

## Chapter 1: Moving In

~Rose's POV~

*My heart pounded in my chest as his lips touched mine. It was a feeling like no other. It was like those lips belonged on mine. Nice and soft. They moved perfectly in sync with mine. It was a kiss from heaven.*

*I wove my fingers through his soft hair and felt his hands snake up my back pulling me closer to him. But who was him? I tried opening my eyes through the kiss but they felt glued shut. I wanted to melt into this mysterious man, I wanted to drift away and lose myself in his touch.*

*"Rose." His deep voice echoed through my mind and fireworks went off behind my closed eyelids. His voice brought a sense of peacefulness in me, a sense of safety, a sense of belonging.*

*I wanted to whisper his name back, but it wouldn't come to me. "Stay safe." He continued and pulled me closer my head resting on his chest. I could hear his rhythmic heart beat through his shirt.*

*I felt him pull away and it felt like my heart shattered to pieces. I wanted to scream to him but no sound came out...*

I startled awake at the same, recurring dream. I never saw his face, never knew his name. But the man of my dreams was...well...exactly that...of my dreams. As I brought my hand to my lips where I swear I could still feel his lips, I felt stickiness hit my shoulder and looked down groaning.

"Gross," I mumbled wiping the dog drool from my left shoulder, then pushing Shanzie's head away. He happily went after his stuffed

rabbit and started gnawing on it.

I felt the wind from the open window slap the side of my cheek and it sent my dark curls flying everywhere. I scowled at my brother, Micah. Who for the most part, was acting like a dog and sticking his dark mane of hair out the window.

The cool breeze from outside of the car completely sucked the heat out and the blasting heater didn't even seem to exist. Mason, my other brother, somehow didn't care that the car was dropping below zero, way past freezing point. He was loudly snoring and starting to droop towards my shoulder.

"Mason!" I pushed at him just as his head plopped down onto me. He grumbled something along of the lines 'not now mom', but stayed asleep as if nothing had happened. I swear a bomb could go off and that boy would still be sleeping through it peacefully.

I groaned as the cold chill kept weeping through my dad's black Chevy Silverado. I sunk down into the plush back seat and glared over at Micah. "Can you roll up the window?"

He momentarily gave me the pleasure of actually looking like he was going to be the nice brother and roll up the window, but instead all I got was a curt, "Nope."

Micah and Mason are both quite the picture. At our old school, they were the stereotypical-over-confident jocks. Both competed in swimming and one always came home with gold while the other in silver. And with their 'dashing looks' per Micah's words, with the chocolate brown messy hair and blue-violet eyes, both had a different girl on their hip each week.

Don't get me wrong. I love my brothers. But they are everything I'm not. They're tall, I'm short. They're popular, I'm not. They're athletic, I trip over my shoelaces and occasionally air. They're loud; I prefer the quiet take on life. Besides our same shade of hair and eyes it would be hard to guess that these two buffoons are my twin brothers.

That's right twin brothers, we are triplets. Mason came first, need I say he constantly rubs that in our faces. Micah, came two minutes later, much to my mother's relief after an eighteen hour labor. At this moment, her and my father finally relaxed. They had their twin baby boys and at home a nursery with two cribs, blue walls with airplanes and a closet full of little boys clothes waiting to welcome them.

But I took my mom for surprise, not but two minutes later another contraction came and I popped out. Six minutes and some seconds behind Mason and two minutes behind Micah. My father, who at the moment was in the midst of handing a bouquet of red roses to my mother was so shocked that he dropped the roses onto the floor and when he stepped to cut my umbilical cord, he smashed them. Making my very emotional mother burst into tears.

He told me that is when my name was born. Rose. So my mother will always have an everlasting rose. Yes, that is my father for you.

My parents, Ana and Nathan Holloway, were high school sweethearts. You know the ones you always see that make you incredibly envious because they were able to find 'the one', while you sat alone and seething that you haven't. Yup that was my parents, been in love since, married at the young age of nineteen, and the three of us came along when they were twenty-one.

"Are we almost there yet?" Micah leaned forward towards the front seat ignoring how Shanzie was nudging his shoulder with the stuffed rabbit. I eyed the window button, very eager to lean behind him and push it so I could roll it up. Micah, sensing my plan flopped back against the seat and smirked at me.

I could hear my mom sigh where I sat. I think we have been asking every five minutes for the last two hours, and I'm not figuratively speaking. "Soon." my mom answered. The same answer both her and my father have said the last million times we asked, they probably got together and came up with these sorts of things.

I slammed my head against the back of the seat and looked out my

window at the murky, gray sky. "I miss the sun," I grumbled hugging my arms around myself to try and regenerate heat back into my body.

This caused my dad to chuckle. "You'll get use to it sweetheart," he smiled, his slate-blue eyes held laughter in them as he gazed at me through the rear view mirror.

Both my parents used to work at a small junior college in San Francisco, California. My mom in English and my dad in History. And suddenly, after seventeen years of teaching at said college both get offered a position and some University in New York. So, basically all of us are moving to small town Flint, New York.

Of course, my brothers and I pitched a fit about it. What kind of angst-ridden teenagers would we be if we didn't? But my parents, usually very considerate of our feelings refused to even bother to listen to us. They were stubborn and set on driving us across America.

The open road was starting to turn into a smaller, narrower road that was being over run with shrubs and trees and a lot of greenery. The cold wind whipped through the back seat and Micah looked like he was sucking it all in and enjoying it. I could hear the slight rock music escaping from the front seat as my dad bopped his head to the music.

I glanced out the window as my dad turned down a winding dirt road. We bumped and bopped as the tires went over the rocks. The trees parted and my mouth popped open and Micah nearly stuck his whole body out of the window at the sight.

I elbowed Mason's ribs and his snore turned into a snort and he jumped up like somebody was ready to attack him. "What the fu..." He bit his lower lip as our mom glared back at him. "I mean what the fudge?" he smirked as she shook her head and turned back around.

I smiled at him and he only glared "What was that for Rose?" he

elbowed me back making me grunt and double over. With my breath still gone, I pointed out the window at the clearing which opened up to a beautiful home.

It automatically made you think of home. It had that certain cozy-like atmosphere about it and we were still entrapped in the stupid Chevy Silverado. The house had to be at least three stories, with two white pillars holding up the upper half of the house. Two balconies jut out on either side of the front house. The roof was slate colored shingles with chimneys sticking up and the rest of the house was white paneled with dark blue bordering and shutters. It looked like it popped out of a *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine.

"Is that it?" I nearly shrieked seeing the upcoming home. I nearly climbed over Micah's lap to stick my head out the window. Shanzie started licking my ear in the process of me nearly jumping out of the window.

"Sure is." My dad smiled turning into the covered car slot. My mom had her mouth slightly open as my dad only smiled proudly. After all, he was the one who chose the house when he flew to New York by himself two weeks ago.

Shanzie started pouncing in the rear, ready to jump out of the truck for a much needed run; my brothers and I were practically doing the same thing. My hands were already curled around the handle to open the door and the car hadn't even stopped.

My dad finally put the car into park and I launched the door open to fall on my butt. "Klutz." Mason laughed jumping over me.

"Hey!" I yelled running after him, my short legs were nothing compared to his long ones. At my supreme lack of foot-eye coordination didn't help the matter either. Who put rocks in the dirt anyway?

"I get first pick!" Mason looked over his shoulder "I'm oldest!"

"Not fair!" Micah and I yelled in unison, we looked at each other for

a split second then ran to the front door, trying to squeeze in before the former.

Micah managed to wiggle in before me and ran straight for the stairs but I was stuck in my tracks looking at the beauty of the house.

"Wow." I mouthed as my parents stepped in behind me.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" My mom beamed looking around the wide open foyer in which the grand spiral staircase led upstairs, to the left was the living room with a huge fireplace nestled in the corner, and to our right was a fully modernized kitchen. All the floors were wood paneled giving the house a vintage touch.

"Aren't you going to claim a room?" My dad gestured towards the stairs and I dashed up, gripping the railing extra tight as not to fall and break my nose. I passed the master suite and headed for the one right across. Mason was sprawled in the middle of the floor his arms spread out along with his legs making a big 'X' in the middle of the room.

"Mine," he said lifting his head to smirk at me.

I stomped further down the hall pass the large bathroom and turned into the next room where Micah was leaning near the floor length window "Mine." He gave me the identical smirk of Mason.

I huffed and turned on my heel then realized I was at the end of the wall. I turned back around thinking I missed some room. I glanced at my parents setting down boxes in the master suite. This was supposed to be a four bedroom, three bathroom house. So far I've only seen three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Either I kept passing the rooms or the real estate agent lied to my father.

"Dad," I walked into their room "I can't find my room." I crossed my arms as he chuckled and headed out the door ushering me to follow him.

I followed him to the kitchen and he pointed to the pantry. "You want me to sleep in a pantry!" I sounded a bit hysterical.

He looked at me as if I had officially lost it. "You think I would tell my daughter to sleep in a pantry?" He chuckled and opened the door, not to a pantry of food but to three steps that led downstairs.

I looked up at him shocked and he only smiled so I stepped down the few steps and sucked in my breath. "I can have this room?" I asked barely audible, I more like choked it out. It was beautiful.

"Of course, baby girl," he squeezed my shoulder. I looked at the wide open space in front of me. The floor was wood paneled like the rest of the house. The walls were robin's egg blue. A white stone fireplace was at the far wall and the bathroom on the other side. It was huge, like a mini apartment, and it was all mine.

"Not fair!" Mason appeared with Micah behind my dad looking at my awesome room.

"You got to choose first so it's not my fault." I stuck my tongue out at them, but they just glared at me. Sure we were constantly attached at the hip to each other, but we had our moments.

"Let's start unpacking, before it gets dark." My dad headed back up the stairs, I stared once more at my room and headed up towards the arriving moving truck.

My mom was already hammering picture frames along the stairwell as I huffed and puffed one of my boxes towards my room. "Need some help?" Mason grabbed the box out of my hand as if it were a feather.

"Thanks." I grumbled a little angry that I couldn't carry stuff like that. I headed back towards the truck and grabbed the box with all my sheets and pillows.

I walked down the stairs and threw the box near my already set up bed as Mason another near my bookshelf "Girl you have too many books," he chuckled flexing out his arms. He purposely flexed the muscles on his biceps and I rolled my eyes at him.

"So sue me, I like to read, rather than drown myself." I smiled before heading up the stairs.

"I don't drown my self," he chuckled "Maybe you would though if I threw you in a pool."

I didn't disagree with him. The memory of when I was ten and slipped into a friend's pool was still very much vivid. "I probably would." We both laughed.

We spent the rest of the evening unloading and unpacking the many boxes. Music flooded the house as my mom blared music from the newly set up sound system in the living room.

I waited somewhat patiently as Mason and Micah hogged the pizza box. Once I finally was able to grab a slice, everyone was already sitting around the coffee table in the living room with the fire going behind us.

I flopped down between Micah and Mason and grabbed a soda can popping it open. The living room was still bare as the furniture hadn't arrived yet so we sat Japanese style on the floor.

My mom cleared her throat and looked anxiously at us then stole a glance at my father who was busy trying to get crumbs of pizza out of his blonde stubble on his chin. "So, you three are going to start school tomorrow." She just threw it in there, like it was nothing, but I think Mason was in the process of choking on his pizza.

## Chapter 2: Alvar Academy

~Rose's POV~

"What?!" Micah spat out half his pizza. Most of it ending up on the newly polished floors. It was quite hilarious actually, especially the look of horror on our mom's face.

"Well, the headmaster said the sooner you start the better." She took a bite of her pizza then stopped mid chew, realizing what she had just said. She sat there, her pizza hanging half in the air as she glanced at us nervously, letting her stray chocolate brown strands of hair fall into her face.

"Headmaster?" Mason finally managed to get his voice back, but was still spewing some left over bits of pepperoni. "What kind of school are we going to?"

We were no longer paying any attention to our pizza; we were, for once, giving our parents our full undivided attention. "It's a private school." Her voice shook a little as she glanced to each one of us.

I tried to control the horror on my face. A private school? Since when did my parents care if we went to a school that probably cost a grand a year? Per kid? All I could imagine was overly preppy girls with big egos and even bigger boobs.

And worst yet when I thought of a private school, the first thing that tended to pop into my mind was that Britney Spear's video. The one that she did when she was first famous with the pigtails, the short skirt and the tied up uniform shirt. Yeah, I had many images running through my head.

I looked over to Mason and Micah for their reaction which was...picture perfect. As shock, then terror, then rage crossed both of them looking completely identical like always. "No way in hell!"

Mason roared suddenly standing up and stalking from the room. He was also closely followed by Micah who was grumbling something about 'snobs' and 'not fair' under his breath.

My parent's eyes zoomed in on me and I gulped. What was I supposed to say? "Pizza's good." I quickly took a bite, hoping like in those Twix commercials it would give me time to think of something smart to weasel my way out of this situation.

Unfortunately, it didn't work. "Rose...honey?" My mom looked like she was on the brink of tears. My dad was leaning his back against the bare wall and staring intently at me, like he was trying to read my mind or something.

"What?" I asked, my mouth full of pizza. Although, for some reason I couldn't taste it, it just gave me something to chew and distract myself with.

"So talk to us." My mom leaned forward on her elbows, her dark curly hair falling over her shoulders, and I watched how some tips fell into her pizza and into the marinara sauce.

"Why private?" I finally summed up the courage to ask. I tried to ignore the trembling in my hands but it made me drop my slice of pizza with a nasty splat on the plate.

"It's supposed to be the best school in the country and highly selective." She explained, "The teachers are highly qualified and the class sizes are extremely small. Each class level has only about one hundred students, and to make it all the more better the campus is beautiful."

I stared at her for a minute. I could care less what the class size was, how beautiful the campus was, or how qualified the teachers were. My mind kept wondering back to snobby, bitchy, rich girls and I'm-too-hot-for-you-guys. But more importantly, the reason why. "Why couldn't we choose to go or not?"

"You wouldn't have chosen Alvar Academy." She chewed on her

bottom lip, her red lipstick vanishing beneath her teeth. What kind of name was Alvar?

"What would have been wrong with that?" I asked picking at the pepperoni on my pizza, not wanting to look up at my parents, but seriously Alvar?

"Because I want to give you three this chance, not many others get it." She returned to eating her pizza. Giving me the hint, that, this conversation was closed.

"Fine." I smiled slurping down the rest of my Pepsi. It wasn't exactly 'fine' with me, but either way I would have to deal. Because no matter how much I throw a fit about not going...my parents would still haul me down to that school tomorrow morning.

"That's my girl." My dad smiled, "Now try going to talk to those brothers of yours." He chuckled finishing off his slice of pizza and licking his fingers.

After looking for Micah and Mason in their own two bedrooms and having no luck, I pushed open my door and both of them were sprawled on my couch watching TV and munching on popcorn. "We're taking over your room." Mason announced flipping through the channels not even looking over at me.

"Yup, we're commandeering this place." Micah put up his feet on my coffee table.

I stared at both of them and crossed my arms. I slowly made my way over stepping over their huge shoes and whacked both of their heads. "What was that for?" Mason rubbed the back of his head.

"Yeah oww," Micah rubbed the same spot. Knotting his eyebrows together and puffing out his lips, it was hilarious how Mason had the identical look on his face.

I rolled my eyes. "For being jackasses and immature brats." I sat between them shoving my hand in the popcorn bowl and throwing

some kernels in my mouth.

"Now what did we do?" Mason slapped my hand away from the bowel and hugged it to his chest. I arched my eyebrow as if I was proving my point.

He only shoved his rather large hand in and then shoved it in his mouth, half the kernels falling out of his mouth and onto his shirt and my couch. I shook my head at his 'boyness'.

"You should have seen mom's face; she looked like she wanted to cry." I exclaimed. I eyed Mason's position on the couch, he was slightly slouched and had the popcorn bowel in his lap and one arm casually around it, I could easily tackle him to get to it...

He put on one of those 'I-didn't-to-it' types of faces causing me to roll my eyes...again "Well she should have sent us to the public school not to the snobby private one." Micah reached over me to grab some popcorn.

"Try it." I smirked looking at him smacking his hand. "Or are you too much of a wuss?" I looked as he stopped his hand midway to his mouth and his blue-violet eyes slowly drifted to mine, then he flung the popcorn at me.

"What did you call me?" Micah asked grabbing both my hands in one of his. I blew at a strand of my bang that had a kernel lodged into it.

I smiled. "Wuss." I shrugged and felt the bowel of popcorn dumped over my head. I felt the kernels ease themselves through my shirt and trickling down my back. I turned my head to Mason who was standing over me beaming with satisfaction and victory.

At his moment of thinking about himself, I grabbed some of the popcorn out of my hair and flung them straight at his face. He stood stalk still for a moment, then Micah watching Mason's moment of shock and surprise attacked my sides, my only ticklish spot.

I started thrashing trying to get away from the tickling, but them being twice maybe triple my size I couldn't even move an inch. I heard the popcorn bowl hit my coffee table as it tumbled off the couch. I kicked out my feet hoping to come in contact with one of the idiots. Unfortunately, all I made contact with was a glass of soda that splashed against my floor; luckily the glass was indeed plastic.

"What was that you called me?" Micah laughed. His dark hair was going every which way and I was tempted to lunge for my hairbrush and teach him how to use it. But I was frozen in my spot as he was still wedging his fingers under my rib cage making me squeal and thrash and try desperately to move.

My klutziness didn't help the matter any. I just rolled off the couch and onto the floor struggling to escape and knocking my head on the coffee table only making the two laugh harder.

I saw Micah and Mason exchange 'The Look'. That look they got when they both did that twin telepathy thing, when I either ended up hanging upside down, tripping and bruising my butt, or yes, even ending up with pink hair.

I saw 'The Look' and knew I had to do something, and do something fast. I craned my neck sideways dodging Mason's tickling fingers to see Micah coming around behind me. I did a nice little twirl and taking Micah by surprise shoved my fingers in his side...his only ticklish spot.

He fumbled back tripping on the coffee table and I stood up on the couch with my hands on my hips sticking out my tongue. Although, my victory was very short lived. I felt hands grip me around the waist, sometimes I forget to watch for the other one. "Can't outsmart us, sis!" Mason howled with laughter as he threw me over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

I started kicking my legs and pounding his back with my fist. "Let me down!" I laughed but he merely flipped me upside down making me scream. I ended up staring at his feet yelling incoherent remarks but he only laughed.

"Are you three killing each other?" My parents came into my room, my dad trying to hold down his laugh. I could see his lip twitching. Micah was still sprawled on my floor and Mason had me hanging upside down.

Sadly, my parents were used to this. They would hear a lot of crashing and a lot of yelling and being the good, caring parents they were, they would come and check on us. Most of the time finding us in odd positions. When I was six, Mason strapped me to Shanzie and told me he was a horse and not a German Shepherd. When I was ten Micah had me pinned under his arm in a head lock and me, being half his size was able to reverse it. My dad videotaped that one; to this day I still use it as blackmail towards Micah.

He threw me on the bed then sat on top of my back making me huff. "Of course not dad." He smiled and I felt the bed shift as Micah sat down.

"So, you weren't trying to kill my daughter?" My dad laughed. I huffed and did something like a snort under Mason's weight.

"What daughter?" Micah asked. Only I would be able to tell their voices apart, as both of them sounded exactly like each other. Our parents couldn't even tell them apart at times.

"Get off." I tried wiggling but his weight wouldn't even let me budge, let alone move a finger.

"You hear something Micah?" Mason asked and I heard our door close, signaling our parents had left, most likely in search for safety.

I finally pried my hands out from under him and lunged for his side...his only ticklish spot. It worked; he jumped off of me in a second. I stood on my bed placing my nicely painted, blue fingernails on my hips. "I win." I smirked.

Micah and Mason rolled their eyes and grabbed the bags our parents left at my door and threw them on my bed. "What's that?" I hopped down as Mason emptied one of the bags onto the bed.

A lot of navy blue and white fabric stared back at us. "Oh jeez," I picked up the pleated, silver and navy blue plaid skirt. "You have to be kidding me." I placed the skirt at my hips and scowled. I'm girly, yes. But only to a point. I have two brothers who made fun of me when I came close to anything that resembled a dress or a skirt or for that fact, anything frilly. So I tended to drift away from said items.

Mason and Micah started snickering dumping the other bag, then Micah pulled up a button up, collared shirt looking carefully at me. It was white and nicely pressed. The buttons gleamed shiny silver and our school name was embroidered in navy blue on the right side and on the left was the school emblem.

"What the hell are we supposed to be?" Mason was looking at the school crest on the left side of the shirt. I grabbed mine and looked at it.

It was definitely interesting. It had a silver vial in the middle with a single red drop dripping down its side, a gray faded wolf's head was in the background, it was surrounded by a wreath of navy blue and silver leaves. "The wolves?" I guessed, shrugging.

"The vial is kind of creepy, especially when that drop looks like blood." Micah made a weird face at his shirt. His finger traced the intricate emblem, as if his finger would magically tell him what it all meant.

"It is, but it's a gorgeous crest." I stated running my finger over the delicate embroidery. Alvar Academy was embroidered on the opposite side. "At least there's no tie." I stated, heaving a sigh of relief.

"Yeah, but we even are issued book bags." Mason pulled out the three shoulder bags. They were black with the same crest on the front. Our names were embroidered on the straps and the navy blue and silver leaves that were on the crest formed a border around our names.

I pulled another bag and dug through it and groaned. "No freakin' way." I pulled out my white knee high socks and both the guys basically rolled around the floor laughing. I suddenly had the urge to kick them.

But I found better revenge. I smirked pulling out their black fancy loafers, their laughter immediately turned to scowls. They looked from their worn Adidas tennis shoes to the loafers. "At least I don't have to wear these." I threw them at their feet with a satisfied smirk.

As I looked at the three of our uniforms spread on my bed, the boys still scowling at their shiny shoes I felt my heart drop. This was different, way different. We were used to public schools and having tons of students filing around us. We were used to getting up and wearing whatever we felt like.

I peered at the pressed shirt and pleaded skirt and frowned. It would take a lot of getting used to, but whether we were prepared or not, we still had to go.

*His hand ran down my cheek, sparks exploded in my body like wonderful little firecrackers. I felt warm and comfortable and blissful all over. My heart pounded in my chest as his hand came to rest at the back of my neck.*

*I reached up blindly, I felt my fingers weave through soft hair. "Be safe my love." His voice deepened in my ear, I could feel his warm breath on my cheek. And his smell, his glorious smell. Like rain and soap and a certain something I couldn't place my finger on, but it was natural and oh-so-alluring.*

*I moved my fingers to his face. Trying to see him, but I couldn't, his face was hidden in the shadows. I ran my finger down his jaw and felt him tense. I left my fingers roam the strong contours of his face. His eyelashes thick, his skin soft, just slight stubble where a beard should be. His lips soft and slightly partly.*

*I ran my hands down to his shoulders. Broad and wide. Down his biceps, muscular under a soft, silky texture he was wearing. I looked at his chest for the first time. Silver wording glaring back at me. Alvar Academy. I sucked in my*

*breath running my finger over the lettering.*

*His lips met my forehead. "Please be safe." He said and then he was gone.*

I bolted up in bed my heart pounding. I glanced over at my alarm clock. It was three A.M., three more hours until my alarm went off to get ready for my first day. Alvar Academy, where I know my mysterious dream guy was waiting. Was it even possible?

If it was or not. I knew that us, the Holloway triplets, were stepping into something that none of us knew about. It was a weird gnawing feeling in the pit of my stomach. It was a mix between excitement and apprehension. But one thing I knew as my dream rewound itself in my mind, was that the answers lay in Alvar Academy.

### Chapter 3: Tinge of Familiarity

*~Rose's POV~*

The next morning, after I showered and French braided my hair back, I stood there, staring in the mirror. The white shirt and pleaded skirt were just too much. I looked like a school-girl. A very, stereotypical school girl. I tugged at the skirt and scowled.

"I hate it too." Mason walked in behind me trying to pull his navy blue slacks lower. His white button up was unbuttoned revealing his white muscle tee underneath and his belt hung loose. I shook my head as he ran a hand through his already tousled dark hair.

"At least you get to wear pants." I pointed out heading out of the bathroom. Micah walked in my room also pulling down his navy blue slacks. It never ceased to amaze how alike the two of them were. Micah also had his shirt unbuttoned revealing the white tee underneath and his hair was messed up in exactly the same way.

"Yeah, cause I would look damn sexy in that skirt." he smirked tugging on my skirt and wiggling his hips. I scowled and looked at the two of them then laughed, not able to hold it in any longer.

"You two haven't looked that identical since you were five." I clutched my sides. I was laughing so hard. With everything being in uniform, they were dressed exactly the same, down to the white undershirt.

They looked at each other as if for the first time. "Damn," they both said in unison making me laugh even harder. As I walked out of the bathroom, I could smell bacon and eggs wafting down the stairs from the kitchen. Mom was obviously still here because there

was no way my dad could make bacon without burning it. Grilling and barbequing were his only methods of cooking that resulted in edible food.

When I entered the kitchen, my dad and mom were sitting at the table, laughing about something. Both were dressed for work. Mom in a sea-green chiffon skirt that floated around her ankles and matching short sleeve blouse.

