

"Only be sure that thou eat not
the blood: for the blood is the life;
and thou mayest not eat the life
with the flesh."

- *Deuteronomy 12:23*

Chapter One

The darkness was always comforting to her, but now she needed more than comfort: she needed shelter. Another day was dawning outside and it was time for Lilith to move on. She was found again by the Hunters and needed to escape. Her dear friend, Anna, vowed that she'd help her escape. New Orleans was no longer the safe haven that it was long ago. Anne Rice's novels had turned it into a haven for vampire wannabes and a Mecca for would-be slayers.

Lilith was no stranger to wanderlust. She often needed to leave the security and tranquillity of a home at the most inopportune times. As a result, she learned not to become attached to many physical possessions. This included her estate in New Orleans, though she couldn't help loving the house and the atmosphere of this town. New Orleans made her feel truly alive. However, she knew she had to leave yet another home behind.

She was able to sell the estate for a reasonable price. She knew the property was worth much more than she sold it for, but she wanted the money immediately and took what she could get for it on such short notice. Afterwards, she decided to visit the bank and finish some business there. The bank manager was quite disappointed to find out that Lilith would be making a withdrawal – and a substantial one at that. Lilith was by no means poor, but she didn't live extravagantly either. She decided, after much deliberation, that it would be best to take her cash with her. Ultimately, she didn't want to leave a paper trail for the Hunters to follow. She assumed that once she reached her destination that she would buy a new house and start a new life.

The question of destination haunted Lilith and her friend, Anna. Lilith had a desire to go to Arizona. She had heard that the scenery was breathtakingly beautiful and that the weather was warm and inviting. "But, Phoenix?" asked Anna worriedly. "It's the 'Valley of the Sun' for cryin' out loud!" she continued. Lilith appreciated and acknowledged her friend's concern, but she replied with a grin on her beautiful face, "True enough, but you must admit that it's the last place you'd expect to find a vampire."

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As the dawn was threatening to rise outside, the ladies were gathering up all of their desired, transportable belongings from the house. They didn't

have much time to prepare for this latest impromptu journey so their mode of transport was short on space. They were able to rent a small but suitable trailer that they hooked up to Anna's beat-up, white Dodge van.

In the back of the van, Lilith put her travel trunk . . . her portable sleeping quarters. She gave up sleeping in her coffin literally ages ago. The trunk's chief advantage was that it could get past customs a lot easier than some dusty old pine box that should have been six feet under.

The trunk was easy to travel with, and she easily found her comfort in it. In the bottom of the trunk, she always kept a mattress filled with down -- and earth. It's comfortable enough to sleep in, though Lilith would prefer a bed to her trunk -- with similar mattresses laden with her home-earth. As Lilith loaded the van with her trunk, she already started thinking about a nice bed and how good it would feel after a few days of traveling in this trunk.

Putting her new road atlas in the front passenger's seat reminded Anna of what the man who sold her the book told her the night before. "Get yerself onto In'erstate 10 and jus' head west, *cherie*. That road'll take ya right into Phoenix, sure 'nuff." Then when Anna got home with the map, she and Lilith planned their route along I-10, noting places of interest to make stops at for the night.

They also noted the number of rivers they'd have to cross. It was fewer than they expected, but nevertheless, they needed to plan their crossings over them. Lilith was strong enough to cross bridges, but she preferred not to live with the pain that crossing running water often caused her. While Lilith sleeps during the day, she is oblivious to the passage, however, and that is how they planned their trip.

They'd be crossing their first river early today. They'd have to cross the Mississippi River, no less, on their way out of Baton Rouge. They decided to make their first stop Houston, Texas, which would be an approximately five and a half hour trip, the two expected.

It was about 6:40 a.m. when they finished loading up everything they needed. It was time for them to hit the road; well, it was time for Lilith to rest in her trunk while Anna drove to Houston. As Lilith stepped into her box, Anna reassured her friend that there would be no need to worry.

"When the sun sets and you wake tonight, we'll be in Houston. We'll go out for a night on the town. How does that sound?" Anna asked. Lilith yawned and replied sleepily, "It sounds good . . . well, be careful up there." Anna smiled and watched her friend lie down and curl up in her box. She then closed the lid of the trunk and then the van door.

