday and both boys found it boring to be cooped up alone. July was currently helping her mother with the dishes.

“He’s a nice kid.” Jane had said handing July a dish to dry. There was a knock on the door and James answered it. “ Hi.” Steven smiled at him. “ Steve!” July squealed, dropping her plate and crashing into

him. " July!" Her mother complained.

James shrugged as his little sister wandered over to the broken plate and stared confused. " It's alright. Lets pick up the glass" " I'm leaving with Steven." James phrased to July as she picked up pieces with her mother. " I'm leaving with Steve." She repeated as the boys left.

The two continued down the street, talking. Talking to Steven was easy. He felt like he could tell him anything, well almost anything. The two always did this, as it was the only thing that didn't cost money. As the two wandered they ended up in the town square. The square was a large circle in the center of town. It was currently covered in snow and the water fountain in the center had been shut off. But that's not what drew their attention. Rent was sting by the fountain listening to his MP3 player. Steven tried to turn them in a different direction but Rent had already seen them.

He pulled his headphones off and stomped up to them looking furious. " Steven what the hell! Why are you still hanging out with him?" Rent shouted when he got in earshot. Steven didn't answer. " You know what that thing is! How can you betray us like that!" he continued to yell while following them. " Betray you!?" Steven stopped and whirled around.

" The pack."

" James isn't our enemy."

"Yes it is! It's one of them!"

"Rent, you know he's not like that!"

"Yes it is! All of them are! God why can't you see it?" Rent argued.

"Because unlike you my eyes aren't clouded with hate!"

" You know what they do!"

"I don't care! James is different!" Steven shouted.

" No it's not!"

" He's a person dammnit! Not an object!"

" His kinds don't deserve the respect!"

" Not all of them are the same rent! And it happened a long time ago. Let it go!"

" Yeah easy for you to say! You don't have to watch my little sister grow up without someone to relate to!"

" Well maybe if you did your job as a brother she wouldn't have to!"

" You know what I mean Steve! And I am doing my job! I'm protecting her from scum like him!" Rent shouted.

" Seriously James, do you have any idea how hurt she was when you rejected her? What? My sister isn't good enough for you!?! She' firkin amazing, and that just proves that you're kind really are scum! You may be remotely human now but you won't be forever!" Rent shouted at James. " Hey! Don't walk away from a fight with me!" Steven interrupted. " And don't talk to him like that. That was a long time ago and it was none of our business!" " What? I'm just doing my job like you told me to! And F.Y.I. both of us are pack, it is our business." Rent yelled.

" We're not pack Rent! The two of us aren't even related by blood." Rent was shocked. "Oh really?" " Yes really! If we were pack you wouldn't be forcing me to choose between our pack and my best friend! If we really were pack you'd be there for me like I am for you! And if we really were pack you'd drop your damn racism!" Steven shouted. He was shaking with rage now. James could tell that Steven was going to snap any minute and that they both would probably do something they'd regret for the rest of their lives.

" My "damn racism" is the only thing protecting you and my family from being manipulated by murderers like him! And if you really think creature like him deserve our respect then you haven't been there for me at all!" Rent shouted. What happened next almost scared the crap out of Steven. James slammed his fist into Rents face, a crack echoed in the town square as he was knocked backwards.

“What the HELL is”- Rent was interrupted when James grabbed him by the collar of his coat and yanked him up into his face.

“ I’ve never hurt you before! I’ve never even yelled at you before! I’ve never done anything to hurt you before! What the hell did someone do to you to make you hate me so much!?!” James yelled. The two boys were a seeping mass of rage as Steven stared. He was almost sure that they would attack each other at any second. “ They took my mother.” Rent growled out. James dropped him in shock.

If he had known he never would have punched him. He wanted to say something, anything, but Rent nose was already bleeding and his heart was pounding. His hands were shaking as he turned and sprinted out of the square faster than Steven had ever seen. He almost called out to him but stopped himself. “ You see what I mean, he hit me without hesitation!” Rent yelled.

“ Rent if James was the “scum” you claimed him to be then he would have ripped you apart by now! ...But he ran away; that should stand for something.” Steven ran after James, he knew he needed him. James was sitting in an ally, back against the wall, head in between his knees, breathing heavily. He was almost hyperventilating. Steven took one look at him, sat down next to him, back against the wall, and pulled James close.

“Are you gonna be okay?” James uncurled and nodded. The two sat there for a few minutes. James let Steven’s scent drown out the smell of blood that had been stuck, he had almost started to fall asleep when Steven shook him. “ Lets go some were else.” He said.

Pretty soon the two ended up outside of Steven’s house. James was climbing over a snow bank when suddenly he sunk, he yelped as snow filled his boots. “ You alright?” Steven said whirling around. “ I think I’ll live.” James said with a smile. Steven pulled James out of the bank.

As Steven led James back to the house James couldn’t help but notice the grin on his face. “ What?” “Nothing.” He giggled. “ What?” James asked. “ ...When you yelped you sounded like a girl.”

James froze. “ No, no I did not sound like a girl.” Steven couldn’t hold back the giggles. “S-shut up!” James stuttered, grabbing the nearest chunk of snow and throwing it at him. Steven froze when it hit him in the face.

Then he grinned. James yelped and within seconds he was being chased into the woods. “Stop! Stop! I was kidding! Ah!” James fell through the snow. Steven tackled him. The two wrestled around trying to shove snow in each other’s faces, and laughing hysterically.

