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WarZone

#2: Let the Hunt Begin

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RAUL

The long walk back to his house had sobered Raul up quite a bit. Part of him wished he had stayed back at the party with his friends but if there was one thing Raul was good at, it was reading a room. The second Lex walked in and saw Chris sitting there smoking, all the fun and joy vanished from the room in a flash.

 Lex was Raul’s best friend and he loved him like a brother but he never understood his overprotectiveness of Chris. He babied him so much that it was a bit off putting. If anyone helped Chris do anything that stepped even a little out of line it was a sure fire way to get an ass beating by Lex, and that was something no one wanted. Lex was easily one of the best fighters in The Stratton apartments, never mind the fact that he didn’t even live in the apartments. He lived in the houses two blocks over.

Raul wasn’t a resident of the apartments either. He was one of the lucky ones in this neighborhood. His dad had money and owned a pretty nice house, about a half mile away from the famed apartments. Normally it was a hassle living such a long walk from his friends, but on days like this it was a relief. His house was much closer to Kimberly’s than the Stratton was.

 Raul made his way up the long, steep hill that led to his housing community. He really hoped he didn’t miss too much of Kimberly’s party. It was always one of the biggest parties of the year, although to be fair he spent most of the party so far getting high with Jax and the others but that was fun. Raul couldn’t wait to get back to that, he just needed to pick up this beer and high tail it back.

It seemed like Lex could really use a drink as well. Even as overprotective as he got he seemed real up tight tonight as well. Raul, found his breathing getting heavier and heavier as he walked up the hill. It was a real bitch of a hill and Raul always hated walking up it. Maybe he would take his skateboard back, there was nothing more fun than riding down the hill on his board. Raul enjoyed toying with the idea for a few minutes before the reality hit him that going down the steep hill holding onto a twelve pack of beer wasn’t the best idea. He had a mental image of himself rolling down the hill as he started going faster and faster, he started to lose control as the added weight of the beer throwing off his already poor balancing skills and his board started to go wild as he attempted to regain control without losing the beer. The bottom of the hill zoomed closer and closer to him, the fear sets in as his eyes went wide. His mind started racing a hundred miles a second, looking for any way to save himself from the fate that awaited him at the end of this hill. He couldn’t bear to keep looking and shut his eyes tight as he could. Trying to drown out the sight of his coming doom. The wind rushing past his face and through his hair, flowing through the wind like this always seemed to relax Raul and for a moment he forgot that he was losing control. But only for a second, his trip downward started to get more and more difficult as the board started to go over a rough patch, his eyes shoot open as he looked down just in time to see his board hit a big sized rock that stopped him in his tracks and threw him forward, the twelve pack went flying from his hands and shattered on the ground, the beer seeping out. Raul had no time to worry as he flew through the air, landing hard on the ground feet away just as a car zoomed around the corner, rushing right at him.

He shook his head as he came to a stop in front of his house. He had been spending far too much time hanging out with Jon and listening to his crazy stories, it was starting to rub off on him. His mind never used to wonder this much. He shook off the vivid day dream and checked out his house, his dad’s truck was sitting in the drive way. He was hoping he would still be at work. This was going to be a bit harder than he was hoping, but it was still doable. He just had to be a little more slick about it. He moved along the side of the house and popped open the side door, careful not to make too much noise.

The garage was full of his father’s junk. His dad was a bit of a pack rat and stuffed this place full of old junk that Raul was sure he hadn’t gone through in years, maybe even decades. Raul forced himself not to sneeze as the dust hit him, he shook it off and made for the tiny fridge his dad used to keep his beer, he had to go and get it after his mom started going to AA meetings and purged all the alcohol from their home. The tiny fridge was packed full of beer and Raul moved some around until he found a full twelve pack.

He could hear someone moving around in the laundry room, just inside the house. He froze as his heart skipped a beat. The last time his dad caught him stealing beer he got the belt. Not something he wanted to repeat if he could help it. He strained his ears to listen, the footsteps were light, odds were they belonged to his mother. If she caught him it would still be bad, but not beating bad. He started to slowly back away from the fridge as he started to close it. It was then that the footsteps turned away. Raul waited till they were gone before grabbing the twelve pack and rushing out of the garage.

The cool night air was a nice relief, it washed over him in a way only freedom can. He started back to the party. This detour already took longer than he would have liked, but what was the point of a party with no beer?

Raul was short for his age, his friends always mocked him for it. It wasn’t easy being the shortest guy in school but Raul always tried to make the best of it. He worked hard to convince himself that his height didn’t matter, tonight he felt it. Every step he took, carrying the twelve back in his hands made him uncomfortably aware how short he truly was. He couldn’t help but be painfully aware that anyone who spotted him walking would know right away that he was under age. He was no stranger to bending the law but he didn’t want to advertise it to his neighbors. The sooner he was off this street the happier he would be.

He cut through the alleyway that connected his complex to Kimberly’s. It was a creepy alley, even in broad daylight. Plant life had gone to great lengths to overtake this path, and even when you were alone you could hear footsteps behind you, hear the breathing of some mystery murder stalking you from behind. At night it was even worst. Raul’s heart was racing as he crossed the alley. He knew in his head that he was imaging things. That the noises were just echoes of himself but knowing that didn’t stop it from freaking him out.

He sprinted the rest of the way till he was out of the alley. His breathing hard and the weight of the twelve pack starting to bother him. He switched it over to his left hand. It was a welcome break, but the sound of a coming car made him quickly switch it back. Kimberly’s house came into view at the end of the block. She had a beautiful home, separated by dense woods on the right side of her house. It was a nice look but in the dark, walking past it alone wasn’t Raul’s favorite pass time. His mom used to tell him stories of the Nahual’s. Mexican werewolf’s, or more like werecoyotes. She would tell him about back in the village she grew up in they used to have one who lived close by. When the moon rose up high he would transform and savage the community. Everyone there lived in fear of the man, even when he was a man. He knew the power he wield and made sure everyone else knew it as well. Even the police were afraid to cross him, not that the police were much to be admired back in Mexico.

That all changed when a stranger road into town and killed the Nahual in the light of a full moon. The stranger didn’t speak to anyone in town, he just came, killed the beast and vanished into the night but no one ever forgot him. Till this day his mother spoke about the man like he was a saint. To the annoyance of his father. It was one of the few things his parents fought about.

Raul knew deep down that it was nothing more than a story, that there were no such things as a Nahual or werewolves or anything else like that. But for the life of him, every time he walked past these woods he would think about those stories and a chill would creep up his spine.

His mind was racing, thinking of the horrible ways that a Nahual could kill him. It was doubled as he crossed the bridge. He glanced down at the 15 foot drop to the lake of what was most likely sewer water below. He took a deep breath and started back on his way, her house was just ahead, and he could get back to parting. All his thoughts of monsters and parents and spying neighbors would be forgotten at the bottom of a beer, or two, or three.

The sound of sirens scared him out of his day dream. Raul spared a look back, cop cars could be seen speeding around the bend back at the end of the block. Fear seized him for a second before panic took over. A million thoughts raced through his head in what felt like a second before he sprang into action. He tossed the twelve pack down the bridge, watching it speed down towards the water below before he hopped over the railing and held on for dear life.

The metal of the railing was cold to his touch. The shock of the cold almost enough to make him let go but he forced down that thought. He looked down below him, the drop wasn’t too bad but it was more than he was willing to fall. The beer splashing down into the water and quickly got pushed down steam. The cop cars zoomed past him over head. Raul pulled himself up to catch a look. The cop cars were parking in front of Kimberly’s house. For the first time since he left the party Raul was glad he chose to leave.

He hoped that Lex and the others managed to get out of there before the cops pulled up. Who would have called them? The party wasn’t that loud, at least not when he left. And it wasn’t like this was the first time a party was thrown here. He could see people running as the cops grabbed some. Two cops converged on a tall man, who for the life of him, Raul couldn’t make out. The man hit one cop and knocked him back with such force that he flew off his feet and hit his car, ten feet away, the other cops opened fire and the man let out a howl.

Raul jumped back out of fear, it took him a few second to process what he did. Panic set in as he reached desperately for the bar, the bar that meant his safety. His fingers brushed against the bar, just enough to feel the cold steel but not enough to get a grip. His heart sank as he started to fall downward. He felt the cold night air rushing past him, just as images of his life passed before his eyes.

It felt like an eternity as he fell towards the water. He was screaming, he didn’t mean to, he just couldn’t help himself. No sooner than he cried for help he hit the freezing cold water, it washed over him and pushed him down. His mouth wide open in a desperate scream as he fell under the oncoming water. Instinct kicked in and he fought his way to the surface with everything he had. He could see the surface, even though his stinging eyes. It was so close, yet so far away. He didn’t think he would ever make it but he wasn’t ready to give up, not yet. He burst through the surface of the water, air feeling his lungs with the sweet oxygen he needed. His breathing was rapid, his eyes were stinging so bad he could barely see. He lunged for what he hoped was land. He fought the rushing current as best he could and finally made it to the cement that lined the sewer water. He was so glad for the safety of land that he didn’t even care for the horrible stench that clung to him. He looked up at the trees above him as his vision slowly cleared. His breathing starting to even out as he collapsed into exhaustion.

JON

This night didn’t go the way he wanted at all. He was sitting up on Will’s dresser in his room while Will changed out of his sweaty clothes. The night after the party of the summer and he was alone in his half naked best friend’s room. This alone would make the night a disappointing one, but add to that the fact that half his friends from school were brutally killed in front of his eyes by what could only be vampires, made this night one for the books.

Jon let out a sigh, wishing he had a change of clothes as well. The blood and sweat was making his shirt heavy and the stench was starting to get to him.