As Anna got into the driver's seat, her watch's alarm went off to signal that it was now 6:45 a.m. She closed the door and looked through the side window to the east and saw the first rays of sunlight begin to appear. In her mind, she heard the phrase "Go west, young man" and started the van.

The darkness truly was comforting to Lilith now. She could sense that the sun had started to rise because that sweet oblivion, that small piece of

slumber's freedom, was creeping over her. Lilith hadn't dreamed since she was mortal. The only disturbances to her sleep came if she wasn't sleeping on her mattress of earth; then she would be totally restless.

However, even though she was comfortably situated on her mattress now, she dreamed! It was glorious. She dreamed that she was walking in the sunshine again. She felt the gentle rays of sunlight warm her long-cold flesh. She felt human again. Then the dream vanished as fast as it came. It felt to her to be only a few seconds. Actually, the sun had just gone down.

Slightly worried about what had just happened, Lilith practically threw open the lid of her trunk to find herself in a nice motel room. She sat up and saw a slightly startled Anna, who in response to Lilith's dazed look said, "Welcome to Houston, sleepy head."

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"You did what?" asked Anna, trying to confirm her hearing. "I dreamt!" repeated Lilith ecstatically. "It was the first time I can remember dreaming since I became immortal. It was amazing! I felt like I was enjoying the sunshine again. Unfortunately, it was very short."

"Well, don't knock it for its length. Anyway, how is this possible? I thought you said that you couldn't dream."

"Well, anything's possible." Then she held her arms open as if to say that she was proof of that. Anna conceded, "*Touché, mon amie*. But still, how? Any ideas?"

"Well, the only theory I have is that Time allowed me to 'mature' again."

"I don't follow..."

"Remember, I told you that there was a time, in my early stage of immortality, that I couldn't, for example, cross rivers or other areas of running water?"

"Yeah, but now you can . . . or we wouldn't be here in Houston."

"Exactly . . . I can cross, but I still feel some slight pain. During the day, at my rest, is of course the ideal time, though. The point is, as I matured as a vampire, the pain from running water has subsided."

Finally understanding her friend, Anna added, "So you believe that you have now reached a stage where dreaming is possible? Amazing. So what do you believe the dream means?"

"I think it's obvious, if it truly is evolution, that it's possible that someday I can reach a stage where I can enter sunlight without pain." Lilith pondered the wonderful possibility.

"That's wild . . . but I hope you don't have any illusions about running around outside in the daylight tomorrow." She gave an uneasy smile.

"Of course not . . . but I do feel like enjoying a night on the town tonight."

Anna felt too tired to enjoy going out tonight. She didn't fully realize how tiring nearly six hours of non-stop driving could be. She decided she would get an early night's rest and be fully refreshed for tomorrow's drive. Perhaps the next night she might be persuaded to enjoy some night life.

Lilith however needed to get out and enjoy some "night life" of her own. She wished her friend a good night and told her that she'd see her in the morning. She quietly left their room, locking the door behind her.

As soon as she was outside, she looked around to see if anyone was about. Satisfied that she was alone with the night, she stepped out of the lights, into the shadows, and dispersed into a mist. Lilith had to admit it; there were times that she enjoyed being a vampire. One thing that traveling in this form didn't afford her was vision. She only had a type of ethereal sense of touch coupled with a heightened sense of hearing.

She let the gentle Texas breeze carry her. It drifted her northward from her downtown Houston motel room. She crossed a few streets and passing cars that changed the direction of her carrier wind to a northwestern one. A few more streets and more slight changes in speed and direction of wind brought her to what felt softer than the concrete she'd just been hovering above.

Suddenly she felt a familiar pain course through her. The pain distracted her enough to cause her to return to her human form. She materialized standing knee-deep in water. Instinctively, she ran onto shore to a small park, a landing for the Buffalo Bayou, as fast as she could. Two things slowed her down; the currents were slightly against her, and the other was her unnatural resistance through running water.

Once she did get to ground, she felt the cool grass of the park -- the soft ground she drifted over just prior to the water pains. She just laid down in the grass, looking up at the stars. She saw one bright "star" in the heavens that night.