Steven pinned him to the ground. Both of them were panting and laughing and covered in snow. The laughter quieted as they caught their breath and stared into each other eyes. Steven closed the gap between them with a rough yet gentle kiss. James Grabbed onto Steven back and pulled him closer. He captured Steven’s mouth as they both explored each other caverns. It was warm and intense and better than any dream James had had and it was driving him crazy. A shiver ran down his spine as a small moan escaped. Steven pulled back and they stared into each other’s eyes. Steven knew that there was something deep between them, something that couldn’t be measured.

Steven rolled off of James and pulled him close. James nuzzled into his chest. He felt, safe, warm, and loved in Steven’s arms. “ I never want to let you go.” Steven whispered. “ ...Nether do I” James said. They lay there in the cold snow, in a warm embrace.

18 - I like where we are

After awhile it started to snow. And James had no idea how he could be cold since it was warm in Stevens arms. "C'mon, were both soaked." Steven mumbled. He grabbed James's hand and pulled him up. They both walked out of the woods together hand in hand, and into the house.

James almost had a heart attack. His heart was silenced when Steven pulled out some of his cloths and tossed them at his head. Steven shook his head and smiled as he headed to the bathroom, he couldn't tell what the other had been thinking but he was obviously in a daze. "Stupid hormones." James thought as he switched cloths. They were baggy but it didn't matter to James, he liked them all the same.

Steven almost stared when he bumped into James in the hallway. The two exchanged smiles before heading downstairs and sitting on the couch. "Nice P.Js" James giggled. They were blue with yellow polka dots. Winking smiley faces had been drawn on them in permanent marker which had just barely begun to fade.

"Rose's prank. They're the only P.J.s I have." Steven said. "Nice toe nails, July?" James blushed and scratched the back of his head. She had painted them purple a few weeks ago but they hadn't even started to chip. Steven laughed. "S-shut up!" James said.

"I should put our cloths in the dryer." Steven said getting up. While he was doing that James thought about what Rent had said. How exactly was his mother taken? Was she poisoned with vampire venom? Fed on?

Maybe just killed in a fight? He honestly didn't know. Maybe she had transformed into a vampiric werewolf? Melexa had told him that if the wolf was strong enough to survive the conflicting venoms and the change in D.N.A then either the wolf gene would overpower the venom or the wolf would become a hybrid. But that would also depend on whether or not she was born a werewolf or adopted into the pack and given the gene.

It was all very confusing and James wanted to ask how she died so he could console Rent. He knew that if he couldn't Rent and Steven would always be fighting when James was involved. James didn't want to be the one to keep the two apart. They weren't only in the same pack but their fathers considered each other family. But who could James ask?

Stevens mother had died when he was only four and he often had a hard time talking about it. This would be a sore subject. Steven came back and sat on the other side of James. He could hear the dryer humming. Steven took one look of James's face and knew what he wanted to ask.

Steven turned his head to the T.V. "...She was eaten by a clan of vampires that tried to invade long time ago. The only thing left of her to bury were bones." James's eyes widened in shock as he realized who he was talking about. "We had been at the leaders cabin, pack headquarters. We were with some of the younger wolves."

* * *

Steven ran as Rent raced him down the hallway. Just as they were about to reach the stairs Steven tagged the railing. "Ha, ha! I win!" The five year old chanted. "No fair! You're taller than me!" The three year old whined. Both boys froze as they heard the front door close.

Voices were heard, some were sobbing, other whispering and one was yelling. "Cover her up I can't

stand the sight anymore.” The leader ordered. Both boys rushed down stairs to see what was going on. The living room was crowded with men and women, all nude, some injured. The boys paid no mind as they waved through them.

Rock (who’s hair hadn’t grown out yet) was cradling something wrapped in a sheet. The smell of blood was thick in the air as the man worked back and forth trying not to sob. The tears wouldn’t stop. Steven father had an arm around his shoulders trying to calm him. “Daddy what’s wrong? What is that?” Rent asked.

“Go upstairs.” Steven father ordered. “But- GO UPSTAIRS!” he shouted giving Steven a serious look. He backed up but Rent ran forward and grabbed the sheet. “Honey no!” One of the teens said as she grabbed him. But he didn’t let go.

The sheet came off. Rent’s eyes widened in shock. It was a skeleton stained with blood and had scratch marks all over it. The left, yellow eye, was still in its socket. Some of its hair was still attached to a piece of clinging flesh. It was midnight black.

The only few in the pack who had that color were the girl holding him, Rose, and his mother. “Momma?” he whimpered. He was trembling in the girls’ arms. “GET HIM OUT OF HEAR!” Rock shouted. He left the remains as he and the girl ran to the next room.

Steven Threw up on the floor just as Rent started to scream.

* * *

James was in shock as Steven tried not to break. “He threw a fit after that and nearly transformed for the first time. It woke Rose up but she never saw anything.” He choked out. His thought ached so much he wanted to throw up. Just to make the pain go away. James squeezed his hand before pulling him into a tight embrace.

He buried his head in the crook of James’s shoulder and shook as he tried not to sob. They sat there for a few moments in silence as James rubbed his back softly. “I can still remember it all so clearly...I can’t get it out of my head.” James didn’t stop rubbing his back until the shaking stopped. He wanted Steven to feel better and would give anything for that.

He pushed Steven back to face him and took his face in his hands, giving him a gentle kiss while brushing the tears away with his thumbs. He wrapped his arms around James’s neck. He wanted so badly just to melt but he knew his father would be home soon. They pulled apart to stare into each other.

“Thank you.” Steven whispered. Just then the doorknob twisted. Steven and James practically jumped to opposite ends of the couch. They both sat stiff facing the T.V. as Steven father came in. “Oh, hi guys!” He greeted the two as he removed his coat and shoes.

He leaned over the couch on his elbows. “Long time no see James, how have you been?” “Good.” James replied. “So, what have you two been up to?” “Watching T.V.” Steven blurted.

