

SANGRE FALLS

by

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EBOOK EDITION

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As I walked down the cement sidewalk, rain soaking through my clothes, I had no way of knowing that my life would change forever. With a storm passing through and thunder bolts momentarily lighting the night's sky, I angrily stomped in every puddle, causing the water to splash around my combat boots. Zipping my black hoodie to guard against the frigid night air, all I could

think about was the day I was told we were relocating to Sangre Falls.

My guardian, José Medina, told me that he was moving the whole clan to a mansion just outside of town. That was a hundred miles away from our old place in Brownsville! I was surprised by the news. I had never been outside of Brownsville, the town where I lived out my relatively short existence as a vampire, and, now, I was being uprooted.

It is not that I hate Sangre Falls, but the people are quite unwelcoming. It is the kind of spot-on-the-map town where people seem naturally suspicious of one another, but, for the most part, everyone stays out of your business. I guess one would think that would work in my favor, being what I am and all, but I dreaded the move. Who really likes change anyway? Not me! I was used to my life before and didn't see the need to throw everything away to start over.

“This is not fair... Don't I have a say in where I live?” I asked, brushing my straight, black hair away from my face. I felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me so quickly I got a bad case of whiplash.

“It's for the protection of our kind, Alexis,” José said calmly, standing over me. “The towns' people have become aware of our habits. They find it suspicious that we only come out after sundown. If they were to find out what we are, they would hunt us down. It wouldn't be long before our kind goes extinct.”

So with that little speech, I, Alexis Adeluna, was whisked away—well, it was more like dragged, kicking and screaming—to a dark mansion on a hill, overlooking the town of Sangre Falls.

With my feet pounding on the pavement, I took a left onto Cemetery Drive. It was not uncommon for me to be found in a cemetery. In my spare time, I liked to do grave rubbings. Grave Rubbing is when you make a copy of a gravestone by placing a paper on a grave and rubbing a crayon over it. Some people used charcoal which is a better medium, but I was no artist. I just use crayons and hang the rubbings in my attic bedroom. It sounds morbid, but I like to make stories up about the people whose graves I rub. In my world, fantasy was better than the shit load of reality I had to deal with on a day-to-day bases. Being immortal wasn't easy! One has to learn the fine art of kicking ass and taking names... Which I hadn't gotten the hang of and was still trying to master. We had to support ourselves with investments that may or may not be legal and we had to change our persona from time to time to throw off humans. We couldn't risk their suspicion falling on us.

With the roar of thunder in my ears and a flash of lightning in my eyes, I entered through the cemetery gates. Preoccupied and temporarily blinded, I had no way of knowing I was about to collide with someone until my body felt like I had run into a brick wall. The force of the collision was strong. So much so, that my ass hit the pavement so hard that I thought I was going to break it.

“Get out my way,” the voice growled.

With the streetlamps dimly lighting the space between us, I looked up to see a grungy-looking man. He appeared to be in his mid-thirties and stood about six feet tall. He wore an oversized, black t-shirt with pants that sat just below his gut. I could see that his skin was the color of caramel and his eyes were as black as the night. His mouth twisted in a sneer, blood seeping from his lip.

My eyes traced his wound. I assumed, had been inflicted from our crashing into one another. “Excuse you,” I hollered at him, picking myself up.

“What are you doing here? Coming to graffiti the headstones,” he stated angrily, answering his own question.

I gawked at him in shock, but my initial shock was quickly replaced by anger. “I would never to something like that,” I told him furiously, sensing my skin grow hot despite the cold. Feeling my teeth descend, I felt the need to do damage. I should have just drained him there and then, but I’d sworn off hunting humans. Instead, I tend to order “O-” from the blood bank Medina owns, ripping the bags open with a straw and drinking them like juice boxes. Yet, the instinct to hurt something never left me. Not when I was angry anyway. Thinking of a good lie, I finally said, “I have family buried here.”