“Fuck her man, Christina is cute but she isn’t worth it.” The conversation hadn’t changed since Will caught up to him. Jon had tried to sneak away from everyone praising that creepy old man in the overcoat but Will had spotted him and followed after him. Good old reliable Will, whenever you wanted a friend to chill and shoot the shit with, he was gone hitting on some girl who just walked by, but when you wanted some alone time to wallow in self-pity he was there in a heartbeat and you couldn’t shake him if you tried. Jon couldn’t help but smile, after all wasn’t that what a friend, a true friend was? Not someone who was always there but someone who was always there when you needed them, no matter what.

“I know man, it just. . . it just felt like I finally had my moment. Finally had that” Words normally came easy to Jon but when Christina was involved his mind seemed to shut down. It fought him every step of the way.

“You finally felt that spark?” Will was an expert with women, Jon always envied him for that. He would give anything to be able to talk to girls the way Will did. To have women throw themselves at him like they did for his best friend. He hated to admit it to himself, but he was jealous of Will.

“Yeah, I did. And right when I felt it,” the door busted open just as Lex and Jax walked in, deep in conversation. “Everyone else showed up.” He turned to look at his friend. “What took you guys so long?” Jax closed the door behind him. Christina was nowhere to be seen.

“We were chatting with our savor.” Lex said as he plopped down on Will’s bed. He looked as bad as Jon felt. Jax leaned against the wall, he slid down, wrapping his arms around his knees.

“I locked your door Will. After everything we saw tonight, you would think that would be the first thing you do.” His face a weird shade of green, if Jon didn’t know better he would think he was about to vomit. “God I’m going to be sick.” He lowered his head onto his knees. A whimpering sound escaping him. Will looked at him, concern crossing his face, however briefly before turning towards Lex.

“What he say?” Will asked, ignoring Jax altogether. Jon couldn’t believe they were out there talking to that man for so long. And then they had the nerve to just come back here like nothing happened. Like they weren’t hanging out with the ass who tried to steal his woman.

“His name is Gambit. He’s been hunting vampires for a long time. Didn’t say how long, but I got the impression he’s been around.” Lex seemed impressed. That spoke volumes about what Gambit must have been talking about. Nothing impressed Lex. If he was impressed than Christina must have been. . . Where was Christina?

“So they were Vampires?” Will took a seat next to Jon on the dresser.

“Where’s Christina?” Jon asked, not wanting to know the answer. Lex flashed a smile and shook his head.

“Mystery man took her home. She seemed eager to go with him.” Lex said it with such ease, like it was nothing important, but how could he just let some strange man take her home? Who knew what he could do to her? She could be killed, or worse!

“What do you mean?” Jon jumped up off of the dresser, Will’s arm shot up and tried to pull Jon back, but he pulled free. He was in no mood to be held back. He didn’t understand what this could mean. “We don’t know this guy! He could kill her!” Jon yelled at Lex. Lex took a deep breath and gave Jon his half smile, a smile that was best to avoid. It was Lex’s way of telling you to back down before he hurt you.

“Relax Jon. He isn’t going to hurt your girlfriend. If he wanted to all he had to do was wait and let the vamps do it for him.” Lex pointed out, but he just didn’t understand. Christina was too important to risk on the trustworthiness of some asshole in an overcoat.

“You don’t understand!” He started to point out, but Will pulled him back.

“He understands Jon. What did you want him to do? Bring her here? She’ll be fine.” Will tried to reassure him, but he didn’t care about her. He made that clear all night.

“Besides, she was desperate to go home with him.” Jax said as he looked up from his corner.

“Shut up!” Jon snapped. Will stepped in front of him.

“Jon, let it go.” Will yelled in his face. Jon shrugged him off and stormed from the room. This conversation had grown stale and he wanted nothing to do with it. He could hear them following him out of the room.

“Jon, if I thought he would hurt her I would have went with them. He isn’t a bad guy. He gave us a lot of useful information.” Lex told him as he followed him out into the living room. Information? What information could be worth leaving Christina alone with that. . . that man?

He turned around to face his friends. Jax stayed behind Lex, a haunted look on his face. Will moved past them towards the kitchen.

“What kind of information?” Jon asked as he sat down on the comfortable chair, with the beat-up cushions.

“Too much information, and not the good kind.” Jax said as he sat on the ottoman in front of the comfortable couch. He was slouched over, stress washing over him. Watching him made Jon uneasy, Jax wasn’t the most upbeat or brave guy around but Jon had never seen him this freaked out before.

“That bad?” What could he have said that freaked him out so much? All thoughts of Christina quickly faded from his mind as doomsday scenarios replaced them.

“What they say?” Will asked as he came back with drinks. He passed them out as Lex hopped onto the couch. Will took the spot next to him, stretching backward and stifling a yawn.

“His name is Gambit,” Lex started, Jon felt his annoyance start to bubble back up.

“We got that part.” He didn’t even mean to say that out loud, it just kind of came out. Lex shot him a look that shut him up real quick.

“As I was saying,” Lex started back up. “He gave us a lot to work with.”

“Too much.” Jax said, his voice full of fear.

“What he tell you?” Jon leaned forward.

“Vampires have been around for almost as long as man, their origins are lost to legends but a lot of the stories we have heard about them come from half-truths. Sun light, stakes through the heart, decapitation all real weaknesses for this freaks.” Lex started off, weaknesses were all well and good, but what Jon wanted to know, what they should all be more concerned with was what their strengths were.

“Well it’s nice to know how we can hurt them. What can they do to us?” Jon asked. Lex looked down at the floor as Will looked at him, bated breath, waiting for an answer. But when it came it wasn’t from Lex.

“Do you need us to answer that?” Jax looked up at them. “We all saw tonight what they can do.” The silence that followed was deafening. Not a one of them could bring themselves to break the silence, let alone look at one another. It seemed to stretch on forever till a knock at the door brought them all out of it. The knocking got louder and louder.

“It’s the cops.” Jax said as he got up and backed away from the door. “I knew we would get blamed for the house.”

“Sit down and shut up!” Lex demanded as he jumped up and slowly walked towards the door.

“Don’t open it.” Will called out as he slowly followed Lex. Jon turned around silently on the comfortable chair and tried to look out through the gap in the blinds. It was too dark, he couldn’t make anything out.

“I can’t tell who it is.” He told them just as Lex looked through the peep hole.

“Who is it?” Will asked, standing behind Lex.

“The police.” Jax called from the far end of the room.

“The fuck?” Lex said as he backed up. Jon and Will tensed up.

“I told you!” Jax yelled out.

“Fuck man.” Will said as Jon jumped up off of the chair. Lex unlocked the door.

“What are you doing?” Will cried out as Lex opened the door. Jon’s breath caught in his throat as the door swung open. Standing there in the frame of the door was a short chubby kid.

“Who? Wha. . . Trinidad?” Jon called out.

“Not the cops?” Jax asked as he started to walk over towards the rest of the group. He still moved slow and carefully, as if a swat team was going to swing down over the curb any second.

“Who the hell do you think you are to be banging on my doors like that?” Will snapped at him. Trinidad seemed taken aback.

“So. . .sorry. I was just”

“Spit it out Trinidad.” Lex snapped, he leaned out of the door looking around, making sure no one was coming for them.

“Sorry. Um I was about to go to sleep and,” He started to say before Jax pushed in front of Will.

“And you thought you’d share it with us? Great! We don’t care.” His attitude back to full on Jax the asshole mode. Trinidad backed away from them a bit.

“Chill out Jax. What you want man?” Jon asked, maneuvering Lex out of the way so that Trinidad could come inside. He slowly made his way into the apartment.

“I just saw you guys heading home from the party and wanted to tell Chris that if he still wanted to use my house as his excuse he should head over now before I lock the door.” He managed to get out fast and nervously. They’ve all known Trinidad for years, he was Chris’s best friend but whereas Chris went out of his way to hang out with them, Trinidad never tried. He usually stayed by himself and did his own thing, whatever that was. Whenever Chris brought him around he would get all nervous and act like this. Jon tried to include him but it made it really hard when the person could hardly spit out a word.

“That’s nice, well your boyfriend isn’t here, as you can see.” Jax said as he sat down on the comfortable chair, his king of the world attitude shining through.

“Watch yourself.” Lex turned on Jax, Jon couldn’t help but smile. Jax knew better than to talk bad about Chris in front of Lex. Jax quieted down instantly, the fear from before seeped back in at the anger on Lex’s face. Trinidad’s eyes flashed between them all, a look of concern etching across his face.

“What happened to you guys?” He asked eyeing the blood on Jon’s clothes. Jon got up, a chill shooting down his spine as he recalled how he earned the blood. Fighting Fury and Fabian. How he came so close to death that he could taste it, that he wanted it.

“Not in the mood to talk about it.” it came out colder than Jon had meant it to, but he couldn’t stop himself.

“Sorry, just are you guys ok?” The concern was sincere, not many people who lived in these apartments were jaded but Trinidad was the only guy besides Jon who still cared.

“Look man, you’ll find out what happened later. Everyone will find out. Right now we just need some time.” Will said as he started to move Trinidad towards the door.

“Wait.” Lex put his arm out and stopped them from leaving. “Chris hasn’t come back yet? He left the party way before us.” Trinidad started to look concerned.

“I haven’t seen him. I figured he was still with you guys.” He replied.

“You don’t think?” Will asked Lex, who just shook his head.

“He’s on his way back. Just go home and we will go get him. Leave the window open.” Lex shut the door before he was even finished talking.

“Where could he be?” Will asked them but they all knew where he was. And they all knew what they had to do but none of them liked it.

Chris

 Chris looked around the dimly lit closet, blood dripping down his forehead into his eyes. He blinked away the blood, if only the memories were as easy to wash away. The tears started anew as he backed into the corner remembering a few hours before.

 The night was mostly a blur for him, after leaving the shed he drank a lot, a lot a lot. Kimberly had an amazing bar, full of different bottles. Everything from Vodka to Hypnotic.