“...Steven? The TV’s not on.” His father said. Steven could have kicked himself. “Found it!” James said too enthusiastically as he picked up the remote. The T.V flickered to life and the boys began to surf channels. Steven father could have laughed but opted to shake his head and head towards the kitchen. James had to suppress giggles.

19 - Bad news

“They want Mena.” Venda explained. “What?!?” Moon shadow shrieked. “I don’t know why, but they think she can do something special.” There was a short pause. The stone, round, table was completely full.

As soon as Venda had gotten back she had call a meeting with the Rose seven. “Are you absolutely sure that you don’t have any uncommon abilities?” Venda asked Mena. “Yes.” Mena replied. “I’ve been tested for everything, if there was something “special” about me it would have shown by now.” “Either way for now we need to be careful. For now don’t leave the compound. And Moon shadow? Don’t let her out of your sight.” Venda ordered.

* * *

James woke up to Steven shaking his shoulder. The two had settled in upstairs to watch a horror movie but they had fallen asleep. “James are you alright?” Steven asked. “Wha...?” James sleepily rubbed his eyes. “You were whimpering.” James froze as where he was sunk in.

And what he had been dreaming about. He was just glad that it hadn’t lasted long enough to cause a long lasting reaction. “Uh...” “Oh!” Steven realized when he saw his friends’ expression. Both boys were redder than tomatoes.

Steven let out a nervous laugh. He had no idea how to handle an awkward situation like this. “Uh, I”- “Don’t apologize.” Steven interrupted. “Heh?”

“It’s not your fault.” He said giving him an awkward smile. He pulled James closer. “... I dream about you.” James admitted. “It’s okay...I dream the same.” The two stared into each other’s eyes. “...Do you always make noise?” Steven didn’t want to ask but the question was gnawing at him.

James hid his face in his chest. There was no way he could lie to him. “...Kind a” He mumbled. Steven couldn’t suppress the giggle, James was being way to cute. “How much noise?” He teased.

“...Allot.” Steven waited for him to elaborate. “I-I woke my sister up once.” Steven burst out laughing. “S-shut up!” “So I guess that’s what the duck tape was for?” James glared at him.

Steven kissed and nuzzled James. “What time is it?” James asked. “Five thirty. I guess the movie was kind of long.” Steven replied. James’s phone wrung. He read the text message.

“Crap, July’s upset. I have to go home.” “Okay.” Steven nodded in understanding. He watched as James left and listened to his footsteps as he closed the front door down stairs. Steven sighed. Just then his father poked his head into the room.

“I hope you know what you’re doing.” He said. “I’m sixteen dad. I know the danger.” Steven replied.

“Good. And Steve? I’m glad you’re choosing your friend despite everyone’s advice.” With that his father headed down stairs.

* * *

“Venda.” Jackobo said approaching. “Our reconnaissance spotted a group of werewolves approaching. Their formation suggests that they’re getting ready to strike.”

“How many?” She asked. “Ten. Not nearly enough to get into the compound by force alone. They may have an insider.” “Any suspects?” “None yet.” Jackobo replied. Venda growled in frustration.

This wasn’t going to be easy. “Inform the leader and get a defense force ready, and Jackobo?” “Yes?” “Hide Mena.” Jackobo nodded in agreement and left the large meeting hall.

Venda glared at the stone table. If they thought that they were going to get Mena they were dead wrong.

* * *

James was outside with Rose watching July line up snowballs. "Don't worry. Rent will get over it." She said. Although they both knew he would still hold a grudge. Rose had stopped in because she couldn't stand her brothers growls and swearing. He had been stomping around the house in an angry mood for a while now.

"I just can't believe you broke his nose. By the time we got to tell dad, most of it had already healed wrong and he had to re-break it and stick a cast to my brothers' face." She almost laughed. James didn't smile.

"Don't feel guilty, he was going to get some sense knocked into his sometime." The two paused and went back to watching July. It was hard not to though. Rent was just trying to protect his family from falling to the same fate as his mother. And James, well James had broken his nose for it. He felt horrible. Violence was never an answer. The three headed inside as the wind started to pick up again. A storm was coming. They could feel it. Rose had always loved and feared storms. She could feel all of the raw power the earth had and it was exciting. The two teenagers watched T.V. while they waited for Steven to show up. They were going to exchange cloths sense James had forgotten to bring his home. It was going to be lunchtime in a few hours and he still hadn't shown up yet. After only one soap opera it was starting to worry James.

July could easily see this and immediately started asking for attention. July wasn't social given her autism but she didn't like others to be upset. She often cried when someone was. To her everyone was supposed to be content or something really was wrong. But despite her attempt James's worry grew as the hours passed.

"We should go find him," James said after he finally had enough. July yelped as he got up and clung to his arm with a put. "I'll go." Rose said getting up. "Good by" She phrased as she left the house. "Good by" July repeated. James sighed. It was going to be awhile.

* * *

Rent stomped down to James's house. His nose had healed and he was so mad that he wanted to explode. First Steven turned his back on the pack for James, and then he defended the rotten little mosquito, and now after Rent had been attacked by James Steven had gone missing. It was already starting to get dark and Steven didn't stay out that late without at least calling first. It was all a little too suspicious for his liking.

Rent was going to find out what happened. One way or another. The next thing he knew he was kicking the front door open. James turned in surprise as Rent stomped up to him. "Where's Steven." He said in his darkest tone.

"What- I know you have him!" Rent yelled. "What's going on?" Jane said appearing from the kitchen. "Is something wrong?" She asked. Rent glanced at her and went back to giving James a death glare. "Well?" He asked.