He looked at me, a hint of disbelief twinkling in his eye. “Listen to me, kid. I am the groundskeeper here. If anything happens to this cemetery, I am coming after you,” he threatened pointing at me. Then he turned on his heel swiftly, moving away from me and going about his business.

Brushing off his threat, I continued to enter the cemetery, trying to calm my frustrations with each step. I still wanted to pound that guy’s face in, but like I said before I haven’t yet mastered the skill of delivering a good can of whup-ass. None-the-less, I felt my teeth retract and my skin began to cool down.

The rain had ceased to fall and it seemed the storm was inching away. After a few hours, I found a few graves that interested me: Zeileth Ortiz, mother of four, died October 31, 1983; Thomas Duffy, beloved father of one, died February 14, 1999.

It was nearly dawn when I heard screams, piercing my ears like a fog horn.

My body tensed as my muscles grew taut. My heart quickened and I felt my teeth descend. Looking down at my nails, they appeared sharper. I realized my back was hunched as if waiting for a fight. My eyes wide as my pupils dilated, giving me the ability to see more acutely in the dark. When I realized I wasn’t in danger, I felt my body relax.

Coming to my senses, I picked up my etchings and ran towards the earsplitting cries.

Immediately, I noticed people running down the street, horror imprinted upon their faces. Curious, I went in the opposite direction of the crowd, running towards the scene.

When I finally reached my destination, I stood before the grisly scene.

A boy, roughly seventeen years old, lay crumpled on the ground. He was pale as if all the blood had been drained from his body. He wore a look of shock as his death mask. His blue eyes turned milky, staring blankly up at the sky. His clothes were shredded and claw marks ripped deep into his chest.

Without thought, I inched closer to the body until I was kneeling before it. There was nothing I could do for him. He had probably expired after the first blow. Still, a strange feeling came over me...

I had never been so close to death before. Vampires are immortal, aging at will and only for appearances. José was over four hundred years old but appeared to be a man of only thirty years. I am just over a hundred years old but appear to be no more than sixteen. Being immortal has its advantages.

As if in a trance, I touched his arm as if I were comforting an ailing friend and not a dead stranger.

His skin was cold... So cold.

I was shocked into my senses when I heard the sirens, quickly approaching. They were getting louder and louder as they bridged the gap between themselves and the crime scene. I decided it wouldn't be a good idea to be found at the place of a grisly attack. So, I ran home as fast as I could and didn't turn back.

When I reached the mansion, I went straight up to my bedroom, deciding it was better not to speak of what I had seen. My room was as I left it with grave rubbings decorating the walls like a poor man's wallpaper. Instinctively, I gave my room a quick glance over, scanning over my black sheets and stopping at the drapery. Sunlight was dangerous for my kind, but I guess that is kind of stating the obvious. To protect my delicate skin from being burned by daylight, I boarded up my windows and covered them with thick, black curtains. So, my room was dark no matter what time of day it was. Nothing seemed amiss. Nearly daybreak, I collapsed onto my bed and entered into a deep sleep.

My sleep was dreamless as my kind didn't often dream. I say "often" because only the prophets seem to have dreams. Yet, the everyday, garden variety vampire didn't dream. Sleep was a trance. A

kind of defense mechanism against daylight.

I woke up from my slumber the following dusk. Usually, I wake up gradually, but this time I felt on edge. I thought I heard a voice, whispering to me from the darkness. I heard it tell me to wake up. It was so unexpected I nearly fell out of bed. I wasn't prone to auditory delusions so I knew it wasn't in my head.

"Who's there?" I asked into the darkness, sitting up in bed and waiting for another hint of an intruder.

After a moment, a wispy voice whispered, "Wake up."

Anticipating a confrontation, my hands were shaking. I usually consider myself quite brave, but not when I am caught off guard in my personal chamber. Feeling around to acclimate myself to my surroundings, I found the nightstand. I reached out, trying to feel for the lamp that I knew was there. After a few seconds, I found the lamp and switched it on.