 And Chris was determined to try a little of everything, as the other people at the party were having fun and socializing he was hovering around the bar, pouring an obscene amount of alcohol into his system.

 Chris had always been more a smoker than a drinker, he thought he could hold his own but he was quickly learning that he couldn’t. It wasn’t long till he was stumbling around her nice home looking for a restroom. How could someone’s house be so big and have so many rooms? Chris had never seen a house this big before, his family had been living in the Stratton apartments for generations. Money wasn’t something they were used to, this short foray into how the other half lived was everything he had ever hoped for. If only he could cozy up to Kimberly and get himself invited back. That would be amazing, maybe then he wouldn’t have to deal with the bullshit that Lex put him through. Treating him like he was nothing more than a child who needed protection. It always pissed him off, just short of the point of wanting to act on it. Not enough to actually act on it, he was smart enough to know that he didn’t want to fight with Lex. No one wanted to fight with Lex if they could help it.

 “Ohh,” the moaning came from the just around the end of the hall, it was a beautiful sound, one he had only heard on internet late at night while his family was asleep. This was different, this was real. He wanted a quick peek, just for a second. He knew it was wrong but what the hell, he was having a horrible day anyways, besides if he wasn’t mistaken, that was Kimberly he heard.

 It didn’t take Chris long to find the room, what he saw he would never forget. Some guy he had never seen before picked her up and tossed her dead body out of the window. Her body was limp, she was lifeless as she smashed through the glass cutting up what was left of her.

 He couldn’t move, he knew that he had to. He had to run and hide, call the cops. Do something, do anything to stay alive but he couldn’t. He was frozen in spot, his legs were stone bricks. They wouldn’t move, to be fair he couldn’t he even think. All he could do was watch as the big man looked down the smashed window, laughing.

 Chris spent what felt like an eternity standing there, letting the laughter, crazy laughter of a monster wash over him. Feeling came back to him all at once. He fell to the floor, his breathing coming hard. The man swung back to look at him. They locked eyes, terror filling Chris to his very core.

 Before he knew what he was doing he was down the hall, running faster and harder than he ever thought he could. He could hear the murderer running behind him, even hear him laughing as he seemed to glide down the hall. Chris would knock things over to try and trip up his attacker but he seemed to sail over anything in his path. Chris wanted to look back, just to see how much of a lead he still held but the fear was too strong, he couldn’t look back. He knew if he did he would freeze again.

 He didn’t want to die, he should have just left when Lex told him to. Everything would be better. Just like that the laughing stopped. Chris’s heart was racing so fast he could hardly breathe. He doubled over, never in his life had he found it so hard to catch a breath. He mustered every ounce of strength he had within himself and risked a glance back.

 The hallway behind him was clear, a disaster area after all the stuff he knocked over notwithstanding. He got his breathing under control and tried to look for any signs of the man but he found none. He slowly started to make his way back the way he came. He needed to get out of this hell house and fast. There was nothing good to be gained by staying here to die.

 He remembered making it as far as the hallway before he heard the sound of someone coming up the stairs. He ran for it, found a hallway closet and stuffed himself inside.

 All he could think about was Kimberly’s dead body being held above that man’s head. Blood dripping down her neck, a look of fear glued upon her face for all time. It was an image that he would never forget, no matter how hard he tried.

 Chris strained his ears as hard as he could, listening with all his might for any sign of someone coming for him. The footfalls he heard moments ago seemed to have vanished. Chris let out a sigh of relief. His relief quickly turned to despair. The tears came out of nowhere, Chris couldn’t hold them back, no matter how hard he tried. This was not how he wanted today to go. Why couldn’t Lex just let him stay? Why couldn’t Lex just treat him like he was their friend?

 Chris hated being treated like a child, especially by people he considered friends. He could hold his own with them, anything they could do he could do better. They just had to let him try. That’s all he asked.

 The closet he locked himself in was small and cramped. Above his head hung jackets for the family, he was huddled back between two bags full of who knew what. He could hardly move, not that he wanted to. All he wanted to do was sit there and cry and that was what he did. Cry. His eyes were soon sore and blood shot, but the tears wouldn’t stop. Not till he once more heard the sounds of someone approaching. He forced himself to stop. He knew he had to get ahold of himself if he wanted whoever was looking for him to pass him by.

He held his breath and listened with everything he had. Whoever it was, was getting closer. This time there were more than one pair of feet. It sounded as if an army was outside that door and they were all looking for him. Chris could feel the panic starting to rise up inside himself as the footfalls came nearer and nearer. Till they were so loud it was as if they were right outside the door. Chris could see the shadow of someone coming through the crack at the bottom of the door.

He could feel his heart inside his throat. *Please God, don’t let them open the door.* He found himself praying. Something he didn’t do too often. The people outside the room were talking. For the life of him Chris couldn’t make out what they were saying. Not that he wanted to. All he wanted to do was stay in this hole and never leave. He didn’t want to die.

The footfalls stopped right outside the door. *Please don’t open, just leave.* The door knob started to wobble. Chris blinked away the sweat as it dripped into his eyes. They closed involuntarily, stinging badly. Fear started boiling up deep in his gut. Chris could hear the door knob slowly turning. *Don’t open the door.* He closed his eyes tighter, till they started to hurt. *Go away, don’t let them find me. Don’t let them kill me.* The door started to creak as it pulled open slowly.

He couldn’t bring himself to look up, he knew he had to. He had to see who it was that was bringing his doom. He just couldn’t do it. As long as he kept his eyes shut tight they couldn’t hurt him. They couldn’t touch him.

“You ok son?” The voice was gentle but firm. Chris swallowed hard as he opened his eyes. Looking up at the man in the door way he was surprised to see a police officer standing there. Behind him he could see other cops looking all around the house.

Jax

 Jax could feel his heart racing. This night had been nothing but one crazy event after another but none of it seemed to have struck home as much as this. He was helpless as he watched the police escort Chris into the back of a patrol car.

 The police were swarming in and around Kimberly’s house like locust. Cold sweat was pouring down Jax’s face even as his heart beat faster and faster. Somehow spending the night running from vampires didn’t terrify him half so much as the thought of getting arrested.

 “We should go.” He didn’t know why he even had to say it. They all had to be thinking it. Hell, they should have turned around and ran the second they saw that cops were there. There was no reason for them to stand around and watch like a group of housewives desperate for something to talk about.

 “Go? We can’t go, what about Chris?” Jon’s voice was shaky. Jax knew Jon wanted to leave just as badly, he just didn’t want to admit it. Jon always had to be a hero, always had to be noble. Jax loved Jon like a brother but he pissed him off so much.

 “What about him?” Lex said, his voice full of regret. Lex was never going to let this go. He was going to blame himself for letting Chris get arrested, which made no sense. He ordered him home hours ago. It wasn’t Lex’s fault that Chris was too damn stubborn to leave. “Nothing we can do for him now.”

 Lex turned around and started walking back to the Stratton. Will looked from the cops to Lex then to Jax and Jon. “We can’t leave him to the cops. I mean what if they think he did all this?” Jax gave a shudder. Something about hearing the fear in Will’s voice unnerved him even more. What he wouldn’t give for a joint right now. He could really use it to calm his nerves.

 “We have to do something.” Jon said, taking a step forward, as if he was going to cross the street. His false sense of bravery always got under Jax’s skin. Why couldn’t he just admit he was as afraid as the rest of us? Why couldn’t he just own up to the fact that he cared more about his own hide.

 Lex stopped and turned back to face him, a look on his face that made Jon flinch. “Like what?” he demanded of him. Jon swallowed hard.

 “I don’t know.” Jon said as Lex stepped towards him.

 “You don’t? Then why did you say it?” Lex demanded.

 “Because Chris is our friend. We have to help him.” Jon’s voice grew smaller and smaller the closer Lex got to him. If Jax wasn’t so scared he would have laughed.

 “You think I don’t want to?” Lex all but yelled. Will’s face lit up with concern as he jumped in the middle.

 “Shh! Shut the hell up before the cops come for us.” Will said, looking across the street as a cop got into the driver seat of the patrol car with Chris in it. The police were still swarming all over the house. They had started talking to the neighbors.

 “At least one of you have some sense.” Lex said nodding at Will. He looked back at Jon. “I want to go help Chris just as much as you. But it won’t do him any good getting the rest of us arrested. He should have left when I told him. Now he has to figure it out for himself. I’m sorry but that is just how it is.”

 Jax could see how much those words hurt Lex. If there was one thing you could say about Lex it was that he cared for his friends more than anything. He would go above and beyond for them. Do anything for them. Sitting here helpless must be killing him.

 “Can we discuss this inside where undead monsters can’t kill us?” Jax pipped in. Finally getting the courage to talk. He knew the courage came from fear, but he was alright with that. As long as it kept him alive. He should never have come back with them. Just because they were his friends didn’t mean he had to let them put his life in danger. Did it?

 “Yeah, we should go.” Lex said. He started walking back home. A haunted look in his eyes. Jax followed after him. Finally something logical. He just hoped that they could make it back to one of their places before running into any more trouble.

 “Come on, there is nothing you can do.” Will said from behind him. Jax turned around just as the patrol car with Chris in it drove off. Will was pulling Jon along with them. A struggle was being waged inside Jon’s soul. It was clear as day on his face for all to see. The man could never hide his emotions.

 That wasn’t Jax’s concern. He just needed to get home safe. Let the rest of the world figure out their own problems. Lex kept eyeing every street sign they passed. Jax knew what he was looking for and he didn’t like it. Gambit, the stranger who saved them at the last minute had filled the two of them in on a lot of information that Jax wished he was still ignorant of.