"I don't know I've been hear all day." Rent growled. "I'm serious! I haven't seen him all day." "That bull shoot!" "Hey!" Daren said emerging from the dining room. "I don't know who you think you are but you can't just barge into my house and disrespect my family." Daren crossed his arms. James knew that look. It was his "knock it off or I'll call the police" look he always gave the neighbors when they were way too loud. "Get out." Rent left the house, slamming the door. "Rent has a bad temper," James explained.

That night no one could find Steven and the police were contacted. James could not sleep at all; he just

tossed and turned. Where could Steven have gone? Was he all right? It was baffling. There had been no sign of a struggle at his house or on the route to James's. There wasn't even a footprint. This night's storm had erased all evidence. James's family was questioned, just as Rose's and Tyler's was. They had found nothing. Three days in James told Melexa Steven was missing.

Melexa was too busy protecting Mena to offer any real help. As the end of that long week grew near James withdrew, the pain was starting to eat at him. "I'm glad that douche is gone, he was a pain in the @\$\$." Tyler had said at lunch one day. Before Suzan had even gotten the chance to yell at him James had already tackled him and tried to strangle him. "James!" Rose yelled.

She and Rent pulled him off of Tyler kicking and screaming. They dragged him out into the hallway before letting him go. "James I know you're upset but you can't take it out on Tyler. You could kill him." She said. "I don't know what else to do." James said trying not to break down. "I checked out every place I could think of but there's no sign of him at all. I even asked the thorn for help but they can't do anything."

Rent's eyes widened. James was shaking. One look at his face and Rent could tell that this wasn't an act. He felt lower than hell. Rent gripped his shaky shoulder hard.

"We'll find him. I promise." And James knew, Rent was dead serious.

20 - Realizations

That Friday James, Rose, Rent, and even July were at Stevens house. The T.V. was on but no one was watching it. They were staring blankly at the screen. July was lining up crayons. "...It's weird, being hear without him I mean." Rose said.

"Yeah." Rent sighed. James was silent. "Were else should we go though? I'm pretty sure that James's father hates me and our house is two miles out of town." Being werewolves gave them the advantage of speed but although they were sure he was faster, James was in no mood to run anywhere. He had spent the entire night staring at his bracelet and thinking of Steven.

At that moment his phone rang. He answered it and almost dropped it in shock. On the screen was a picture of Steven unconscious and chained to the wall with an I.V sticking out of his arm. His clothes were torn up, he was badly scratched, and the side of his face was a spectacular purple were someone must have tried to bash his head in. There was also a text.

"We're watching you James. You're in a living room with your sister and two friends. Tell anyone of this and we'll kill Steven. Attempt to break him out; we'll kill him. You will turn yourself over to us. If you don't we'll kill him. And if we kill him we'll have to re-place him with your sister. You have until Tuesday to find us. Mt."

James was shaking. "James? What is it?" Rose asked She took the phone and gasped when she saw the picture. Rent read over her shoulder. "We have to tell the pack." He said.

"No!" "James." "You both read the text! They'll kill him. They're watching us right now and they'll take my sister!" James's breathing was rising and he was standing. July was watching with concern. "We can't tell anyone."

"What about the thorn?" Rose asked. The phone rang. They read the text.

"Absolutely no thorn. Get any were near the compound and we wont hesitate."

James threw the phone down and began to pace. July whimpered. "W-well there has to be something we can do!" Rose said standing. James paused. "...I have to turn myself in."

"No!" Rent said finally getting up again. "You can't let them win!" "What else am I supposed to do!?! They know where I live Rent! Even if I find a way to keep them from July they'll just take my parents! Or worse, you..." July began to cry. "But you don't even know who they are! They might not even have Steven with them!" Rose shouted.

"And you do!?!!" There was a pause. Rent stared at the floor as sobs filled the room. "It's the mountain pack." He said. "Take me to them!"

"I can't. If we go now everyone will be looking for us, besides someone will have to protect your family. Lets face it; your sister is a wreck without you." He said sternly. He gestured to July who was crying on the floor. They paused while James tried to reassure her. "We're okay now. I'm sorry" He phrased kneeling to her level. She sat up and stared at him.

She gave him a worried look. After all she had been around James long enough to be able to tell when he was lying. "I'll stay behind." Rose said. "It'll take your four days to get there on foot...Rent when you get near there you'll have to turn around. If they get you too then we'll be in over our heads." She said. "James... they might not let him go. Your understand that, right?" Rose walked over to him and

gripped his shoulder.

“ I understand.” He said swallowing. James turned to July. “L-lets go home.” He choked. “ I’ll hide your phone and we’ll head out a midnight from your house tomorrow.” Rent said. July took her brothers hand and together they left.

Rent sat down on the couch and turned James’s phone off. He stared at the floor in thought. “ ... We’re in deep shoot.” He said turning to Rose. Little did they know, Stevens father had been in his room, pretending to read. He had heard every word.

* * *

Saturday had been hell for James. He had only slept for twenty minutes and had a nightmare about Steven being tortured by the man who had been locked up at the thorn. He couldn’t stop the tears when he woke up. July who had woken up thirsty walked in his room and put an arm around him. The day had seemed to drag on and he spent most of it on the couch watching TV and planning.

His parents hadn’t noticed that his boots and coat were hidden under his bed along with some of the food. It had been shoved in his backpack as well as a sheathed kitchen knife. A sharp one. That night after he finished counting his money he sat in bed staring at his bracelet ready to go.

He was also wearing a hat to hide his semi-long hair. Rent showed up at his window right on time. Which was a big feat for him as it was. “ We’ll run to the nearest city and sneak onto a bullet train headed near the mountains.

“Once we get close enough we can just jump off.” He explained. “ If we haven’t gotten caught.” “ We won’t get caught” it wasn’t a suggestion; it was a statement. James climbed out the window.