Dad wore light blue slacks and a white polo shirt with blue edging on the collar and sleeves. "Morning, baby girl." my dad said.

"Morning," I replied, sinking into the chair across from him and near my mom when the guys walked in. Both of them were sulking. "Oh..." my mom sighed. "I need to go pull out your old identification bracelets or something." She laughed as my brothers sat down and piled eggs on their plates. They had just buttoned up their shirts and I could see my mom staring at the greasy bacon and then at the boy's crisp, white shirts.

"Mason, hand me the milk." My mom looked up and Mason who was seated far from the milk with a mouthful of eggs glanced over and realized she was looking at Micah.

He basically choked on his eggs. "Our own mother." He laughed and my mom turned bright scarlet while our dad chuckled, dropping his fork.

"Sorry, Micah, hand me the milk." Micah looked at Mason and smirked. There was 'The Look' again. I put my fork down and shook my head sipping some of my own milk.

"He was only kidding, I am Mason." He handed the milk to our very confused mother. She was glancing between the two and probably trying to count the faded freckles on their noses or look at the exact shade of their hair to tell if they were telling the truth. But when neither option worked they looked at me.

"He's Micah not Mason." I said not glancing at my brothers who

were probably throwing me glares for ruining their fun. Maybe, it was because I was their twin to tell the two apart. But usually, I just get mistaken for their younger sister. But it annoyed the hell out of them when I could tell them apart even from a distance or over the phone.

"Is it too late to change my mind?" I asked as our dad drove us towards the school. That twist in my stomach was gnawing away and made me squirm in my seat.

He chuckled putting on his sunglasses. Why he would need sunglasses? For somewhere without a sun, I had no idea. "Yes sweetheart."

I crossed my arms in the backseat my bag between my ankles. I could do this. At least, that's what I keep telling myself. I wiped my sweaty palms on the dreaded school-girl skirt and smacked my lips together.

"Stop fidgeting, will you?" Micah chuckled as I finally decided to sit on my hands. I glanced out of the window; the sky was murky and gray. Making a sense of dread form inside of me. I watched as he pulled onto a gravel path under a dense canopy of trees. Black large gates appeared with the Alvar Academy crest gleaming silver under the faint sun.

My dad pulled along the drop off curb and I stared outside as Mason and Micah jumped out of the car. "Let's do this." Mason rubbed his hands together, and just like that he became the over-confident-popular-jock-dude I was quite used to.

I looked beyond the gate at the school. We could slightly see the top pointy parts of the school. It reminded me of a medieval castle. "Awesome" I heard Micah say. I stepped closer to him so the full view of the school slapped me in the face. It was 'awesome'. I stared in wonderment at it.

It was a faint gray stone. It's walls were entwined with green ivy. It looked like it popped out of the 14th century. It looked like a miniature model of a castle and it seemed to have aged and withered but yet retained its beauty. It had creepy and magnificent written all over it. It was simply...amazing.

After staring at the school for some time we stood at the gates wondering how we were supposed to get in. "You put in your student numbers." A young looking man said. And I point this out bluntly, he was hot. I mean wow-type-hot. He had thick, sable hair that fell a little less than an inch of his neck and came right above his bright gray, almost silver eyes. His build reminded me of a soldier. A warrior. His muscles shone through the dark robe he was wearing and his shoulders were broad and wide. His jaw line was hard but the lone dimple in his left cheek gave him a sort-of-there boyish look.

"Don't drool on yourself." Micah chuckled near my ear and I snapped my mouth shut. Mason entered the number from a piece of paper in his hands letting the gates creep open. We all stepped in as the gates closed behind us.

Students stopped to glance at us but continued up the path towards the school. Some other students lounged under trees snuggling up to their significant other and making out. I looked around expecting a teacher to pop out and hand out a detention slip for such a public show of affection. But none came.

"I'm Professor McAllister, your mentor." The guy, who is a hot teacher, extended his hands to each of us. I tried not to look as shocked as I did, but I couldn't help it. He looked maybe twenty or twenty-two at most.

"Mentor?" Mason asked clearly as shocked as me.

"Um, yeah, but first how can we tell the two of you apart?" he chuckled pointing between Micah and Mason.

"That was Mason and he's Micah. There is really no way to tell them

apart." I said, finally managing to make my voice work, even if it did shake just a tad. But I didn't miss the party-pooper glances Mason and Micah shot at me.

Professor McAllister nodded in understanding with a slight smile on his face. The dimple showing in his cheek again. "I'm your mentor. Basically for your next year here; I'm the person you come to if you need anything, never hesitate."

He pushed open the main doors to the school letting the warm air hit us in the face. We stepped in and again I was taking in the beauty of the place. I now understood the meaning of 'timeless beauty.' The walls were of hard stone and the floors looked like they were carved out of the earth, but polished and filed down to create a smooth, soft surface. A large wall rested in front of us with the main events of the week. Even the school menu was even posted.

I broke my gaze from the dimly lit hallways back to him. "Like a counselor in a regular school sort of thing?" I asked still astonished that he was a teacher.

"Something like that." he chuckled and handed us each some more paper. "You're schedules. And I believe I have you for homeroom, Rose." he nodded and took off down the hall. A jolt hit me then. Maybe, it was the way he said my name. But a tinge of familiarity ran through me. I gazed after him. He greeted some students as he passed them but then disappeared into a far classroom.

"Even the professor's wear uniforms." Micah pointed out, clearly not noticing my gaping mouth and shocked face. But it was true, the professor were now easily distinguishable.

They wore black robes that fell to the floor and under them they wore a black collared shirt. But their crest was different. Like, Professor McAllister's only had the wolf on it, and the headmaster's, who we met shortly after, (who mind you was also young and hot), not something you see a lot in a headmaster, his crest had only that red drop.

"Did you notice something odd?" Mason asked looking around the hall we were walking down where most of the students were glancing at us over books or behind the navy blue lockers.

"That all the guys here are really hot." I sort of felt intimidated by the beauty of these people; it was like they all popped out of a magazine. I looked over to a group of guys who were huddled by the water fountain with a book spread between them. It looked like they were firing questions at each other. But I couldn't find a flaw in any of them. No weird birth mark. No softness around their corners. No braces. Not even glasses.

"I don't know about the guys, but the chicks are damn sexy. Maybe this place isn't so bad" Mason laughed seeing a girl standing by the water fountain. She had mahogany waves that fell around her caramel colored skin to the middle of her back and deep set topaz eyes. "See ya!" he waved and went straight for her.

"You Mason or Micah?" I turned towards the deep set voice and I swear to you, I drooled as my jaw fell open. He was past the meaning of hot or handsome or cute, he was a word all his own. His shaggy, caramel hair fell around his ears and into a pair of ice-blue eyes. He was huge, six-foot-four maybe, and very nicely built. Not that I was looking or anything.

"Micah." He outstretched his hand to the god-like figure that I could only stare up at in awe. I was defiantly going to need some self-esteem classes after this school.

"I'm Trevor." he smiled and my knees almost turned to Jell-O. Could he be anymore perfect? Micah elbowed my ribs making me stumble backwards and nearly fall to my butt. Hard hands gripped me and stood me up right.

I looked up and wanted to fall again. What was with these amazing looking guys? They were doing some serious damage to my hormones and my self esteem. I suddenly felt so average, so...plain. He had jet-black hair, styled into small messy spikes and metallic blue eyes. "I'm Justice." he flashed me a crest-proud smile.

"Ugh..." What was my name? "Rose" I stuttered throwing a glare at Micah, who made me fall in the first place and who was also in the process of trying not to laugh. I could see the corner of his lips quivering.

Justice stood near Trevor. He wasn't as large as Trevor, but he was extremely lean and his face held certain softness to it. His eyes roamed over my head as if he were looking for something or someone. His hands rested at his side relaxed. I had the urge to poke one, just to see if these guys were for real.

The bell rang and nearly made me jump out of my shoes. "It's called a bell, sis." Micah nudged my shoulder and headed towards the direction of his classroom.

"Who do you have right now?" Trevor took the schedule from my hands and I shifted on my feet. I felt incredibly small between these two out-of-the ordinary guys. "You have McAllister, so do I." He smiled taking the lead as Justice departed with a small wave of his hand.

I quietly followed Trevor as he made his way through the hallways. "So are you three close?" Trevor looked down at me. His indigo blue eyes felt like they were looking straight through me. He slightly cocked his head at me.

Remember how to talk, I mentally slapped myself. "Yeah, we are." I managed to utter out and probably had a pathetic excuse for a smile on my face.

We walked into a classroom where the seats were not typical desks you see in any other classrooms, but tables set up in a sort of stadium-like set-up. Students were flopping down in random seats throwing their bags at their feet and removing notebooks and pens.

Professor McAllister was perched on the edge of his desk chewing on an apple watching everyone file in. I still couldn't get over how he was a professor. He looked young enough to be a student. He saw me staring and offered me a warm smile. There was that tingle

of familiarity again.

## Chapter 4: The Voice in the Dream

*~Rose's POV~*

I looked at Professor McAllister's black robe. It was cool looking; it made the professor's seem more...professional? Authoritative? I glanced at his silver wolf embodied on his robe. "So, why does Professor McAllister only have some of the crest on his shirt?" I asked Trevor who quickly looked up at the Professor, who stopped mid chew of his apple. His silver-gray eyes came up to meet mine and he seemed to be silently chuckling.

Had he heard me? "I don't really know," Trevor chuckled. "Guess the Prof's just want to be cool or something." He winked one of his indigo eyes at me as he pulled out a notebook. Somehow, I had a feeling he was lying. He seemed to be holding back laughter and that in itself frustrated me.

"Thank you Mr. Knapp for the nice introduction." Professor McAllister stood up. His height made him seem intimidating. But yet, if you looked at his silver-gray eyes it made him seem so gentle. "Now if everyone can take their seats." I quickly glanced around the room for an empty seat and found one near Trevor and some other girl who was already staring at me with wide eyes and a huge grin on her face.

"I'm Matilda, but don't call me that. I hate that name. If you do, I'll..." She bit her lip and then continued on skipping whatever she was going to say. "Just call me Mattie." she beamed at me.

She had dark red locks that flew all over the place. Some of the curls were big and loose while others were tiny and tight, little spirals stretching down to her hips. Her eyes were a dark emerald

color, flecked with darker marbling of gray and black, something I've never seen before. She wasn't model tall, but she was taller than me. She seemed so...bubbly. Her energy was very projective as she bopped up and down in her seat to her own music she seemed to be humming.

"Rose." I smiled. Yup, I was definitely going to need those self esteem classes. All these people were now getting annoyingly beautiful. There was no geeky kid in the back, or weird guy with trading cards on his desk in the corner, or a preppy snooty-talking teacher's pet in the front.

As the final bell rang, all the students fell silent. I was so used to hearing the teacher yell several times before the class came to order, and even then there still would be note-passing, whispering, and paper airplanes.

"Halloween is around the corner." Professor McAllister suddenly boomed and then the class started cheering. It took me awhile to figure out they were cheering at how Halloween was around the corner. I glanced around the room at all the grinning faces and excited squeals.

When I was kid I acted like that. Especially when I was nine and my mom bought me a superstar costume, microphone and all. I drove my brother's nuts dancing around and singing my lungs out. But I'm seventeen now. Halloween was just a day where little kids annoy the heck out of us as they ring the doorbell every three minutes screaming 'trick-or-treat!'

"And the committee for the week is now looking for people. If you're interested the sign up sheet is at my desk." He continued gesturing to an orange sheet taped to the front of his desk. Many students made the move to go up with pens in their hands when Professor raised his hand with a smile on his face. "After class." He clarified.

"Halloween committee?" I leaned over and whispered to Mattie, who was in the midst of basically jumping out of her seat with an

overflow of excitement. She seemed to be gazing dreamily at that orange paper, not at all like she was paying attention to anything else.

But amazingly she answered me. "Halloween is the biggest holiday for us." she tried whispering but her excitement wasn't helping any. For *us*? Was there something I was missing? I was pretty sure New York celebrated the same holiday's California did, no matter what religion. And again, sure Halloween was big to little kids, but what did she mean to *us*.

"The week of Halloween we go all out, with contests, and hall decorating, and events, and finally the night of Halloween we have a huge ball." Her hands made wild gestures to each as if she was drawing them in the air. I had a feeling that if she was standing up she would be twirling around.

My old school we had none of that. They celebrated no holidays in fear in would contradict with someone's religion and conflict would arise. We did celebrate Homecoming though. We would decorate our halls and have pep rallies and at the end of the week have a big dance. But that was it.

"You want to join the committee with me?" she looked at me widening her eyes in a puppy-dog plea. "Please? It will help you get to know the students better and its tons of fun." She had clasped her hands together in a bigger plea and jutted out her bottom lip.

"Why not?" I laughed and she clapped her hands together with a little squeal.

"Another announcement." Professor McAllister stood from his position of his desk and clasped his hands behind him. He allowed the class to quiet down and give him their full attention. "Wayland Academy will be joining us this year in our Halloween festivities."

Each and every student in the classroom seemed to groan. I looked around at all the grimaces. The exited atmosphere from earlier was completely depleted, it seemed to have been sucked out of the room

when Professor McAllister mentioned Wayland.

"What's with Wayland?" I asked Mattie who was frowning and still in her seat. With all her happiness and excitement gone, she looked sort-of frightening.

"They're our rivals and they're...they're...ugh." She spat out when one of the light fixtures suddenly blew out above us. I was the only one who jumped, others in the class just laughed. I caught the glance Professor McAllister gave Mattie; it was a look of amusement and disapproval. I glanced at Mattie who was now scowling deeper, her arms across her chest and taking deep breaths.

After class I headed to McAllister's desk and signed my name to the line. "You'll love it, I promise. This is my third year on it and I always look forward to it." She looped her elbow through my mine. Her sour mood seemed to have vanished as fast as it came.

Mattie ended up having Biology with me, so she led me to the class. I was still getting used to the winding halls that were dimly lit and the throng of students that barely moved out of the way in time before slamming into someone else.

We walked into the classroom where black top tables scattered the room, two stools per table. The professor leaned against the chalkboard watching everyone walk in. Her champagne brown hair was tightly tied up in a bun at the base of her neck with chop sticks holding it up and her almond brown eyes reminded me of doe. She smiled kindly as I passed her noticing that her robe only had the silver vial on it. She looked no older than twenty.

I saw Mason and Micah in the middle of the classroom leaning against one of the tables. Their eyes came up to meet mine and I heard Mattie let out a breath. "You're brothers are hot." She whispered in my ear and I rolled my eyes. I was used to people coming up to me trying to have me play cupid and set them up with my brothers. I hated it. I had no business in their love affairs no matter how much they think they have every right to probe my boyfriends.

"Sis." Mason threw his arm around me. "Hear about all the Halloween stuff that goes on around here?" He was smiling ear to ear. He looked genuinely happy leaving me guessing that he had a really good time first hour.

"Yeah, I signed up for the committee with Mattie." I gestured to her and saw her and Micah throwing goo-goo eyes at each other. Mattie had her mouth slightly open and was very obviously batting her red eyelashes at him. Micah on the other hand looked like he was trying to be cool. But I noticed how white his knuckles were from clenching onto the side of the table that was holding him up.

I don't think she was even in this classroom anymore, neither was Micah. Even as the bell rang, they stood frozen staring at each other, many of the students whistled at them. "I'm Micah." He threw her his best looking smile he could.

"Mattie" she said a little breathless. She twirled a piece of hair around her green painted fingernail and threw him a hundred watt smile.

"Alright, everyone can flirt after my class, but for now take your seats and grab a microscope." The Professor smiled grabbing a chalk and started scribbling the day's assignment on the board. "And for our new students my name is Professor Tompkins."

I flopped into a seat with Mason, since Micah and Mattie couldn't take their eyes off each other. "Disgusting." Mason looked over to the two of them. "They should just go find a room and get it over with."

"Gross." I whacked his arm. He rubbed the spot and grinned at me. He grabbed the worksheet and the slides. He messed with the microscope for a little while then leaned over to me.

"Have you noticed anything strange about this school?" He whispered while he placed the slide under the microscope.

"How everyone looks like they popped out of a Vogue magazine?" I

stated looking at the slide, I had no earthly idea what it was, I was horrible in Biology.

"Yeah that too. But all the teachers look like they just finished high school, even the headmaster looks twenty." He said pulling the microscope away from me and looking in, quickly jotting the answer down on his sheet. I glanced at his sheet and scowled at him. He was already half way done with it and I only had my name on my sheet and a picture of what I saw.

"How is it that?" I pointed at his picture then looked at mine. His picture looked like the exact replica of whatever we were looking at and mine just looked like a whole bunch of lopsided circles.

He chuckled and shook his head. "Stick to English sis and I'll stick to science." He smiled finishing off the worksheet like it was nothing.

He was right though, taking a closer look at all the professors, they were all really young. It occurred to me how my mom said that all the teachers were highly qualified. I tried to figure how they could be highly qualified if they looked like they just graduated high school. College professors were highly qualified and all of them were old from their years of experience.

"Stop thinking so hard, you'll hurt yourself." I jumped as Mattie perched herself next to me on our lab table. She looked over my worksheet and raised an eyebrow. "Is that supposed to be weird polka-dots or something?"

I ignored her and looked over at Micah who was staring back at her with a dreamy look on his face. I have never seen my brother look like that. In all the girls who he has gone out with, he has never, ever glanced at them the way he was currently looking at Mattie. "My brother is going to drool all over himself if you don't stop that." I laughed and Mason choked trying to hold down his own laughter.

Mattie only grinned as red flooded her cheeks. She shrugged and skipped, literally skipped, back over to him. They went into their

own little world again.

As the lunch bell rang I flew into the hallway looking over the throng of students for the red head. "She's probably in a broom pantry with Micah." Mason came up behind me laughing. His eyes were glancing around the throng of students as if looking for someone. He seemed distracted.

"I wouldn't be surprised." I walked forward, and me, being the klutz I am, tripped over something, probably air and right into a hard chest. Hands grabbed me under my arms to keep me from falling face first into the floor and possibly breaking my nose.

"Sorry." I mumbled straitening myself out and trying to control the blush that rose to my cheeks. I looked up and saw Professor McAllister. As I did a weird spark flew through my body. I knew that feeling. It was like little firecrackers igniting themselves under my skin.

His body stiffened and confusion passed his face, then just as fast as it came, it left. "Please be safe." He smiled and walked quickly around me. As he walked away I suddenly felt like I wanted to cry. Not only because it felt like my heart was shattering to pieces but because that was the voice from my dreams.

It was that same deep, caring voice that haunted my dreams every night. That familiarity that hit me when I first met him was because I had sensed him. My body knew it was him, but my logical sense kept saying...no. It can't be him. It's impossible. But even as the silver letters on his black robe glittered at me, I kept saying no. He was a professor...my professor. He couldn't be my dream guy. He just couldn't.

"What's wrong?" Mason was instantly at my side, his hand gripping my shoulder and making me look up at him. I hardly ever cried, and now I had the strong urge to cry, it was like some one was ripping my chest open, throwing it on the floor and stomping on it.

I sucked in my breath trying to catch some air. Trying to push sense

into my brain. But it didn't stop the agonizing pain in my chest. I felt like I wanted to crawl into a very dark hole and disappear or cry and cry until nothing existed anymore.

"I don't know." I sighed leaning against the wall trying to pull myself together. I could feel my heart hammering against my ribcage. It felt like it would explode out of my chest right here in the hallway for the world to see. I closed my eyes and tried to regain my usual calm. But it wouldn't come. My dreams kept flashing behind my eyelids. And I opened them and I see Professor McAllister and I'd hear his voice in my head. So clear, so deep, so gentle.

"What's wrong with her?" I looked up at Micah and Mattie as they approached. Micah had his eyebrows furrowed as that fierce over-protective-brother-mode was switched on. He let go of Mattie's hand and came to my other side.

"I'm okay." I assured them. I started walking forward slightly stumbling. Mattie had her eyebrows arched and yanked me back as the guys headed into the cafeteria.

"What just happened?" She asked looking the most serious I've seen her yet. And again, she looked frightening.

"What do you mean?" I pushed a loose strand of hair behind my ear trying to ignore the throbbing in my chest.

"I mean what were you doing before you felt like shit?" She asked, okay that was a good way of putting it. I wrapped my arms around my chest, as if that would help the throbbing from getting worse.

"I tripped and Professor McAllister caught me." I shrugged and her hand went to her mouth and her eyes went bigger than dinner plates. "What?" I asked stopping at the entrance of the cafeteria to stare at her.

"Professor McAllister." She stuttered shaking her head and quickly went to Micah who immediately put his arm around her.

I stared after her. "What?" I asked to no one, what was that all about? I hugged myself some more and made my way into the nice cafeteria where the food lines were quickly going by. The smell of pizza drifted in and out of the doors as I walked in.

## Chapter 5: Love Sick

*~Rose's POV~*

The cafeteria was large and looked as if maybe it used to be a large ball room. It even had a large chandelier hanging from the center. The long tables ran the length of the middle of the room and smaller round tables were scattered along the hall. And at the very back on a small podium was the faculty table. They ate in the same place we did. They had no fancy lounge with extra perks like in my old school.

I spotted Professor McAllister he was pushing his food around on his plate and seemed to have his mind somewhere else. Headmaster Seeley, with his light brown curly hair and youthful features sat beside him. He looked as if he was trying to hold a conversation with McAllister, but wasn't having much luck.

McAllister's eyes suddenly came up to meet mine for a second and he gave me a warm smile then turned back to the headmaster. There was that feeling again, like I wanted to cry and throw a tantrum. I managed to make my legs move towards the lines that edged along the far wall of the cafeteria.

"Maybe if you eat, you'll feel better." Mason offered handing me a tray as we stood in line. I walked through the buffet and although the food looked and smelled delicious, I had no appetite.

I followed Mason to a round table where Mattie and Micah were already sitting with their books thrown in the middle of the table. We flopped down and Micah arched his eyebrow at me then looked at my near empty tray. He didn't say anything though, but turned back to Mattie who was cutting up her grilled chicken salad.

I could see how Micah was slightly leaning towards Mattie, their elbows touching. He was lost. Completely gone to rationality. He was hopelessly in love, something I never thought I say about any of my brothers. It was weird how it also seemed to happen when they laid eyes on each other, like that whole love-at-first-sight-fate thing.

"Hey everyone." Trevor flopped down, his shaggy caramel hair looking more shaggier then usual. His indigo eyes looked hungrily at his plate full of chicken and pasta. It was enough to feed two or three of him.

He pried his eyes from his food and looked over at Micah and Mattie and grinned. "Told you Mattie." He chuckled. "He finally came around for you." Mattie grinned and leaned her head on Micah's shoulder that far-away look in her green eyes.

"What is that supposed to mean?" I asked. Trevor's head came up, half of his pasta hanging out of his lips. He raised an eyebrow then slurped up the pasta making some of the white sauce splash on the side of his cheek.

"Nothing." Trevor smirked. "Nothing at all." He wound some more pasta around his fork and stabbed the chicken and shoved the whole thing in his mouth. It amazed me how much food that boy was devouring.

The same girl Mason saw earlier sat down at the table. She was taller up close. She went up to Mason's chin and her dark waves cascaded perfectly down her back and her large eyes smiled at Mason.

Mason suddenly sat up straighter and leaned forward. "You came." he beamed. She leaned towards him too and smiled showing a row of perfectly-straight white teeth. She pushed her tray to the side and became completely entranced with Mason.

"Of course I would." She said breathless. I think I was going to be sick. Mason had the same identical look of hopelessly in love on his face. He had disappeared in his own little bubble with this girl.

I felt that 'weirdness', that gnawing inside my stomach grow. I glanced between Mason and Micah. They seemed different. All in the matter of hours, they changed. They were in love. It wasn't hard to see. My brothers, who got bored with a girl after a week were now in the dreamy-world of love. It was as if cupid had magically appeared and stabbed them with an arrow.

Justice interrupted my ongoing thoughts as he plopped down in the chair opposite of me. He grinned at my brothers. "Jaemi look at you." He nudged the girl's shoulder. She smiled but then fixed her gaze on Mason again. I was ready to bang my head against the table.

I heard the click of heels and looked up to see Professor Tompkins approaching our table. She was holding a math textbook in her hands and smiled at us. Justice went all googly eyed. I figured it wouldn't be hard to be a guy and have a crush on her. She was cute. Kitten-cute. With the little nose and the innocence of her eyes. Even if she was older than all of us, she still seemed not that much older.

"You forget something, Justice?" She laughed handing him his math book. Pink rose on his ears as he placed the book in the middle of the table, amidst all the others.

"Thanks." He said throwing a kiss on her cheek. She squeezed his hand and walked towards the faculty table. I sat frozen in my spot. He just kissed a professor. A *professor*. I finally moved my eyes from the faculty table to stare at Justice who was in the process of plucking the tomatoes out of his hamburger.

I wasn't the only one either. Mason and Micah were both staring at Justice as if he grew a second head out of his neck. The three of us remained silent for several seconds as the rest of the table continued eating as if nothing out-of-the-usual happened.

Finally Mason broke our silence. "You're dating a Professor?" His voice was a mix between shock and disgust.