I almost jumped out of my skin. There was a boy standing at the foot of my bed, staring down at me. "Who the hell are you?"

"Danny," he replied, looking stunned. "My name is Daniel Adeodatus. You can see me?"

"Of course!" I yelled, instinctively trying to cover myself with my blankets. Eyeing my intruder more closely, I realized the boy was actually quite handsome and... semi-transparent! "What the hell! What are you? What are you doing here?"

"You remember me, don't you? You saw my body sprawled on the street last night. I saw you, but you couldn't hear me."

My eyes almost bulged out of their sockets as I stared at him in utter shock. His black hair was tousled and his complexion was slightly darker than I remembered. His unwavering eyes were no longer fogged over and shun like brilliant, blue gems. There were no signs of blood stains on his white tee and blue jeans. He was actually tall and surprisingly muscular. Not that I usually check out dead guys, but Danny was pretty cute...

Vampires usually had extraordinary senses, but many had gifts which were quite beneficial at times. José had the power of mind control. I heard of others having the gifts of levitation and foresight, but I never heard of anyone having the ability to see the dead. It must have been my unconscious sympathy for him as he was strewn across the pavement or the fact that I touched his body that gave me the ability to see him in spirit form.

"I can't believe this," I said, glowering at him. "What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to go into some kind of light or something like that?"

“I didn’t see any light,” Danny said, sounding confused. “I only saw darkness.”

“What was the last thing you remember?”

“I remember teeth. I remember my insides being hacked out by some kind of wolf,” he responded, seemingly horrified by his memories. “Then, I remember you.”

“A wolf?” I questioned, stunned. “Like what? Like a werewolf?”

“I read about these things in the past, but I didn’t think they really existed.” He appeared completely distraught, but, then, an idea seemed to dawn on him. “I am cursed! I am the undead, doomed to walk the earth forever until the lycan that killed me is slain.”

“What comic book did you get that out of?” I asked sarcastically, giving him a sidelong glance.

“Not a comic. A movie,” he replied, quite proud of himself. “I don’t remember the title... I think its An American Werewolf in—”

“Never mind,” I told him forcefully, rolling my eyes. “So, what does that have to do with me?”

“You have to help me, of course,” he replied matter-of-factly.

“You must be out of your mind!” I yelled at him, getting up out of bed.

“You think?” he asked sarcastically, raising an eyebrow at me. “I’m dead! I don’t have a brain! Hell, I don’t have a body.”

I looked at him levelly. “Your problem is not my problem,” I told him. “Besides werewolves don’t exist.”

“Then, what killed me?” he asked angrily.

“I don’t know and I don’t care!” I shouted, wanting to roll over in my bed and put a pillow over my ears to block out his annoying voice. “Lycans are extinct. There evil breed was killed off hundreds of years ago. But if you don’t believe me, go kill your imaginary wolf and leave me alone!”

Danny’s face softened. He walked towards me and said, “I can’t go looking for a werewolf... Even if I could, I don’t have a body! You have to help me. We have to find the wolf together before it kills anyone else.”

I put my hands over my ears to block out what he was telling me. “I’m not hearing you.”

“I won’t leave... I will haunt you for as long as I am doomed to wonder the Earth.”

Through gritted teeth, I said, “No you won’t! I’m going to find a way to get rid of you.”

Throwing my blankets off in a messy heap on the floor, I stormed out of my room and

descended the stairs. I entered the main hall which was where José did most of his top secret projects. I was sure that José could remove whatever voodoo had been placed on me in no time.

However, when I bounded into José room, he was not alone. He must have called some kind of meeting because there were at least ten members of the coven with him.

“How nice of you to join us,” José said, keeping his indifferent demeanor which he worked hard to perfect over his years of existence. José’s long dark hair shun in the dim light. He looked paler than usual. It didn’t help his complexion when he wore all black. He appeared to be more like a rock star than a four hundred year old vampire. It didn’t help that he was clad in leather.