Rent tossed him his bag of things including his cloths and shifted forms. Together they ran into the night.

* * *

The next night as the sun went down; Melexa had been watching the news. His eyes were wide in shock.

“ Startling news strikes the area as new developments appear in a recent missing persons case. Steven, whose last name as well as others involved in this case will remain confidential, age sixteen, disappeared two weeks prior of today. Police have found no new evidence of the teen’s disappearance.” The local anchorwomen said. A picture of Steven appeared on the screen. “ Just last night Stevens close friends Rent (age fifteen) and James (age sixteen) were reported missing early this morning. They have yet to be found and no evidence of a struggle has been found. Cash and food has gone missing from both residences, making it appear that the two boys have planed this. The only lead on the two run always is Rose, age fourteen, Rents younger sister, however she insist that she knows nothing of their disappearance, despite having seen both boys before the disappearance.” The threes pictures had been added to the screen. “ Pleas, if anyone has any information leading to their whereabouts or there disappearances, call this number.”

Melexa immediately got up and went to the dining room of the rose sevens sector. The rest of the group was sitting around another stone table drinking coffee. “ James is missing.” All conversation stopped. “ It’s on the news, one of the local packs teenagers is gone as well.”

Venda froze. “ I’ll get it eventually.” The moment was ringing in her mind. “ He said it. We’ve been protecting the wrong person. They wanted James.” She said.

“ But James isn’t a member of the thorn.” Moon shadow argued. “ Yes but he appears to be.” Navy

said. Melexa, Venda, and Leks cursed. Everyone immediately got up to inform the thorn leader. Melexa took out his cell and dialed.

Stevens's pack was involved; they had a right to know. It would also improve the odds of finding them if they knew the other sides story.

* * *

" I know. The Magicians have made a treasure of mine disappear during the magic show. I'm trying to get it back but... you know magicians. They always say they're always watching you. I can't be sure but you never know. I was planning to take the rest of my family to the next show but with what happened and my son missing... Yes I know. I'm pretty sure that magicians a thief too. He's probably hiding it at his home. Some of my other stuff is gone too. ...Yes, thank you." Stevens father hung up the phone.

" So we were gonna go to a magic show?" She echoed. She was busy with keeping an eye on James's family, not stupid. Her uncles' codes were always easy to read. Steven was kidnapped during the storm to erase all evidence; they were being watched so they couldn't do much at the moment, he would alert the pack as soon as possible; Rent and James were going to try to get Steven, simple. " Yeah." Her uncle trailed off.

" But now I just want to make sure the boys are all right."

* * *

James woke up just as the sun was setting. He and Rent had sowed away in the cargo compartment of the bullet train. Rent was currently laying agenst to wall opposite of him. James was curled up in a ball agenst a crate. The room wasn't heated so all of his joints were cramped and freezing. His sleep had been a numb, dreamless sleep filled with an aching sadness and fear. He honestly just felt like crying but he wouldn't. Now was a time for action, not tears. But he didn't know what he would do once he finally got there.

James would be walking into the den of a small army of wolves. Big wolves. He would be alone and armed with a big kitchen knife. It was pathetic. He couldn't get Steven back by force and even if he didn't fight they wouldn't let Steven go.

They would use him as a toll to control him. What was he thinking? He barely knew how to fight let alone fight like a vampire. He had almost no skill what so ever. How would he beat a pack of wolves?

It was making him more miserable and scared by the second. His hands were shaking at the thought of it. Or was that the cold? He hadn't noticed but Rent had woken up and had been watching him. The more he watched the more he realized.

James was terrified. " You can get him out, I know you can." They both jumped at that. Rent hadn't meant to say anything at all but he was probably right. " Look, the sun is going down and according to the map this is as close the mountains that we can get from hear."

James nodded as they got up, opened a ceiling hatch, and climbed onto the roof of the bullet train. The force of the wind almost knocked both boys over they were going so fast. There was no way James would come out of this unscathed. James stared at the ground as it went by. " Yup...I'm gonna die" He thought.

He was trying to prepare himself but Rent grabbed him before he could. The two crashed into the gravel as a yelp echoed. Rent had already known about Vampire healing problems and had made sure that James landed on top of him before they rolled down the banking. Before he knew it James was yanked to his feet. " Lets move" and they were off and running through the woods.

It was up hill and the snow slowed them down but for some reason Rents energy had rubbed of on

James and he wasn't tired anymore. They ran, jumping over rocks, dodging trees, and occasionally tripping. James's face was bright red from the wind as they were running faster than cars. James's energy surged from a determination he had never known before and Rent had to shift forms just to keep up. They ran into the pitch-black night until dawn, their eyes reflecting what little light they had had. Rent howled to get James to stop and they both collapsed. James had never felt so alive before but his lips had turned blue and if his legs weren't numb he was sure that they would have ached. Rent shifted forms and quickly pulled on his cloths. "We should get a fire going. I might be an endless heat sore but your not" James nodded as a shiver ran up his spine.

The two quickly gathered as much dry wood they could find. The clearing they had settled in was baking in the sun. "What's with all the vegetables?" "I have to keep my iron count up and meat would only make me crave." Rent nodded in understanding.

"But it's so cold out hear it wouldn't spoil." "It'd probably get freezer burn." They both laughed. The fire crackled as they fell into silence. James fell back and stuffed his remaining food in his bag. He wondered if Steven was all right but decided to sleep. Worry would only tie him out. They had a long way to go.

* * *

Steven was trying his hardest to keep conscious but the drug was sapping his energy so much that he couldn't keep his eyes open. Everything hurt, he was sure that his ribs were broken and the drug slowed his healing tremendously. He was only fed enough to keep alive and his Stomach ached with hunger and bruising. Steven knew; he wouldn't last long. He could feel his grip on his life slip but he held on.