He shook his head and laughed. "We don't date." he smirked. There

was that reference to *we* again, just like Mattie's *us*. Before I could think too hard, Justice continued. "And she's not that much older than me, dude." He flung a fry at Mason.

Mason grabbed the fry that plopped into his pile of chips and bit into it still looking quizzically at Justice.

"Isn't there a rule against it or something?" I asked and all of them started laughing leaving the three of us dumbfounded. I was trying to figure everything out. First, the very out there show of public affection by the student body, then, my brother's falling madly in love within a matter of seconds, and finally, Justice dating (or whatever you call it) a professor.

"No, you can't help who you fall in love with, it just happens." He shrugged looking over at the faculty table where Professor Tompkins was now eating a salad. She was also holding a conversation with McAllister and Headmaster Seeley.

I chewed on my bottom lip. My mind was racing. "That's just –"

"Weird" Mason finished.

"Creepy" Micah added.

"How?" Justice and Trevor asked in unison. Trevor had already inhaled his pile of food, I doubt he even tasted it.

"Whose to dictate who you love and who you don't, you should be free to choose." Justice said and my eyes went wide, who knew a guy could think like that. I knew Justice looked soft at the eyes, but he also had this strong jaw-line that made him look fierce. His words bounced around in my head.

He was right. Who was allowed to dictate who we love and who we don't. It wasn't fair if you fall madly in love with someone of your same sex and then told it wasn't allowed. Or if you fell hard for a teacher and said teacher wound up in prison for it. But there were laws. Laws that stated that if you were under eighteen, anything with

an adult is illegal. And laws still had to be followed.

I took that time to look around the cafeteria and my eyes bugged out. It seemed like most of the students had a significant other attached to them. Some were snuggling close to each other at tables, others fed each other, some were kissing. I glanced at the faculty table, they didn't seem to care. In fact, a couple of the professors were very close their hands entwined.

I looked over at Mason and Micah who seemed to be noticing the same thing. "This just gets weirder by the minute." I mumbled pushing my untouched tray away from me.

Trevor looked at my tray thoughtfully. "You going to eat that?" He asked and I shook my head gesturing for him to take it. Although, I don't see how he fits it all in to that flat stomach of his.

He continued as he dug into my slice of pizza. "Why because the teachers don't care that we show affection to our other half?" Trevor asked and turned around. A slender girl, with long, pin straight, white-blonde hair walked up to him and kissed his cheek, flopping down beside him. She carried a atmosphere around her that said 'stay away', she didn't even acknowledge anyone else at the table. Her pale green eyes were locked only on Trevor.

"No, it just-" I sighed trying to rack my brain as how to explain it to him. I didn't even feel comfortable looking at this girl. I fidgeted in my seat as her eyes finally came to scan me as if taking me in. Her nose made a sniffing notion as her red lips slightly parted.

"Brittney!" Jaemi snapped. "Control yourself."

I scrunched my eyebrows, but didn't want to push it. Brittney pushed her hair behind her ears and took a deep breath as Trevor put an arm around her pulling her close.

"How much have you eaten?" Brittney smiled, making her look like a porcelain doll. She eyed the two empty trays.

"Not much." Trevor frowned patting his stomach. "I'm still hungry."

Brittney laughed shaking her head. "What am I going to do with you?" She squeezed his hand and looked towards Justice who was mid bite into his hamburger.

She opened her mouth to say something to him but Micah interrupted. "Everyone has another half?" he asked. I realized then that he finished my earlier comment. It was nice having a twin sometimes, you didn't have to think so hard. Most of the time they finish the thought for me like, we were on the same wave length.

They laughed. Why wouldn't they? "Everyone is made to have another half, the challenge is finding them." Mattie giggled bringing Micah's hand up to her lips. He seemed to melt in his seat with her touch. My brothers completely had a serious dose of love-sick.

"Like a soul mate type deal?" Mason asked sipping at his Dr. Pepper. He glanced at Jaemi over the rim and she gave him a flirty smile.

"Yes, something like that." She reached for his hand and they disappeared into that bubble again.

I glanced from Mason and Jaemi, to Micah and Mattie, Trevor and Brittney, then sulked. The guy I seemed to be falling for was only in my dreams. He wasn't real, no matter how much Professor McAllister sounded like him, and sent those funny little firecrackers popping under my skin. But that didn't mean anything, I could just be imagining the whole thing.

I pushed around the fries on my plate. Maybe, I was just being paranoid. Maybe, all this was just a coincidence. The whole love-sick thing was just that...temporary love because the girls were outrageously and abnormally beautiful. I was ready to pull my now very dull-looking hair out of my head.

I never called myself ugly, but I never really called myself beautiful. I was ordinary and plain. Dark hair, blue eyes, petite build. No boy has ever called me pretty, or cute, or beautiful. My parents did, but

that doesn't count, their children will always be beautiful in their eyes. But here, within the walls of this school. I felt ugly. I felt small and obnoxiously short.

The bell snapped me out of my thoughts as everyone started leaving the cafeteria. Mason and Micah took off with their newly found 'other halves' and I walked by myself towards math class.

As I headed down the east wing there were several men standing against the wall. I would say they were soldiers by how they looked but I saw no "U.S Army" or anything like that on their dark blue uniforms.

They were well built that's for sure. They filled out the uniforms nicely, the black boots laced up around their ankles. On the front of the shirt to the right, was an odd crest I didn't recognize. It was silver with a two swords in front of a detailed triangle. On their shoulders they had either a wolf, a drop, or a vial. Each one surrounded by the same weird detail that was on the triangle. The main navy blue uniform was buttoned up in silver buttons and a black belt around the hips.

As I passed I stole a glance at them, of course they were young and hot. They also had an authoritative atmosphere around them. They were intimidating with their straight backs and hard faces. I saw Professor McAllister talking to one of them in the corner, his eyes met mine for a second then returned to talking to the soldier or whatever they were.

A sharp pain ripped its way through my chest, taking my breath with it. I grasped at the collar of my shirt and took a deep breath. My lungs felt like they were withering and twisting. My heart pounded so hard against my chest it literally felt like it would burst into thousands of little pieces. "What is it?" Professor McAllister was now standing in front of me his eyes worried but his hands clenched into tight fists. His silver-gray eyes looked gentle and like he really cared as he kept his eyes locked on me as I tried regaining my breath.

I shook my head not wanting to speak. He looked like he was hit by a semi truck with the sadness on his face. I could hear his heavy breathing coming out of his nose, like he was calming himself down. His fist were clenching and unclenching. At one point, it looked like he was going to reach out to me, but then he dropped his hand.

"Everything alright?" The headmaster came up to us. His black robe flopping at his heels. I felt like I had to leave. I felt like I was suffocating and the caring look on McAllister's face wasn't helping any.

"Fine." I mumbled trying to keep from gasping. My head spun with emotions - more emotions than I could name - that swirled inside me. I turned quickly and walked towards my next class without looking back.

For the rest of my classes I pretty much sat in a daze. Why did it hurt so much every time I saw Professor McAllister? Why was everyone here so...beautiful? Why did everyone seem to have a significant other? Why did I have a feeling that this was no ordinary, private high school? The gnawing grew deeper in my stomach. It was like my body was warning me. My mind wouldn't stop racing with unanswered questions.

After school I found Micah and Mattie under a tree playing tonsil hockey. "Get a room." I grumbled, not in a very good mood and headed to the gates. I just wanted to leave, to go home. To take a hot bubble bath, get in my colorful pj's and lounge on my couch and watch movies.

"You okay, sis?" Micah had caught up with me, he was glowing. Like my mom did all the time whenever dad was around. He had a large idiotic grin on his face as we made our way towards the gates.

"This school is weird." I answered spotting dad's black Chevy Silverado and Mason leaning against the gate with Jaemi nuzzling his neck. I wanted out. And I wanted out now.

"I think the place is awesome." Micah smiled hoping in the car. Of course he would. He already had a group of friends and a girlfriend and he wasn't getting all heart-attackish around a professor.

"Well, I can see you boys have been busy today." Our dad chuckled watching Jaemi walk away. "How 'bout my daughter back there?" He looked at me through the rear view mirror as we drove away.

"Sucks." I said biting my lip. "I want to go to public." I couldn't get that pain out of my mind, it was still nagging me, like someone was stabbing my heart over and over again. Like my lungs were empty of much needed oxygen, like I couldn't take a complete full breath.

"It can't be that bad sweetheart." He pulled onto the main road and I huffed leaning my head back against the seat, he had no idea.

## Chapter 6: The Kiss

*~Rose's POV~*

I was having a heart attack. That had to be it. I was a seventeen-year-old having a heart attack. I pulled my legs up onto the seat of the truck and wrapped my knees up to my chest. The throbbing grew stronger and stronger. It was like somebody was using my heart as a drum. I couldn't catch my breath as my lungs twisted and crushed together.

"Can Mattie and Jaemi come over?" Mason asked from the front seat. He always seemed to be the one who got shot gun. I saw the corner of my dad's cheek lift in a smile.

"That's fine." He said, his voice seemed different. It almost sounded satisfied and unbelievably happy, how a kid sounded after he found a priceless baseball card. Somehow, I had the feeling he knew something we didn't.

My mom bristled around the stove making the house smell of baked chicken and mashed potatoes. She was asking Mason and Micah many questions about Jaemi and Mattie, from the way they looked to what they liked eating. I should have reminded her that they only knew each other for eight hours, but amazingly my brothers were answering all the questions.

When Jaemi and Mattie did arrive, my parents turned into the ever-caring-picture-perfect parents. They hugged them and introduced themselves and then flew into animated conversation. I sat watching all this interaction. My mom being overprotective of the boys always came across to their old girlfriends as cold and distant, my dad wouldn't even come out and meet them. But with Jaemi and Mattie

it was like they were already naming them their daughter-in-laws.

After dinner, while everyone was sitting around the empty table talking about pretty much nothing meaningful I sneaked off to my room to wallow. Sometimes, wallowing is good. It's good to drown in self-pity every once in awhile. Mine, however was more frustration and many unanswered questions that only grew by the minute.

"Thought we'd find you down here." I looked up to Mason's voice from my bed, where I was laying flat on my stomach with my head buried in my pillows trying not to scream.

"Go away." I grumbled throwing my head back down into the pillows without as much as giving him a glance.

"Awesome room." Mattie's voice startled me and I instantly sat up to see the four of them standing in my doorway. Mattie was peering at my shelf littered with nick-knacks and photos from California. Jaemi was leaning close to Mason and glancing quietly around my room.

Micah sat by me on the bed. "You alright?" He whispered near my ear. I silently nodded my head as Mattie flopped down on the couch giggling. She picked up the TV remote and examined it as if it was from another dimension.

"A purple remote." She giggled. "Interesting." She threw it aside and flipped through some magazines that were on my coffee table and then set a orange folder on top of everything. I didn't even realize she was carrying it.

"Huh?" Mason chuckled. "Micah, where did your girl pull that out from?" He laughed, apparently I wasn't the only one who didn't recognize the bright orange folder.

Micah, however threw a pillow at Mason's head, but it missed and hit Jaemi square in the face. She blinked a couple of times looking confused but Mason looked furious. His fist clenched up and

Micah's eyes went wide. "Whoa, I didn't mean to hit her." He said putting his hands up as if to surrender.

Jaemi's slender fingers slid over Mason's clenched fist and he immediately calmed down, letting out a gush of air. He eyed Micah warily but led Jaemi to sit on the couch.

Mattie's mouth slid shut and she shook her head. "It's for the Halloween committee." She pointed to the folder and I grabbed it. Several papers flew out as I opened it. "It explains everything and when we are assigned to go do certain duties. Like, decorating the halls. Handing out fliers, finding certain people, etc." She waved her hand.

I flipped through the colorful pages. Each one held a schedule and names were plastered everywhere. Every once in a while I spotted my own name. "Mate day?" I spotted the Monday event, in which my name was sprawled under Hall Decorating.

Mattie and Jaemi exchanged glances and we didn't miss it. It was a glance of oh-no-what-do-we-say. "Seriously what's going on you two?" Micah asked pulling Mattie in his arms. She grinned and rested her head against his. Her red hair meshing with his dark mess.

"We can't tell you...not yet anyway," Mattie finally answered. "But mate, just means you're other half. You attach yourself to them for the entire day, you go the decided mate's classes for whole day."

"Decided mate?" Mason asked raising an eyebrow, his arm casually around Jaemi's slender shoulders.

"Yes." Mattie nodded. "For example, between Micah and I, one of us tags along with the other to their classes. Like, I'll stick to Micah all day and go to his classes. Or he sticks to me all day and goes to my classes." Mason nodded in understanding in unison with Micah. Both girls did a double take and Jaemi even gave a small smile.

So, basically, it was like Valentine's Day times ten. I hated Valentine's Day, mainly because I was always single when that holiday rolled

around. It was a depressing holiday that only rubbed it in your face that you were single. I slammed my head against the back of my couch."And if we don't have a 'mate'" I asked. Why mate anyway? It made us sound like an animal or something.

"Then you don't participate." Mattie shrugged "You don't have to participate in all the events." She gave me a 'duh' face.

"Yeah, I'll probably be the only one." I grumbled more to myself then to everyone else.

"That's okay with us." Mason hung his arm around my shoulders and I glared up at him. Of course it will be alright for me not to have a boyfriend to my 'older' brothers. When I was fourteen and they caught me kissing Preston Abbott in the dodge ball field, they went berserk. If a teacher hadn't showed up, they probably would have given poor Preston a broken nose.

The next morning, I leaned against the wall outside of Professor McAllister's classroom. I was arguing with myself about whether to go in or not. The throbbing was becoming a familiar pain that was getting highly annoying. It thumped against my ribs, making them feel bruised and battered.

As I held up the wall arguing with myself McAllister passed and smiled at me. My heart clenched causing a sharp pain to surge through my body. Was he trying to torture me? His eyes softened and his fist balled up but he continued to walk into the classroom.

I couldn't stand it. The pain was just too much. So when the bell rang instead of heading into the classroom I headed towards the female restrooms. I wasn't brave enough to face him and face the strong drum that was beating against my heart and ribcage.

I sat on the toilet on the stall. There was no graffiti on the stalls door that I hoped would give something interesting to stare at. Instead I was staring at a pink wall decorated with roses.

I have never, ever ditched class in my life. I was too much of a wimp to do so. Last year, Micah and Mason tried to get me to ditch with them and see a premiere of a huge opening movie. They got caught, and got suspended for three days and grounded for months. I never went and through my brothers, learned never to ditch. But, here I was. Ditching, and I was being stupid and staying in the school building. Sadly, I felt no guilt over it. At this moment I rather take months of punishment from my parents then face one minute of the agonizing pain near McAllister.

I heard the door squeak and heels click on the tiled floor. I hoped it was a student. "Rose?" I tried to hold my groan at Professor Britton's voice. "Can I talk to you?" Her voice was gentle and kind, not a trace of anger in it.

I sighed and opened the stall door. She was smiling warmly at me and leaning against the sink her black robe flowing around her. Her brown eyes seemed sad though. "The Headmaster wants to speak with you." She led me out and I hung my head like a troubled puppy. I had never even been in trouble with school, I was the 'good' twin per say.

She led me down a narrow hallway and had me sit on some seats in the plush little front office. She placed a hand on my shoulder and gave a slight squeeze. "Everything will work out Rose." She said softly then left through the door leaving me gaping after her.

Mrs. Hensley, the school secretary, sat at the front desk muttering to herself and rifling through papers. Her flame colored hair pulled behind her neck with a pencil. "He'll be with you shortly." She said not even bothering looking up. Her voice reminded me of 'The Nanny' from TV, that annoying nasally one. That was Mrs. Hensley.

But with my experience with her, she was far from kind. She hardly even glanced at the students much less the faculty. I didn't even know why she was here if she hated it so much.

She muttered something under her breath and grabbed a stack a papers. "Lousy professors." She barked and stalked out of the

office. If she didn't look twenty I'd say she was an old cranky lady.

As the time slowly ticked by, I couldn't stay still. I started pacing the little area. I began taking in every detail of the small office. The Victorian rug that lay under my feet. The green plush chairs along the wall, the long counter separating the office from the 'waiting section.' The modern desk in the office seemed completely out of place in the very 'vintage' office.

I heard mumbling voices by the door that was marked 'Headmaster Seeley' in gold letters. I stepped closer. "I can't do this anymore Garrett!" The voice sent chills down my spine. It was McAllister and he sounded somewhere between upset and hurt.

"You have to hold out until Halloween, Ian." It was the headmaster and his voice seemed strained, tired. I could picture him pinching the bridge of his nose as he said this.

"It's hurting her!" McAllister's voice was far from that gentle voice that I knew so well. It now sounded furious, full of rage, and terrifying all at the same time. "I can't do that to Rose. We have to tell her!"

That made me freeze. They were talking about me. Professor McAllister was yelling at the Headmaster for me. I stood rooted to the floor in front of his door. My mind was such a jumbled mess that I could hardly think straight.

"Calm down Ian." The Headmaster's voice was so low I could hardly pick up his words. "Just hold out for two more weeks."

"It's been a day and I'm ready to crack." McAllister sighed out. I could picture his broad shoulders drooping and his sable hair falling in his eyes. "I can't do this to her." His voice sent sparks exploding in the length of my body. His voice was so gentle it was hard to describe, it was like he was trying not to cry.

"I talked to her parents already and they know the situation. They think its best to wait till Halloween." The Headmaster went on. My

parents were in on this? Since when? And why didn't they care to explain all of this 'weirdness' to us.

I was ready to burst into the office, stomp my foot, and demand they tell me everything this instant. But McAllister's worried voice stopped me, "By then she'll be sick."

Sick? I never got sick, that was always Micah's department. And how could Professor McAllister predict this? Was he planning on poisoning me...or was the school already putting some rat poison in our school lunches?

McAllister's voice suddenly went cold snapping me out of my reverie. "She couldn't even go into my class this morning, it's hurting her." Or maybe, he wasn't trying to poison me, maybe he understood the heart-wrenching-lung-squeezing pain I was constantly feeling.

"I'm sorry Ian." The Headmaster's voice was final. I even knew that it was the end of the conversation. I hurried back to plop down in a seat and crack open whatever book was in my hand.

I heard the door squeak open and McAllister emerged. His dark robe was a little rumpled up at top and his hair was disheveled like he ran his hand through it one-too-many times. I wanted to reach out to him. He looked upset, frustrated, and hurt...so hurt. But I couldn't bring myself to move.

My heart had lifted with him being so close. It felt like it was thumping in my throat and clogging off my ability to speak. He gave me a small smile, nodded, and swiftly left the office.

I was completely dazed when I realized that the Headmaster had been trying to call to me. "Ms. Holloway, come in please." I followed him into his luxurious office. A black cat was sitting on the edge of his desk, the yellow eyes blinking at me and his white whiskers were twitching. "This is Dracula." He grinned and laughed, as if it was some inside joke.

He sat at desk and pointed to me to seat on the couch opposite of him. "Were you ill this morning?" He asked. I was expecting yelling but instead his voice sounded like he actually cared.

"Yes." I lied "I wasn't feeling well so went to the restroom." I knew my voice was shaking. I was horrible at lying and I was even worse at doing it in front of an authoritative figure.

When I was eight, Mason broke mom's collectable porcelain doll. He told her that it was me, and then told me to tell her I did it. I was shaking so hard trying to lie to my mom about the doll that I couldn't even stand and she thought I was having a seizure. I haven't lied since then. Until now.

"I see." He arched his eyebrow, then pulled out a slip and signed it. "Here's a pass, you only missed the first part of class." I took the pass from him and frowned. I didn't want to go to McAllister's class. "Is there a problem Rose?" He asked, again his voice held no anger in it.

"No sir." I mumbled slinging my bag over my shoulder. "Thank you."

He nodded. "Close the door behind you please. Dracula likes to roam the halls and often gets himself lost." He chuckled again as I closed the door.

It felt like it took forever to walk down the hall which was deserted. It stretched out in front of me for miles. But when I finally did get to his door I froze. I couldn't bring myself into the classroom itself. I could hear McAllister going on about getting homework turned in on time. But his voice brought back the familiar pain.

I took a deep breath trying to control myself. "Come in please, Ms. Holloway." His voice startled me and I looked up. He was looking at me from the chalkboard. I felt my face flush and I stepped in and sat in my desk.

Both Mattie and Trevor looked at me with curious eyes. Mattie even

mouthed if I was okay and Trevor mouthed something along the lines of 'making out'.

As I sat in my desk, my heart still beating in my throat, I couldn't help but think 'why'? Why was I feeling like this? Was I being paranoid? Or maybe I was simply losing my mind. I was becoming insane.

"Are you alright Rose?" I looked up at the Professor McAllister standing over my desk his eyebrows furrowed in worry.

"Fine." I mumbled just wanting to hide in a closet or disappear in the cracks in my seat. He straightened up but his eyebrows remained furrowed. He studied me for a second then returned to the front of the classroom.

I slid down in my seat as Mattie leaned towards me. "What happened?" She whispered rather loudly causing Trevor to cough to try and cover her voice.

I shook my head. "Nothing," I said scratching a doodle in my notebook. I was trying desperately to ignore the sharp burning in my lungs. They were on fire, I knew it. I was going to spontaneously combust at any moment.

I clutched the edge of my desk feeling sweat bead around my hair line and back of my neck. I felt Trevor nudge my shoulder and he handed me his water bottle. I tried gulping down a sip but then felt like was going to choke on it. I pushed it away and groaned.

I looked up just as Trevor and Mattie were exchanging a look with McAllister. A look that said do-something-now-or-we will. The feeling of burning spread through out my chest, squeezing tighter, burning hotter. "Rose." His voice was like sweet chocolate and warm vanilla all at the same time.

I peered up at him through my lashes. His eyes were smoldering and very close to me as he was leaning down. I caught my breath and quickly looked away the fire exploding in my head. I clutched my

eyes closed wanting to go jump into a swimming pool, full of nothing but cold, ice water. "Look at me Rose." His voice was close to my ear, his breath hitting my cheek. "Please." He pleaded and I peeked out of my lids.

I opened them more when I realized the class had emptied. I didn't even hear the bell ring. "What's wrong with me?" I whimpered rubbing my temples. His fingers came to pull my fingers away from my temples. As he did, the fire that throbbed under my fingernails vanished.

"I can't tell you that." He said softly. His eyes lowered so his thick lashes wiped his cheek. His fingers moved from my hand and the flame immediately sparked again making me want to wrap myself in his healing hands.

His eyes came up to meet mine. You know that saying 'the eyes are the window to the soul', we'll at the specific moment looking into his eyes, I could see his soul, and I believed that saying. His eyes were like mirrors of who he really was. Under the intimidating figure, the stern professor, he was a gentle, caring, man who wanted nothing for himself.

I couldn't stop my hand when it went to touch his cheek, right under his right eye. I felt him tense. It was my dream playing in real time, the slight stubble on his cheek, the strong contour of his jaw.

I realized then that my pain had been replaced. Now I felt like I was floating, like a cloud had simply swiped me from my seat and soared away with me. It felt unreal but it was the most amazing feeling I have ever felt.

Too soon was it over as I quickly snapped my hand back to myself, realizing that I was touching a professor in an intimate way. "I'm sorry." I muttered. "I should get to my next class."

I quickly stood up stumbling over the strap of my bag. His hand came to grip my elbow to steady me. "It will get better Rose. I promise you." He said very close to my ear, almost so close that I

could feel his lips brush my ear.

I nodded fixing my bag strap and walked out of the classroom hoping I wasn't walking like a drunk. "You okay, sis?" Mason wrapped his arms around me. "Heard you had a rough morning. What's going on with you?" He looked down at me.

I chewed on my bottom lip feeling the squeezing of my chest returning. "I don't know, this school is just getting to my head. " I sighed. I wanted to scream, I could feel it bubbling in my throat.

Micah joined us raising an eyebrow at my expression. I had my lips held tightly together trying to keep the scream inside. Mattie then skipped, literally skipped up to Micah and wrap her arms around him. "I know what will cheer you up." She looked around Micah at me.

I looked at her, her face was radiant, it actually looked like she was glowing. She also couldn't stand still in one spot. That was one thing I learned quickly about Mattie, she couldn't stay still. Not even for a moment. "And what would that be?" I asked.

"Trevor is throwing a party at his place." She grinned looking at her green painted fingernails.

"And you all are my VIP's." Trevor added popping up behind us. "So, you have to go Miss Rose." He winked at me, his hair hanging around his tanned face.

Brittney was standing next to him, her white blonde hair pulled up in curls at the top of her head and hanging around her face. She gave us a smile but said nothing to us. "I don't think so Trevor, sorry." I said. Partying was never my thing and I didn't want to start now.

Trevor puffed out his lower lip and did very hardcore puppy eyes. "But you have to." He whined looking at my brothers. "Make her go."

"We'll hog tie her." Micah chuckled.

"And shove her in the car." Mason added squeezing my shoulder as I scowled.

"It will make you feel better." Trevor leaned down closer to my level. "Just come, you won't regret it."

He walked off towards his own class as my brothers and I headed into Biology. Professor Britton was drawing some figure on the chalk board. I groaned. "I don't even know what that's supposed to be."

Mason chuckled by my ear. "I'll help you out." He grabbed us both assignment packets as we headed to our lab table.