I guess our whole clan appeared that way. We always wore dark colors. Our style of dress made it easy for us to fade into the shadows of the night. Our skin was pasty white and our eyes were as black as night. Our vision was excellent, especially so at night. We were freaks of nature and the rebels within us made us all rock stars I guess.

“Get rid of him,” I told José, pointing at Danny’s ghost.

Danny leaned against the wall, smugly.

At first José must have been taken aback by my bursting into his personal quarters, but, then, he appeared to be confused. “There is no one there, Alex.”

“He’s right there!” I insisted, continuing to point.

“He can’t see me, genius,” Danny taunted.

“There is no one there,” José repeated adamantly. Then he briefly turned to the other members of our clan who sat around him. “Leave us,” he ordered.

Everyone rose to their feet in unison and exited the room one by one, passing by me to reach the door. Some had smirks on their faces. Some looked utterly concerned. I didn’t care what they thought. José was my mentor and the only one whose opinion counted.

“Don’t you see him?” I asked José in a small voice. I glanced at Danny, wishing I could kick his ass.

Danny just shrugged at me as if he couldn’t understand why I was so bothered.

Seemingly concerned, José looked at me, taking my appearance in. “Talk to me. What is going on?”

José was more than just a mentor. He was family. A hundred years ago, I was on the street. I didn’t have parents and spent most of my childhood in an orphanage that can only be described as a juvenile prison. No one ever expected to get out of there. It was a place where unwanted babies could

be dumped and forgotten about. I was one of those babies. I broke out as an early teen and settled into life on the street, pick pocketing to survive.

One night, I pocketed the wrong person's wallet and he turned me into a vampire for it. He probably thought I would be stupid enough to end my own existence by going out into the sun. I didn't though. I survived on the streets as I always had, but blood was hard to come by. Starving, I met José and he took me in, ushering me into the pampered life I now have. He saved me.

"I'm being stalked by Casper over here," I said, motioning to Danny.

Confused, José inquired, "What do you mean? Who's Casper?"

I shot him a look of annoyance, but realized he may have never heard of Casper before being that he was four hundred years old. "I mean that ever since I woke up this evening I can see dead people," I stated coldly, feeling as if I was about to lose my mind. "I went to the cemetery last night to do some grave rubbing and I heard screams. I went to investigate and found a mangled body of some boy. Now, that boy is haunting me!"

José moved around his desk and picked up a newspaper. Handing it to me, I was surprised to see Danny Adeodatus was front page news that morning.

"Bad picture," I commented, gazing down at the paper.

Danny scoffed as he didn't think he looked bad in anything.

"We were meeting to discuss what should be done. We are new residents of Sangre Falls and suspicion could fall on us," José told me, his brown growing dark. "If what you are telling me is true, then this is an extraordinary ability."

"Hurry up! We have a werewolf to catch," Danny said anxiously.

I ignored Danny. "It doesn't feel extraordinary. It is really annoying if you ask me. So, what can we do to get rid of this ability?"

"Why would you want to do that?" José asked, confused.

"He is telling me that he is going to haunt me for an eternity if I don't help him," I said as I dropped the newspaper on the desk.

"What does he want from you?"

"He believes he was killed by a lycan," I spat. "He wants to hunt it down."

José appeared to be concerned. "I hate to break the news to you... But if you wish to release his spirit, you might have to do what he says."

“No way!” I yelled bitterly.

“Why gifts are given to some vampires and not others is unknown, but there is one thing for certain, these abilities are life long. They cannot be removed or cured.”

I decided, then and there, if there was no cure I was going to ignore Danny. Sooner or later, his spirit would get bored and moved on. I was not going to roam the streets to appease some ghost! I was sure that if I could ignore him long enough, he would find someone else to haunt. Upset, I went to my room and blasted some heavy metal music, drowning out Danny’s ranting.