He fought with everything he had. If only he could move. Then this agony would be over. "They can kill me...but I will never brake." He kept thinking.

The memory of James's face kept him fighting. Steven was going to die, but he would never let them have him. One of his hands twitched.

* * *

That night they woke at sunset and continued on. Never stopping until sunrise. Rent told James everything he knew about the mountain pack. So it was Stevens father who saved him all those years ago. He also learned that the pack was living in and abandoned castle they had fixed up.

The top of the mountain was flat and hidden in trees. So only a werewolf or a lost hiker could find it. They were a poor pack but they somehow managed to conduct experiment. On there own as well as other races. They had used to be a proud and honorable pack but the last blood war did allot of damage that had yet to heal.

There were even farfetched rumors that some of them had turned rabid. James was now even more scared to enter alone. However the running and camping had shown him almost just how strong he really was. He still didn't know his limits but was surprised by how far they had come. Maybe he could succeed.

Maybe he could...

The next night was horrible. A storm had appeared in the day and the angry winds were going crazy. The snow was coming down in huge clump but this didn't stop them. It was only a challenge to overcome. They were forced to stop a few hours before sunrise.

James was completely numb but he still had his energy. James had become stubborn, eyes on the goal.

“ I’m not gonna let a storm slow me down!” James shouted over the winds. Thick trees sheltered them but it was still loud. Rent growled in frustration.

Didn’t James realize he was going to get frostbite? Apparently not because he kept walking. Well that was it; Rent had had it. He honestly didn’t care if it would be awkward. Rent jumped and tackled James knocking him over.

“ Rent! Get off me!” James protested. “ Before I throw you off!” Rent growled and snapped his muzzled only a few inches away from James’s face. James sighed in agitation. Rent was right and he was sure that if Steven was hear he’d kick his @\$\$ for being so reckless and stupid.

When they woke the sun had barely started to set, the storm was over. The two immediately took care of themselves and set out again. They needed to make up on lost time. Steven was probably in agony now and they had no time to waist. The two were sprinting as fast as their legs would go, heading straight for their destination as the hills eventually turned into cliffs.

Neither cared. They just wanted to get Steven back. Ironically they had made better time then they had thought. The entrance was close. They could see the decrepit castle in the distance.

“ I don’t like it...” Rent said. “ But I’ll have to wait hear.” James turned. He was terrified. “ Okay well...Thanks and... goodbye!” And James sprinted before he lost his nerve.

He jumped up and over cliffs. He knew that when the sun rose Rent would sprint for help. After all they had James, now they wouldn’t have to take July. He and Rose had to tell the rest of their pack what was going on if they hadn’t already figured it out. James’s sprint eventually turned into a slow walk when the mountain flattened out.

Fear slowed him down, but Steven kept him going.

21 - Rescue

Steven forced his arm to move even though it was sapping his energy and he was shaking with effort, or he would be if not for the exhaustion. His brain wanted him to sleep but he would not let them win. He would never let them have James. With a determination he hadn't known he had he fought off the haze, grabbed the I.V., and ripped it out of his arm. He fought it but passed out having used all of his energy.

* * *

Rose and Mena were sitting on either side of the couch at the leaders cabin. Rose had been put in charge of watching the youngsters of the pack who were currently upstairs. The Rose seven and other members of Roses pack had decided to join forces to take down the mountain pack. They were a small pack so if the Rose seven could get to the boys in time then they could easily over power them. "So...uh." Mena wasn't good at small talk.

"...They'll be fine." Rose sighed. How did she know? Well she didn't. But it was enough.

* * *

James walked into the front yard of the castle. It was currently crawling with werewolves. They were skinny and despite the cold snow they were all wearing rags that barely covered themselves; old cloths that had been patched and sewed. "Well it's about time." Said one of them. James immediately recognized him.

He was the man who had been locked away and by the looks of it he was the current leader. His black hair had grown past his shoulders and there was stubble were a beard would grow in. "Where is Steven?" James said in a cold tone. His fear still remained but was being suffocated by anger. "Now no need to be upset. He's still alive."

"I'm not handing my self over until you let him go!" James took a step back. "Ha! Funny thing about that..." The man trailed off. He snapped his fingers and the two men on either side of him shifted forms. They were both gray, and huge.

"You don't have a choice." The two wolves lunged at James and he ran. "Don't kill him boys we need him alive!" the leader shouted after them. None of the other wolves had given chase as he ran around the left side of the huge castle. The snow was deep there, which slowed them down but not for long.

The wolves were used to the climate and were gaining fast. James was already sprinting. But the snow was too thick. He knew that he would be captured. But just as he had tripped the wolves howled in pain.

"You dolts! I said to lead him to me! Not to attack! You're just as stupid as your leader, or was this David's doing!?" James looked up. Standing upside down from a ledge on the castle was a women, she had tan skin and brown wavy hair. The women blew the whistle she was holding. There was no sound but the wolves whined in pain and immediately turned around.

The women sighed and turned to James. "My baby..." She jumped and landed on her feet in front of him. "You're all grown up." She cooed. She opened her arms.

James backed away. "Of course, you were so small then ..." James's eyes widened. "That voice... I can almost... remember it?" He thought. He was pulled back into a memory.

A calm female voice was humming. He felt warm and safe, as if he was buried in something soft but he

could still see light, it was moving as if he was being rocked. A warm scent surrounded him. James blinked; he didn't know what to say he couldn't even move. He had never wondered about it; never. But now questions were exploding in his mind. The winds howled against the castle. "... M-mother?" He felt so torn and confused that he wanted to scream. Her face broke into a teary smile and she embraced him.