I looked down at the assignment and then up at Mason. His pencil was flying across his page with ease. He glanced over at me his pencil frozen midair. He smiled shaking his head and then started helping me.

I stared at my reflection in the mirror and frowned. Suddenly, without my uniform on I felt exposed in my teal ruched side v-neck tee and five pocket distressed jeans. I ran my fingers down the length of my ringlets that fell to my waist. "You look fine honey." My mom walked in the bathroom placing some towels in the cabinet.

I was nervous. I added a couple silver bangle bracelets on both my wrists and diamond studded earrings then slipped on my black flats. My mom patted my shoulder and left the bathroom.

Mattie was sitting on my bed looking at her newly manicured fingers. Her red hair was twisted up and she wore a plain white v-neck tee with a black chiffon ruffle lace vest over it and denim long roll up shorts. She whistled at me. "Now that's what I'm talking about." She grinned jumping up from my bed. She squinted at my

face. "Are you wearing make up?"

"No." I shook my head. "I don't like that stuff."

Mattie's mouth popped open as if she never seen me before. "What have those boys done to you?" She shook her head and grabbed her purse. She started pulling out all her little tubes and things.

"No." I said pushing what I think was eyeliner away. "I don't want it."

"Oh come on." Mattie whined holding the tube mid air. "Just a little."

"Let her go, Mattie." Jaemi laughed walking in. She was wearing a black tube dress with a slightly flared skirt that showed her lengthy figure. "She looks fine how she is." She winked at me.

I glanced down at Jaemi's heels. I would kill myself in those things. "You like?" Jaemi wiggled her foot at me. "I got them on sale." She grinned making a little twirl.

I was envious. She had the long legs, the curves, and everything any girl would dream of. I looked down at my short legs and hardly-there curves and frowned. "You look amazing Rose." Jaemi squeezed my hand.

I gave her a smile as we headed upstairs to wear the boys were in the midst of fighting over the remote and Shanzie was looking at them like his tennis ball was being thrown between the two.

Mattie plopped down in Micah's lap and he grinned giving her a very obvious once-over. I rolled my eyes walking to the door. "Can we go now and get this over with?" I asked grabbing my dad's keys to the Chevy.

Mason looked at me for a second with his eyebrow arched. "It's like we are carrying you off to your death sentence." He chuckled ruffling my hair.

"Don't mess up her hair!" Mattie leaned over from Micah to swat at Mason's arm. He rubbed his spot and looked like a puppy with his tail caught between his legs.

As we drove up the carved pathway towards Trevor's house you could already hear the loud music. My mouth popped open at the house itself. It was "L" shaped, at least three stories high with a balcony off to the far right. The outside wall was made of stones of various grays and browns. There were row after row of white windows with black old-fashioned shutters and four chimneys. At the entrance, four white columns stretched to meet the roof. The grayish black door was flanked by a small rectangular window on both sides and an arch above. People were up on the top balcony and outside as well. "Wow." Mason whistled as he parked the Chevy.

"He has a great place, doesn't he?" Jaemi smiled getting out of the Chevy. The music was so loud you could feel the vibrations on the ground as you walked.

We made our way towards the house. People were dancing in the front lawn and people poured out the front door. I gawked at the site and how so many people could fit into such a large space and make it look small. They were like sardines.

As we walked closer faces started to become familiar. "There are professors here?" I nearly shrieked seeing my math professor dancing it out with a girl in my English class.

I then spotted my History professor sitting on the porch swing with a beer in his hand flirting with some English professor. It was a tad awkward, they all seemed so comfortable, as if they were our best friends.

Mattie looked at me like I was crazy so it was Jaemi who answered me. "Outside of school, they aren't considered our Professors, but really good friends."

"However, we still respect them by calling them professor." Mattie added waving as Professor Britton and Justice appeared. Both a little

sweaty from dancing.

"I knew you get her to come." Trevor jogged up behind Mason grinning. "Welcome to mi casa." He opened his arms to gesture to his large house.

Mason, Micah, Jaemi, and Mattie drifted off into the house and Professor Britton and Justice disappeared behind a tree. "Go mingle." Trevor nudged my elbow, his eyes falling on Brittney who was walking up the path in a very tight black mini dress. He darted towards her.

I made my way into the house to avoid looking like a loner idiot. I thought it was packed outside, the inside was worse, it was body against body. I glanced around many of the faces still unfamiliar.

I found myself at the munchies table, which was completely unrecognizable under a mess of crumpled Doritos, spilled punch, scattered pretzels, and clumpy liquid what I believe is potato chip dip. I grimaced at a green checkered potato chip I was holding. "Looks marvelous." I snapped my head up to that alluring voice.

His gray-silver eyes were tinkling with laughter. But my eyes were taking him in, without his uniform. He wore slightly faded, blue denim jeans, a black tee, and a blue button up with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. It defined his broad chest further and showed his slender hips.

My heart was hammering against my ribcage aiming for my throat. My lungs were starting to burn and spots were running behind my eye lids. "Rose?" He bent a little toward my level letting his scent of fresh soap and fallen rain, rush into my nose.

"Huh?" I shook my head clear. He was standing in front of me, a soda can in his hand, and looking utterly and inhumanly beautiful.

He chuckled. "Are you alright?" He straightened up and turned to dig through the ice chest popping open a Cherry Cola and handing it to me.

"Fine." I muttered out sipping on the cold soda. The cold of the soda had no affect on the fire that was raging in my veins.

He looked around the cramped living room. "You look lost." He pointed out as I peered at him from over the brim of my soda.

I smiled pulling the soda can away and fiddled with the rim, something to keep my hands from sweating all over the place. "I was forcefully dragged here." I pushed a lock of my hair behind my ear.

He smiled. I wanted to melt right there, my knees even shook. A girl with golden-blond curls that fell just above the middle of her back walked up to us. She was perfect in every aspect, she looked like a modern-day Barbie doll. "Professor McAllister." She gave him a smile that would make Colgate proud.

"Tawny." He nodded politely sipping at some of his cola.

She looked over at me and arched one of her too-perfect-eyebrows. "Would you like to dance Professor?" She asked glancing back at him. Her cornflower-blue eyes were gazing right into his. She had the blessed height and went up to his nose.

He smiled. "I'm sorry Tawny, I was in a conversation with Rose." He nodded towards me and her mouth popped open. I just stared at him with wide eyes, he was giving up a dazzling looking student for me?

She opened and closed her mouth, then opened it again. "Just one little dance professor?" She batted her heavily mascaraed eyelashes.

He smiled and shook his head, but I looked up at him. "It's alright Professor, I'm getting really hot in here anyway." I said making my way outside. I didn't stand a chance against someone like her. It was like she was molded and perfected without a single flaw.

I glanced over my shoulder as I stepped out onto the litter filled patio into the night air. My heart pounding painfully against my chest as I leaned against the railing. "Can I have this dance?" I

turned to stare at Professor McAllister leaning against the door frame. He gave me a mock bow.

I looked behind him and saw Tawny pouting against the fridge. I laughed. "I can't even walk straight." I pointed out and he chuckled holding out his hand.

"I won't let you fall." He gripped my hand leading me inside. "Promise." I noticed how his simple touch took away the fire in my veins and the painful pound of my heart. The bruising on my ribs seemed to be fading and I felt like I was floating.

He wove through the throng of dancers and pulled me closer, his arms circled around my waist and he began to rock his hips with the music, leaving me to follow. It felt like thousands of little fireworks going off through out my body. Lightening going pleasantly up my spine. It was such an amazing feeling.

I peered up through my lashes at him and realized he was looking down at me. "See you're not so bad." He grinned showing his left dimple in his cheek.

I felt myself blush and looked down to stare at both sets of our feet. "All I'm doing really is swaying side to side, not much of feet movement." That was the most words I've ever said to him at once, and they all came out babbled together.

He smiled twirling me around with one of my arms over my head. I stumbled a little, but sure enough his arm wound around my waist to steady me so I wouldn't fall. "I've got you." He laughed and for some reason I knew he would always have me.

It was this feeling deep down passed my stomach. It was more then the twisting and the knowing feeling, it was a feeling of...completeness, a feeling like I was finally whole. I wanted to pull him closer, bury my head in his chest, run my fingers through his hair. But each time I felt my hand twitch to pull him closer, I reminded myself he was my professor.

I was very aware of every movement of his hands, where they rested on my hips, how they moved slowly around my waist, then his eyes how they stared straight into mine, how they didn't wander to anybody else in the packed house.

We danced in a comfortable silence. It was like no words were needed to fill the space. I lost track of time as I danced with him, moving my hips with his as the music pulsed under our feet.

After each song he would slowly move us along the dance floor, to when we were finally wedged in the middle, sweaty bodies all around us. I could feel his hot breath on the top of my head sending shivers down my spine.

"Want to get some air?" He yelled over the music. I nodded and felt his fingers entwine with mine as he wove us out of the house. The night air was crisp with a little wind as he led us up the path towards the edge of the forest.

I stumbled a little going up the hill and nearly fell to my knees. His arm instantly went around my waist to keep me from falling. He chuckled. "You are a little klutzy, aren't you?" He glanced down at me the moonlight bouncing off the silver of his eyes.

I blushed. "Just a little." I giggled as we sat in a clearing a little ways into the woods. He leaned back on his elbows and looked up towards the moon with a slight curve in his cheek from his smile.

I flopped down next to him and enjoyed the silence around us. It felt wonderful being around him, that throbbing in my chest turned to a feeling like floating, like none of this was actually real.

I heard a soft howling in the distance and turned to look in the darkened woods narrowing my eyes. The howling happened again. There couldn't be wolves in New York. "I think I'm loosing it." I smiled slowing leaning back down. "Yup, I'm loosing it."

He arched an eyebrow at me. "Why? May I ask?" He chuckled.

"Are there wolves here?" I asked, I was positive his reaction would be throwing his head back and roaring with laughter, it didn't happen. Instead, his eyes snapped up to me and narrowed then he looked over my head as if he was peering deep into the forest.

"Why do you ask?" His tone was serious but I saw his eyes going from one side of the forest to the other.

"I think I just heard one howl." I laughed it off and pointed at the full moon.

"Ah the full moon." He chuckled looking back down at me. "Why does everyone associate wolves with the moon?"

I stared at him for a moment. He was staring longing at the moon his chin tilted a little. "Books." I shrugged. "Myths, stories."

He laughed. "For the record, you probably just heard a dog." He leaned down and ruffled my hair. "You're not losing it."

As he fingers wove through my hair it felt like every hair on my scalp was electrocuted, but it was a nice feeling, like my body was coming a live. I wanted to run my fingers through his hair, grab his shirt and pull him close to me. But he was and will always be just my professor.

He paused a second like he felt it too and withdrew. "So, you excited about Halloween week starting on Monday?" He asked me, I noticed how quickly he changed the subject.

I looked at him, his gray-silver eyes gazing down at me. There were definitely the window to his soul. "I am but its weird how big Halloween is for this school." I pointed out

"Well, our school is one in its own. " he smirked looking over at me.

"That is it, I usually don't run into partying Professors." I made a bold move and tugged on his sleeve. I felt his arm tense under my fingers but then he immediately relaxed with a lazy smile on his lips.

"We aren't old and crusty you know." He punched my shoulder playfully with a small chuckle.

"But yet you're some of the most qualified teachers in the nation." I sat up and stared at him, challenging him. He only smiled.

"That we are, but to our standards not to everyone else's." I furrowed my eyebrows at his response. What did he mean by *our* standards? It was going back to that whole *us* thing.

We stayed quiet for a little while hearing the noises drifting up from the party. But mainly it was silent as we sat next to each other. Suddenly, his hand was coming up to my cheek. His fingers running down my cheek bone, leaving a tingling sensation in its wake.

His eyes were swimming in silver, the gray almost completely gone, as he leaned forward. I in no way wanted him to stop as his lips met mine. You know the movies where fireworks happen in the background when they first kiss? Well that's what it felt like but ten times more. There were fireworks, rockets, the whole sha-bang.

His warm lips moved with mine as my heart soared in my chest. His lips were soft and tender and moved perfectly synced with mine. I finely wound my fingers through his silky hair. I wanted to pull him closer, never let him go, hold on forever, all the cliché stuff I used to laugh at.

His fingers held to the back of my neck and wove up into my hair. His other hand lay at my waist as he pulled me closer to where I was basically on his lap. The kiss was beyond the best, it was a kiss that made everything fall into place, made everything 'click'.

Suddenly, it was over. He yanked back with wide eyes. "Shit." He mumbled running a hand roughly over his face. And just like that my heaven was shattered. My heart literally felt like it was cracked in half. I tried taking in a big gulp of air but all that happened was a weird chocking sound, that happened to come from me.

He quickly had my face in his hands. "No that's not what I meant."

His voice was rich and seemed so...powerful. His silvery eyes were locked straight on mine. "I just wasn't supposed to do that yet." He gave a sly smile and kissed my forehead.

Immediately, my heart mended itself. As his hand came down to entwine with my trembling one, it felt like the world that once was tilted, righted itself. "Yet?" I asked and he looked at me his gray now back in his eyes.

"Next week." He squeezed my hand and smiled, showing that lovely dimple in his left cheek.

"Rose!" The yelling of my name shattered the little bubble I had lost myself in with Professor McAllister.

"It's Micah." I groaned untangling myself from McAllister.

"How do you do that?" He asked chuckled and running a hand through his already disheveled hair.

"Do what?" I asked.

"Tell them apart like that." He gestured to Micah and Mason who were trudging up the hill still shouting my name.

I shrugged. "No idea." I smirked. "Over here!" I waved at them at they jogged the rest of the way up. Mattie and Jaemi not too far behind them. All four sets of eyes went from me to Professor McAllister.

Mattie beamed and looked at him. "Thought you had to wait?" she asked.

He snorted while rolling his eyes. "I'll try keeping you away from Micah for a week." He chuckled.

Mattie crossed her arms "Don't even try it." She snuggled into Micah while sticking her tongue out at our Professor. I looked between Mattie and McAllister and became even more confused then I originally was.

It was like they were having these hidden conversations, these meanings behind words. That type of 'inside joke type thing'. I was trying to read between the lines, trying to decipher the hidden meanings of their words. It wasn't working.

That's when I decided to look at Micah and Mason and saw them staring at my hands with furious faces on. I looked down and at the moment realized my hand was still entwined with McAllister's. "No way!" Mason roared looking from my face to McAllister's.

Micah pulled me out of McAllister's hand and pushed me towards the hill making me stumble and nearly fall to my face. "What!" I cried trying to regain my balance. At the same time it felt like my chest was being pried open and my heart was getting stomped on.

"He's a professor, Rose!" Micah said still yanking me down towards the cars.

I dug my heels into the grass. "Stop!" I cried feeling myself shake. I was having a heart attack. I was sure of it. At the mere age of seventeen I was having a heart attack. Black dots danced in front of my eyes, my head was swimming in fog and my heart was pounding so incredibly fast.

I could faintly hear Jaemi and Mattie yelling for Micah to stop dragging me. Most of all I could hear McAllister's voice. Rich and deep and wrapped in silk as he ran after us pausing in front of us, blocking the way.

"Mason, Micah." His voice was doing that powerful tone again. His eyes locked with mine and my breath was heaving trying to escape my fire-writhed lungs. "It's normal. Look at Justice and Professor Britton."

We had reached the cars and Micah was basically carrying me, my feet no longer wanted to hold me. I was clutching at the burning pain in my chest and trying to breath. "No" Micah growled and shoved me in the backseat.

I slumped over. Now, it was like a knife was being dug into my chest and twisted. I felt sweat bead around my forehead, suddenly, despite the crisp October air outside I was burning. I struggled to shrug out of my hoodie. I kicked off my shoes and wound my hair off my neck.

I couldn't breathe. It was like all the air was being suck through the back of the SUV. "Micah move!" Mattie yelled. "Look at her!" She was pointing frantically at me as I tried taking gulps full of nonexistent air.

Micah's eyes went wide. "Rose!" He shook me a little, just enough to make my teeth rattle. I clutched at the edge of the seat. It was so hot. I had to be on fire. I was leaning towards that spontaneous combustion thing again.

McAllister pushed Micah aside and placed his hands on my cheeks. "Look at me." He ordered. I somehow made my droopy and very tired eyes look up into his now worried ones. "Rose." He gripped my chin so it made me look at him. "It will be okay." He said softly his lips near my ear. "Just breath." He said his lips landing on the crown on my head.

It was amazing how the world righted itself after his simple touch. It was like an air conditioner was turned full blast and all the heat from my body was sucked away. My heart returned to normal, and air whooshed through my lungs normally. I wanted to cling to him, to keep this blissful feeling that settled in my chest.

His thumb gently went down my cheek. "I'll see you Monday." He pulled away and I felt my heart clench. "Be safe." He smiled closing the door behind him.

I sat there in the back of the seat ignoring the wild hand gestures Mattie was throwing at Micah and how Jaemi wasn't even looking at Mason. My mind was trying to unravel itself. I've had crushes on boys. My major one was on Miles Kent. He made my heart feel like it would explode and my stomach twist. But it was just that. A feeling. Not real. He didn't make me feel like I was being burned on

a stake, or having a heart attack, or going to spontaneously combust. Miles was just a cute guy who was sweet and gentle. He also happened to be my first, major boyfriend.

When Miles would leave me, to go home, or wherever, I was saddened. But I didn't feel like I was going to die or anything. Now, with McAllister, he leaves and I have to remind myself to breath.

It was almost as McAllister had bound himself straight to my soul, and when he was gone, half my soul was gone too. It was the whole cliché-soul-mate-deal. But could something like that really exist? Something that far-fetch exist in real life, no special effects, no enhancements, no nothing, but honestly and truly be real?

"...professor Rose...a friken' professor..." I snapped my attention back to Mason who grumbling while his knuckles turned white against the steering wheel. "You know how that would make you look?"

I hardly got mad at my brothers. In truth, I never did. Not when they went after Miles after he stood me up, not when they broke my favorite Barbie doll, not when they made fun of my very frilly, pink Easter dress, not when they turned my hair pink, and not when they chased away every single guy who showed even a tad interest in me. But now, as they drug me away from McAllister, as they babbled on and on about how he was a professor, I was getting angry.

Angry to the point that I wanted to scream. Me. Rose Holloway. Scream. It never really happened, hell I hardly even cried. I wanted to ram my fist into the back of Mason's chair. I wanted to kick my feet and act like a three year old. I wanted to yell.

I bit my lower lip, practically gnawing it off as Mason wove dangerously in the streets. "It isn't your business." I said trying to keep my voice as calm as possible.

Micah's head snapped around and his blue-violet eyes narrowed onto me. "Not our business?" His voice rose an octave. "You're our twin, how could it not be our business?"

I had the sudden urge to stick my tongue out at him and stomp my feet. I wanted to scream at him. He didn't understand the way it felt like when McAllister wasn't around me. When I felt like I rather die then spontaneously combust. Or maybe he did. Maybe if I were to pull Mattie from him, he feel all those things. But him and Mattie were 'normal.' Both of them were the same age, both were students, and both were teenagers. He didn't have to feel like he was having a heart attack.

I slumped back in my seat as Mason turned onto our street. "Wait till mom and dad hear about this." He grumbled putting the Silverado into park. "They'll put a stop to this."

"They can't tell me who I can and can't see." I snapped at him slamming my door a little harder then normal.

Both of them stared at me for a split second. "Watch them." Micah said unlocking our front door and bursting in.

My parents were on the living room couch snuggled together watching some black and white movie, my mom half dozing on my dad's shoulder. Mason and Micah started yelling at the same time, I jumped in as well. Nothing was comprehensible.

My mom instantly sat up rubbing her eyes and my dad arched his eyebrow. Finally he stood up and yelled, "Enough, now what's going on?"

All three of us decided to launch into our own stories at once. Mason and Micah's deep voice much louder then mine. I had the urge to once more kick them or push them. I was getting violent.

My mom put up her hands "One at a time."

"Rose hooked up with a Professor." Mason said quickly, hardly catching a breath. My parents exchanged knowing glances then at me.

"Ian McAllister?" My dad asked. I nodded biting my lower lip which

was probably a terrible look by now. I then remember what McAllister and the Headmaster were saying about how my parents were informed. Did they know all along? Did they accept it?

"Calm down boys." My dad said sitting back down on the couch. "Next week you'll understand." My mom snuggled back into his side and they pressed 'play' on the movie, hinting to us to go away and leave them alone.

"Why does everyone keep telling me next week" I stomped my foot, breaking the awkward silence. My parents just glanced at me then turned back to the movie. I stomped off to my room, ignoring how my brothers were right behind me.

"That's what Mattie tells me too." Micah said flopping down on my couch and kicking off his shoes.

"As does Jaemi." Micah followed suit as I went towards my drawers in search of some comfortable pajamas.

"But why?" I asked.

"Halloween is my guess." Mason shrugged. "That's next week, and to Alvar it's a big deal, it's like freakin' Christmas times twenty."

"But why Halloween?" I badgered. None of anything made sense anymore. Halloween was just a kids holiday to trick-and-treat. Halloween lost its significant meaning years ago when it used to be 'All-Hallows-eve' or whatever.

"Your guess is as good as mine." Micah said as I changed into some purple flannel pajamas.

I sat between my brothers as Micah randomly flipped through channels. It amazed me how quick we always smoothed things over. One minute, I could hate them and want them to disappear and the next I was leaning on their shoulders.

I looked at Mason who had his head thrown back and was starting to dose off. "Something is weird." I announced and Mason opened

one eye to look at me and Micah put down the remote.

"Like what?" Mason asked sitting himself upright.

"With this whole McAllister thing." I waved my hand a little and brought my knees to my chest. "It hurts when he isn't around."

Mason furrowed his eyebrows. "Like you're on fire?"

"How did you know?" I pulled the afghan over myself and leaned on Mason's shoulder.

"That's what its like with Jaemi." He said softly.

"And Mattie." Micah added throwing his legs across my lap and leaning his head against the back cushions.

I closed my eyes as Mason leaned back propping his feet up on the table. "What do you suppose it means?" I garbled out half asleep.

"No clue." Micah answered. "All I know is Mattie is like no other girl I've been with. I love her and I don't think I could ever love another girl again."

My eyes shot open to stare at Micah. His eyes were closed and his arms tossed out above him. I never thought I see the day when my brothers completely committed themselves to one single female.

"Ditto bro." Mason said with a lazy smile on his face. "Ditto."

## Chapter 7: My Mate

~Rose's POV~

"Wake up!" I felt my shoulders being shook Monday morning. The voice was high and squeaky in my ears. "Now!" I felt the covers yanked off my body.

The cold air whipped at my bare legs. "Go away." I grumbled feeling for my covers to pull back over myself. It was too early for this.

"You're just like Micah." I heard the giggle and then the pillow was yanked from under my head. It was Mattie, I was sure of it.

"He is my twin." I mumbled out curling into a ball. "Now go away and come back when the sun is up." My words were slurred together.

"Get up this instant, Rose." I felt a hand clasp around my wrist and pull. Jaemi was here too? "At least she's lighter than the boys."

"Good to know I'm not fat." I said my eyes still closed.

"She's grumpy in the mornings." Mattie giggled latching onto my other wrist and yanking, making me sit up.

I swatted at them and plopped back onto my bed. I heard Jaemi sigh then leave the room. "Is it even considered morning?" I said finding my blankets and finally pulled them up over my head.

"Yes." Mattie said jumping on my bed making me bounce up and down. "Now get up."

"No." My teeth rattling together as she used my bed as a trampoline.

I heard footsteps, than was thrown over a shoulder the blankets slipping off of me. "If we have to get up this early so do you, sis." Mason said swinging me to stand onto my own two feet.

I glared at him and then laughed. His hair was disheveled, his shirt was inside out and backwards, his eyes half drooping closed. "Hey don't laugh at me." He chuckled pointing to my haystack of hair.

I ran my fingers through it and groaned feeling all the tangles. "Why are we up so early anyway?"

Mattie froze with my uniform midair. Her green eyes went wide and her mouth popped open. "You don't know!" She screamed making me slap my hands over my ears. She was way too hyper for whatever early time it was.

"Obviously we don't." Micah stumbled in running a hand through his hair. He didn't even bother to put a shirt on as he flopped down on my couch and closed his eyes again.

"Halloween week!" Mattie clapped her hands together and Micah winced.

"Mattie, I love you." He peered out from one open eye. "But can you down it a notch, its way too early for this." He closed his eye again. Ah, the wonders how the three of us think so much alike.

"You signed up for the committee Rose; we have to go set up." Jaemi announced poking at Mason who seemed to have fallen asleep standing up against the wall.

"What does that have to do with us?" Mason asked pulling Jaemi towards him and leaning his head on hers, closing his eyes again. "We aren't on the committee."

"But we need one of you to drive us to school." Mattie said jumping on Micah's lap making his eyes shoot open.

"How did you get here then?" I asked plucking my uniform from where Mattie laid it on the bed.

Jaemi and Mattie glanced at each other. Mattie biting her lip. "My mom brought us." Jaemi finally answered, somehow I didn't believe her.

"So what's today event?" I asked.

"Mate Monday." Surprisingly, it was Mason that answered.