The first day was the hardest. His words kept invading my thoughts. A few times, he tried to drag me from my bedroom, but his hands didn’t connect and went right through me. A week passed, but Danny did not leave my side although he had gotten to be a little less annoying. I caught him sleeping at the foot of my bed like a loyal puppy. I didn’t even think ghosts could sleep! When I woke him up, he was so surprised that his body went through the bed, landing on the floor beneath.

I hate to admit it, but after a long while I kind of began to like his company. We had a lot of things in common when we weren’t talking about werewolves that is. Danny’s family wasn’t really present in his life. They hadn’t abandoned him like mine had, but they didn’t spend time with him either. He seemed to understand my abandonment issues. He even found my grave rubbings interesting although I could tell he often thought about what his own plot looked like...

José urged me to give Danny’s lycan hunting thing a shot, but I just couldn’t see myself hunting a mythical creature in Sangre Falls. No one believed lycans even existed anymore... They went extinct centuries ago and if one was alive, why would he hunt in Sangre Falls? Yes, I know Sangre translates to blood, but still... The town was barely a blip on the radar! Nothing went on there... Nothing supernatural anyway—excluding my clan and the very pathetic ghost that followed me around, that is.

Within that week, I heard some things that made me regret my decision. There were two additional murders. The first had taken place two days after Danny’s murder. It seems a homeless man was attacked while he slept in an alley. The other murder had taken place the day before. A nurse was attacked outside the town’s only hospital as she walked to her car after her shift.

The newspapers didn’t seem to think it was some kind of animal. They marked the murders as the work of a serial killer. The papers dubbed the killer “The New Jack the Ripper”, because he shreds his victims to pieces. I didn’t know what to think! Was the murderer a he, she, or it? Could Danny have been right about a werewolf on the loose?

I knew I couldn’t let this go on. The nurse this thing killed was a mother of two. As a vampire, I craved blood, but I have always practiced restraint. Our clan never killed a human although we

drank from willing partners. We even feasted on blood reserves from blood banks. Whatever was roaming the town had no restraint and that made it all the more dangerous.

Still, blood was a necessity. Vampires lack the ability to create red blood cells which is the essence of life. In order for our life processes to work, the ability to transport oxygen in the blood was a necessity. So, we consume what we cannot produce.

Lycans were different. According to the legends, lycans are shape shifters. Their animal needs take precedence over their rational mind. It was not just the kill or the thrill of the hunt they enjoyed. It was the essence of their victim. Once a lycan fed upon a human, it would be able to shift into their form at will. That made them hard to catch.

José wanted to send a group of assassins out to look for the beast, but we had to maintain a low profile. If we sent a convoy then people's suspicions could be raised. I decided I would check out the town alone. It wasn't a wolf hunt. I was just going to have a look around. I couldn't have another death on my conscience.

While the rest of the household went out to dinner at the blood bank, I snuck into the armory and picked up some weapons in the event I should need to defend myself. I picked up a nice silver bladed dagger and a sweet three-inch, serrated pocket knife that had a razor thin blade. Lastly, I chose a bow with silver tipped arrows. Guns would be too loud and I didn't want to bring attention to my solo operation. I threw the weapons into my backpack and walked silently out of the mansion.

Danny was not far behind. "What are you doing?" he asked worriedly. "Aren't you going to tell the others?"

"Calm down," I told him, looking into his anxious blue eyes. "I am just going to check things out."

Using his hands in an expressive manner, he said, "I'm having second thoughts about this whole thing. The lycan could kill you. It would be better to fight it in a group."

I grinned at him teasingly. "Are you developing a crush already?"

He gawked at me, dumbfounded. "A—what? A crush?" he stammered, shifting his weight uncomfortably. "No way."

Raising an eyebrow at him, I eyed him suspiciously. "Ghosts don't usually care if vampires live or die..."

"How would you know?" he asked defensively, folding his arms as if shielding himself from the conversation. "How many ghosts have you talked to?"