"Yes, yes it's me." She almost sobbed. James was frozen in shock.

The women led her son into the castle with an arm around his shoulders. James didn't know what to do. "You sound so much like your father. He was always a shy person, stuttered when he was nervous, and had a very strong heart." She said as they walked down a large corridor. "He was a good man. We fell in love and six months after I went into heat (I can explain that to you later if you need me to) you were born." She explained. "You used to scream pretty loud, I'm sure you got that from him."

"Heh, it's probably the other way around." The pack leader had followed them. "Silence!" She hissed. She had snapped so fast that they both jumped. "Yes Pandora." The leader immediately turned around and walked away. She smirked.

"When I demanded their help they were all frightened, one of them passed out." She almost laughed. "You planned this." James stopped and pulled away. "I couldn't get to you. The thorn wouldn't let me. "You're too unstable. You" put him in danger and the boys already been traumatized enough. Those were their exact words."

James was shocked but they were right, he could hear it in her voice. Something wasn't right with her. "Listen. A war is coming. You will be put in danger, one way or another. Clans have already started to attack each other. I need you hear." "How can I believe you!?" He shouted. "Because that's how your father, your real father, died. My coven was preparing for a war and killing halflings, they would only slow them down; they needed strong vampires. But I couldn't let them take you so we ran!" She was almost sobbing.

"A few weeks later they caught up to us, I tried to stop them but I was too slow at the time, they stabbed him to death. I managed to escape but I could never stay in one place. I eventually gave birth to you alone in an abandoned house. A few days later they found me and I led them away. When they had discovered I had already given birth to you they went back to search for you. I managed to get ahead of them but you were gone!" James was speechless. "We were preparing for a war James! I couldn't look for you for almost four years! And when I finally found you I couldn't get near you! Then you disappeared again! But you see I'm like a tracking device, when I couldn't stand it anymore I decided to find you again."

Fourteen years. It took her fourteen years to finally decide to try finding him again, and it was out of guilt. James didn't know if he was shaking with rage or pain. Pandora had abandoned him of her own choosing. Suddenly it all clicked.

David, the man who had been locked away, had been trying to find him. The other wolf had been ordered to take him.

"When I found you again you were even closer to the thorn than before. Until I could get you back again I watched you. David agreed to help me. You see when I was on my way to a hotel her tried to mug me, the hotel was on the outer edge of the city next to your town. He discovered that I was the missing vampire they had been warned about a few years back. I told him my story and he agreed to help me if I killed his leader. He wanted to be in charge." She explained.

Maybe she was sane once but over the years she had been unsettled. "Honey you have to understand; I would do anything for you. You're all that I have." James wanted to cry. Nothing would fix her. Even if he stayed with her for the rest of his life there was nothing he could do.

"I understand." James tried to smile. He was telling the truth; he did understand. The traumas she had

been forced to endure had broken her. If he had lost Steven for good, the same might have happened to him if he were alone like Pandora. The two continued to walk down the hallway.

“ I’m glad you do. That family did a good job raising you.” She said. “ The problem is... Mt coven is still looking for us and they haven’t stopped killing halflings. Consorting with humans can bring treason, but you’re father is dead; we’re not consorting with them anymore. Theirs only one thing left to fix.”

James’s eyes widened. He had to get Steven out of hear.

“ Humans are weak, in fact your father was one of the few who fought agents that weakness. He was always trying to be a better person; an exception. But the coven was too stubborn to see it; they could never see it. Which is why they’ll never see you until you’re one of us.” She stopped walking.

“ You’re illness will disappear too. I feel bad for Steven.” She put a hand to the side of his head. James swallowed. “ C-can I say goodbye? He was one of the few friends I had, things won’t be the same after this.” “ Of course. But he’s still in bad shape; break it easy to him. Letting go of a loved one is hurts.”

Pandora said. James forced himself to nod. “He’s on the second floor, third door to your left. Oh, and you should take the I.V. out. It’s about time we let him go. I just hope he doesn’t come after us when this is over. I don’t want to kill him”

“ Got it.” He said. James turned around and walked down the hall. He had to tell himself over and over not to run. This was his only chance, but it was hell. “ Where are you going!?!” David shouted, grabbing him when he got to the entrance hall.

“ Put a scratch on me and I’ll scream bloody murder.” James threatened. He was almost devoid of emotion. David froze at the statement. He growled. “ If you try to escape I’ll rip your little sister to shreds” He hissed in his ears.

David shoved James to the stairs. “ Wow, I must have picked that up from Melexa.” He thought as he ran up the stairs. As he reached the second floor he could hear a continuous bang. Some one was banging on the third door to the left, from the inside. James sprinted over and practically ripped the steel door open.

Steven yelped and stumbled to the floor. His eyes were partially glazed over as he looked at James. “ James, you...idiot.” He said through the haze. However the relief in his words was obvious. James almost laughed at it as he pulled Steven up into an embrace.

“ You alright? You’re shakin.” He slurred. “Shouldn’t I be asking you that?” James said. “ How did you get out of the chains?” James said. He noticed the broken shackles hanging from his wrists. “ I ripped the...I.V thing out.” He said.

“ Is there another way out?” “ There’s a window.” “ Oh you won’t be going anywhere.” The boys turned. David was standing next to a gray wolf on the other side of the hall, and true enough there was a window behind him.

“ Do you really think I’m that stupid?” David said. “ Maybe.” Steven slurred. “ Ha! Well now that I’m in charge I have no use for Pandora. I can just kill her!” He echoed. “ Then why are you doing this !?!” James asked. “ I don’t have anything to offer!”