"Mate Monday..." I arched my eyebrow. Right, the day that you spent with your mate. The day worse than Valentines.

"Yes." Grinned Mattie. "And I bet Professor McAllister will keep you with him." She wiggled her eyebrows.

I shook my head. "He probably forgot about Saturday night anyhow." I walked towards my bathroom to change since everyone was gathered in my room.

"I doubt it." Mattie sung out doing a mini twirl in the middle of the room.

Micah chuckled and shook his head at her. "You're something else Mattie." He pulled her down onto the couch as I disappeared into the bathroom.

Why would Professor McAllister call me his mate? Would he really keep me with him all day? I doubted it. He had better looking girls going after him, Tawny for one.

I quickly changed and reappeared in my bedroom, where my brothers had already changed and were leaning against the wall, the Chevy keys dangling from Mason's fingers.

We walked into the school, I was expecting to see deserted, ghostly hallways, but the committee was all there with red hearts floating everywhere. It looked more like Valentine's Day rather than Halloween.

Some of the girls ran up to us and handed us tons of hearts. "You three do the wall." She smiled then dashed away.

I looked over at Mattie who was taking down the school menu from the large wall right at the entrance; Jaemi was flipping through the hearts and smiling at each one. "I knew they were together." She laughed waving around a photograph.

I looked down at the hearts in my hand and realized they not only had names on it but pictures too. "Hey, it's you and Micah." Jaemi held up another heart and Mattie grabbed it grinning from ear to ear. She put it in the middle of the wall.

"It's the Wall of Mates." Jaemi smiled looking down at the heart in her hand. She then clutched it to her chest, letting out a dreamy sigh. I watched her tape it up near Mattie and Micah. Of course, it was her and Mason.

The Wall of Mates? I stood there staring at them for a little while. "You'll understand at the end of the week. We aren't crazy we promise." Mattie smiled; there it was again, the end of the week.

I started plastering up all the couples in the hearts, then stopped when I came to one. It was me and Professor McAllister. The picture looked like it was taken the very first day of school. I was standing in front of him holding out my schedule. "Told you he wasn't drunk." Mattie beamed seeing why I was frozen to my spot.

Jaemi plucked the picture from my hand and taped it up to wear her and Mattie's were. I stared at the picture tilting my chin. I didn't even want to think about how I was photographed without knowing.

I turned around to where the noise of the decorators had toned down and gasped at how everything was already decorated. "How..." I stuttered looking at the corridor that looked like it popped out of a valentine card. "That was fast." Red streamers cascaded down from the ceiling. Hearts dangled from the walls. White rose petals littered the floor leaving a scent of fresh flowers float through the hallways. Mattie looked shocked for a moment. "Umm...that's why there's so many of us." She didn't sound very convinced as she told me this. That is why I think she was lying.

Students started filing in admiring the work of the committee and finding their pictures on the Wall. There were many delighted squeals and bragging as people pointed to their picture on the Wall.

I also noticed most of the guys were carrying white roses. "For you," I looked over at Mason who handed Jaemi a single white rose. She beamed, turned and gave him a very, passionate kiss that I had to turn away from.

"What's with the white roses?" I asked Mattie who was bouncing on the soles of her feet, not really paying attention to me but looking around the halls, most likely for my brother.

"They represent love, its tradition; you get a white rose from your mate on this day." She smiled seeing Micah coming with a white rose. She clasped her hands together and gave a little squeal running towards Micah.

Micah handed her the white rose and they started kissing, again I had to turn away. There was that mate word again; they didn't use boyfriend/girlfriend. Maybe, it was because that word seemed to miniscule for what they were actually feeling for each other.

Everyone was ecstatic in the halls, most of the female population carrying around a white rose with their arms wrapped around their significant other. It was like I was doomed by not having a white rose.

I walked into Professor McAllister's class just as the final bell rung. That's when I realized I shared the class with Tawny. She didn't have a rose either. She sat in her chair eying me with her arms across her chest. I guess appearances didn't get you anywhere in *this* little world.

I flopped down in my seat and Mattie was just staring at me with a wide grin on her face. "What?" I asked and she looked down at my desk.

I looked down and sucked in my breath, a single white long

stemmed rose was sitting on it. I smiled, I couldn't help it, I got a rose. I wanted to wave it around over my head and dance around the room like an idiot, because I. Got. A. Rose.

"I have a feeling not much teaching is going to get done this week" Professor McAllister started. He leaned against his desk casually crossing his arms. "So I might as well give you this period to have fun and catch up with whatever homework you didn't finish over the weekend." He waved his hand absently.

Everyone in the class cheered. The sounds of notebooks and textbooks closing filled the room and easy chatter started. "Enjoy it, because it doesn't happen all that often." He chuckled. "And those of you who are meeting with your mates, you're released." He waved his hand.

"See ya!" Mattie beamed, "I'm off to find your brother." I waved at her as she danced out of the room. I looked around, half the students have left, but just as many were walking in, sitting by their mates.

"You have a rose; shouldn't you go find your mate?" One of the guys leaned over and asked me.

"Damn, I was hoping she wouldn't have a rose, I wanted to take a shot at her." Another guy said. He winked at me and Professor McAllister came to stand by me raising his eyebrows.

He leaned over the guy's desk, "So sorry Mr. Hawkins." McAllister seemed to get closer. "But don't you dare take a 'shot' at her." His voice went cold and Hawkins actually shivered.

"Holy shit!" Trevor slammed his fist to his desk, making Brittney jump in her seat. "You're mates with Professor McAllister." He chuckled as the class stared at me wide eyed, I swear to you my face went twenty shades of red and fifteen shades of pink. "I should have guessed it." He rolled his eyes.

"You can be oblivious at times." Brittney laughed earning Trevor's

large hand to ruffle through her perfectly combed hair.

The class started talking all at once wanting information. I wanted to disappear. I even started sinking lower into my chair. "Enough, Enough" Professor McAllister laughed waving his hands.

"It's about time," Professor Britton walked in handing him some papers. "I was getting sick of hearing you complain about not having a mate," she smirked. McAllister took the papers from her and she gave him a little wave as she walked out.

"Even if all the girls in this school were throwing themselves at you professor." A girl said from under her *mate's* arm. Everyone in the class laughed and I noticed the tips of McAllister's ears go a slight pink but he laughed with everyone else.

He perched himself on his desk and chuckled, meanwhile I think I was almost successfully under my desk. When the bell finally rang, I jumped up so quickly I almost made my chair fall backwards. I was almost safely to the door when a familiar warm hand grabbed my wrist and sent sparks through my body. "You stay with me today silly." He winked.

I nodded as he pulled out his desk chair for me to sit. "So what's with the whole 'mate' thing?" I asked him and I saw jaw clench as if he was grinding his teeth together.

"I can't tell you yet." He looked at me apologetically.

"Let me guess, at the end of the week" I sighed and he nodded. He ran his finger down my cheek.

"I'm sorry; I would tell you now if I was allowed to." I brought my hand to rest over his and I felt happy, beyond happy, at that moment I didn't care that everyone was hiding something huge, or that this school was loopy. I was just happy in the presence of him, like nothing could ever bring me down.

"I know." I smiled as we heard cat calls in the classroom both of us

pulling apart and looking at the now full class.

"I didn't even hear the final bell." He scratched the back of his head, looking out at the classroom. They were all ogling us as I blushed a deep red ducking behind McAllister's desk.

Professor McAllister stood up as if getting himself ready to lecture. I was interested, to say the least, in what he actually taught. I only had him for homeroom, and it never crossed my mind to ask him. I was disappointed though, because he just cleared his throat and told them they had a free period, he gave every class a free period.

When the lunch bell rang he led me out into the hallway. "So what exactly do you teach?" I asked trying not to trip over a freshman as she barreled pass me in tears. McAllister looked over his shoulder at the girl then back down at me.

"Umm..." He scratched his head. "Physical Education." He smirked.

I cocked my eyebrow. "In a classroom?" I figured physical education to be outside or in a gym. Not in the confines of a classroom.

He smiled at me. "End of the week." He repeated while I groaned. I was getting sick of hearing that. Why couldn't they just tell me now?

I flopped down at the table with my brothers, both of them were arguing with Trevor and Justice about something or another.

"What's going on?" I asked. I never really understood Trevor. He was stuffing his mouth with a bread roll and yelling something at my brothers. Not that I understood, but Mason apparently did as he yelled something about blue boxers.

"You don't want to know." Jaemi laughed running her fingers through Mason's messy hair. As the boys continued with their unintelligible talk between boxers and briefs, Mattie started poking me.

"So are you dressing up tomorrow?" Mattie asked but still continued to poke me. With her other hand she twirled her hair completely

ignoring Micah who was now prattling on about pink briefs.

I tried remembering what tomorrow was. I tried picturing the calendar that was inside that bright orange folder.

"You dress like a dude." Micah laughed pulling at my skirt. As in the whole 'gender bender' type thing? "And I dress like a chick." He pointed proudly to his chest. Mattie giggled leaning her head on his shoulder.

I arched my eyebrows, that would be...well...interesting. "People actually dress up?" I asked and everyone started laughing at me. I could picture the whole school walking around trans-gendered. It was quite hilarious to imagine.

"Of course, even the Prof's." Justice laughed, "We are a very spirited school." I tapped my foot under the table, thinking.

"There's another small tradition." Mattie said holding up her thumb and forefinger proving her point. "We usually switch clothes with our mates." she beamed. *Mate*. There it was again.

I looked towards the faculty table. McAllister was sitting with the history professor and making a lot of hand gestures. He was huge. No scratch that, a giant. He was like six-four, I was lucky enough to call myself five-three. I barely went to his chest if even. He was abnormally huge. His clothes would fall right off me, and that's not figurative speech.

Jaemi noticed my probing eyes at McAllister and she started laughing. "That's what makes it so funny." She said gesturing to McAllister. "Try picturing him in your clothes."

I looked at him, his tone chest, muscular arms, broad chest. Oh, I don't even think my shirt would go over his head, but it was funny none-the-less. Jaemi put her bag onto the table pulling out a black eyelet skirt and a fuchsia bandeau and handed them to a horrified looking Mason.

Mason held up the skirt. "Please tell me this is a cruel joke." His large as they ranked over the skirt. Jaemi grinned patting his arm. "It won't cover anything!" He wailed putting it to his waist, he'd be lucky to squeeze a leg into that waist line.

"It's stretchy." Jaemi pulled the skirt to prove the point. "Mattie can alter whatever doesn't work."

"How is she supposed to alter it in a day?" Micah piped up. Jaemi visibly blushed.

"Right." She shook her head. "I forgot."

"Stop being so macho and wear it." Mattie laughed. "You won't be the only one." She pulled out a lilac flare dress from her bag and threw it at Micah who looked like he was about to lose his lunch.

I tried holding down the hysterical laughter riding up my throat but I couldn't help it. "That's to pay you back for all those times you two made fun of me." I snorted out a laugh trying to hold the cola from coming out of my nose.

Micah narrowed his eyes at me. "I'm sorry! But that pink dress was a little much." He smirked.

"She looked like Shirley Temple." Mason added laughing about the stupid, frilly, pink, Easter dress.

"I don't have red hair." I pointed out causing Mattie to open her mouth to protest in the name of red heads.

Micah beat her to the punch. "Mattie would make a cute Shirley Temple. You just looked like an over done doll." I had the urge to fling the rest of my cola in his face.

"Any woo..." Mattie interrupted pulling out another dress from her bag. "I went out of my way to go through your closet for Professor McAllister." Mattie grinned at me, handing me the dress.

I picked up my red, halter dress I've never worn. "It will be a shirt

on him." I laughed and she threw something black at me, black leggings. Everyone erupted in laughter around the table at the ensemble.

"I have a feeling the laughing has to do with me since I've noticed everyone exchanging clothes for tomorrow." Professor McAllister sat on the bench near me and I looked up at him apologetically.

"Mattie picked it out not me." I babbled out suddenly feeling nervous. He took the dress from my hands and shook it out, his eyes going wide.

"Why do you have to be so tiny?" He ruffled my hair laughing. "I don't even think this will go over one of my arms." He chuckled then saw the leggings. "Oh god Mattie, you're officially failing my class now." He laughed holding up the leggings to size them.

"Aw, but Professor I think it will look adorable on you." She batted her eyes at him and he smirked handing me a wad of clothes.

"You on the other hand will probably drown in my clothes." He chuckled as the bell rang. "See you in class." He kissed my forehead then took off. I floated on the clouds for a second before Mattie snapped me out of it.

"What did he give you?" She screeched near my ear making me cringe. The girl had a set of lungs.

I opened the clothes he handed me and saw some gym shorts that will probably fit about three of me in them and a gray muscle tee. His alluring scent hit my nostrils from his clothes. "You know how many of the girls would love to be in your shoes, Rose?" Mattie got up from the table grabbing her tray.

I got up almost throwing my tray halfway across the cafeteria. Mason simply laughed and shook his head. "Huh?" I asked, trying to balance the tray, wad of clothes, and my book bag all at the same time, while attempting to walk in a straight line.

"Well, when all the 'available' chicks found out Professor McAllister didn't have a mate, they all went after him." She glanced over at me as I dropped my tray off at the window and shoved everything in my bag.

A sudden surge of jealousy racked my body and for the first time, I noticed that there were a lot of single people in the school. And the single women were looking at my mate, mine. Oh great, now I was calling him *my* mate.

## Chapter 8: His & Hers

~Rose's POV~

I walked alongside Mattie, glaring at every single girl imaginable. "Chill girl." Mattie laughed looping her arm through mine as some freshman shrank away from me. "He won't look at any girl now that he has you." She pointed out.

I don't know about her, but many guys didn't care if they were dating a girl or not, they still gawked. Especially at girls who had big booties, big boobs, pretty eyes, too tight clothes, short skirts, the list goes on. And McAllister was well...hot. If he flirted with the girl, the girl would flirt right back...and then probably jump him.

"Rose." Mattie stopped in the middle of the hallway. "Trust me when I say Professor McAllister will never be with any other girl but you." She sounded so confident in that sentence, funny thing is how much I believed her.

I nodded at her and she smiled patting my arm and skipped away to where Micah was waiting for her at the end of the hall. I shook my head of all the unwanted thoughts, never in my life have I felt so jealous. And no one was obviously flirting with him, it was just someone *saying* that people flirted with him. I was really in deep.

I walked into his classroom and he was in his usual position perched on the edge of his desk. His hair was falling around his face, hiding it. But it looked as if he was reading something down by his lap. The students shuffled in and flopped in seats, whispering amongst themselves.

"You're right." I laughed as his head popped up and he jumped a

little. "I will drown in your clothes." He grinned at me and chuckled.

"At least it will cover you." His eyes moved to his desk, where my cocktail dress and black leggings were piled. He turned back to me and raised his eyebrows and half-smiled. "I will get you back." He chuckled gesturing for me to sit down.

He sat down in his desk chair as he gave the class a free period. He pulled a large stack of papers towards him and looked slightly sick as he eyed them. "I hate grading." He mumbled more to himself than me.

"Then why are you a teacher?" I laughed eying the large stack. I tried seeing the writing, maybe, as to get a clue as to why a P.E. class would have written assignments.

He pulled a paper down and clicked his red pen. "Just because I love teaching doesn't mean I have to love grading." He said matter-of-factly.

I shrugged pulling out my math book, giving it the same look that McAllister gave the stack of papers. "Are you excited about Wayland coming?" He asked not looking up from the paper that lay in front of him. His pen was still moving across it.

"Ummm..." I looked up from the math problem I had already erased three times. "I really don't know what to expect."

He chuckled, still not looking away from his grading. "They're..." He paused, his pen held mid air. "You think we're weird, wait till you meet them." He went back to his grading, making many red marks on the poor paper in front of him.

I scowled at my own paper for a little while before I erased the problem yet again. "You mean they are *weirder* then you guys?" I shook my head. "I didn't think that was possible."

"Trust me." He laughed finally looking up at me and my badly erased paper. "A lot is more possible then you think."

I glanced up at his hypnotizing eyes completely forgetting about my stupid math problem. Something about an A and B equals X. He smiled lazily at me and then glanced down at my paper. It was hard to even remember my name around this man.

"Let me see." He laughed pulling my book from my hands and my notebook. He quickly glanced over my problem then handed it back. He pointed to several numbers in my book and then wrote out the equation across my page.

I was focused on his handwriting, for a guy, it was actually nice. It wasn't chicken scratch. "Are you even paying attention?" His voice sounded amused as I unglued my eyes from the way he made his sixes.

"Yeah." I said, hoping he wouldn't ask questions, seeing that I was paying attention to his nice, slanted handwriting instead.

He leaned back in his chair. "You were, were you?" He smiled glancing at my paper then back up at me. "What's this formula called?" He pointed at his very, nice, handwritten equation.

I bit my lower lip. "I like your sixes." I smiled up at him and he shook his head and chuckled.

"Well isn't that nice to know, but it won't help you pass Professor Karlo's class." He then bent back over the paper and explained it again.

Shanzie sniffed my bare feet and craned his huge head to look at me. "It's me boy." I laughed ruffling his ears.

I looked in the mirror and scrunched my nose. This is why I wasn't a tomboy, despite having two twin brothers. I looked ridiculous in male clothing, no scratch that, beyond ridiculous.

The gray muscle tee could have passed for a knee-length dress on me, the gym shorts as pants. As it was I had to roll the shorts and tie

them in a knot at my hip to keep them from falling. My hair was piled on top of my head in a messy knot, most of my bangs hanging down the side of my face.

"Ah...where's the camera?" Micah strolled into the bathroom casually, as if he was having no trouble walking in the purple dress. I bit my lip to keep from laughing as he was with me.

"I feel so exposed in this." Mason walked in putting his hands in front of him, trying to cover as much as possible. The eyelet skirt barely reached down to his thighs. The fuchsia bandeau was more like a tight-fitting bra on him. I bit my lip harder trying to hold in the hysterics.

"Should we stuff?" Micah looked down towards his chest. With that, I could hold it in no longer. I burst out laughing. Both of my brothers slowly turned towards me.

"I have..." I tried calming myself down so I could talk properly. "Socks..." I couldn't control it. My two macho brothers were standing in front of me in a dress and a skirt, one in pink and one in purple. "To stuff..." I giggled some more.

I made my way back into my bedroom while my brothers continued to glare at me. I grabbed my cell phone which was resting on my bed near my bag. I quickly snapped a photo of both of the. "Rose!" They both yelled in unison.

"You better hand that over!" Mason hollered lunging toward me but the tightness of the skirt made him stumble, giving me a head start up the stairs.

"Never!" I exploded out into the living room not really noticing that three extra people were sitting on our couch.

Shanzie was barking loudly as I ran around the couch waving my phone victoriously over my head.

"Get back here!" Micah ran into the front room. Well, I should say

hop, as he was trying to hold down the dress and run without tearing the fabric. I stood on one side of the couch and he stood at the opposite. Like the good seventeen-year-old I was, I stuck out my tongue then ran in the other direction.

"Give it here, Rose." Mason suddenly appeared behind me pulling down at the skirt. I ducked under his outstretched arm and ran back towards the couch.

Suddenly, the wind was knocked out of me as I was flung in the air. I felt my stomach hit the hard shoulder so my butt was successfully in the air. Mason appeared where my face was hanging halfway down Micah's back. He snatched the phone from my hands.

"You can never beat us, sis." Mason grinned pressing the 'delete' button on my phone.

"Are they normally this crazy?" My head snapped towards the voice. I nearly groaned out loud, did they see the whole idiotic scene? Mattie, Jaemi, and Professor McAllister were all smiling widely on the couch.

"Yes." My dad laughed.

"Put me down!" I rammed my fist into Micah's back.

"If you insist." And with that I landed on my butt, on the floor, Shanzie coming over to lick the side of my face.

I finally stopped my laughing and looked up to see Professor McAllister standing with his arms across his chest...and broke down laughing again. He was in my clothes. The red halter was a short shirt on him and the leggings looked as if they might be cutting off circulation. He closed his professor's robe around his ensemble.

"Are you laughing at me?" He crouched down towards my level on the floor. I tried stopping my laughter but I only succeeded in making a snort come out.

He smirked at me and then I was mid air again. "Stop laughing." He

chuckled swinging me over his shoulder as if I was a rag doll. I tried attacking his sides, but unfortunately, he wasn't ticklish.

"I'm not ticklish." He laughed. I craned my head up and saw Mattie and Jaemi leaning on each other laughing. Both were wearing Micah and Mason's clothes with baseball hats and fake beards painted on their face with what looked like eyeliner.

He set me back on my two feet and Shanzie ran towards me sniffing me again. Then turned to Professor McAllister. His ears flattened and he growled showing his teeth and McAllister. The fur on his back rose and he stepped back a little. "Shanzie!" My dad yelled running over to him.

"He's normally very friendly." I stared wide eyed as my dad grabbed his collar and led him towards the back yard.

"That's alright." McAllister laughed. "Dogs normally don't take to me easily for some reason." He shrugged and gestured towards the door. "Everybody ready?"

"Hell yeah. " Mason said pulling at the eyelet skirt he was wearing. "Let's go make fools of ourselves." We all headed out side and I gaped at Professor McAllister's black, very expensive Range Rover.

"Um...nice." I gaped some more.

"Hop in." He opened my door and I slid in still in awe of the very fancy looking car, I even poked the seat to see if it was real. He pulled out of the driveway and sped towards the school. His hand entwined with mine and I felt like I was soaring, his eyes were focused on the road, but they were shining, I could melt in those eyes.

He pulled in the black gates and turned the opposite way of Mattie and Jaemi and into the faculty parking lot. He came around the car and opened my door. I started laughing again looking at his attire. "You look hilarious too," he smiled pointing at the ball of fabric at my hip.

As I walked in the school, I think all of us were laughing at all the hilarious outfits, Mattie and Jaemi were right, this school was spirited. I didn't see one person who didn't dress up. "Hey, Professor McAllister." Tawny came up to him and smiled batting her eyelashes, eyelashes I wanted to rip out. She was in a pair of baggy jeans and a long t-shirt with a baseball cap on her head, her golden-blond hair pulled back tightly.

"Tawny." He smiled "Good to see you."

"You too." She batted her eyelashes some more, she was flirting with him. Flirting. With. Him. I felt McAllister squeeze my hand, calming me down just a tad.

"I'll see you in class." He smiled politely and we walked around her. I ignored the death glare she sent me as I passed. "You okay?" He looked down at me. Now, I understood why they called jealously the green monster. I understood it perfectly.

"I'm okay." I smiled pulling up the shorts a little as they were falling.

"You look adorable." He grinned his hand coming around my waist and pulling me closer to him. I nearly melted right then and there.

"You too." I managed to say and he chuckled looking down at me as if I was crazy.

"You know how exposed your little dress makes me feel?" He tugged on the black leggings a little.

"Mason said the same thing." We both laughed as the bell rang and walked down the corridor. The hearts in the hallway were now replaced with blue and pink streamers. And hanging down from the ceiling were varieties of boxers, panties, bras, make up, cologne, shaving cream.

I gawked at the decorations. McAllister looked up at a very vibrant gold bra dangling from a light. "Interesting." He laughed shaking his head.

"Very interesting." I added looking at a pair of dangling white briefs. We entered his classroom where female and male symbols were painted on his windows. I made a move to my seat and then froze biting hard on my lip to keep from laughing again.

I thought I had see everything. But then I saw massive Trevor. "Don't you even start laughing." He said sliding down in his seat. He was in bright pink skinny jeans and a black bustier with a gold necklace dangling down his neck.

I flopped in my seat and was ready to open my mouth. "You say anything I'll hurt you." He grumbled. Professor McAllister cleared his throat. "I mean I'll uh..." He looked over at McAllister, "Oh hell, I'll just shut up."

I laughed pulling out my history homework. "Just a reminder Wayland Academy comes in tomorrow, please be on your best behavior." McAllister smirked.

I leaned over to Mattie. "What are we doing for Spirit Day tomorrow?" I asked, finally getting into the spirit of the week.

Tomorrow was Spirit Day. We would wear our uniforms, but paint our faces and hair and pretend to be cheerleaders or something. "I figured we could do a dance or something." Mattie was doing her normal bouncing in her seat. "Justice can play the drums or something and we just act crazy."

"You want me to dance in front of the whole school and make a complete idiot of myself?" I asked my mind halfway between are you frickin' kidding me and that sounds fun.

She nodded her head. "Come on it will fun. We can get together tonight and think of something. I believe Justice said to meet up at his house." She said just as the bell rang and both of us jumped up startled as how the time passed so quickly.

I looked down at the homework I didn't finish. I sighed and shoved it all back in my bag. "See you at lunch, Rose." McAllister winked at

me as I reached the door. I felt the familiar small stab of pain in my chest as I left him.

## Chapter 9: Alvar! Alvar!

*~Rose's POV~*

"Honey, you look cute." My mom said as I walked into the kitchen. Cute? Was that a good thing or a bad thing? Being called cute? I'm sure if a guy called me cute I would jump for joy, but with my mom....not so much.

I sat down at the table where Mattie and Jaemi were already elbow deep in their breakfast plates. Micah used his artistic abilities to paint our faces. Mattie, Jaemi, and my face all consisted of navy blue swirls outlining our eyes dashed with silver glitter.