I shrugged, turning serious once more. “At the first sign of trouble, I’ll run back and get some help,” I said, reassuring him. “Besides, I have you. You will be my other pair of eyes. Stay alert.”

He nodded, averting his eyes.

When the wolf attacked Danny, it was in the vicinity of the cemetery. The other attacks were within a few blocks of the graveyard. I came to the conclusion the lycan stalks around its territory and that was the cemetery. I did find it strange that I didn’t get to see the beast especially since I was in the same area the night Danny was murdered. But, maybe, it smelled a vampire in the area and avoided contact.

It was a little after eleven thirty and I had made it as far as the town square on foot. I turned left and headed towards Cemetery Drive.

Sangre Falls should be known as the second city in America that doesn’t sleep. There were always people on the streets even in the middle of the night. Lost in my thoughts, I had to work hard to dodge people in my path. Maybe, my coven and I weren’t the only vampires in town.

I looked back at Danny who was trailing behind me. I waited until we were the only ones within earshot and then I inquired, “Why were you out that night? It was almost dawn.”

“I had an early morning game,” Danny responded. “I was on the varsity football team. I liked to go jogging before a game. Running makes my muscles swell.”

I rolled my eyes, tossing my straight, black hair behind my shoulders. “Running makes your head swell!” I shot back, laughing.

He ignored me. “Running always helped me relieve some stress—”

I shushed him. “Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

Only my vampire ears could pick up the most acute noise from blocks away. “I heard a scream,” I stated, looking around.

Danny looked scared. “I didn’t hear anything.”

“It was muffled like someone was being gagged,” I said, deciding to run to the approximate location of the minuet sound.

As we ran, Danny asked, “How is it that you can hear something so far, but you couldn’t hear me that night?”

Briefly, I glanced back at him. “You didn’t scream,” I said without losing my breath. “I guess it killed you before you even knew what was happening.”

He winced at my directness.

I stopped mid-stride when I saw a purse on the ground. I picked it up and looked inside. Everything was still in it. This was no robbery!

Knowing I had the right place, I looked around and saw that a few feet away was an alleyway. I carefully inched towards it, trying not to make too much noise.

“Don’t go in there,” Danny said, alarmed. “Let’s go and get some help.”

“Why are you so scared? You’re the ghost,” I whispered back to him, stating the obvious.

“But you’re not!” he told me, panicked. “Let’s go.” Forgetting that he lacked substance, he tried to grab my arm, but his fingers went right through me.

Brushing off his attempts, I continued into the alley.

It was a dark, dank place. There were huge puddles which collected after the evening showers. The rain often seemed like an everyday occurrence... It was quite depressing actually.

Nearing the end of the alley, I saw a large, shadowy figure hunched over a woman. She was lying lifeless on the ground. The life had been drained from her being.

“Hey!” I screamed, fumbling through my backpack for the silver dagger.

I heard the most God awful howl and then the shadowy beast leaped upon me, grabbing me around my neck. My feet lifted from the ground. Pain shot up and down my spine as its nails sunk into my skin, cutting off my oxygen supply.

Trying to kick the beast, I began to lose consciousness, dropping my bag with the blade inside. My hands flung to my throat, trying to loosen its grip. Slowly, my vision began to fade.

“Stop!” Danny shouted, trying to punch the beast, but it was no use. His fists never made contact.

I couldn’t breathe.

My thoughts were a jumble. All I could think about was air...

I felt its hot, musky breath upon my cheek. All I could see were teeth. Without warning, I was flying in the air as the beast flung me across the alley. Pain shot through me once more as my head bounced against an adjacent brick wall, making me see stars. Then, I heard and saw no more.

When I awoke, my head was pounding. It took a minute for the pain to dull and for my eyes to adjust.

Danny was kneeling over me with a look of fear upon his face. “You were out for about fifteen

minutes,” he told me and I nodded.

“You were timing it?” I asked, rubbing my head.

“The lycan is gone. He left after he finished his meal.”