“ Your mentor killed my brother.” David said in monotone. The gray wolf growled. An image of Melexa splitting the black wolf apart flashed in James’s mind. “ Oh I think you have plenty to offer!” David snapped his fingers and the wolf attacked.

Steven shoved James out of its path and was tackled. The two wrestled, human form against wolf, as David transformed and lunged for James. James dodged each attack but David kept coming at him. Steven however was trying not to get torn apart. He was holding the others muzzle closed as the wolf thrashed and clawed his legs.

Steven was in too much of a haze to transform and he knew he couldn’t last long. That was when he heard it. There was a crunch and a blood-curdling scream. David had gotten to James arm at the shoulder. His eyes were wide in terror.

But something changed. His pupils had turned to slits and his eyes had changed color. He had claws and adrenalin was pumping through him. And then he screamed in rage, dug his claws into David's back and hurled him into the window behind him. David let go of James as he crashed through the glass. Both Steven and the gray wolf had frozen in awe. James's fists were clenched. He turned. His expression radiated Rage and he attacked. Before Steven could even see it the wolf's back had been scratched.

He was ripped out of Steven's hands and thrown. With a cry it slammed into the wall just above the broken window and landed top half hanging out. James shook with an intense rage and fear at the power he never knew he had. His fists were clenched so tight that his palms bled. Not that it mattered; his shoulder bled enough for two.

Sound of a battle could be heard downstairs. "James...?" James couldn't answer. He was trying not to scream. "James?"

Still nothing. James could smell blood everywhere. "James! Look at me!" Steven yelled. James turned. He looked terrified.

"It's okay. I'm right here, you'll be fine." Steven wrapped his arms around him and without warning he sobbed. His tears mixed with the blood that splattered his face. He had almost lost it and was thanking god that he hadn't snapped.

22 - End

The rose seven and Stevens pack had practically sprinted a day behind Rent and James. When they attacked things got heavy. Pandora was captured and handed over to the government. She was too unstable to go free. All evidence had been cleared out and a story put in its place.

“ They” had mistaken James for a wring leaders son who had gone missing a year before. The “ Drug wring” had kidnapped Steven in hopes of a trade. Rent and James went after them. The police tracked them down and every one who had actually been in the “drug wring” had been arrested. Case closed. The rumor behind James’s wound was that a wolf had attacked him on his way to the hide out, a regular wolf. Maybe doped up on steroids but nothing more. Steven healed just fine once the drug was out of his system. James had been put in the hospital. He had suffered a fever, which was dubbed an extreme allergy from the werewolf venom that had gotten into his system.

The doctor he had seen before had re-tested him for multiple allergies and updated his file, which was now under lock and key by order of the Thorn. Steven visited as often as possible, whether visiting hours were closed or not. Surprisingly James had figured out how to stick to walls and ceilings. The werewolf venom had triggered some of his remaining dormant abilities to emerge. After about four weeks James was healed completely. Not scars what so ever.

“ So a war is coming.” “ That’s what she said.” Melexa sighed. He and James had been discussing Pandora’s plans by twilight. “ Covens and clans are getting tired of hiding. There’s not much we can do to stop it.”

There was a long pause. James knew. He knew he had to pick a side and he had already chosen. It was something he had been trying to decide sense he learned of Stevens involvement with the werewolves and now it was clear. The job of ambassador to the wolves had been up for grabs and he was eligible. No one had taken it. He would. The thorn needed a link to them. Someone who knew them well and could negotiate between the two. The different pack leaders that had been involved with them had agreed.

The choice had been obvious to Melexa but because James was still in high school he didn’t pressure him. Of course he’d be out of high school soon. Well...soon by their standards. James was going to be a member of the thorn but he would be working with the wolves if they needed his service. “ You sure?” Melexa asked.

“ Absolutely.” James was dead serious. Melexa sighed. “ Moon shadows gonna be ecstatic.” James almost squealed. Almost. “ Welcome to the coven.”

* * *

The next weekend Stevens father was out of town. He would be back in the morning so Steven had invited James over. James had taken a call in the hallway on his cell (after Steven had nearly pulled up all of the floor boards in his closet to find the thing.) Steven got up and headed to the bedroom door the listen. The hallway was quiet, that’s when the door swung open.

James a sitting on the ceiling with his hair untied. “ Theysaidyes!” He blurted. It was so fast it came out as one word as James jumped up on the ceiling. “yougotthejob?!?” Steven asked. “ Igotthejob!” Both boys squealed and started jumping in excitement. “Whyarewescreaminglikeschoolgirls!?!?” Steven said. “Idon’tknowmabyitwastheicecream!” They both screeched again in the same manner. That is until

James and knocked Steven over. "That was random." Steven laughed. "Yeah." James replied. For a moment there was nothing, nothing but the two of them. " I love you." Whether James meant to say it aloud or not didn't matter. " When I was alone...ish seeing you, even if it was in the background, kept me from dieing inside." Steven was almost speechless...almost. " I love you too. You're the only reason why I could get out of those chains." What happened next said it all.

(Removed scean: why? cus I know kids don't listen to the warnings. May change my mind. if you'er interested say so.)

* * *

Stevens father had entered his sons' room the next morning to drag him out of bed and nearly had a heart attack. Steven was asleep, in the arms of his best friend. Naked. Little James, the boy who couldn't go to sleep without saying goodnight to his little sister, who was so quiet that he often didn't hear him enter the room, had his son wrapped in his arms, in bed. He thought about alerting the boys' mother about this but though better of it and settled for quietly backing out of the room and closing the door in shock.

He stood frozen for a moment. " I should get Steven a health book about this." He said aloud to himself before heading to his own room. He knew one thing for sure; they were not aloud to be alone in the house anymore.