He and Mason had painted blue warrior marks on their noses and cheeks outlined in silver. They reminded me of a football player.

"Professor McAllister couldn't come today?" I asked trying not to sound too let down. I doubt it worked by the eyes Micah and Mason gave me.

"He had to be at the school early to welcome Wayland." Mattie stuck her tongue out at the word 'Wayland'. "Those, big, egotistic, idiotic..." Jaemi elbowed Mattie and she clamped her lips shut and vigorously cut into her pancake.

I glanced over at my parents who were elbow to elbow whispering to each other and completely ignoring their hot food. I then looked over at Micah and Mason who were also staring at our parents.

"Something we should know?" Mason voiced and both my parents' heads looked up at us.

My dad scratched his scruff on his chin and looked away leaving my mom blinking at us and looking like a deer caught in the headlights.

"No, not at all." She smiled. "Just telling your father how much I love him." She beamed leaning her head on my father's shoulder and puckering her lips.

"Ugh." Micah rolled his eyes. "Not in front of us." He covered his eyes. "I'll be traumatized."

"I think I already am." Mason grumbled standing up from the table and dumping his plate in the sink.

Jaemi and Mattie only giggled as they grabbed their bags and headed out side towards Mattie's new candy apple red convertible. "Isn't she a beauty?" She ran her fingers over the shiny paint.

I gaped at it. "Wow." Was all I could say. I climbed into the black leather seats in the back and smelled the whole 'new-car-smell'.

"Lucky." I grumbled.

"No kidding." Mason said. "We still have to use dad's Chevy."

Walking into school, I had to blink several times. "Talk about school spirit." Micah said looking around the main foyer. It was covered in navy blue and silver. Streamers, banners, balloons. The works. And on the Wall our crest was painted ten times its normal size. Each section of the crest, vial, wolf, drop, and leaves were all separated and outlined in more navy blue and silver glitter.

"This is just..." Micah glanced at all the walls. "Umm...blinding."

"I know what you mean." Mason rubbed his eyes. "Man, I am going to be so sick of these colors come the end of the day."

"Show some school spirit!" Mattie stomped her foot in front of us. "Alvar! Alvar! Mighty warriors, wolves, and..." Jaemi elbowed Mattie, interrupting whatever the rest of the school song was.

"Watch your mouth." Jaemi whispered.

"Right." Mattie said putting her fingers over her lip-glossed lips.

"Oops. I was getting a little too spirited."

We continued walking down the corridor when I spotted different colors. Students in green and gold uniforms. "That would be Wayland." Mattie whispered in my ear as a girl passed us, sending a hard glare at Jaemi.

They were just as beautiful as Alvar. I watched one of the males pass and tried to keep my mouth from dropping. "They're horrid." Jaemi snapped as another girl gave her a glare. "Why did they have to come here?"

"Look at those beautiful eyes." McAllister came up behind us completely breaking the tense atmosphere...well, for me at least. He was in his normal black uniform and had blue streaks in his hair like the rest of the Prof's. But he had a silver paw print at the corner of his right eye that was outlined in blue.

Professor Britton who was pointing something out to a Wayland student, had a blue swirl going around her right eye and cascading down her cheek. Looking around, all the profs had the same forms of paintings on their face. Either a paw print, a swirl, or a drop that almost looked like a tear drop.

I brought my finger up to McAllister's paw print. "What's it mean?" I asked and he smirked.

"End of the week." He tapped my nose and I scowled. I was seriously getting sick of hearing that.

The headmaster was walking down the hall and seemed to be beaming at the decorated hallways. He had silver drops falling from his right eyes. "Marvelous." He clapped his hands together as he passed us still murmuring to himself, Dracula at his heels.

"I hate cats." McAllister said as Dracula hissed at him and his tail poofed up. Only to have headmaster Seeley pick him up and continue on down the hall.

"You don't like animals at all." Mason pointed out as we continued down the hall.

"No." McAllister shook his head. "It's more like animals don't like me." He shrugged and laughed.

As the bell rang I followed McAllister into his classroom. Wayland students were standing around the classroom awkwardly while we sat at our desk. "Good morning." McAllister smiled looking at all the students. "Wayland students just grab any empty seat."

A Wayland student grabbed the seat in front of me. He had sandy-blonde hair reaching just below his ears in small curls and sea green eyes. "I'm Reeve." He turned to face me completely. His face was flawless. Like, utterly, annoyingly flawless.

"Rose." I introduced glancing at Trevor and Mattie out of the corner of my eyes. Mattie had this look that said 'throw something at Reeve's perfect head'.

"So you have a mate?" My eyes went wide at his words. He just threw it out there, like it was an everyday question like, 'how are you today?'

My mouth hung open for a little while. "Yes." I finally said and his grin turned into a grimace. I mean, McAllister was my mate. Right? That is what everybody was calling him anyway.

"You're lying." He said bringing his hand to my cheek and I recoiled. "You can't have a mate." I was spazzing at how easily he just up and touched me. I didn't even know the boy.

Trevor coughed loudly. "I wouldn't touch her if I were you." He glared at Reeve, his aquamarine eyes hard and for the first time, far from friendly.

"Why are you her mate?" Reeve asked looking over at Trevor.

Trevor made a movement to stand up, his fist clenching into each other. "No." His voice was cold, something I wasn't used to hearing out of Trevor.

Reeve smirked, ignoring Trevor and touched the tip of my pony tail.

"Anyone ever tell you how beautiful you are." He brought his hand down my cheek again.

A hand grabbed at Reeve's wrist. "Do not touch her." McAllister's voice was quiet, but his words held an undisclosed threat. He released Reeve's wrist and let his hand fall away.

Reeve looked up, almost looking a little shocked. "You're mates with a Prof?" He snorted rubbing his wrist where McAllister had grabbed it. "How touching." I twirled around in my seat giving him my back and crossing my arms.

"You alright?" McAllister crouched down to my seat and I nodded. I didn't really trust myself to speak, no thanks to Mr. Perfect over there.

As the bell rang, I was the first one out of my seat. I stopped in front of McAllister on my way out. "Thanks." I smiled, his fingers came over mine and squeezed them a little.

"Anytime, but if he touches you again..." His eyes darkened and his eyebrows furrowed.

"That's how I felt that morning with Tawny." I pointed out and he smirked.

"I'll keep that in mind for the next time." He grinned letting go of my hand letting me go to class.

The rest of the morning classes passed quickly and I realized Wayland had just as many students we had and unfortunately I had Reeve for most of my classes.

As soon as the lunch hour bell rung I ran straight to the main foyer where everybody was meeting up for the lunch time contest. My twins were the first two I spotted. Both of them were leaning against the Wall and arguing about something or another. I wasn't even going to try and get into the middle of it.

"You ready?" Mattie was doing her typical bounce-dance-walk type

of deal and shoved a bag in my arms and pushed me in the bathroom.

I stomped right back out after I realized exactly what she gave me. "Get your ass back in there and change." She ordered pointing towards the bathroom. I turned to look to my twins for help but they merely pointed at the bathroom, some help.

I groaned and reluctantly and loudly went back into the bathroom; I stripped out of my uniform and slipped into the dark blue, baby doll dress with a sequin embellished bodice and layered chiffon skirt. It was really cute and sexy but something I wouldn't normally wear.

Mattie and Jaemi danced into the bathroom as I was tying the silver sash around my waist. "Why am I different?" I looked at their silver baby doll dresses. Brittney casually walked in behind them in the same silver dress.

"Because you're the cutest." Brittney beamed yanking out my ponytail and fluffing up my curls. I'm the what? Have they not looked at themselves in the mirror? And I also noted, that is the first real thing Brittney has ever said to me.

"You're gorgeous." Mattie backed away after putting on red lipstick on me. Then she pulled out a pair of strappy silver heels.

"Those better be for you." I looked at the death traps she was trying to get on my foot.

"Please Rose, they'll look amazing on you." She was forcing my foot into the little contraption, so I technically didn't have a choice.

We finally left the bathroom where the guys threw long silver trench coats over us to cover our outfits. They were in dark blue slacks and light grey button ups. Our attire actually came out really good. Minus my strappy silver shoes. Those I could have done without.

We made our way through the packed cafeteria, there was a group

on stage that was attempting a karaoke song that was suppose to represent our school in some way. "That's not the half of it." Justice laughed as the group left the stage and some guys stepped up and I couldn't help the laugh that came out of my mouth.

The guys were in cheerleading outfits, skirts, bows, and all as they started doing a cheer routine for the school. They left the stage to a standing ovation and a cafeteria that was roaring in laughter.

We were next as I headed for the stage I glanced over to the faculty table and locked eyes with McAllister. He winked and gave me a thumbs up. I was trying to act cool, but put me in high heeled shoes and I tend to stumble a little. Mason gripped my elbow to steady me, while chuckling at the same time.

"Shut up." I swatted his arm. "This is all everybody's fault, I didn't want to do this."

"Oh you know you want to." Micah walked to my other side. "You loved this idea."

I snorted as we headed towards the front of the stage where our names were being announced and loud cheers followed.

My heart started pounding harder as we stepped up on the stage and put our backs to the audience. "Good luck." Mattie whispered as the instrumental version of the school song started and blared throughout the cafeteria.

Our trench coats dropped to our ankles, many whistles and catcalls and screams flew threw the room. I felt my face heat up as I turned and faced the audience when I did I saw all of them were already on their feet cheering.

We started the dance and the cheering got louder adding to our adrenaline as we pulsed with the beating of the drums. As our circle formed at the end of the dance the cafeteria erupted in applause, whistling, shouting, and yes even stomping.

As we did our final bow I looked over to the faculty table and saw McAllister whooping and clapping with everyone else. We descended the stairs as the next group walked up.

I felt hands snake around my waist as we made our way through the throng of students. The sparks danced up my spine at the feel of his hands on me. "You. Were. Amazing." His deep voice whispered in my ear.

I felt my face flush and turned to meet his silver eyes, I could melt in those eyes. "Really?"

"Would I lie to you?" He half smiled at me, making my legs feel weak.

I looked straight at him running my fingers under his gleaming eyes. "Just so you know your eyes are beautiful." I whispered, completely taking myself by surprise.

"So are yours." He smiled catching my fingers and bringing them to his lips to gently kiss. I was flying on cloud nine. A gross gagging noise snapped me back to reality and I glared at Mason.

"Go make out with Jaemi or something, shoo." I waved at him and he smirked.

"With pleasure." He pulled Jaemi to him and dipped her throwing a kiss dramatically. He then pulled her to him and they disappeared in the crowd waving over their shoulders.

I shook my head and returned my attention to McAllister who was watching the stage intently. I got on my tip toes but still couldn't see, it sucked being short. I pulled a chair and stood on that and saw some Wayland students performing.

One of the guys was on his hands and knees howling like a dog. One had his hand raised to the air like he was worshipping or something, and the other had a scary, cold, dead look on his face and they just stood that way. "I don't get it." I said to McAllister

who laughed seeing me standing on the chair.

"You won't till Friday." He smiled holding out one of his large hands to help me out of the chair. He already knew to well, he knew to help me before I fell flat on my nose. "They're not supposed to do that anyhow." He shrugged it off and led me through more of the students, all of which were whispering loudly and pointing at the performing students.

"Let's go for a walk." He took my elbow and led me out to the back courtyard. I followed him silently and watched his robe flap around his ankles.

The back courtyard was one of my favorite places on the campus. It was mainly a huge garden that had a cobblestone path that had several scattered benches.

"Did you come here for school?" I asked, figuring I should find out a little about him.

"I did." He smiled thoughtfully. "As did my parents, grandparents, and well as far back as I can tell you." He looked down and smiled wrapping his arm around my waist and pulling me closer.

"Professor McAll-" I started, but he lifted his hand and looked down at me.

"Ian." He gave me that half-smile again. "Don't call me Professor, it's weird." He laughed "You're my mate before student."

I smiled. "Ian." I smiled liking the way his name rolled off my tongue. Ian. "Did you have other mates before me?" I asked.

He smirked. "Girlfriends, yes. Mates no, you only have one." I looked up at him confused. "Friday." He told me and I rolled my eyes.

I adjusted my book strap as we continued the walk through the school's gardens. "And you?" He looked down at me. "Boyfriends?"

I frowned. "Yes." I grumbled. "Not that I want to remember them."

"You want me to go kick their asses?" He laughed. "Because I will." I laughed picturing massive Ian against scrawny Layton.

"My knight in shining armor."

"Always." He squeezed me to him then he groaned softly and I looked up and saw Tawny walking towards us. I securely wrapped my arm around his back, he was mine, and she was going to have to get the hint.

"Professor." She smiled flipping her overly-curved blonde hair over her shoulder. "Good to see you."

"As you Tawny." He said politely. I admired how nice he could be when I wanted nothing more than to pull her hair-sprayed hair.

"And Rose." She sneered out my name. "Good performance." I have a feeling she wanted to say a lot about my performance and it had nothing to do with 'good.'

"Thanks." I forced a smile on my face. I felt Ian give me a reassuring squeeze.

"So Professor, are you going to the party Friday night after the ball?" She asked and I looked up at him.

"I'm not sure yet." He started playing with a lock of my hair.

"Depends."

"Oh alright then." She sent a glare my way and then swiftly walked away.

"Bitch." I mumbled under my breath and Ian started laughing.

"Jealous much?" He looked down cocking his eyebrows. "I didn't even know you knew those words."

I crossed my arms, trying to look mad at him. "I'm not that

innocent." I so much wanted to stick my tongue out but I bit it to keep it in my mouth. "And are you forgetting how you were with Reeve earlier?" I pointed out and rage crossed his beautiful features.

"He touched you though." He ran his hand down my cheek, just like Reeve, except when Ian did it I felt the familiar warm sparks ignite.

"She's flirting with you and inviting you to her parties." I once more tried sounding mad, it came out more like a whine.

He wrapped an arm around me and turned me back to the school.

"I only have eyes for one." He smiled down at me. "But you should get back in your uniform now, no matter how much I love that dress." He tugged softly on the silky fabric.

## Chapter 10: Time to Terrify

~Rose's POV~

I rushed upstairs stumbling up the steps. "Sis, we're going to be late!" Mason hollered from somewhere in the kitchen.

I stumbled a little more up the stairs trying to pull up the stockings on my legs at the same time. I managed to fall flat to my face when my foot caught. "Please don't kill yourself on the way up." Micah yelled laughing at the same time.

I huffed and burst through the door where both of them were leaning against the counter. One of them holding out orange juice and the other holding out pop tarts.

My brothers were intimidating figures. They always have been. And quite often I would use that to my advantage when I had an obsessive, weird, dude with glasses the size of bottles following me around in middle school.

"What?" Mason asked questioning my staring and handing out the pop tarts to me. I gazed at them. Their intimidating figures stood out most today, Terrifying Thursday.

Mason was in complete black attire, he even had a black bandana over his dark hair. Micah, once more using his artistic abilities painted fake wounds all over Mason's face. He carried that facade of that creepy guy from *Star Wars*.

Micah on the other hand was a mix between something of completely hilarious and completely freakish. He gelled his dark waves completely back, except for a strand to curl in the middle of his eyes. Something like *Cry Baby*. He wore a white v-neck shirt with

a black leather jacket over it. He completed his look by putting in fake earrings up and down his left ear, nose, eyebrow, and lip. Well, I hope they were all fake.

"Are you going to continue gawking or are you going to eat your pop tarts?" Micah chuckled holding out the glass of orange juice in his hands. I chomped into the strawberry filled pastry and sipped at the orange juice.

"Mattie did you up good, girl." Micah smiled looking over my wardrobe.

I looked down at myself, and scowled at what Mattie had forced me into. I looked more like a freaky-Goth-vampire-chick. She had bought me and forced me into a black mini skirt that had this black stringy material that sagged around the edges, giving it this certain vintage yet chic appearance. I wore wrist length gloves similar to the skirt with the fingers cut out.

Now, the shirt...I basically strangled her when I saw it. It's a black lacy corset that hugged me tightly and everything I did have was basically popping out. She had coaxed my hair to fluff up in a kind of scary mad-scientist kind of way and sprayed a single white streak down one of my hanging strands.

She did up my eyes in completely black makeup and my lips blood red. We even went as far as painting my fingernails black. "I can't believe I'm actually wearing this." I took a bite out of my pop tart as my parents walked in.

My dad immediately froze his eyes going large. "You are not my little girl." He said his eyes bugging out as my mom breaking down in hysterical laughter right by him.

I tugged at my skirt self-consciously and tried pulling up the corset that was impairing my ability to breath. "Come on Dad. I don't think Professor McAllister will let anyone touch her anyway." Mason laughed and I blushed suddenly interested in the pulp floating around on the top of my orange juice.

"I'm sure of that." He chuckled running a hand through his shaggy hair.

"Let's go before we are late." Micah said dumping his now empty cereal bowl into the sink.

I placed my glass in the sink and grabbed my bag throwing it over my shoulder. "Um, sweetheart?" My dad called me just before I was going to step out of the door.

"Hmm." I looked back and all four of them looked like they were ready to burst with laughter.

"Forgetting something?" Micah boomed out breaking into bouts of laughter.

My book bag, my purse, my shirt, my skirt, my shoes...wait...I looked down at my bare feet. "Oops." I laughed running back to my room and finding the knee high black boots that were sure to kill me today. Another reason to strangle Mattie.

Mattie met us at the front entrance. She was dressed as a spooky witch. Hat, cat and all. "Rose look at you." Jaemi appeared wearing a blood red floor length gown and had painted on blood dripping from the corner of her lips, she even wore fangs.

I felt a hand grab at my side and I jumped twirling around. I screamed and almost fell to my butt. "I'm not that freaky looking am I?" Ian chuckled looking down at himself, he wore all black with a black cloak on with a hood pulled over his head, and blood red contact lenses.

"The eyes." I pointed a shaking finger at him. "I prefer your gray-silver ones." I leaned against his chest and he chuckled rubbing my back.

"Well but still," he held me out at arms length by my shoulders looking me up and down "You look really well...sexy...and nobody else should see." He laughed pulling me close again. "I should give

you my professor robe or something." He chuckled wrapping his cloak around me too.

"I don't think so." Mattie shrieked storming over dragging her broomstick behind her, she pulled away his cloak and nodded in satisfaction.

"Please tell me you're not going to parade around the school around in that" Ian's voice was a whine making me look up at him. And once more I screamed jumping back, forgetting about his stupid contacts.

Everyone erupted in laughter. I clutched my heart like I just suffered a major heart attack. "It took me hours to do that girl up!"

Ian arched an eyebrow, "A broom Mattie?" He started laughing shaking his head. "Shall I see you fly across the full moon later?"

She smirked showing her perfect-toothpaste-commercial-smile. "Who knows Professor..." She let out a cackle laugh and straddled her broom galloping away. She looked over her shoulder really quickly as she swooshed on her broom. "If you howl at the moon professor." She wink and cackled again.

"Um bro I'm sorry to say this," Mason nudged Micah in the shoulder "but your girl has some serious issues."

"Ah but I still love the chick." He smiled and took off into the school after her.

Ian's arm went around me and we started into the school, as soon as he opened the main entrance I wanted to crawl back out and hide outside. "What's wrong?" He laughed as I was cowering and started to shift back towards the door way.

"Did I mention I'm a wimp?" I said shakily. "I hate horror stories, horror movies, horror costumes, and most of all haunted houses." I nearly sounded hysterical at the end, clinging on to his cloak and staring in front of me.

The school's castleness made it all the more creepy. The stone walls suddenly seemed like they were closing in, they had shut off all the lights and put fire-type lanterns that gave off this very eerie glow.

The stone walls were covered in something wet and something red, black streamers and cobwebs flew down from the ceiling, and what was worse, you couldn't see more than three feet in front of you.

"I'll protect you." He chuckled pulling me close and started walking into the school of a haunted castle.

I clung to him and was so scared, that at one point I wondered if I was hurting him. There was no doubt I would leave bruises along his arm.

We turned down one of the corridors towards his class. When from what I thought was a wall, someone masked and hooded in a cloak jumped in front of us making a growling noise.

I screamed, like all the cowards do in the horror movies, and jumped like fifty feet in the air. I was never going to survive the day. "It's alright." Ian was laughing, pulling me back to his side. "Breathe Rose." He ordered as I was holding my breath.

I let it whoosh out and just as I did someone, or something, this one looked like an animal, jumped out making me scream again and I would have fallen backwards if Ian didn't catch me, I was ready to cry.

"You really don't like this stuff do you?" He voice was gentle as we walked though the hall. I was too scared to talk, luckily we turned into his classroom and he flipped on the light, I blinked several times adjusting my eyes.

I flopped down in the closest desk and put my head down. "I think I'm the first seventeen- year-old to have a heart attack." I griped keeping my head down.

I felt his hands come to my shoulders and start massaging them. "I

wish I would have known it would affect you that much, I would have fore warned you." He whispered near my ear, suddenly I felt so I calm I wanted to sleep. Did he have that impact on me or did I not just sleep well?

"Feel better?" He asked kissing my cheek and I raised my head to stare at him and almost screamed again forgetting about the contacts.

He furrowed his eyebrows. "What?" He asked and I shook my head laughing and pointing at his eyes.

"Do you want me to remove them?" He asked "I will if you want me to." He lifted his hands ready to pop out the contacts.

I smiled and shook my head. Now, what would be the point in 'Terrifying Thursday' if he couldn't be well...terrifying.

"You sure?" He asked as he kissed my forehead. People started pouring into the class and howling with laughter some of them clutching their chests. I could hear the screams, squeals, and laughter from the hallways as people popped out of the walls.

"I'm sure." I smiled standing up and tip-toeing to kiss his cheek then headed to my own desk.

I don't know exactly how I made it through the day. I was clinging onto somebody different between each class. Trevor, who looked like a zombie werewolf, howled with laughter every time I screamed and jumped at every little thing. Mattie, on the other hand seemed to quite enjoy how things randomly popped out of walls. She would literally giggle and wave at them. Jaemi didn't jump or even twitch for that matter as she glided along the hallway with Mason's hand in hers.

I was nearing a hysterical break down as the day ended. I was so rumbled that as I was walking out the front entrance Dracula rubbed up against my leg and I nearly kicked the poor thing across campus. Luckily, I realized before my foot launched that it was just,

in fact, the headmaster's cat.

The Wayland students seemed amused at our reactions. Reeve even offered to walk me down the hallway at one point, which I bluntly refused. He wasn't dressed up, in fact none of the Wayland students were. They were all in their traditional green and gold uniforms.

"We finally find out everything tomorrow." Micah exclaimed in my room later that night. All of us back in our own clothes and comfortable .

"Did Mattie show you what we had to wear?" Mason asked and I nodded. The three of us were in complete white attire. Micah and Mason had to wear white slacks and a white button up with a white tie and I had a long white flowing gown.

"What do you suppose is going to happen?" I asked climbing into my bed as my brothers lounged on my couch flipping through the channels.

"No clue." Mason said leaning his head back so he could see me. "But I have a feeling it has nothing to do with jack-o-lanterns and trick-or-treating."

"Dido." Micah mumbled half asleep on the couch with the afghan pulled to his chin.

"Why do we have to wear white?" I ask burrowing under my own covers.

"Again, no clue." Mason said kicking up his legs on the couch. "Jaemi wouldn't tell me."

"They never seem to want to tell us." I said closing my eyes.

*"Be safe." His voice whispered through my ears. I finally was able to look up and Ian was staring down at me. His silver-gray eyes shining, but worry was etched into them.*

*"I am." I said entwining my hand with his. He gave me a slight squeeze to my fingers.*

*"I love you." He said softly. "Please know that." It was the first time he had said the words. I constantly felt how he felt for me, but he never said the words.*

*"I love you too." I whispered back, the words flowing easily off my tongue. His head suddenly turned and from the brightness there came dark.*

*"Be safe." He repeated and then he was gone, leaving me in nothing but the oncoming darkness.*

*"Ian!" I screamed after him, but oddly enough all I heard was the howling of a dog.*

## Chapter 11: Love & Trust

~Rose's POV~

Someone was shaking me. "Go away." I grumbled and turned in bed throwing my comforter over my head.

"Get up." His deep voice had a hint of laughter in it and I popped up. I still had the ringing of the howling dog in my ears as I blinked a couple of times letting the face before me come into better focus.

"Ian?" I asked feeling around for my light switch and he flipped it on. I gasped at his appearance. He wasn't wearing a shirt, only a pair of silver cloth pants and bare feet. He had a paw print on the right corner of his chest. He was cut! And not in a muscle-bound meat head kind of way, but with a lean athletic build and a set of abs that would make an actual six pack jealous.

"You want to catch flies?" He chuckled and helped me out of bed. "Your clothes are in your restroom. Hurry up and go change." He basically had to drag me out of bed because I was still in awe over his appearance.

I stumbled to my bathroom and turned on the hot water letting the steam feel the bathroom, while lathering my skin with a bar of soap that was heavily scented of vanilla. By the time I stepped out, the mirror above my marble basin sink had gotten all foggy. Once dried, I slipped on the floor length gown in light ivory fabric with a straight neckline, ruched bodice, and tied empire waist. I let my ringlets hang loose to my hips and slipped on the nice, small ivory heels Mattie left out for me.