She thought to herself that it couldn't be Venus, for it didn't shine as brightly. *Nothing in the night sky shines as bright as Venus, save the moon of course*, she deduced. The moon was new tonight so its light was absent from above. She decided it must be Saturn then. She imagined that she almost saw the rings around it with the naked eye. Her unaided eyes were powerful enough that she just might have been able to see Saturn's rings, had she actually wanted to focus in on them.

An old song slowly made its way to her recollection and she began to sing, "The stars at night, are big and bright." She clapped four times and burst out laughing, but tried to continue to sing, "deep in the heart of Texas."

She then came to the solid realization that she wasn't in Louisiana anymore. She wasn't in her beloved New Orleans. She might never get to see the mighty Mississippi River and its levied banks again. *Maybe it's just as well*, she thought to herself; *the delta that New Orleans was built on is sinking*. Then a humorous thought came to mind, *it might just become the next Venice*. She then

shuddered at the idea of needing to get around town in a gondola. No amount of justification eased her anger, however.

Damn those Hunters! What a bunch of fools they are to try to hunt me down, she thought. *I'd be a bigger fool had I stayed. Mob mentalities have a way of justifying foolishness.*

As she continued to gaze up at the twinkling stars, she felt that familiar tugging feeling. She was hungry. Lilith tried to avoid feeding on anything but animal blood. However, being in a new town, she had no idea where she could find such a meal. So, she thought she'd just find a "lost soul" somewhere -- besides it had been a while since she last satisfied her hunger, and other desires, with a human.

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"So, what does a lady have to do to get a drink around here?" she asked the bartender as she sat down on a stool. "What can I get for you, darlin'?" was the bartender's quick reply, though it was obvious that he was tripping over his words. Lilith was the only woman in the bar, and was probably the first one the barkeep had seen in there in a while.

"Bloody Mary, and hold the celery," she softly replied, laying the influence on thick. As the bartender hurried off to mix her drink, Lilith noticed the mirrored wall behind the shelves of drinks and the absence of her reflection. She had to stop and focus her thoughts for a moment, closing her eyes to concentrate. When she opened them again, she saw her reflection. It takes a little effort but casting a reflection is no longer a problem. Just one more reason for her to think that there were stages of development to her immortality. Being able to eat and drink something besides blood was another. Although she gained no sustenance from eating, it added to the masquerade.

"Here you are . . . no celery," said the bartender triumphantly as he set the tall glass on the bar. He then added, "and it's on the house," as if it was his chivalric idea to do so, though it wasn't. Lilith finished the act by saying "Thanks, love," then she leaned over the bar and kissed him on the cheek. The bartender actually blushed.

She then got up and started to walk around the bar, nursing her drink. She found the pool room in the back. Two guys, obviously drunk, were attempting to play pool. The fools were even betting on the game, and the pile of money was fairly large. Lilith had wondered how many times they'd bet "double or nothing" that night. She leaned against the wall, staring at the men, slowly sipping from her Bloody Mary. The men were either too involved in their game or blind drunk, because they didn't notice her immediately.

When one of the men, the more handsome of the two, looked up from the table and saw her, she winked. The man then missed his shot terribly. Lilith wondered if it was because she distracted him, or if he was irretrievably

drunk. The other guy missed his shot as well. When the handsome one stepped back up to the table, Lilith blew him a kiss. That must have sobered him up instantly, for he proceeded to sink his last two balls, followed by the eight ball. At that, Lilith clapped softly for the victor.

The other guy, quite upset, and obviously broke, called it a night and huffed out of the room. The winner walked up to the pile of cash and stuffed it into his pockets and some into his wallet. He then walked slowly up to Lilith and stated the obvious to her -- "You're new to these parts." She smirked as slipped her free hand into a pocket of her skin-tight blue jeans and slyly said "Yes, and I just love pool halls. Unfortunately, I don't have any money." The man was observant and noted the drink, which he eyed to call to her attention. She replied, "It was on the house."

"Joe always was a sucker for a beautiful lady like yourself."

"Thank you, mister...?"

"Rob . . . Rob Stevens."

"Well, Rob, how about a friendly game of pool?"

"How friendly?"

"Well, if you win, you can take me to your place."

"And if you win?"

"You can take me to your place."

"Very friendly . . . I like those odds."