 Jon and Will had left soon after Gambit saved them from the vampires. Lex had started playing 20 questions with the man while Christina stood there swooning over the mystery man. Jax had wanted to run after Jon and Will but his legs wouldn’t move. Fear kept him there, listening to every answer Gambit gave. Answers that Jax knew were going to haunt his dreams for years to come.

 “Please tell me you aren’t looking for what I think you are.” Jax knew the answer even before he asked the question. Part of him hoped he was wrong, but he knew better. Lex looked back to make sure that Will and Jon couldn’t overhear.

 “Don’t ask questions if you don’t want the answer.” For the life of him Jax couldn’t figure out why Lex would be looking for the nest. Gambit had told them about a nest of vampires that had just come to town. It was this nest that the vampires who attacked the party came from. The second Gambit told him about the nest Jax knew that Lex was going to do something stupid. He would have given anything to have been wrong.

 Jax looked behind him, Jon and Will were deep in conversation. “You going to tell them about the nest?” Lex contemplated it for a few minutes, he risked a glance back at their friends, torn between what he should do.

 “They are better off not knowing.” Lex went back to eyeing the street signs. A sense of unease washed over Jax. What was Lex planning on doing? He couldn’t be thinking about attacking the nest, could he? They barely made it out of their first battle with the undead alive. How could Lex be so suicidal as to want to go for a round two? Jax knew he should tell Jon and Will what Lex was planning on doing but they would want to stop him or worse. . . help him. They would expect him to go with them. The four of them as a team against the forces of evil. What kind of idiotic notion was that? Jax wanted no part of that. Not now not ever.

Raul

 Raul couldn’t ever remember being in this much pain. His whole body was sore and if that wasn’t bad enough he had the taste of sewer water still in his mouth. He didn’t know how long he had been laying there on this hard cement hill dug out of the woods that he knew, even without opening his eyes surrounded him.

 Enough was enough, Raul knew he had to get up. That laying here wasn’t going to do anything to help him. He had to get home, there was no reason to go back to the party. The cops were all over the place by now. Going for a beer run turned out to be a blessing. His father would have beat him raw if he knew that he had been at a party all night.

 After what felt like an eternity he forced his eyes open, his heart held in his chest. He saw nothing. Nothing but pitch blackness. *Had the fall damaged his eyes? Is this what blindness looked like?* Just as the panic started to set in his eyes started to adjust. It was still hard to see but the full moon helped a bit. Raul couldn’t remember the last time he had been somewhere this dark. That wasn’t true. He could remember, back when he was a kid he would take part in a challenge. More a game than anything else. Lex came up with it. Ironically the game was played in these woods. Near this sewer.

 In this sewer.

 They would go one by one into the sewer and mark the other end by tagging their nickname. Lex tagged his as Joker, complete with a crown over the words. As cliché as that was it was what Lex liked. The rest of them just wanted to fit in with their fearless leader, because truth be told that’s how they all saw Lex. As their fearless leader. So the rest of them tagged variations on it. Raul, having always been the shortest out of all of them, went by Shorty Joke. Thinking back on it now it pained him to think just how stupid it sounded. What made it worse is knowing that it was tagged on the wall for the world to see. The stupidity of youth.

 This night wasn’t near as dark as the inside of the tunnel. Here he had the light of the full moon sticking through the tree tops, whereas in there he had nothing. His eyes never adjusted to the dark because there was nothing to adjust to. It wasn’t so much that the light was so low, as it was that there was no light. Complete and udder darkness.

 Raul made his way through the sewer alone with no way of seeing even a foot in front of his face with no problem. He could make his way through the woods back home with the full moon as his guide just as easily.

 He started making his way up the cement and into the woods. He only made it a few feet before tripping on a root. *Ok, the sewer might have been easier. That was a straight line, this was a maze.* He had no idea which direction was home. He had never been this far out in to the woods and that frightened him more than he would care to admit.

 The safest thing to do would be to just follow the sewer back to the bridge where he fell. That way there would be no more roots to trip over and he could just walk down the path. Only problem was, which way did he travel once he fell? If he wanted to find the bridge, which way should he walk?

 There was nothing to do but pick a direction and start down that path. The water was flowing to the east, so that must mean he floated here from the west. It was all he had to go on. He started down his path and started heading for what he hoped was home.

 It was hard going. His body was still sore from the fall. To make matters worse his head was aching something fierce. All he wanted to do was lay down. But that would only make matters worse. Besides, the sooner he was away from the horrible smell of the sewer the better. His wet clothes dragged him down, making the journey even longer than it would have otherwise.

 The small was enough to gag a man. It was always the worst part about hanging out at Frog pond. The smell. It always seemed to stick with you, even after leaving. And now it was on his clothes. In his clothes. He would have to burn them. There was no way this smell was ever going to come out. He ran his hand through his hair, it stuck in the sticky gel that the sewer water had mutated into. He pulled his hand away, dripping with nasty water and some kind of dark substance he had no desire of finding out the origin of.

 He wiped it off as best as he could on some leaves he passed by. The longer he walked the harder it became. His legs wanted to give out on him, but he wouldn’t let them. He had to make it home.

 “Ahhwoo” A loud long howl came from somewhere behind him. Raul turned quickly around to see if he could spot the source. He saw nothing. It was just a coyote. The damn things were everywhere around here. There was nothing to be afraid of. Coyotes attacking humans was practically unheard of. At least living humans. Raul gave a shudder. The chill night air was starting to get to him. The breeze mixing with his soaking wet clothes was starting to make him shiver as he walked. This night couldn’t get any worse. Could it?

 “Ahhhooowoooo” the howl was longer and louder than the first. The sound of it knocked Raul to his knees. His heart beating so fast that he was sure it was going to burst right out of his chest. “Grrrrrrr” a low deep growl coming from close behind him filled him with dread. It took all the strength he had to look behind him once more.

 There it was, just behind a pair of trees, in complete darkness were bright orange eyes. The eyes of a killer. Raul wanted to scream but his voice failed him. All he could do was sit there and lock eyes with the monster coming for him.

A warm sensation flowed down his right leg.

Chris

 Everything was moving so fast. One minute he was hiding in a closet and the next he was being handcuffed and tossed into the back of a police car. How could this night have gone so wrong?

 The cop who found him had pretended to be nice. Chris should have known better. You could never trust a cop. Everyone knew that. His uncle was beaten and robbed by a cop for no other reason than the officer was bored. The biggest trap house in the Stratton was run by so called police officers.

 It was a universal truth that had been drilled into his head since before he could remember but somehow when shit hit the fan he forgot. He told that cop everything he saw. Everything he knew. The cop promised him that he would protect him if he just told them what happened. So he did and in return they handcuffed him and tossed him into the back of the patrol car. There he sat for at least an hour just watching as the police tore apart Kimberly’s house. Paramedics came and went. Taking with them bodies of the fallen. There were a lot of bodies. Chris had never seen a dead person before and now he had seen more of them in an hour than most people saw in their entire lives.

 He spent most of the car ride fighting back tears. He didn’t want to give the cops the satisfaction of seeing him cry. It wasn’t easy but he managed it. He spent the car ride staring off into space. Trying to forget what he saw.

 Once they made it to the station they chained him to a desk in the interrogation room and left him there. Alone. He tried to keep track of how much time passed but he couldn’t. His mind was too preoccupied.

 Just when he thought he would lose his mind a detective came in. Asked him a million and more questions. Chris had no idea what he was even saying by the end. All he knew was he was tired, scared and hungry. Other detectives came in and asked more questions. They tried to play good cop, bad cop but Chris didn’t play along. He stuck to his story as best he could. *The truth shall set me free.* That’s what he told himself, but he soon saw the errors of his way. The more he told them about the mystery man throwing Kimberly out of the window and chasing him through the house the more they yelled. The more they threatened. The detective refused to believe that he didn’t know the killers names. Refused to believe that Chris didn’t take part in the killings himself.

 How could they believe that? They found him hiding in a closet for crying out loud. He told them everything they wanted to know but it was never good enough for them. If the constant barrage of questions wasn’t bad enough, when his stomach started to rumble they left for food. He was relieved, that was until they came back and ate in front of him. He asked for some and the detective told him that he wouldn’t get anything to eat until he confessed to helping murder Kimberly and her guests.

 The rest of the night was a blur.

 One detective after another. Nothing mattered anymore. He had grown so tired but they wouldn’t even let him sleep. All they would say was that sleep would come when he confessed. He couldn’t take it any longer. He wanted food, he wanted sleep, he wanted to go home. Next time they offered him a way out he was going to jump at it. This was all too much.

 Only no one came. Chris was left waiting chained to his chair. He didn’t know how long he was waiting and he didn’t care. At long last he had some peace and quiet. Maybe now was the time to get some sleep. He glanced up at the door one last time before laying his head down. It wasn’t comfortable, what with his arm chained to the chair. It took a while but he finally started to doze off.

 The door flew open with a slam. Chris’s head shot up at the sound. Standing in the door was a man in his early 30’s in a rough worn suit. He had a grim look about him and he didn’t look happy. Chris swallowed hard.

 “You ok?” his voice was deep, firm but gentle. Chris didn’t know what to say so he just nodded. The detective walked over to him, leaned over and un-cuffed him. “Let’s get you out of here.” Chris looked down at his wrist, it was rubbed raw from where the hand cuffs locked him in place. He tried to rub away some of the pain, but it wasn’t much help.

 “I can go?” he asked, refusing to hope for the best. It had to be some trick. They didn’t just lock you up all night and then let you go like it was no big deal.

 “For now. I don’t want you to get the wrong idea.” The detective told him as he led Chris through the police station. Past inmates and other officers. “You are the only witness we have and we will need to ask many more questions. But there are rules. Rules that my partners here seemed to have forgotten. You are a minor and they should have called a guardian. Your parents are waiting down stairs.” His heart sank. Was it too late to go back in the interrogation room? His dad was going to kill him.

 “So uh, what happens next?”