I stepped out of the bathroom and Ian was sitting on the edge of

my bed, which he made. "You look beautiful." He smiled kissing my forehead. My heart pounded a little in my chest, he called me *beautiful*. I suddenly felt like I was floating. He gripped my hand and led me upstairs.

Mattie and Micah were sitting on the couch. I gaped at Mattie, she was in a long, flowing green robe with oversized bell sleeves. A green swirl tattoo by her right eye went around her ear. "Catching flies again?" Ian laughed into my ear. Mattie giggled as she fluffed up her red hair.

My mom handed me some pop tarts and winked as my dad leaned against the wall sipping coffee. Mason finally came down stairs his tie a little crooked and his hair askew. He was not a morning person. Jaemi was not far behind him and once more my mouth fell open. She was in a tight blood red dress with a high scoop neckline, beaded shoulder straps, and an open back. A dark red drop tattoo was formed under and behind her right ear.

"Everyone ready?" Ian asked and we all nodded. I looked over at my brothers who shrugged having the same questions as I did.

My mom came up to hug me, "Please don't be mad us after you find out." She whispered in my ear. "I love you, honey."

"Love you too, mom." I thought her reaction was a little much but I didn't say anything.

My dad wrapped his arms around me. "I love you sweetheart." He kissed my forehead and looked like he wanted to cry. "Take care of her tonight." He looked up at Ian.

"I will." He shook my dad's hand and led me out to his Range Rover.

I didn't even bother asking all the questions that were racing through my head. He just drummed his fingers to the music against his steering wheel looking extremely relaxed. I simply wondered if he was going to put a shirt on. If he didn't all the girls would be

ogling him.

As we pulled in the gate of our school I plastered my face to his window. They had a bonfire going in the courtyard and all the students were dancing. "Wow." I said looking back at Ian who put his car in park.

"Amazing isn't it?" He smiled helping me out, I looked at his bare feet hitting the gravel "It doesn't hurt." He squeezed my hand and we headed to the bonfire.

Everyone was dressed somewhat similarly, even the Wayland students. Some were in just silver cloth pants, others in green robes, others in blood red attire. All of them had the similar tattoos on their faces. "Is this a cult or something?" I asked and Ian threw his head back and laughed.

"No, we're far from it." He smiled and I noticed the soldier guys were back and standing along the perimeter of the school.

We made it to the bonfire and as I passed with Ian students placed their fists over their heart and bowed and Ian did it back. "What..." I asked.

"Respect." He laughed answering my hanging word. "This bonfire is tradition we do it every Halloween. To us, this is the day we can be ourselves." He smiled rubbing my back as the sun began to rise.

He wrapped his arms around my waist and gently lowered his mouth to mine, electricity and heat flowing threw my body. I tangled my fingers in his hair, my heart was ready to burst out of my chest. "I love you." He whispered over my mouth. I shuttered from how different the words soared through me in real life. His lips added more passion over mine as he gently and this time publicly kissed me.

"I love you." I smiled under his lips. The words flew easily and confidently from my mouth. Somehow though, 'I love you' didn't even come close to what I was feeling for this man, it was deeper,

way deeper, like I was somehow eternally connected to him.

The morning breeze whipped around us as we slow danced near the bonfire, our lips finding each other often. It was a weird feeling, knowing everyone could see me kissing a professor, but it didn't matter to me. All that mattered was him, him and the morning and the dancing. Just me and him.

The bell ringing brought me back to the reality, how did it go from five to eight so quickly? "Lets get to class." He smiled and led me to his classroom.

Trevor was in the silver sweats with the paw print and Reeve sat there smirking at me with black slacks and a blood red shirt on.

"Don't you look wonderful." Reeve had the audacity to say. From the corner of my eye I saw the glare Ian sent him.

I sat through my classes once more in a daze, everything felt so...surreal. The halls today were decorated in odd symbols and tattoos like the ones everyone was wearing today. The colors fell in fabric banners from the roof, green, red, silver, and white. I noticed students going to certain colors and taking a marker and writing in their name.

Mattie made Micah, Mason, and I sign the white one. I thought it was weird how we were the only three to do so on the white.

As the final bell rang I followed the crowd out into the hallway. Oddly, they all disappeared extremely quickly, leaving me alone in a deserted hallway. I made my way to Ian's classroom only to find it closed and locked up.

"Where is everyone?" Mason and Micah appeared behind me. "This is of sort of creepy." We walked along the deserted hallway. The dance was supposed to be in the ballroom but I had no idea where it was in the large school.

"Rose." Ian appeared around the corner. "Come with me." He

grabbed my hand and led me away from my brothers. I looked back in time to see Jaemi and Mattie leading my brothers away as well.

Ian led me into a deserted classroom somewhere in the depths of the school; a part I never even knew existed. I could feel the vibrations of the walls as the dance had started.

He sat me down on a black couch and flopped down next to me. "Now we wait." He smiled and I looked at him confused, that's all I seem to be.

"You'll understand everything shortly." He grinned running a hand through my hair. As he did so my body erupted with tiny sparks and I shivered.

He leaned in, I could feel his warm breath on my cheek and smell his minty toothpaste. I wanted to grab his shoulders and pull him down to my lips. His hand came to run down my cheek and I saw the corner of his mouth lift up in a smile, his lone dimple showing.

Wordlessly his lips met mine. It amazed me at how right it felt. How every single kiss felt like a new one, like I've never been kissed before. How each time his lips made contact with mine electricity soared through my body wanting him even closer. He pulled me on his lap deepening the kiss. I felt so secure in his arms, so...right. I wanted to mesh into him, I wanted to get closer to him as I gripped his muscular arms.

"Rose." He said a little breathless as I kissed him. "Do you trust me?" He pulled back a little. So his forehead was leaning against mine.

Did I trust him? If he told me to jump off a building I would. "Yes." I said and he pulled black fabric from his pocket and put it over my eyes. "What? Why?" I asked as my world went into darkness.

"Later." His voice said and I felt his hand run down my cheek. "But do you trust me?" He asked again.

"With my life." I answered and I felt his lips gently brush mine.

"Then be safe my love." He whispered then everything fell silent. I groped around me and I only felt air. Panic swept through me as visions of my dream flashed in front of my eyes.

"Ian?" I was close to crying. "Ian!" I brought my hands to the blindfold but unfamiliar hands stopped me.

"Don't." Professor Britton's soft voice stopped me gently.

"Professor Britton?" I asked.

"Shh, Rose." Her voice was gentle but I was scared. This is how horror movies happen, in a deserted place, nobody around, the victim helpless. I started shaking uncontrollably itching to tear off the stupid blind fold.

"You have to trust me okay?" She asked pulling me up and I nodded automatically. She squeezed my hand. "It's alright Rose, calm down." She said softly, I tried but the only person who could tell me that was Ian and I had no idea where he was.

She led me down hall after hall and finally stopped. I could hear faint murmurs but other than that everything was quiet.

I felt someone grip my hand, Mason. Then my other hand, Micah. "Are you blindfolded?" Mason asked his voice shaking.

"Yes." My voice cracked and Micah squeezed my hand, then we just stood there for what seemed like forever. Micah and Mason's hands felt strong in mine, they weren't shaking like I felt I was. I felt like I was convulsing or something.

"Rose, Micah, Mason." We turned our head to the sound of the headmaster's voice. "I ask that you three try and stay as calm and open minded as possible when we remove your blindfold." It was the horror movie again, they remove our blindfold we see a whole bunch of dead bodies in front of us.

I felt someone move behind me as my blindfold was taken off. We stood in a large ballroom. The paper lanterns hung from the ceilings and the punch table was deserted.

The students stood in front of us. No one speaking. All of them just staring. "On this day," The headmaster began. "Your seventeenth Halloween, we welcome you into our world."

I glanced around completely confused. Maybe it was a cult. Then, I heard the distinct howling of dogs. I shivered inching closer to Mason whose arm went protectively around me.

I heard heavy panting and the students started to move aside letting a large group of dogs come into view. "I think they're wolves." Micah whispered backing up a step. All the wolves stood in front of us. They were beautiful in a scary sort of way. Their shiny fur under the faint light.

The students in red gathered in one group and then...they're eyes started to glow. I cowered back into Mason whose eyes were fixated on Jaemi in front of the group. The green group had their hands raised just a little causing little green sparks to erupt from their fingertips. "Shit." Micah cursed seeing Mattie leading the pack. I looked around for all the guys who were in the silver sweats, for Ian.

"I think we landed in the Twilight Zone or something." Mason said still backing us up inch by an inch. Suddenly, the people we had become so close with in the matter of weeks became strangers.

My eyes darted around the ballroom. I wanted, no needed Ian. He had to be the one to tell me everything was alright. That we were safe. That in fact they weren't going to eat us or burn us to sacrifice to some God.

I was too scared to even move, suddenly pain shot up my spine and I fell to my knees trying to hold in my bubbling scream. Mason and Micah both dropped near me one of them cradling my head in his arms. "Sis, what is it?" He asked running his hands through my hair. I felt sweat edge along my forehead and I clenched my teeth.

The pain was unbearable, I wanted to die, just end it. I clutched at Mason who looked up at one of the professors. "Do something!" He yelled. One of the wolves was pacing in front of me, great he was waiting for me to die so he could eat me. But the wolf whimpered lowering his snout, like he was in pain.

The headmaster simply shook his head and smiled. *Smiled*. I clutched my sides. "Ian." I murmured. I wanted him, wanted him near me, but where was he? The wolf sprang up and came closer to me very slowly looking at Micah and Mason like he was waiting for their permission.

He lowered his snout on my stomach. Those silver-gray eyes, sent a familiar shock through my body. "Ian" I whimpered bringing my hands to his ears. He head bopped. Was it a nod?

"What the fuck is happening?" Mason roared swiping my sweaty forehead. His eyes danced with fury as he carefully watch the wolf nuzzle my cheek.

"It will be over soon." Professor Britton kneeled down in front of us just as Mason collapsed backwards bringing his hands to his head screaming, then Micah.

They were hurting too, what was happening to us? Was it the school? We were normal before..before we moved to Flint. Now, we were far from normal, no where near normal. I was falling head over heels for a professor, people in high school were more in love then couples that have been married for years, the green sparks, the glowing eyes, the wolves, the list goes on and on.

I wanted to disappear, die. Ian, or wolf Ian, I was still confused on that part stood up and started pacing at my body. Then as quick as it came it left. I pushed myself up and looked around, spotting Mattie helping Micah up and Jaemi with Mason.

Everyone started cheering and whistling, as if something big just happened, many people punching their fist in the air and screaming our names. I looked over at Mason and Micah who had the same

confused expression on their face as I did.

I felt a nudge to my shoulder and looked down at the wolf with eyes so similar to Ian. "Follow him Rose." Professor Britton smiled.

"Don't worry he won't hurt you." She said winking at the wolf.

Surprisingly, I followed the wolf.

## Chapter 12: Surely I'm Dreaming

~Rose's POV~

It was a short winding way down to another deserted room. A couch was against one wall and desks piled next to another. I looked at the sable wolf pacing in front of the couch and silently sat down watching the silver-gray of the wolf's eyes follow me.

I should be scared. I should be screaming, hyperventilating, and trying to run from the room. But I wasn't. Somehow, I knew that this wolf wouldn't hurt me. He stopped pacing his tail coming to a swishing stop and he just stared at me with the large eyes, his ears pointed up as if alert.

I felt a tad lightheaded as I didn't break contact with him. It was a weird buzzing in my head as he stared straight at me. I fidgeted in my seat and glanced around the dimly lit room. A duffel bag was thrown against the far wall and two bottles of water sat on a desk. I took a deep breath and looked back at the wolf.

But I was no longer looking at the wolf, Ian was standing before me. His silver cloth pants a little rumbled. "Don't be scared." He approached me slowly.

I watched how his lean body took gentle steps toward me, his bare feet making no noise against the floor. He sat across from me on the couch, leaning against the far arm rest. He rested his hands in front of him. "Rose." He said slowly. I took a deep breath.

I was in the midst of dealing with the whole wolf-turned-Ian-thing. I know I wasn't dreaming, but everything in my logical brain was screaming it. That I would wake up any minute and find myself in

my bed back in San Francisco, going to my same old boring high school.

But I had to deal with the fact that I was sitting in front of my chosen mate, who also happens to be my professor, who also plays wolf on the side. I glanced at his sable hair and marveled at how just minutes ago it was a shiny brown. I glanced at his hands, which moments earlier were padded paws.

He just sat across from me, waiting for me. His eyes were soft around the edges as I slowly took him in, his hands relaxed, his shoulders sagged just a tad. "Are you alright?" He spoke as if he was speaking to an injured child. Careful, alert, and calm.

I nodded my head. My voice seemed to be caught somewhere between my throat and my mouth. I wanted to speak. I wanted to tell him I was alright. He looked worried and concerned. "Are you allowed to explain now?" I was finally able to get my voice to work. Although, it did shake to my embarrassment.

I saw how his tense shoulders relaxed and how he let a large breath out. "Now I can." He smiled running a hand through his hair. "I'll start from the beginning." He scooted closer to me, slowly, as if waiting for my permission. I outstretched my arm and his fingers entwined with mine.

"Obviously, we aren't humans," he chuckled "but don't mistake us for the mythical creatures you read in books or see in movies." He quickly pointed out. "There are four kinds of other species besides humans: Magii, better known as a warlock or witch, Vampire, Werewolf, and Proteggi."

He peeked over at me through his lashes. This is something that only happened in movies or in books. Never in real life. But here I was, listening to my mate talk about vampires and werewolves and even witches. I blinked several times, I was tempted to pinch myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

"The Magii, are the ones you see in green. Vampires are in red,

Werewolves the sweats, also they are only male. And Proteggi are the rarest, you and your brothers are Proteggi. Translated, it means Protectors." He explained. "And for the first time in a long time new ones have come along." He touched my nose and smiled, his dimple showing in his left cheek.

I peered at the paw print on his chest then up at his silver eyes. He was still the same Ian that I knew, that I loved. The same caring man who held my hand, he just changed every now and then to a vicious animal.

"Now I'm going to jump a little, so you can understand fully what a Proteggi is." He pulled me closer to him. My back leaning against his hard chest. I could feel his breath hitting the top of my head and his fingers running the length of my upper arms.

"Remember how you always asked about Mates?" He continued without waiting for an answer. "Well, to each of our species we are all given a mate, someone who directly connects with our soul. Our one true love." He explained starting to play with my hair.

Now, we were leaving the whole movie-book-type-deal and going into fairy tales. With the prince charming, the beautiful princess, and everlasting love. Again, I was determined that I had to be dreaming.

"The reason we have this and not an average human, is because humans don't connect with their soul's the same way we do. Humans tend to jump at any powerful emotion and often mistake strong liking for love. More often then not, they 'fall in love' with the wrong person." He words had me thinking back to high school. Back to Layton, who I was so sure he was my first love. But was he really?

What I feel for Ian is so much deeper then the words 'I love you'. It's a meaning that can't even be put into words. It's like I need him with me, he has to be with me. My soul is interlaced with his. That is true love. It's more then the pounding heart, the twisted knotted stomach, the fireworks. It goes beyond that. It was like it just clicked in my head.

"Once your mate is found, you are physically and spiritually connected to him or her for the rest of eternity. You separate from your mate you feel pain, actual physical pain." He looked down at me, well that explained a lot. "You can't be separated from your mate for long without actually getting sick. The reason is that our souls are so connected that they need the other to survive.

"We belong to each other, we literally are each others 'other half'. It's something humans rarely feel in their entire lifetime, true and honest love." I looked up at him wide eyed. All this was churning in the middle of my mind. Trying to circulate and tell my logical sense that this was all really happening.

"Now, let's say that a human did manage to find their mate. And they were actual mates, a human chance of finding that one person is literally well over one in a million chances. But if two people happen to be in the right place at the right time..." His far-a-way glance came to focus in on me. I know my face showed a mixture of shock, confusion, and mild understanding.

He continued keeping the slow pace and twirling a lock of my hair in his finger. "When the human finds a mate, they get together and have a kid, or lets just say triplets, they give birth to extraordinary kids." I furrowed my eyebrows, "You are the Proteggi, you are born from humans, but humans who were able to break into our world by finding their one true mate."

He stopped talking, letting me soak in the information. So, my parents were true mates, that explained why they were always with each other, never separated for long. Why after years of marriage and three kids they were still very deeply in love. I bit my lip and craned my neck to look back at Ian who was staring at an opposite wall looking deep in thought.

"So what exactly can a Proteggi do?" I asked wondering if I had some amazing super power, like x-ray vision, super strength, the ability to fly.

"Well..." Ian laughed scratching the back of his head. "Nothing that

you can tell right away." He smirked kissing the top of my head and then continued twirling a lock of my hair.

I frowned. His answer made no sense in my head. Proteggi's were rare but yet they held no awesome power. "No cool powers? You get to turn into a ball of fur and I don't get anything?" I crossed my arms and he laughed.

"Ball of fur?" He raised one of his eyebrows and gave me a crooked smile.

"A very cute ball of fur." I confirmed smiling.

"Just making sure." He ran his hand down my side sending a shiver down my spine. "A Proteggi, is a rare species and one that is the most commonly hunted."

"Hunted?" I interrupted. I was just getting used to the fact of true love, witches, vampires, and werewolves, and now he had to throw in hunters.

"Yes, there are hunters." He laughed. "Let me finish and then I'll explain that."

"Proteggi don't have any abilities like the rest of us do, because they're power lies dormant, inside of them." He pointed to my chest. "That pain you felt was your power, you changed permanently to a Proteggi on the seventeenth Halloween of your life."

"Your power can not be tapped into unless someone is injured beyond the healing powers of a Magii." He looked at me seeing if I understood, which I didn't. "You can heal or even bring back the dead, but it will cost you your strength and most of the time your life, that is why you're a protector, you save our species."

I chewed on my bottom lip, so I could save people, but will end up dead. Well, I would do it for Ian, Mason, and Micah no doubt about it. "So back to the hunters." I said and he frowned.

"Proteggi are the most hunted, since they are so rare and such a

powerful tool." He squeezed my shoulder. "But that's why we have the Cavaliere here."

"Cavaliere?" I asked.

"It's our military." He smiled. "Which is why I'm so highly qualified, I'm their general." He smirked and I gawked at him. "I don't teach P.E, I teach advanced Cavaliere training and defense. Most people in our world want to get into the Cavaliere, so my class is usually the first they try and get into."

I sat quietly taking in the information, the Cavaliere was their military, and my mate, *my mate*, was their general. I smiled proudly.

"You said not to compare you to books and myths and stuff but can I ask questions?" I asked. Many thoughts and questions swimming around through my head.

His hand went down my back and softly massaged, sending little fireworks popping up and down my spine. "Ask away." He said near my ear making me shiver.

"Aren't werewolves and vampires supposed to be mortal enemies?"

"No." He laughed. "In truth we do great together in battle, they are our right hand man or women." He added on.

"Vampires drink blood?"

"Yes. But only sometimes, its makes them more powerful." He paused and smiled, guessing my next set of questions. "But, they do eat human food, sleep in a normal bed at night, eat garlic in their food, and enjoy the sunshine as much as we do."

I leaned back further into him. "So I get no awesome flying abilities or anything?" I just had to make sure.

He laughed kissing my forehead. "Unfortunately, no."

"Mmm." I closed my eyes suddenly feeling really tired. Everything

seemed to weigh down on me. Vampires, Werewolves, Magii. It was all so much. I was still expecting myself to wake up any minute.

"Sleep my love." He leaned my head down on his lap and ran his hand through my hair. The feel of his fingers running the length of my scalp made me feel suddenly so calm, so relaxed.

I opened one of my eyes. "How do you do that?" I murmured.

"Do what?" His fingers froze near the base of my neck, making my little hairs stand up.

"Always make me feel so calm all the time." I closed my eyes just as he smiled.

"I didn't tell you?" He deeply chuckled. "All wolves are empaths."

I snorted. So he got to transform and mess with people's feelings. Not fair.

## Chapter 13: We're Connected

~Rose's POV~

*A sable wolf paced in front of me, his silver-gray eyes searching ahead of him. His ears flattened to his head and his tail swooshing silently behind him. I put my hand on his silky fur letting the soft texture spread through my fingers.*

*"Please don't Ian." I pleaded with the wolf. His large head turned to stare at me and he lowered his snout then raised it. He had to. And I knew it. He softly padded off leaving me alone in a small room.*

*I looked after him and felt my heart clench. Would he be back?*

I startled awake. It took me a few minutes to gather my surroundings. I was in the classroom lying on the couch. Ian's jacket was thrown over me and the room was dimly lit and a little chilly.

"General McAllister, its all clear." I turned my head to the unfamiliar voice and saw a Cavilere warrior standing with Ian. The warrior was tall and lean and quite an intimidating figure.

"Thank you Kale." Ian nodded and the warrior placed his fist over his heart and bowed then swiftly left.

It was weird finally seeing the actuality behind all the secrets that this school was holding for weeks from us. Ian turned and his eyes locked with mine a wide smile erupting on his face. "Sleep well?" He asked sitting down beside me as I pushed myself up.

I nodded pulling his jacket tighter around myself. "What time is it?"

"A little after ten." His arm went around my waist and pulled me closer to him. I immediately felt the heat of his body bring me comfort as I let the jacket slip off my shoulders.

I tilted my head back looking at his now almost silver eyes. He gave me a small smile and leaned his head forward, the moment his warm, soft lips hit mine I felt shivers race throughout my body.

His hands fell to my lower back and I brought mine to his bare chest running my fingers over the outline of his muscles. His skin was soft under my fingertips and I felt him tense as I ran them gently over his front. His hands froze on my back and his kiss became more passionate.

"I love you." I said into his mouth. But oh, how I wish I could explain this feeling better. This utterly blissful feeling towards him. It was more than love and lust and passion. It was something more, something I know I will never be able to place my finger on.

"I love you too." His lips left mine and kissed my cheek, my ear, my forehead and then returned to my lips. I wanted to melt into him, wanted to always be wrapped in his arms.

Banging on the door made both of jump in surprise. The banging continued and Ian groaned untangling himself from me. "It's open." He snapped.

"Our eyes are closed so get decent." Micah had his eyes covered as he entered the room and knocked into a desk. Mason behind him also had his hand over his eyes and nearly ran head first into a wall.

"We're decent. Now open your eyes before you kill yourself." Ian chuckled and Mason and Micah uncovered their eyes. Both sets of blue-violet eyes went between Ian and I.

They both smiled at me then grabbed my wrists and pulled me up, "Fellow Proteggi." Mason squeezed me. "Now that I know what this school is I won't call the FBI or CIA." He laughed.

Ian arched his eyebrows. "Even if you did, they would just laugh. They already know about us." He grinned as Mason and Micah gawked. "Well, how else are we supposed to explain ourselves when young witches decide they want a purple elephant instead of a dog." He laughed at himself as we continued to stare at him.

"I didn't want a purple elephant." Mattie walked in. "I turned my cat into a dragon instead. My mom had fun with that one." She slipped under Micah's arm.

"See what I mean." Ian pointed at Mattie. "Dragons in the sky are bound to cause attention. And it's the human's government that will clear it up for us."

Jaemi entwined her fingers with Mason's and smiled at me. Her front teeth lowered and pointed. "Eh, I'm sorry Jaemi but I can't imagine you as Dracula."

"Be very afraid." She laughed in a fake Romanian accent.

Ian came to stand near me and flopped his arm around my shoulders. "Now you know the truth and poor Mattie won't have to try so hard anymore to be human."

"The light fixture was so not my fault." She pouted crossing her arms. "You knew better then make me angry Professor."

"Yes, I know that quite well. At least it wasn't a window this time." He chuckled.

"So that light blowing out that first day of school..." I asked.

"My handy-work." Mattie laughed.

I laughed and shook my head. Everything was falling into place. The light blowing up, the mate deal, the weird performance by the Wayland students. "The week before you three came to school, they held this big assembly telling us how we had to keep the secret for two weeks. No power in the halls or transformed wolves running everywhere." Jaemi laughed, "I think Trevor exploded right there, cause he has trouble keeping in human form."

"That boy does." Ian laughed. "When he was just a pup, his mom always called me in hysterics because she couldn't get him to change back."

"Yeah." Trevor walked in. "Thanks for that bit of embarrassing moment, Professor." He ran a hand through his shaggy caramel

hair. "I just prefer the adrenaline of being of a wolf rather than the slow human form."

Brittney stood behind him tall and beautiful like always but a smile played on her face. "Too bad I refused to let you go to the end of year ball last year as a wolf." She shrugged. "I would not let you pass up a tux for a tail."

He pulled her near him and as she smiled, I saw her elongated fangs. "I prefer the tail but I'd do anything for you babe." He kissed the side of her head.

She rolled her eyes and glanced at me. I now understood why she kept her distance. The little sniffing motion when we first met. "I'm sorry." She said as if reading my mind. "But Proteggi blood is really..." She bit her lip.

"Let's just say, you three smell like hot fudge brownies to us." Jaemi finished laughing and kissing Mason.

"What's Justice?" I asked realizing I hadn't seen him at all today.

"Magii" Mattie smiled. "That's why we were all so surprised to find out his mate was Professor Britton. It's rare the same two species end up together."