"They're in both our favors," and with that she racked up the balls, bending over the table, quite obviously displaying her cleavage. Rob almost tripped as he stepped back from the table, noticing that she wasn't wearing a bra under her red tank top. "Ladies first, miss...?"

She stepped back up to the table, cue stick in hand, gently rolling it back and forth, eyeing the cue ball. "Lilith . . . Thompson." Then with a quick strike, the cue ball clapped against the racked balls, knocking in two striped balls right from the start.

Lilith loved billiards, and she had plenty of time throughout her immortality to perfect her playing skills. She often hustled those taken by her beautiful appearance. This time, she wasn't playing for money. It didn't matter, apparently, for what she played. She was very good -- poor Rob didn't step up to the table once.

As the eight ball, the last ball, was sunk, she turned to Rob who had a slightly disappointed look on his face. "Damn, you're good. What a hustler. Good thing money wasn't at stake. Would you like to give me a shot to play, at least?"

"You don't really want to stay here and play pool, do you?" and she gave a somewhat playful, pouting look.

"No, ma'am. I do believe a bet is a bet."

Lilith smiled and said, "I do believe you are right." She then walked over to her Bloody Mary, which she had nursed so well that it was only half drunk by now. She turned to Rob, knowing full well that he hadn't taken his

eyes off her at all, and practically swallowed the rest. She then licked the salt and pepper off the rim and licked her lips seductively. As she walked up to him, she swayed her hips.

When she put her arm around him and the two began walk out of the pool area, she wondered if she was laying it all on too thick. As the two walked past the bar, she could tell that Joe, the bartender, was jealous. *Yes, she thought, I'm pouring it on thick. But when I'm good, I'm very, very good. Tonight, I'm feeling bad.*

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As Lilith and Rob arrived at the front door to his apartment, she began gently rubbing her hands along his back and neck from behind him. This made it all the more difficult for him to calmly find the key to his apartment. She started kissing his neck on his left side when he finally got the door open. He audibly let out a sigh of relief that changed to a satisfied moan as she moved to the right side.

Not necessarily rushing in, he moved inside with her tagging along, giggling. He half-mumbled, half-stuttered, "P-please excuse the m-mess. I wasn't expectin' c-company." She giggled again and softly whispered, "I didn't follow you home to examine your decor. Where's your bathroom? I'd like to make myself more . . . comfortable," and then blew in his ear.

"It's down the hall, past the kitchen, to your right."

She kissed him deeply and longingly, a preview of what was to come. Then she walked down to the bathroom. Before entering, she noted the bedroom just beyond the bathroom entrance and called back to him, "I'll meet you in there." Then she blew a kiss to him. He wasn't sure, but he thought he actually felt it land on his cheek. She then walked into the bathroom, turned the light on, and closed the door behind her.

Frantic with anticipation, Rob ran into his bedroom, turned on the light, and tried to make the room presentable -- at least try to hide dirty clothing by kicking it all into his closet. He then made his bed neat, knowing full well that the sheets would probably be tossed around tonight. He heard the bathroom door open behind him, so he spun around, turned the light off, and sat on the edge of the bed, waiting. Heart pounding. Blood pumping. Adrenaline escalating.

Light from a streetlamp outside was gently streaming through the venetian blinds on his bedroom window. The penetrating beams gave the room just enough light to cast mysterious, yet alluring shadows all around.

She turned the bathroom light off, then ever so slowly, walked out clothed only in a black silk and lace nightie. The black was a striking contrast to her milky white flesh, which was now nearly all exposed and was radiant in the dim light. The light from the lamp in the hallway behind her bounced

playfully about her head and shoulders, highlighting her flowing, shiny, copperish hair.

Taking in this spectacle, drinking it in like the beers he'd had tonight, he suddenly realized that he was still fully clothed. He immediately took his boots off, but Lilith told him to stop before he could remove anything else.

She walked over to the bed, crept behind him and sat on the bed, then she wrapped her legs around his waist. She kissed him on the neck and slowly undid the buttons on his shirt. Then she reached into his jeans where his shirt was tucked in and pulled it out and took it off him.