 “You go home. Get some rest and we will call you. I’m personally taking charge of this case and I swear that I find this man you spoke of. The one who killed your friends.” The detective led him out into the police station lobby. His mother was standing there, a pained look on her face. Chris hated disappointing her.

 They came to a stop in front of her. “Ms. Johnson?” the detective asked. Chris mom nodded and pulled Chris into a hug.

 “Are you ok?” She asked looking into his eyes. She had been crying.

 “I’m fine mom.” He tried to sound fine, but he knew his voice was still shaky.

 “Ms. Johnson, my name is detective Jared Singer, I’m going to be paying you two a visit shorty. I have a lot of questions. But till then take your son home and let him get some rest. He had had a hard night.” The detective smiled and walked off. Chris let out a sigh of relief. He got to go home, at last.

Will

 The day dragged on. Will tried desperately to get some sleep but rest wouldn’t come. The events of the night before were too fresh in his mind. All the death and the blood. The blood would haunt him till the day he died. He knew that. After a few restless hours he went for a walk. The Stratton seemed peaceful but then again everything seemed peaceful after the hell he went through.

 The peace didn’t last. It wasn’t long before news broke out about what happened at the party. Everyone found excuses to talk to Will, trying to weasel out what he knew about the events of the party. It was common knowledge that he was there. He’s Will, he’s always at the party. No matter whose party it was. He was there.

 Now he wished he wasn’t.

 Jax’s mother said he was asleep but Will didn’t believe it. He saw how terrified Jax was. There was no sleeping after that. No chance in hell. He made his way to Jon’s apartment. He was asleep. Will could hear him having night terrors through the door. He should probably have knocked and woke him up but he didn’t have the heart.

 That left only Lex. Will didn’t know why but he needed to talk to someone about what he saw. He had never been a talker. He was a man, he buried everything that bothered him and moved on. It was one of the few things that his father taught him. But this, this was too much. He couldn’t handle this. Not alone.

 Lex didn’t live in the Stratton apartments like the rest of them. He lived in a house nearby. A neighborhood full of middleclass snobs. They weren’t rich like Kimberly but they had more money than the people of the Stratton and they never let them forget it. They never bothered them too much. Lex’s mom had restraining orders on every last one of them. Will knew some of the stories but had long since forgot most of them. Lex’s mom was something else. She saw offense when there was none but she was always sweet to Lex’s friends so they never minded.

 He wasn’t home. Of course not. Just Will’s luck. The good thing about Lex was that he had a few go to places when the world got rough. One was Frog Pond but Lex wouldn’t go there. That was Jon’s go to spot as well and if Lex really wanted to be alone he wouldn’t risk it.

 That left his tree house. It was built in the woods behind his house. There was no way that Will could just go through Lex’s backyard to get to the tree house. The only other way there was through the other end of the woods. In order to get there he would have to go through Frog Pond.

 It was a good forty minutes before Will made it to the tree house. Frog Pond was empty just like he expected. He made it up to Lex’s tree. He didn’t hear anything from up above. That didn’t mean anything. Lex could be asleep or just thinking silently.

 He quickly made his way up the tree to the tree house. Lex was nowhere to be seen. The tree house wasn’t much of a house. It was just some planks of wood nailed together to make a platform half way up the trunk. Lex loved it. He kept all his best weapons there. Not real weapons, not really. Ammo for BB guns and some weird plant he found that when you blew on it colored dust scattered everywhere. It wasn’t fun being hit in the eyes with it. Will knew that from experience.

 Only the plants weren’t there. The crate built into the side of the tree was empty of the plants. The branch was stained by the different colors. Red, blue, purple. But the plants themselves weren’t there. Why would Lex take them?

 He hopped down off of the tree. His landing was a bit rough but he stuck it. If Lex was going for his weapons supplies there was one more location he had to check. But he sure hoped he was wrong.

 He ran back down the hill towards Frog Pond but made a left and headed towards the high end apartments. In the woods just before them the grass grew out high. He made his way through it till he made it to a clearing.

In front of him was the hood of a yellow Volkswagen. It was rested on the top of what at first glance looked to be a sewer top. Only it didn’t lead to a sewer, it was a cement tube that went down six feet and just stopped. Near the bottom there was a cut out in the wall. Inside the cut out Lex put his extra BB guns and some knifes that he kept there in case of emergency. If the weapons weren’t there than that could only mean Lex was out looking for trouble and that was never a good sign.

Lex crawled into what was once the front windshield. The cold step ladder led the way down, the sixth one down was missing. Back when they were in seventh grade they were playing capture the flag. War style. Each team was armed. This was Lex’s base. Jon managed to get here and was on his way down to get the flag. Will was standing guard up top when he heard Jon let out a scream. When he looked down the hole he found Jon lying flat on the ground down at the bottom. He held the metal bar from the latter in his hand. It had come loose while he was climbing down.

It took nearly an hour before they could get him to wake up. His head was bleeding so badly they thought he might die. Lex tried to talk Jon into going to the hospital but he wouldn’t hear of it. They broke into the backyard of a nearby house and hosed his head down till the blood ran out. Then Jon pretended like nothing happened. He was a trooper that way. Always had been. It was what made hearing his night terrors so depressing.

Will made it to the bottom of the tube. The cut out in the wall still had BB guns inside. He let out a sigh of relief. He should never have doubted Lex. Fatigue was finally starting to catch up to him. Sleep might come easier now. All he had to do was make it home and put all of this nonsense behind him.

He started to make his way back up the ladder. Only something didn’t feel right. He couldn’t seem to put his finger on it. The BB guns were there. He saw them, there was nothing else here for Lex to have taken.

Will started back up the ladder. Maybe he should go wake Jon up. Save him from his nightmares. How he could do that he had no ideas. Nothing would ever save them from the nightmares of that horrible night.

Will passed the missing bar, careful not to over reach. The climb up always bothered him. He wasn’t a fan of height and it was a hard climb with the cold hard bars. The last time he climbed them it was during a war game. He had to carry up with him a rifle and a butterfly knife.

“Damn!” That was what was missing. The knifes! He didn’t see a single knife down there. He had to be sure. He slid the rest of the way down the ladder. Sure enough there weren’t any knifes left inside the cut out. Lex must have taken them. This wasn’t good.

Raul

Raul found himself standing in front of a cliff. He peered over the edge. His breath stuck in his throat. That was some fall. Straight down into cold hard ground.

 He had never been this tired in his life. The night had been hard on him. He didn’t remember how long he sat there staring into the coyotes eyes. The coyote that wasn’t a coyote. It turned out to be a wolf. The biggest wolf he had ever seen. The wolf jumped out of the shadows and Raul turned and ran. Ran faster than he had ever run in his life. He turned into the woods, away from the sewer. Running in a straight line was only going to get him killed faster.

It was risky running into the woods. This far out they were dense and full of trees and over grown bushes but he had to try. With the exceptions of a few near misses he managed to stay on his feet. He didn’t dare look behind him but he could hear the wolf smashing branches behind him.

He ran all night, changing direction every so often in a misguided effort to lose the wolf but it never helped. The sound of the wolf only grew closer and closer with every step he took. That was until the sun rose. Then the sounds died down but Raul was too scared to stop running. Too scared to look back.

It wasn’t long before he was completely lost. This Techolode canon was huge. Raul and his friends had tried to figure out their way around it many times but never made it this far in. Never even came close.

His wild blind run led him to this cliff and he had no idea what to do now. He couldn’t go forward. The fall was such that he would be dead before he hit the ground. And he was too terrified to turn back around.

 It had been hours since the sun had come up. It had to be around noon by now. There was no way his father would still be asleep. So even if he made it home his dad was just going to kill him. Nothing was going his way. Nothing ever did.

He sat down on the cliff and looked out at the view in front of him. It was truly beautiful. Nothing but trees for miles and miles and just beyond that, an endless sea of buildings. Civilization, so close yet so far. Now all he needed to do was find a way to get there. Get down off this cliff and make it through miles upon miles of forest to get to the city.

It was just a walk.

The cliff he was on stretched on for a long while. Both sides slanted downward. It stood to reason if he followed one path it would lead him to the ground floor of this canon. Once there he just had to go as straight as possible to make it to the streets he saw.

He took a few calming breaths and stood up. The sooner he started the sooner he could rest. He just hoped the wolf didn’t get him first.

**Jon**

The humming from the microwave was the only thing keeping Jon sane at the moment. His head was spinning with memories of everything that had happened. The party, the mayhem, the vampires, Gambit, Chris getting arrested. Hell.

He spent hours trying to get to sleep once he got home. It wasn’t easy. His sleep was hard earned and hardly worth it. His dreams were worse than he could have thought possible. What haunted him most was what his dreams weren’t about. He would have expected nightmare after nightmare of vampires killing people. Or even of Chris being arrested but all he dreamt about was Christina making out with the mystery man, Gambit.

He had never been so miserable sleeping as he was today. It was a welcome relief when Will came banging at his door with Jax in toe. A welcome relief that didn’t last long. Will started almost immediately talking about what he thought Lex was up to. It was insane. Lex wasn’t suicidal. He wouldn’t go chasing after more vampires. Not after what just happened the night before. Even Lex wasn’t that reckless.

His stomach was twisted all in knots, he didn’t think he could eat a bite but he was starving at the same time. He hated it when he felt like that. He put on a pizza hot pocket while Lex drooled on and on about how they had to find Lex and stop him.

Jon didn’t get it. Say Will was right and Lex had run out to go slay some undead freaks, why should they stop him? The only thing they should do was to go help him.

“Just shut up.” Jon turned to look. It was the first words Jax had said since they showed up. He looked sick and just stayed to himself. He was shaking as he tried to speak. “Just please stop. Let Lex go do his thing.”