I jumped to my feet. I ran towards the beast’s latest victim. There was nothing I could do for the woman. She was dead long before I walked into the alley.

“At least we did find something interesting.”

“What?” I asked, glancing at Danny.

“Its den,” he answered, motioning behind me. “Turn around.”

In the back of the alley was a large hole in the brickwork of one of the buildings. It was large enough that an animal could crawl into.

I took a look inside.

It was littered with old newspapers and smelled like a wet dog had been marking his spot if you know what I mean...

“We’ve compromised its hiding place, forcing it out into the open. It will be looking for a new den now,” I said, both disappointed and elated.

Maybe it would find another place to stalk—another town perhaps. Yet, I really didn’t think it would be that easy to get rid of the beast. I found out when I had awakened from my daylight slumber that there had been two attacks last night. This thing had to be stopped.

Without telling anyone, I went out again on my own for another steak-out. Danny did not agree with my decision, but he didn’t have a say. This was something I had to do.

I carried a backpack filled with more devices of destruction. Tucking the dagger into a sheath attached to my jeans, I walked towards the graveyard. The cemetery was located near Sangre Woods which was vast and held an eerie aura about it. I walked along the sidewalk with the woods to my right. I noticed that every step I took the shrubbery seemed to move with me. There was no wind to move it. The night was as still as a corpse...

Feeling as if I were being stalked, I sprinted as fast as I could towards the cemetery. When I reached the gates, I turned around, wanting to confront my stalker. But there was nothing to be seen.

“I don’t like this,” Danny said, suddenly at my side.

I shushed him and quickly pushed the gates, entering into the cemetery grounds.

“What are you doing here?” a male voice asked.

I was taken aback. With a gasp, I turned to see the groundskeeper that I bumped into the night Danny was murdered. My ears had not detected him before he spoke...

“What are you doing here?” he repeated, stepping forward menacingly.

I didn't say a word. As he moved forward, I took a cautious step back. “What does it look like to you?” I challenged, feeling brave.

“Trespassing,” he growled.

Then I heard a sound off in the distance.

I gasped as I thought I heard what sounded like a young girl, calling out for help.

He threw his head back and laughed in an exaggerated gesture.

Turning away from the groundskeeper, I ran in the direction of the whimpering voice. Stumbling over a few low grave makers, I found a young girl tied to an erect gravestone. The girl couldn't have been more than eight. Her blond hair hung in tangled clumps. Her cheeks were stained with a mixture of dirt and tears.

“Don't worry,” I told her as I began to untie her, setting my bag down beside me. “You're going to be alright.”

“Hurry, Alexis. I have a bad feeling about messing with the lycan's dessert,” Danny warned nervously, shifting his weight from one foot to another.

“An animal took me from my house,” the girl cried. “It took me from my backyard and dragged me through the woods. All I want is my mommy! Can you take me home?”

I looked her over. Her knees were bloody and her arms were bruised. She was not in good shape. “Of course I will,” I answered. “You will be back home with your mom as soon as I can untie this knot.”

After fighting with the knot for what seemed like an eternity, I untangled the rope, setting the girl free. I watched as she glanced over my shoulder. I saw her whole body shuddered and she belted out an earth shattering scream.

Immediately, Danny and I turned around to focus on what she had seen.

I felt my heart pound in my chest and my muscles grew taut. My teeth descended. My eyes tried to focus until they grazed the outline of something big.

It was the werewolf!

Standing at six feet tall and with a muscular build, I noticed it was covered in black fur that

blended with the shadows. Its maw contorted in a hideous smile, displaying large, jagged teeth.

“Run!” I yelled to the girl and she ran as fast as her beaten body could carry her.

Before I could climb to my feet, the beast leaped on me. The weight of its body pulled my skinny frame down. The breath had been knocked out of me. I was stunned for a minute. I could hear Danny screaming, but I blocked it out. Locked into survival mode, I was on pure adrenaline now.