After she threw it aside, she wrapped her arms around his chest and began softly caressing it. She then saw a gold chain around his neck from the back side. *It must have been hiding well in that shirt*, she thought and hoped it wasn't carrying a cross. She moved her hands higher along his chest and found what was hanging in front . . . it was a crucifix. Nevertheless, she wasn't frightened at all -- so this one's faith in such baubles was lax, especially tonight. It wasn't going to protect him tonight, so she let him wear it.

She whispered to him to stand up and face her. He did so, most obligingly, and then she undid his belt and the button-fly on his blue jeans. As she pulled them down, she revealed a pair of boxer shorts with red hearts on them, to his embarrassment, and her amusement. 'This one was obviously a lady-killer, which suited her fine because she'd been known to do some killing of her own. However, that was a long time ago. Tonight she would only feed to his point of exhaustion, not a drop more. He would suffer no ill effects, save a neck-ache for a few days.

She leaned backwards and laid upon the bed. He quickly took his cue, slipped out of his jeans and socks, and was now wearing nothing but his boxers. Lilith almost giggled again, but restrained herself when she saw how well built and handsome he was. She was distracted by the crucifix again, however, so she asked him to remove it. He agreed and with a mischievous grin he removed the chain and cross and placed it on his dresser beside his bed. Out of sight and out of mind.

Then, with a beckoning finger, she lured him onto his bed. Once in, she pounced on top of him, caressing his chest, then his legs, and started kissing his neck again. Meanwhile, he was busy feeling the soft, silky nightie that she was wearing and found the zipper in the back. As he started to unzip, she sat up. Her blazing red bangs flopped messily over her eyes as she did so.

Rob playfully displayed a poutful look, which was answered by a wide grin from Lilith. She then reached behind her and easily unzipped the back of her nightie, which released the pressure on her bosom, and caused her breasts to appear to inflate. She then slowly crawled backwards, pulling his ridiculous boxer shorts off, and stepped off the bed.

He was again embarrassed by the shorts, and when they were removed, she noticed his distraction. So, standing at the end of the bed, she tossed the shorts aside. She then slipped the straps of her nightie off her shoulders, and

the outfit slowly drifted down her body. It revealed a shapely and firm bosom and torso, almost statuesque in proportion, unlike anything Rob had ever seen in his short life.

Lilith then climbed slowly back onto the bed, moving stealthily and gracefully like a cat towards him. In his highly excited imagination, he thought he actually heard her purring. When she was directly above him, he grabbed her and pulled her down, flat on top of him. He wanted to feel her skin on his. He was surprised by the fact that she was fairly cold to the touch. As he was pondering ways to warm her up, she kissed him deeply. Lips enmeshed, tongues entangled.

She bent her head down and started to kiss the nape of his neck. She could feel the throbbing jugular vein. She could taste the salty sweat on the flesh above his carotid artery. She raised her head back, extended her canines, and then gently thrust them into his soft neck. The warm blood welled up quickly into her mouth and she drank deeply as Rob let out a wail that was due to the simultaneous pain and pleasure he felt. With the blood rushing from his neck to her mouth, each draught brought blood from all over his body.

Having satiated her thirst, her hunger, and her undead libido, she slowed down her rate of withdrawal, and finally licked away any dribbled streams of blood from Rob's neck. As she backed away from him, she could see that he'd fainted. She quickly ran to the bathroom to wet a washcloth and grab a small container from her purse.

She cleaned up the immediate area around the neck with the cloth. She then opened the container to reveal a healing salve. She dabbed some of the salve onto the washcloth and then proceeded to coat the tiny wounds with the substance. This salve would quickly heal the wounds with no scars by morning. It was a little something that Anna made for her. Lilith found many values in having Anna as a friend, including the fact that she was a Wiccan herbalist.

She then quickly, yet orderly, slipped the unconscious man back into his clothes. Knowing he was in fact oblivious to her, she laughed freely about the boxers. The difficult part was the crucifix. She picked it up by the chain and gazed at it. She did not feel any fear from the crucifix and had a chance to admire it for its craftsmanship. *It's a pity that it is worn by someone with little or no faith in it*, she thought. To be sure, though, she grasped the cross in her fist. To her surprise, and pleasure, she felt no pain from holding it. *No faith at all then*, she believed and placed it around his neck. She then bent down and kissed him again.