“Do you know something?” The microwave beeped. Jon pulled out his hot pocket, the plate was hot as hell. He made his way back into the living room as Will tried to get information out of Jax who swore he knew nothing. Even Jon could tell he was lying. It was all over his face.

“What don’t we know Jax?” Jon asked as he took a bite of his hot pocket. Nothing he loved so much as pizza. No matter what form it took.

“You don’t want to know.” Jax looked down at his feet, he sounded as if he was about to cry. “I wish I didn’t know.”

“Tell us.” Will wouldn’t take his eyes off of Jax. This all seemed very important to Will. Jon knew he should have been concerned as well. Lex was one of his best friends. He should be beside himself with worry at his friend’s safety. Instead all he was just mad. If Lex went out to kill these monsters he should have invited them. Lex didn’t have a woman, a woman he knew, dropped in front of him. Almost on top of him. Dead.

“What does Lex know, that we don’t?” Jon asked as he finished his hot pocket and put the plate aside. “Lex is too smart to just run around looking for a fight. He must know where they are.” Jax looked up at his words.

“You do know something.” Will said, as he sat next to Jax. “What is it?” Jax swallowed hard.

“Lex didn’t want you guys involved. He said it was something he had to do alone.”

“What? What does he have to do alone?” Will demanded. They all knew the answer. Lex was a great guy. A great friend but he tried too hard to protect everyone. He was a natural born leader so they let him lead them. What he said went, no questions asked. Sometimes Lex let it go to his head and thought that he knew better than everyone else. That his friends were too stupid to look after themselves without his guidance. It annoyed him to no end sometimes.

“Gambit told us a lot of stuff about vampires.” Of course it had to have come from that asshole Gambit. It wasn’t bad enough that the man was plaguing his dreams, now he was sending his friends off to their deaths. Jon wasn’t a violent man but he wished he could hurt him. Hurt him bad. “Decapitation, sunlight, stake through the heart can kill them.”

“Movies tell us that. Did he tell you anything everyone doesn’t already know?” Will asked, he stood up and started pacing around. Jon had never seen Will this stressed out. “Hell we even staked a few vamps ourselves.” Will was full of anger. Jon didn’t blame him. They had a right to know what was said. They would have learned it all if Jon didn’t throw a pity party. He only hoped Will didn’t blame Jon. He only hoped Lex didn’t die because Jon was acting like a school girl and running away from his problems.

“Did Gambit say where the vampires are?” Jon already knew the answer. Lex learned the location of where these vampires hung out and went to put an end to them. “Tell us Jax.” Jon meant to go and help him end these blood thirsty freaks.

**Lex**

 Lex slowly crept along the roof of a warehouse down by the docks. It took him three buses and about an hour to get out here from his house but it was worth it. These blood sucking fiends massacred his classmates. Massacred a party full of his friends.

That party was already hell for Lex. He caught his girlfriend, Cindy, cheating on him with that asshole Josh. He liked her a lot. Maybe even loved her. He didn’t know for sure. He was only 16, what did he know of love? He knew that his heart raced every time he saw her. He knew that he got lost every time he looked into her eyes. Her big brown eyes that held more wonder than the rest of the world combined. Her smooth soft skin that gave him Goosebumps every time she touched him. She was his first and last thought every day and he couldn’t imagine not being with her. No matter how hard he tried.

He came to Kimberly’s party late. Truth be told he didn’t even want to go. Cindy told him she had a family emergency and couldn’t make it so he was just going to stay home and call it a night. That’s what he told her and that was his plan.

Jon kept bugging him throughout the day to change his mind. That he was going up there with Will and it would be fun. He kept insisting it would be fun. Jax told him he was going with Raul, Charles and James and they had some kush. That’s what sold him. To hell with sitting at home alone, he was going to have some fun with his friends.

Fun.

Nothing in life ever worked out the way you expected it to. Murphy’s Law. A universal truth that Lex knew only too well. He came to the party late, part of him still wanted to stay home alone. Despite what he wanted, he came to the party anyway. He went in through the back, the pool was full of people swimming and having a good time. Tons of kids getting drunk on the grass surrounding it.

Jon and Will were sitting on the other side of the pool deep in conversation. Will’s eyes darting from bikini clad girl to bikini clad girl. That was Will for you. He loved women. He really loved women. Lex started towards them, he figured he could kill some time with them before finding Jax and Raul.

He only made it a few feet before he spotted something that ruined his day. Something that made his heart sink and angered him all at the same time. On a pool chair near the side of the pool he saw Cindy, only she wasn’t alone. She was laying with Josh Rowel. An annoying prick in his math class. The two of them were kissing. Passionately.

Lex couldn’t really remember what happened next. The world went red and Lex was lost to blind rage, confronting both of them. Next thing he could recall he was in the shed near the back, kicking Chris out and demanding him to go home. He spent the night in the shed till shit hit the fan. The rest of the night was pure horror, right out of a movie. Everyone at the party was being torn apart by a group of men Lex had never seen before. He and his friends ran for their lives. Part of him wanted to stay and help, but he knew it would do nothing but get him killed. They needed to go and go fast.

They made their way through town and all the while they were hunted by the vampires. Killed off one by one. It wasn’t long until they met up with Jon, Will and some girl from school named Christina. It was there that Lex slayed his first vampire. The first time he felt alive since his heart all but stopped at catching Cindy.

He remembered the first time he saw her. Two years before. He sat next to her in class and fell for her at first sight. He spent the whole school year trying to sweet talk her into going out with him. She didn’t make it easy. She liked to toy with him and he loved it. It was a game to them and he didn’t want it any other way.

It just sucked that the whole thing turned out to be a game. And he was nothing more than a pawn for her amusement. Lex was no one’s pawn. He was a man.

The vampires soon overwhelmed them. Lex thought they were all going to die when a man in a brown overcoat dropped down off of a nearby tree and made quick work of the blood suckers. Lex didn’t trust the man who he soon learned was named Gambit. He was in a tree just waiting. Almost as if he was waiting for them. Something was fishy and Lex wanted to get to the bottom of it.

After the vampires were killed or fled Jon and Will took off home. They didn’t want to deal with the fall out was what Lex told Gambit and Christina, but he knew better. Jon was heartbroken at the way Christina looked at Gambit. Lex knew that look too well. It must have been the same look he had on his face just a few hours earlier.

Gambit was a fountain of knowledge. He told them how he was a hunter. How he had tracked a nest down here from England of all places. This group of vampires were after something, he wasn’t sure what, but it had to be important. He told them that there was a nest in an old warehouse out by the docks.

Lex didn’t know what to do with that information. Not at the time, he was just going to sit on it. That all changed when he saw Chris tossed into the back of that patrol car. That had decided Lex’s course of action. He had to kill the ones responsible. For the people who they killed. For Chris. For the horrible memoires that were going to haunt him and his friends for all time. They had to be put down like the animals they were.

He wanted to do this alone. His friends had already been through so much, he wanted to spare them this. He had no choice but to let Jax come if he wanted, he knew everything Lex did after all. Fortunately he didn’t want to come.

Lex gathered up what he thought he would need. His best knife. Some not so great knifes. His dust flowers. He didn’t know what they were really called but they were great with distractions. And for good measure he had sharpened some wooden stakes. They were vampires after all.

The bus ride here wasn’t too bad. Lex had never come out to the docks before. Not nearly as pretty as the beach he went to so often with his friends.

It didn’t take him long to find the right one. He went from warehouse to warehouse looking for one that was isolated from the rest and didn’t let any sun in. The last warehouse on the lot held what he was looking for. He climbed up onto the roof and looked for a way in. It wasn’t easy but he managed to get a vent shaft open. As he pried it loose it made a loud clanking sound. Lex froze, the reality of what he was doing started to sink in. These were undead monsters, a whole nest of them and he was going in alone to fight them. The only advantage he had was the element of surprise which he might have just ruined. He sat there silently, listening for any sound that they might be coming. It quickly dawned on him that even if they heard him they couldn’t attack him. Not yet, not out here. The sun was still up. He was safe. He could turn around and go home. Turn around and run and be safely home just as the sun set for the night.

He should turn home. Only he couldn’t. He had a job to do and he would do it. He took a deep breath and entered the vent. Slowly crawling through the narrow tunnel. He could hear people talking down below him but it was hard to make out what they were saying. Hard as he tried. He had to get closer. Get lower.

He hurried along the vent as fast as he could, trying not to make any noise. It wasn’t easy work, moving fast and silently. The dagger he hid taped to his leg was starting to bother him. The cold steel pressed against his flesh. Everything was starting to get colder and colder.

A sudden breeze picked up out of nowhere. So strong he lost his footing for a second and started to slide backward till he braced himself using his feet. He was in a vent! How in hell did a gust of wind get in here?

It hit him like a ton of bricks. Someone turned on the A/C. they knew he was here, they had to. He was as good as dead. He could feel it in his bones. There was only one thing to do. Take as many of the blood suckers out with him as he could.

He started forward once again. Fighting against the force of the wind. He would not be stopped by air. Not when he was so close. Nothing stopped Tommy Lexington. The vent was cold, and only getting colder by the second. The touch of the metal on his flesh was almost painful but Lex pressed on. After a time he made it to a drop. It looked to be at least a story, a story and a half fall. The vent was too small for him to reposition himself.

It was hard going but he managed it. He lowered himself over the edge of the drop and let himself fall. Trying to slow himself using his feet and his hands. The fractions made his hands burn and he wanted to scream out in pain but he stopped himself. The vamps knew he was here. They knew he was in the vents but not his exact spot. He had to remain silent if he hoped to even take a few of the blood suckers out.

His mind flashed to Die Hard, John McClane fighting a building full of terrorist all on his own. If Willis could do it so could he! He managed to stop himself just above the bottom of the vent. It took all of his strength to hold himself up. He let himself drop silently to the ground.