It climbed on top of me with its jaws snapping towards my face.

I grabbed its neck with one hand, forcing its head up.

Its eyes glowed red and its mouth was foaming with the anticipation of a meal.

Trying to break its neck, I quickly realized I didn't have the strength. Its neck would not give in to my supernatural strength. I was stronger than any ordinary human, but the wolf was a challenge. It was huge and composed mainly of muscle. With all my might, I held its throat as far away as I could, keeping its snout at bay.

Using my other hand to feel the ground around me, I located my bag. It was just out of reach. I wasn't choosy about my weapon. Any one of them would do just fine under these circumstances.

My hold on the ferocious animal was starting to wane, but I stretched my arm beyond its limit, grabbing hold of something within my bag.

I pulled out a... pocketknife!

My elation had turned into dismay, but I used the small tool as best I could. I swung it up between us, piercing the chest cavity with it.

The massive wolf let out howl of pain as I punctured its lung.

In retaliation, it swung its paw at my face, slashing my cheek. The pain was vivid and intense. I felt as if my entire face had been ripped away. Blood seeped into my eye, blinding me slightly.

In a moment of rage, I grabbed its paw with my free hand and bent it backwards until I heard a sickening crack.

Again, it wailed in agony.

Holding onto its neck, I remembered the dagger I attached to the waistband of my pants. It tried to wiggle free of my grasp, jerking wildly. With one hand I held the beast and with the other I unsheathed the blade.

Before I had time to think, I stuck the blade into its chin with all of the strength left in my body.

The blade traveled into its mouth through its hard palette, puncturing its brain.

Its body slumped instantly.

Relieved, I knew it was dead and let out a sigh of exhaustion.

It couldn't hurt anyone else. I had avenged all the recent murders of Sangre Falls and prevented new ones from occurring.

As the shock of what I had accomplished wore off, I rolled its body off of me, watching change into human form with some interest. When the change was over, I recognized the body of the groundskeeper. Feeling a strange sense of euphoria, I turned my head and locked eyes with Danny.

Breaking the silence, he said, "You look like crap."

"Thanks," I responded just happy to be alive. "You always know just what to say to a lady."

He smiled.

"I guess the cemetery is going to need a new groundskeeper..."

He nodded and said, "You just saved the towns' people from being next on the werewolf's menu. How do you feel?"

"Great! I'm going to Disney Land," I responded with mock happiness. "So, where is the white light?"

"It's coming. Daybreak is soon. It will be coming for us both now."

I looked at him, confused. "What do you mean?"

He held his hand out for me. "Take it," he ordered, his eyes aglow.

I reached out for Danny's hand, expecting to feel nothing but air. Instead, I felt the warmth of his grasp. "How could this be?" I asked as he lifted me to my feet.

"When the werewolf slashed you, it punctured an artery," he answered regretfully. "You managed to kill it before you bled to death."

I looked down at my body. It was mangled, but I should have been able to survive the attack. "I thought when vampires die they went straight to the underworld."

"You risked your life for people you didn't even know. I think that earns you a ticket into heaven," he told me, smiling grimly.

I looked down at my body and watched as it changed color, from porcelain to ashen. Then, it collapsed onto itself, becoming dust. My ashes scattered in the breeze. There wasn't a piece me left that the wind had not carried away.

I was at peace with my death. It seemed almost natural to have a beginning and an end. I was an immortal, but even the immortal can die...

“Look!” Danny said, pointing off into the distance.

My eyes drifted to the skyline. Silently, we watched as the sun began to rise in the horizon. It was the first time I had witnessed a sunrise in a hundred years. I smiled at Danny and he returned it, wrapping his arms around me. Somehow he knew that I would enjoy this part of the morning and I did. I took it all in with a deep breath. I felt oddly serene by his side and I believe he felt likewise, knowing that he didn't have to leave this earth alone.

When the white light appeared a few moments later, we walked into it, hand-in-hand.

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