"You were wonderful, and if I might add, tasty. It's a shame you won't remember this as much more than a wet dream, Rob. *Au'revoir*," she said as she bent down to grab her clothes, the washcloth, and the salve. She walked into the hallway and put all of her clothes back on as quickly as she could. She looked in the mirror, and after noticing that there was no reflection, she concentrated on casting one.

Slowly, her image focused onto the mirror, and she noticed some blood on her face. She wiped it off with the washcloth, then brushed her hair with a small brush from her purse. She adjusted her outfit to a proper fit, packed her salve and brush back into her purse, and walked out of the bathroom. As soon as she turned around, her reflection vanished. She turned out the light. She slowly walked through the living room, opened the front door just a crack to peer outside the apartment. She then stepped out and locked the door behind her. When she decided that it was quiet and dark enough, she took to the sky.

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As she flew above the streetlamps, she climbed above a few small clouds. She knew the motel was northeast of Rob's apartment, along the same street. She flew along the way of the road below, interestingly enough, against the one-way traffic below her.

She suddenly felt an amazingly strong tugging at her from below. It wasn't the same pain as running water, so she drifted down through the clouds to investigate. As she broke through, she discovered that she was hovering over a catholic cathedral.

Rob's forsaken crucifix was one thing, but this was entirely different. Upon seeing the holy spires of the building, fear of faith gripped her and she lost her concentration and fell hard to the ground.

Since she had just fed, and on strong human blood, not that of an animal, she was strong enough to suffer nothing but the shock of the impact. However, she had to get as far away from the cathedral as possible. Flying was out of the question, because she didn't want to risk weakening again. Actually, walking seemed like the best idea at the time.

So she walked along a different street -- she'd temporarily lost her sense of direction from the fall. Things just weren't going to go well now, she thought as she passed a church of Christ Scientist and then a Methodist church. She decided she had better call it a night and head back to the motel. She found that one-way street again, and walked the rest of the way, almost half a mile, back to the motel room.

As she returned to the motel, she decided not to disturb Anna, so she shifted to mist and flowed through the door crack. She reformed beside the bed, standing up, and scared the hell out of Anna who was awake and watching Letterman.

"Holy shit, Lilith! You know you freak me out when you do that. Why are ya back so soon, anyway?" she asked as she calmed herself down.

"I ran into a small problem . . . three churches in a row. Good thing I fed well tonight. What are you doing up so late?"

"I just couldn't sleep. I'm still pretty tired, though. Thought I'd watch Letterman's new show."

Lilith laughed, "Yeah, and I love the fact that he's on earlier now. I can usually catch his show then go out and prowls an hour earlier."

Anna laughed nervously at that and asked, "So you say you fed well tonight?"

"Yes, and don't worry, I even used some of your salve on his wounds. In the morning he won't know what hit him . . . er, bit him," and she laughed again. This time, relieved, Anna laughed genuinely at the pun.

"And you know, you do look a little shaken. Did you say three churches?"

"Well, two churches, and one frighteningly beautiful cathedral. That one took the most out of me. But I'm fine. I thought I'd come back here, lay my earth-mattress out on a bed and relax."

"Then it's a good thing this motel only had this room with two beds tonight. I guess it won't go to waste after all." With that, Anna helped Lilith unload her mattress and lay it on the spare bed. They laid back on their beds and watched the rest of Letterman's show.

After the show was through, they turned off the TV and got ready for bed. Anna was sufficiently tired now, so she yawned wide and loud, disrobed and crawled between her sheets. Being the naturalist and Wiccan she was, Anna enjoyed sleeping "skyclad" -- in the nude. This was the first time that Lilith and Anna had gone to rest at the same times so Lilith never realized this fact. She also never realized what a truly beautiful human being she was, inside and out, until now. As she tucked herself in, Anna whispered, "G'night, *mon amie*."

"Good night, and blessed be," Lilith whispered back, using Anna's favorite phrase to wish her a good rest for tomorrow's trip to Junction, Texas. *Damn, this is a big state*, she thought to herself, noting the need to make a second stop in it. *Too many bloody churches so close together*, she sighed to herself.

Lilith tried to sleep but she just couldn't seem to do it. She was a creature of the night. She was, however, good as new when the morning came. At about 5 am, she woke Anna up so that they could get ready for their next day -- their next trip.