He made his way on all fours around the base of the warehouse, he was looking for any way out. It seemed he was trapped in this damn vent. There had to be a grate leading to the inside of the warehouse. There just had to be. After a while he found one, only it lead outside not in. This was useless. He was wasting time. Time he didn’t have. He turned back around and started searching once more.

The voices from inside the warehouse stopped. The breeze inside the vents stopped. It grew eerily quiet, the only sound being made was by his crawling. He cursed himself under his breath and stopped moving. Hopefully they didn’t hear him yet. He feared they could.

Seconds seemed like years as he sat there. Trying hard not to make a sound. Nothing happened. Nothing was ever going to happen. He was going to sit here till the end of days just waiting. He should have brought his friends. He shouldn’t have been so proud. Pride was always his downfall and now it was to be his death.

His breathing was out of control, he tried to tame it but it had a mind of its own. The only thing worse was his heart. Being so loudly they could hear it back in the Stratton. There was no way the vampires could not hear it. It was thundering.

No sooner the thoughts crossed his mind than his worst fear came to pass. Hands crashed through the vents and grabbed Lex, pulling him through the vent. He screamed out in pain. As he came crashing down hard on the warehouse floor.

There were at least 15 vampires surrounding him. Their faces were bestial. They wore the faces of demons, not the faces of men and they all looked hungry. The only meal they were likely to get was him. He knew it, he could feel it in his bones. He was going to die, slowly and painfully.

But not yet. Not before he did damage to these monsters. He let out a cold battle cry as he hopped onto his feet. It was a trick he taught himself. To jump from his back and land standing up. It served no purpose but to look cool. Or at least that was true until today. As he jumped up he pulled out his good knife. He held it in his hand as he turned slowly around in a circle, looking each and every one of the monsters in the eye. An evil grin crossing his face. His dagger was a good foot and a half long.

“I’ve been looking for you freaks.” He said in what he hoped seemed like aa brave voice but even he heard the fear and self-doubt in it. The vampires laughed. A long evil laugh that chilled Lex to the bones. *Please God let me make it through this.*

He lunged at the nearest vampire, stabbing him in the neck. The vampire yelled out in fury and swatted him away. The vampire held his cut neck and howled in pain. The other vampires jumped at Lex. He swiped his blade back and forth trying to keep them away. He kept an eye out for the head vampires that he saw last night. He didn’t spot them, but he only got quick glances at them to begin with.

He pulled out the stake he made. The vampires laughed again. They didn’t seem him as a treat. He knew it. He didn’t blame them. There were 15 of them, armed with super strength and there he was alone with a blade and wooden stake. What chance did he have?

 A big vampire on his left, with a long mane of red hair bared his fangs and lounged for Lex. Lex slashed his blade and a strike of red blood shot down across his face, blinding him for a moment as he blinked away the blood from his eyes. He felt another of the beasts picking him up by his throat. Choking him. The hand around his neck tightening. He tried to lift his blade but he no longer had the energy. The world started coming into focus as the strength left his hand and the blade fell to the floor with a clang. His vision started to blur as the beast smiled his fanged smile. He moved forward to bite him. Lex used every ounce of strength he had remaining in him and kicked the vampire with everything he had. He caught him by surprise, the vampire stumbled back and flew into two of his friends as he dropped Lex to the floor. Lex was too winded to do anything but try and get his breathing under control. He sat there for a moment too long. Another vampire jumped on top of him and bite him on the neck. It was a warm sensation. An oddly pleasant one at that.

 As his blood left his body the fight went out of him. He wanted nothing more than to lay here and let himself be drained. Part of him even wanted a taste of blood himself. He couldn’t explain it, it almost felt like instinct.

**Jax**

Jax had never been this scared before in his life. He wanted nothing more than to run back home and hide under his bed but he couldn’t do that. His so called friends wouldn’t let him. Will dragged him out of his room, in a panic about Lex. Insisting that he went off on some fool’s errand to hunt vampires.

 Jax knew it was true. He knew that Lex was off getting himself killed for some idiotic notion of revenge, of justice. But he promised he would tell no one. Ever.

 As he sat in Jon’s apartment and listened to the two of them go on and on about stopping Lex and trying to find him, all he wanted to do was flee. Run from the house as quickly as he could. The second Will came to his house he knew where all this was headed. He knew that before long they would get the truth out of him and dragged him along to go stop Lex.

 He also knew they would be too late. By time they found Lex he would already be in a battle for his life. He knew it, but it seemed his friends didn’t.

 “We can’t leave him to die.” Jon demanded. He refused to believe Lex went out to hunt vampires. The whole time Will insisted on it Jon refused. Called it lies and wouldn’t hear of it. The second that Jax had confirmed it the two friends just switched. Will said they were too late, while Jon wanted to rush after Lex into the grave. Why did he hang out with such stupid people?

 “If he is already with the. . .the monsters than it’s too late.” Will was fighting himself with every word he said. He wanted to save Lex. Back at the apartment he was fevered with the notion of saving him. But it seemed that righteousness, that loyalty towards his friend fled him quickly once his life was in danger. “I want to save Lex. But us dying with him isn’t going to do anyone any good.”

 Jax couldn’t help but side with Will. But it didn’t matter. None of this mattered. All of this was already decided. They were in the warehouse district by the docks. Will was dead set against going into the warehouse with the vampires. He said if they could stop Lex before he entered than great, otherwise they needed to run home before the sun went down. Jon swore he would burst into the warehouse and save Lex. Jax knew full well that Will would be right by his side.

 He would love to stay outside the warehouse. Hell he would even run home as soon as the door opened. But he would never be able to live with himself. He knew that full well. They were his friends and he loved them like brothers. He stayed silent while Lex went off to find the vampires. Jax did some research on the bus ride and found out which warehouse the vampires were in. It wasn’t hard, there had been police reports about strange noises coming from the last warehouse but no one had bothered to check it out yet. It meant it had to be the vampires.

 How could Jax tell his friends the location of their death and then just run off home? It wasn’t right. As terrified as he was, he couldn’t run scared while his friends ran to death.

 They made it to the warehouse. From inside they could hear loud talking and laughter.

 “Are we sure about this?” Jax heard himself say.

 “We need to run, maybe we can find some people to help us.” Will said, nodding at Jax. If only he meant the words he said. Jon looked between the two.

 “Maybe we can.” He looked at the door, at the sound of the laughter. “or not.” With those words he sealed their fate. Jon kicked the door open, pulling out the wooded stake he carved for himself on the way there. Like it was going to do any good. Jax stood in the door way. The bright sun shining down on him. Giving him protection as he heard screaming and the sound of struggle from within the warehouse. Will took a deep breath and took out the wooden stake Jon had made for him. With that he charged into the warehouse, screaming like a mad man. His screams didn’t last long. Jax heard Will get knocked backward into a wall. Jon screamed out his name. Jax couldn’t hear anything from Lex. Maybe he didn’t make it here yet. Maybe he backed out. Maybe he was dead.

 Jax should go in and help, but fear wouldn’t let him. His feet wouldn’t respond to his mental commands. He stood there listening to his friends die mere feet away, while he stood in the safety of the warm sun.

 He had never known how much of a coward he was till that moment. He knew he wasn’t reckless like his friends. He wasn’t an adventure like them, but he had never thought he was cowardly. Till now.

 He was going to live while they died. And he would spend the rest of his days remembering that he let them die while he stood by and did nothing. Tears started to flow down his face as the sounds of the violence inside intensified. He found the stake Jon made for him in his hand and he held onto it tight. So tight that it drew blood from him. It was time he changed who he was. *Hell we all have to die sometime right?* He thought to himself.

 Jax took a deep breath and stormed into the warehouse, screaming like a mad man.

**Lex**

 The sounds of battle were all around him. His neck was hurting worse than any pain he had ever felt before. Death was upon him when the warehouse door busted open. The nearest vampire caught on fire. Lex saw him out of the corner of his eye. He couldn’t tell at first who had run in, but the other vampires had run to meet them.

 Lex’s eyes had become too heavy for him to keep open but he could still hear the battle rage on. The second the vampire stopped draining him the peace he had experienced evaporated and was replaced with pain. He felt sickly. He knew it had to be from the loss of blood. The creep had been draining him for a while before the mystery man burst down the door.

 Whoever this help was, they came too late. Lex knew he was dying. His life was fading even as the battle waged on. He wanted to die. To make this pain stop. To make up for the fact that he wanted to feed on the vampire. He knew enough about vampire lore to know that if a vampire drained your blood and you drank from them you would become one of them. He didn’t know if being drained made you want to drink or if deep down he wanted to be a vampire. Be something more than a normal human. He didn’t want to know the answer. It scared him.

 He laid there listening to the battle wage on. He listened in as more people joined the fray and still he laid there. Never moving. Never opening his eyes. These were his last moments on Earth and he wanted to make good use of them. He started praying. Begging even, for forgiveness. He had done so many wrong things. So many bad things. He was going to have a lot to answer for when he made it to Saint Peter’s gates. That he knew for a fact.

 “Jon! Help me!” Lex barely heard the words. Even sounds were little more than static now. But the name Jon pierced through his fog. It couldn’t be his Jon. He didn’t know Lex had come here. Unless. That voice, he knew that voice. It was Jax.

 His friends had come here. Come here to save him and he just laid here. Letting his life slip away as his friends risked theirs. He had to do something. The sounds of the world started to come back into focus. He felt strength returning to his wary body. Not a lot. Not enough to really make a difference, but enough to open his eyes. To move.

 The will to live had returned to him. If his friends were fighting for their lives how could he do any less? He looked around to survey the battle that had transpired. Jax was pinned against a far wall. A blood sucker holding him down trying to bite him. Jax was holding him off as best as he could but it clearly wasn’t good enough. Jon was trying to get to him but being held back by three vampires. Will was knocked out along the back wall. Blood pouring from his head. A thin lanky vampire was slowly walking towards Will. Hunger in his undead eyes.

 It took all of Lex’s strength but he managed to get to his feet. His blade and wooden stake were near his feet. He scooped them up and started towards the vampire that was headed towards Will. Every step was a chore but he continued on. He couldn’t let a little thing like fatigue stop him. He was the only chance Will had. He had to save him.

 The vampire bit down on Will’s neck. Will let out a howl. The bite woke him up. Lex could hear the sound of Will’s blood being slurped up like a dog with a water bowl. The vampire was having his fill. Lex gave him what he had coming. He put his stake right through the heart. The vampire gave out a startled cry and he burst into dust. Will coughed out the dust and looked up at Lex. His eye’s watery with the pain.

 “You ok?” Lex asked, holding out his hand. Will’s neck wound was gushing blood. It was an ugly sight. His own scar must look much the same.

 “I’ll never be ok.” Will said as he got to his feet. “Why did you come here?” That was the question. No answer seemed good enough anymore.

 “It was what was right.” The words sounded hollow even to him. “These blood suckers come into our city and killed our friends.” Lex took a deep breath. Standing was still hard to do but he didn’t falter. “What choice did I really have?”

 Will locked eyes with Lex. He had a cold hard look in his eyes. But the anger seemed to melt away. Lex could see the realization dawn on Will that he was right.

 “Then let’s kill these freaks.” He said as he picked up his stake. Together the two of them rushed across the warehouse to where Jon was fighting two vampire atop the ashes of the third. He was losing ground. Jax was laying on the floor of the warehouse, a look of defeat in his eyes. His clothes were dirty, full of dust.

 Lex and Will joined in the battle and helped Jon overtake the two vampires. The three of them made quick work of the blood suckers.

 “Bout time you woke up.” Jon pulled Lex into a hug.

 “Only thanks to you.” Lex meant it. He was going to die if they didn’t show up. They kept him alive. He owed them everything.

 “What are friends for?” Jon said with a laugh. Will had helped Jax up and the two of them made their way over towards them.

 “Not walking each other into death traps!” Jax screamed at them. Lex let the words wash over him. He was owed them. He earned them, no matter how much it hurt him.

 “I deserved that.” Lex admitted. Feeling ashamed.

 “Yeah you do!” Jax said, fury rising up in him. “We all almost died because of you. Always trying to play hero.”

 “Shut up Jax.” Jon said stepping forward. “You’re the one who let him come alone.” Will nodded. Jax looked away.

 “I told him not to tell you guys.” Lex admitted. Will sat down, the loss of blood was getting to him.

 “You should have trusted us.” Will said half-heartedly.

 “I trust you. It wasn’t that.” Lex didn’t know what to say. These three men he trusted more than anyone.

 “You were trying to protect us.” Jon said. He was pissed and Lex couldn’t blame him.

 “I thought it was best I did this alone.”

 “You thought wrong.” Jon snapped.

 “The four of us are a team.” Will said standing up. “Next time we face vampires we do it as a team.” Lex couldn’t help but smile. Jon patted him on the shoulder.

 “Next time?” Jax asked with a sense of dread. Lex nodded.

 “Our home has been invaded by the undead freaks. Who else will keep Kimberly’s party from happening again?” Jon asked. Will nodded his agreement. Jax didn’t look happy.

 “Our home has become a warzone, and we have to stay on the front lines. No matter what.” Lex said firmly.

 “I don’t like it but there is no way around it.” Will said. Jax let out a long low sigh of frustration.

 “Fine.” Was all Jax said.

**Raul**

 The warmth of the sun was quickly fleeing this world. The trees were pressed in close around him. Even with the little sunlight that made it through the thick canopy of the trees above was hardly enough for Raul to see where he was going.

 His journey was taking far longer than he had meant it to. Fatigue was setting in. He had been up and walking for longer than he could remember. The whole day seemed to pass on his way down. His family must be worried sick about him. He could just imagine how it would play out when he made it home. His mother and father would be so happy to see him. They would hug him and tell him how glad they were to see him. Not two seconds afterwards his father would beat him to within half an inch of his life for giving them such worry.

 He should never have gone to the damn party. It did nothing but cause him problems. Then again, life was never anything but problems. Raul had not had a hard life. Not an overly easy life but not a hard one. His family wasn’t rich or powerful but they weren’t poor either. By and large they had a lot more money than anyone else he hung out with. His mom had even hinted at him getting a car come his birthday in two months’ time.

 Hopefully this wasted day didn’t get in the way of that. Wouldn’t that be a laugh? He fell off a bridge and floated down a stream of sewage water before washing ashore. He spent the night running from an angry wolf and the whole next day walking through trees. Half doubting himself that he was even going in the right direction.

 His feet were killing him. He could feel the dirt beneath his feet. His shoes were quickly wearing out. It was what he got for wearing his nice shoes. You can’t ever wear nice things. This night proved that true. He wanted anything to sit down and rest, just for a bit. Rub some of the tension out of his feet before continuing on his way but he was afraid that the wolf would be back at night fall. And this time he wouldn’t have the energy to keep ahead of him. He would get caught by the beast and be torn apart. He would die.

 He didn’t want to die. No one wanted to die. He knew that, but he was only 15 years old. Much too young to die. Out here alone. Where no one would ever know what happened to him. He couldn’t have that. He had to make it out alive.

 One foot in front of the other. That was all there was too it. He had to put one foot in front of the other, till he made it out of here. Once he found the street he saw from up on high he could find a way home from there.

 In truth this was no more difficult that the trip through the sewer they all had to take back at frog pond. Back when they were still in elementary school they would all have to travel through the tunnel and tag up the other end of it. They would move through it in pitch blackness with the crackling sound of thunder every few feet. A sound that would make anyone weak with fear.

 He shook his head and put one foot in front of the other and was on his way. The light from up above was gone now. The moon wasn’t strong enough to shine through the tree tops. Raul’s eyes adjusted quickly enough to this new gloomy world. He tried to remember how far he had to go. The distance didn’t look that far from his vantage point at the top of the cliff. A few hours at most. How could he have miss-judged it so badly? Maybe he should go back and check again how best to exit these woods? But that wouldn’t do. If he would go back it would take another day and the wolf would get him. Get him and rip out his throat.

 He shuddered at the thought of having the wolf’s teeth sink into his flesh. He eyes stung with tears as he thought of it. Why did he have to leave for beer? He should have just stayed at the damn party. Sure he would have had to deal with the cops but most of them got away in the night. If there was one thing kids were good at it was running from the cops. Even the ones who did get caught were most likely set free by now. Whereas he was still locked in these damn woods. With no end in sight.

 One foot in front of the other. Words he kept repeating to himself as he made his way through the dark thick woods blocking his path to the street that in all honestly could have been nothing more than his mind playing tricks on him.

 He couldn’t let himself believe that, but he was starting too. All this was just too much. He walked on, one foot in front of the other. The words played over and over in his head. They started to sound like a nursery rhyme, lulling him to sleep. He shook his head trying to keep himself awake. It wasn’t easy work. His body ached for sleep and he longed to give in to its sweet embrace. He would give anything for a quick nap. Just an hour or two, laid against a nice hard tree. Let all the pain just wipe away in the darkness of sleep. It would be a sweet release. One that he would kill for. One that would have to wait till he made it home.

 One foot in front of the other and on it went. The woods started to thin out as he made his way farther and farther away from the sewer that he washed out on. It wasn’t long before he saw the street up ahead. A smile crossing his lips as he could finally see his freedom so close at hand.

 He started running towards his goal. He tripped half way there but hopped back to his feet and was sprinting towards the street once more. The full moon high over head as he exited the trees. The street was long and empty in both directions. Raul let out a sigh of frustration. He was free of the woods and yet just as lost.

 “Ahhhoooowwwoooo” a long bellowing howl that terrifies Raul to his soul.

 The wolf was back.

**Christina**

 The moon was bright out tonight. Lighting up the rooftop as Christina stretched back and laid out. A resigned smile resting on her face as she watched Luna like an old friend. She knew that by all rights she should be upset about the events of the party but all she could think about was Gambit. His face was so dreamy. With his firm features, chiseled jaw, crooked nose and bright brown eyes. His eyes that could see into her soul and melt her heart.

 Christina wasn’t much of a romantic. No one would ever mistake her for a girly girl. Yet for some reason just thinking about that mystery man in his long overcoat had Christina swooning. The entire time that Gambit was talking to Jon’s friend she was just lost in his accent. It was a thick Irish accent. She had never met an Irish man before, never would have guessed how much she was turned on by it. She could have spent the rest of the night listening to him.

 She wished she had. But not long after he finished talking to Jon’s friend he asked her if she needed protection home. What a gentleman. He walked her all the way to her house and made sure she was safe. No one else would have looked out for her the way he did. He was a saint. The bravest man who ever lived. The face of an angel and a body. . . oh did he have a body. She longed for him to hold her, to feel his arms wrapped around him.

 She stayed up that whole night fantasizing about him. Dreaming about what it would be like to be with him. If only dreams could come true. She spent the whole day looking for him to no avail. She went everywhere she could think of but had no luck. She even tried to go back towards Kimberly’s house, but it was swimming with cops. Even well into the afternoon they were still carting off dead bodies. How could so many have died? Monsters were real and only her Irish man stood in their way.

 The cool night air felt good on her skin as her mind wandered. Plans unfolded before her. Playing out across the moon as if it was a screen and her mind’s eye was the projector. If she couldn’t find him through normal methods she would have to try something drastic. The only thing she really knew about him was that he saved her from a vampire attack. Maybe if she was under attack again he would once more save her.

 It might not have been the best idea she ever had, but it was the only one she could think of. She had to see Gambit again. Nothing else mattered.

 Sleep soon took hold of Christina as she laid there on the roof. A smile on her face.

The End