"Why?" Micah asked leaning his head a little.

"Usually their off spring are Mezzos." Ian said matter-of-fact. "Part of our world, but are humans."

"So what's the big deal with that?" Mason asked just as Professor Britton and Justice stepped in hand in hand.

"Usually our souls connect with the person best suited for us as well as continuing our world. Our population isn't that big as it is." Professor Britton put in.

"So our souls play breeder?" I asked and everyone laughed.

"No." Ian said. "It's just a side perk but usually it works out as such. Except in Justice and Danica's case."

I had a feeling that I still had a lot more to learn about 'their world'. I looked at the group in front of me. It was odd the feeling I had for this people. In the short time I have known them, they had become something more than friends. It took the whole second-family to a whole new level.

I looked at Jaemi and pointed to her fangs. "When you bite someone is it immediate death?" I don't know exactly where the question came from but for some reason I just had to ask.

"No, not death." Jaemi stopped then looked deep in thought. "Only if the biter wishes it. But for the most part our venom causes intense pain and the feeling of being frozen. It won't change a human to a vampire though, it's impossible. You have to be born a vampire." She answered my next question without me even having to ask.

"Ouch." Mason laughed "I'll make sure and stay away from those teeth." He rubbed his neck and we all laughed.

I felt a sudden breeze by my cheek and turned to see Trevor now standing on all fours in wolf form. His tongue lolled out of his mouth. Brittney's hand came between his ears and scratched.

I heard the deep chuckle of Ian in my ear. Trevor looked over at him and lowered himself on his front two paws and his butt and tail in the air. He bared his teeth and growled at Ian.

Ian arched his eyebrows and shook his head at Trevor. Trevor only lowered himself more and growled deeper. His tail wagging vigorously in the air. He reminded me of an overgrown puppy waiting for a tennis ball.

"Aww, come on Professor." Mattie whined. "Look at how cute he looks." She pointed at Trevor. He whirled his head to glance at her and he barked. "Yes, I said cute. You remind me a brown lab."

"Show him what you got General." Justice laughed throwing his arm around Professor Britton.

Ian cocked his eyebrows. "I'll kill the boy if I did that." He chuckled and Trevor pounced up throwing his large paws on Ian's chest

making him fly backwards. I caught my breath thinking he was hurt but in mid air he changed and was now a beautiful-oh-my-god-can't-take-my-eyes-off-of-you wolf.

He fell expertly to the pads of his paws and growled at Trevor and they started circling each other. "Is a student going up against General McAllister?" A warrior walked in and we all nodded. "Good luck to him." He laughed.

I looked up at the warrior. He had curly jet black hair worn short and out of his face and large dark sapphire eyes. He didn't seem quite as frightening as the other warriors. He was still massive but his face seemed friendly. "Why does Ian have that thingy on his forehead?" I asked the warrior.

"Because he is a Cavilere. He wears the mark of the warriors." He pulled up his uniform sleeve and on his shoulder was a tattoo of a triangle figure close to the one on Ian's forehead. "It sets them apart. Let's everyone know who they are."

"Oh." I said watching the two wolves circle each other.

I felt proud, no scratch that, beyond proud, I was in love not only with a highly qualified professor, a werewolf, he was also a General that many people respected and held high. I couldn't even find a word for what I felt for him. "You his mate?" The warrior looked down at me, his brown eyes large.

"I am." I answered proudly. I watched the wolves lunge at each other, one flew across the room and landed on his back. I looked at the sprawled wolf and laughed when it was Trevor, not even a minute in the battle and he was already on his back.

Trevor popped back up and took another lunge at Ian who merely stepped out of the way, he turned and his paw pushed at Trevor's turned back and he flew across the room. "I'm Kale Trayhern. Captain of the Cavilere unit posted here." He held out his hand to me. "It's an honor to meet you Proteggi."

I blushed taking his hand. "Rose." I said and he smiled and nodded turning back to the battle where once more Trevor was on his back.

Ian transformed back laughing and shaking his head "Never turn your back Trevor. Haven't I taught you anything?"

Trevor transformed back a scratch across his chest and breathing hard "Not fair." He grumbled straightening out his sweats.

Ian wrapped his arm around me, he wasn't even breathing hard "You still got a lot to learn pup." He laughed.

"I'm not that much younger than you." Trevor snorted walking over to Brittney. Ian cocked his eyebrow.

"A hundred and eighty something years, no big deal." Trevor sulked and I snapped my head up to Ian who was staring at me.

"I didn't explain that to you, did I?" He furrowed his eyebrows and I shook my head.

"Well we are immortal." He smiled looking down at me. "Well, sort of, we die but our life spans are longer then humans."

"Like how much?" I asked.

"I'm two hundred." He smiled and my mouth dropped, "Twenty in human years." He added quickly "We age every ten years once we hit eighteen."

"Umm," I laughed poking his chest. "You're old."

He laughed flinging his arm around me. "Ask Headmaster Seeley how old he is. I'm really young compared to him."

"So whose going to the after party?" Justice rubbed his hands together. His dark eyes sparking as green sparks came from the tips of his fingers. I stared at his hands in awe and he wiggled his sparking fingers at me.

"What do you say?" Ian squeezed my shoulder, drawing my attention away from Justice's sparkling fingers.

I looked down at my long white gown and frowned. "Can I change?" I asked and a bag floated over to me.

"I grabbed some clothes from your closet." Mattie smiled flicking her hand so my bag fell at my feet.

"I'm scared to see what you packed for me." I laughed as Ian shooed everyone out of the room so I could change.

I dug in my bag and groaned. What was with that girl and skirts? "It's cute." Ian kissed my cheek and headed out a door on the other side of the room.

I quickly changed into the sequined jean skirt and a white racerback tee a large hot pink, sequined lip design across the front. When Ian walked back in, now in jeans and a gray v-neck t-shirt. He was hot, no doubt about it, he was really hot.

"What?" He laughed catching me staring at him, most likely catching flies again.

I smirked throwing my arms around his neck and tip-toeing. "Nothing," I smiled placing my lips on his. His hands came to my lower back as he deepened the kiss his tongue entering my mouth. I never wanted it to end.

"Professor...gross." We jumped apart looking as our gang barged back in the room.

"What?" he chuckled "I'm not allowed to kiss?"

"Once more, stick to teaching." Mattie laughed shaking her head. "Make out, out of school grounds."

We all headed out of the school, some students were still hanging around the now dull bonfire waiting for rides, or figuring out what to do next. Now I saw the difference in the students, they didn't have to hide anymore.

Green sparks danced from Magii's fingertips, wolves were running around the courtyard, vamps showing their fangs. "Awesome" I breathed out and heard Ian chuckle.

"You riding with the Prof?" Mason yelled from our dad's black Silverado.

"Yup." I smiled as he led me to his Range Rover. He smoothly pulled out and got behind the Silverado and we started following

them to wherever they were going. I was too focused on Ian's hand that was resting gently on my thigh.

I placed my hand over it entwining my fingers with his when I heard screeching tires. "Shit." Ian cursed slamming on his breaks. I snapped my head up and saw a large semi running a red light and straight in its path was Mason and Micah.

My breath caught in my throat as Ian swerved the car sending it into a spin. I was jolted forward as we hit something and came to a stop. "Rose!" Ian's voice cried. "Are you okay?"

"Yes, you?" I asked feeling for the door handle.

"I'm okay." That's all I needed to hear as I jumped out of the car and saw the totaled Silverado. Tears were already moistening my eyes. Mason and Micah. I pumped my legs faster, not caring if I was running into the middle of the road.

Hard arms went around my waist and pulled me to a stop just short of the totaled mess. "No." Ian said but I shoved out of his hands and raced forward. I saw the black Silverado door slam open and Mattie and Jaemi emerged not a scratch on them.

Mason and Micah came out next and I breathed again. I ran into their arms. "We're okay. No thanks to Mattie and whatever she did. " Mason wrapped his arms around me. "But I have a feeling dad won't be too happy."

I felt Micah rub my back as I clutched onto them. I then turned to Mattie who was rocking on her heels looking at the large semi. I threw my arms around her. "Thanks." I said and she laughed hugging me.

"It's who I am." Mattie grinned. "Glad you know now because that would have been really hard to explain."

Ian jogged up to us. "What happened?" He asked looking at the semi truck and the driver getting out yelling all sorts of curse words.

"That asshole ran a red light." Micah said wrapping his arm around Mattie.

"What did you call me you stinkin' teenager?!" The driver was instantly in Micah's face "You know how much this will cost me?!"

"You're the one who ran a red light!" Mason was now shouting and the driver did a double take between Mason and Micah.

"The light was not red!" He seethed, his gut hanging over his jeans and his white shirt stained with God knows what.

"Maybe you should get your eyes checked." Jaemi's voice dripped in ice and I cringed. She could be scary.

The driver looked at Ian and his arm went protectively around me.

"What? Are you raping the little girl?!" He was now in Ian's face and I saw his fist clench and he took a deep breath.

"I'm not little!" I stomped my foot. Oh well, that just helped the situation a lot.

The driver crouched down to my level. "You're a pretty little thing. I wouldn't mind doing you either." The moment it took me to blink, Ian had the driver in the air his hand clenched around the collar of the nasty stained shirt, his feet dangling over the street.

I stared wide eyed, so he had super strength. "How dare you talk to her like that?" There was that creepy voice again. The driver's face went white looking at the fury on Ian's face.

The sirens wailed from somewhere and Ian let the driver fall to the ground like a rag doll as the cops came up and started asking questions.

By the time that was finished we all just sat on the curb as the tow truck pulled away the Silverado. The Range Rover was fine. Just a dent in the passenger door but now Ian was looking under the hood to make sure. "Now would be the time to say someone is bleeding. I can smell it." Jaemi sniffed and closed her eyes.

We all looked down at ourselves. That's when I felt the dull throb in the back of my head. I brought my hand to my head and brought it forward it was covered in red. "Oh shit Rose." Mason stood up and pulled off his t shirt and slammed it against my head.

I saw Ian furrow his eyebrows from where he was at and brought his hand to the back of his head then his eyes snapped to me and they went wide. He ran over, "What is it?" His hands went immediately to pull away the t-shirt.

"I'm fine." I said, seriously I didn't even notice it till Jaemi said something. "You felt it?" I asked seeing how he put his hand to the back of his head.

"I'm your mate." He smiled, "Remember, we're connected." He kissed my forehead. "It doesn't look deep but maybe we should get you checked out, or at least take you to Danica."

I let him help me up and looked back at the semi driver who was being cuffed by the officers; turns out he was drunk, go figure. "Man, I can't wait til my healing class next semester." Mattie pouted looking at my gash. "I could have healed that easily."

We all piled in the Range Rover and headed to my house. "Danica is going to meet us there." Ian said looking over at my head worriedly.

"I'm fine." I repeated, just a dull headache.

We opened the door to our quiet house "Mom! Dad!" Mason hollered and my parents emerged downstairs, my dad's eyes focusing in to Ian who was holding the tee shirt behind my head.

"Drunk driver hit us." Mason said and my parents stood stalk still for a moment, then my mom went full panic mode.

"Are you alright?" Her hands fluttered all over Mason's face then Micah's. "Are you hurt? Where are you hurt? Is he in jail? He better be in jail."

"Anastasia." My dad chuckled walking over to me and removing the shirt from my head, my mom turned then ran over to me.

Our doorbell rang and Micah turned around to open it to Professor Britton and Justice. Professor Britton smiled at me as my mom was gushing over me and muttering something about permanent brain damage and 911. "Mrs. Holloway." Professor Britton put her hands over my mom's trembling ones. "She'll be fine."

She came over to me, green sparks already sparking from her fingertips. I cowered away from the sparking fingers into Ian's chest. "It won't hurt." He chuckled pushing me away and towards Professor Britton.

Her hands hovered behind my head and I felt nothing but warmth and then the dull headache was gone. "All done." She grinned. She stepped back the green sparks now gone from her fingers.

My mom made a full circle around me. "You would have been handy when those boys were growing up." She laughed talking to Professor Britton. "I swear they have broken every bone in their body and had stitches more then a dozen times."

Both Micah and Mason grinned proudly, as if it was their manhood that made them so reckless growing up. "Well soon you'll have Mattie, she starts my class next semester." Professor Britton smiled over at Mattie who beamed.

"Other then the accident, how was everything?" My dad asked leading everyone to the living room.

"So you two are actual mates?" Micah asked suddenly and my parents nodded. My dad reached for my mom's hand and gave her that I'm-so-in-love-with-you look that I have seen since I was a kid.

"I freaked when I was sixteen and thought I was having a heart attack when Nathan left for a football match." My mom laughed as my dad grinned.

"Or when I nearly killed James for telling you, you were pretty." My dad's ears turned pink.

My mom and dad dove into all their love adventures and jealousies. I sat under Ian's arm as Justice and Professor Britton left back to the party, where supposedly everyone had showed up.

My dad, after telling the story of how he came to own his loved black Silverado suddenly sat up straighter and looked over at Mason. "How is my truck?"

Mason and Micah stole glances at each other then he shoved his hand in his pocket and pulled out the crumpled paper of the tower information. "Sorry Pops." He gave him a small smile.

My dad who had owned that Silverado since his college days looked near tears but put a smile on his face. "At least you three are okay." He said through tight lips as my mom rubbed his back.

I walked with Ian to his vehicle later that night and he leaned against the driver's side flinging his keys between his fingers. "Do you have to go?" I pouted leaning into his chest.

"Yes." He chuckled running a hand through my hair, the tips of his fingers tickling the edge of my neck. "But I'll come back tomorrow." He kissed the top of my head. "It hurts me too, being away from you." I looked up at him and trailed my finger down his jaw line and around his lips.

"Then don't go." I pleaded. My heart was already clenching at the thought of him driving away.

He kissed the tips of my fingers that were running over his lips. "I'll see you soon my love." He leaned down and gently pressed his lips to mine.

I watched him drive away and I sighed very tempted to run after that fancy black car. "You'll see him tomorrow honey." My mom came up from behind, wrapping her arms around me.

"Easy for you to say." I sniped. "You live with your mate, you guys don't leave each other."

My mom chuckled. "We work apart all day and that's really hard." She kissed the top of my head. "You two will be together soon enough."

## Chapter 14: Departure of the General

*~Rose's POV~*

Monday morning, after Mason parked the rental car, I ran into the school. Ignoring the wolves running down one of the stone corridors, I headed straight into Ian's classroom. He was seated at his desk, his head bent over some papers and his hair falling into his ears.

I stood there in his door way staring at him. "I love you too." He chuckled looking up at me. I smiled and tilted my head a little as his eyes gazed intensely at me.

"And what if it wasn't me?" I raised an eyebrow and approached his desk. "What if it was one of your random students?"

He pulled me on his lap and laughed. "I always know when it's you." He smiled kissing my cheek.

I looked down at his messy desk, he was grading papers. Red splotches covered one of the essays in front of him. "Looks fun." I pointed at his scattered papers.

"Tons." He wiggled his eyebrows as the bell rang and students filed in.

"Figured we find you in here." Mattie shook her head with a werewolf right behind her. His ears perked up and he lowered himself onto his front two paws.

"Haven't I already taught you a lesson pup?" Ian said looking down at Trevor who bared his teeth and growled but went and hopped up into his desk.

I heard a lot of commotion at the door and turned to look as several green and gold uniforms walk in. The Wayland students. Everyone started whispering to each other, audible shock filled the room. The Wayland students ignored the glares from the Alvar students and seated themselves around the classrooms keeping their noses high in the air. I rolled my eyes and focused on Ian who seemed to be amused by the interaction.

"Calm down class." Ian held up his hands to quiet everyone. "Wayland will be our guest for the rest of the year. They will be staying in the dormitories in the south corridor."

"We have dorms?" I looked at Mattie who nodded her mouth still hanging open. Her green eyes narrowed at a Wayland girl who looked like she wanted to jump Mattie.

"A lot of the Prof's live in the dorms in the East corridor and some of the out of town students live in the dorms on the top floor. Brittney and Trevor live up there." Mattie was now pulling out some book I've never seen before, I had a feeling it had to do with her Magii abilities by that swirl that was on the cover.

What didn't I know about the school? I felt hands come onto my shoulders and I shuttered. "Leave me alone Reeve." I didn't even give him the glory of looking back at him.

"Why?" His voice was laced in silk, entrancing. "Don't you want to get to know me better?" He leaned in so I felt his hot breath on my ear, my breath hitched and my mind swam in fog. "I want to get to know you better."

Suddenly, my mind was filled with imagines of Reeve and I. Him holding me, him kissing me. I then leaned towards him smelling the sweet aroma coming from his breath. His hand lay gently over mine as his mouth still moved silently near my ear. More images erupted in my head. Him laughing with me, him dancing with me his arms held securely around my waist.

My stomach twisted as an imagine slipped through of Ian smiling

down at me. I shook my head trying to clear it of the heaviness that I was feeling. "You're beautiful Rose." Reeve's voice floated in my head causing all my senses to spark. The way he sounded, the way he smelt, the way he looked all made me lean closer to him.

Ian. Ian. Ian. I had to repeat the image in my head to keep some form of control over myself. "I can't hit a student, so if you would please move seats Mr. Broderick " Ian's bitter voice broke through my fog. Shattering all the images of Reeve and I that were still floating behind my eyelids.

"No." Reeve smirked and I shook my head clear. I stood up and walked to Trevor's seat, as Trevor moved into my seat he showed his teeth to Reeve and growled. It was a different growl then the playful one he gave Ian and it made the little hairs on my arms stand up.

When the bell rang signaling the end of class, I marched straight to Ian. "What happened?" I screeched and he stood up gripping my shoulders to calm me down. "Why couldn't I think!"

"Calm down, love." He smiled kissing my forehead. "He's a vampire, they can think for you."

"Like mind control." I said taking a deep breath. The thought of somebody looking through my mind and then taking it over was a little much to deal with.

"Something like that." He said running a hand through my hair. "They can get you to do or say things and you know you're doing it, but you can't stop it."

I shivered, I never wanted to have that feeling of helplessness and vulnerability again. "Well, thanks for being there." I tipi-toed and kissed his cheek.

"I'll always be there."

I walked out into the packed halls and spotted Reeve leaning against the lockers with Tawny. Now, that was a team, they were meant for

each other. For all I care, they could have each other. Both of them glanced my way. Tawny's eyes flashed and for a moment something flashed in my mind, but too quickly for me to catch. Reeve tugged her arm and they walked away their heads bent together in deep conversation.

I flopped down at our usual lunch table while Mason and Jaemi were in the middle of locking lips. "Go get a room, twin." I threw a fry at his face making him jump away from Jaemi and scowl at me.

He picked up the French fry I threw and popped it in his mouth. "I would but I'm in school." He smirked. "Unless, maybe, I can sneak into one of those dorm rooms?"

Trevor, now back in human form, took a key from his pocket and threw it at Mason. "Stay off the bed." He laughed. Mason and Jaemi were out the door before the keys even hit his hand.

"Gross." I shook my head turning my attention to my tray of food, which Trevor was already eying.

"It's a wonderful, magnificent, natural thing, oh young one." Trevor nudged my shoulder. "You going to eat that?" He pointed at my orange and I threw it at him.

Ian flopped down near me. "What's wonderful and natural?" He

asked pulling me close to him.

Trevor smiled. "Sex, Professor. You know when a man loves a women..."

Ian laughed putting up his hand. "I know about sex, Trevor." I felt my face flush. My brothers lost their virginity sometime during their freshman year, as for me, well, I still had my virginity.

"Why so embarrassed?" Ian chuckled looking down. "It is a natural thing." I had a feeling he wasn't a virgin. I mean come on, he was only about two hundred years old.

"I'm not." I scoffed crossing my arms.

"Yes, you are." Both Trevor and Ian answered in unison and I arched my eyebrows.

I groaned and rolled my eyes. Looking at my tray and considering bashing my head with it. "Right. Werewolves are empaths." I muttered and both of them grinned. "Whatever." I pushed my still full tray away.

Trevor looked at me then smacked his lips at my plate. "Take it." I said. He grinned digging into my hamburger.

"Now, why are you mad?" Ian leaned down near my ear and softly kissed it making me shiver and little goose bumps rise on my arms.

"Am not." I said twirling my water bottle cap around. He just eyed me. "Fine, you turn into a fur ball and can read people's emotions and I..." I looked up at the ceiling. "Can't do anything cool."

He laughed and wrapped his arms around me, bringing his head down to my level. "You will not let this the fur ball thing go will you? I'm not that furry." He blew a piece of his hair out of his eye. I nodded grabbing that same piece of his hair and swung it back. "Okay, so I'm a little furry but you are more powerful then all the species."

"I don't have super strength and if someone flung me across a room and into a wall, I would die." I pointed out and noticed Ian flinch.

"I wouldn't let you die." His voice was nothing but serious, the corners of his mouth pulled down a tad.

"I'm just saying." I clarified running my fingers down his cheek. "I may be a Proteggi but my body is still very human. Do I even age?"

"No, you stop at eighteen like the rest of us, but you're right. Your body is still fragile like a human's, but that's why we are here." He gestured around the cafeteria.

He looked up quickly and I followed his gaze and saw a lot of Cavilere warriors walking in. "I'll be back." He said furrowing his eyebrows.

I watched him walk up to the warriors and all of them gave him a respectful bow. I saw them exchange words as Headmaster Seeley joined in. "What do you suppose is going on?" I asked Justice and he shrugged.

Most of the cafeteria was watching the exchange and for once the cafeteria was awkwardly silent. "Don't you all have super hearing or something?" I whined and Mattie raised an eyebrow.

"They put a block up." She said. "I tried."

I sunk into my hands watching more warriors join them in the middle of the cafeteria. "Must be serious." Trevor said, for once not paying attention to the little food that was left on my plate. "That's a lot of Warriors."

"Probably Hunters." Mattie said, making both Micah and I look over at her. "Well, now that the Proteggi have their power, there will be more Hunters running around. The Cavilere will be busy, busy." She said.

The bell rang and I stood up looking over at Ian, who was still in deep conversation with the Warriors. "Get to class, sis." Micah

patted my back as he turned in the other direction.

I slipped out of the cafeteria and to English and flopped down, Reeve sitting right next to me. "Go find another seat." I snapped at him but he remained seated with an arrogant smile plastered on his perfect face.

Professor Houghton started the lecture on metaphors and similes when Ian knocked on her door. She momentarily left the classroom with him then swiftly walked in, "Ms. Holloway, Professor McAllister would like to speak to you."

I walked out into the hallway where he was leaning against the wall looking deep in thought. "What's wrong?" I asked as his face was drawn. He opened his arms to me and I instantly ran in them. "What is it?" I asked again, suddenly feeling the urge to cry.

"I have to leave for a little while." I snapped my head up to him, leave? Then he better be taking me with him.

"What?" My voice was barely a whimper. I clung to his robes. My breath started coming faster. He was leaving. Leaving most likely to danger. He could get hurt, injured, killed.

"They need me on the coast where a group of Hunters are trying to break through our barrier." His voice was soothing near my ear.

I clung tighter to him. What happened if he got hurt? Killed? Never came back? I could feel the tears prick my eyes and before I knew it they were streaming down my cheeks and he instantly had his palms on my cheeks. "Follow me." He led me down the hall and down a stairwell and into a maze of more hallways finally stopping at a door.

He pulled out a key and opened the door to a very luxurious looking apartment. "Sit." He motioned me to the couch. I sniffed and rubbed the back of my hand across my eyes. "I'll be fine." He looked straight at my face. "I've dealt with them many times."

I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled him into a hug, burying my face in the crook of his neck swallowing the tears. "What if --" I couldn't even say it.

"Shh." He rubbed my back in soothing circles and gave me some time to compose myself. I tried to, tried really hard, to control my near hyperventilating breaths. "I promise to come back." He whispered in my ear.

I nodded my head in his shoulder but what if he didn't come back? "I promise, love." He kissed my head.

Someone else walked in the room and I felt hands grip and pull me away. I looked up at Micah. "Call me whenever you need it. I'm going to try and be back before the end of two days." He stood up as Mason pulled me onto my own two feet.

My heart wanted to rip itself out of my chest. All my dreams were flashing behind my eyelids. Could they actually mean something? They were just dreams...right? "Be safe while I'm gone." He leaned down to my level, "I love you, Rose."

"I love you." I managed to choke out as his lips meant mine then I was pulled out of the room.

As I sat through ride home I felt my heart pounding roughly against my rib cage. I felt like he was gone forever, like he was never coming back. When, in truth he would only be gone for a couple of days.

Once more, I tried pulling my self together. I tried stopping the tears from rolling down my face and the snot from running out of my nose. I ran a hand through my hair, wiped my eyes and blew my nose. Nothing helped. My subconscious knew that Ian was not down the road any longer, but farther. Knew that I wouldn't see him tomorrow.

My heart clenched again. Would he be back? Would he be safe? I wanted to jump out of the moving car and follow Ian to where ever he was going. I wanted to jump in front of him and kill whoever

tried to hurt him.

"Honey." My mom opened her arms to me as soon as I slugged in. I just passed her open arms and went straight down to my room, locking my door on the way in. My mind was racing with possibilities of where Ian was at the moment, if he was safe, comfortable, not in danger.

"Come on, sis." Mason was knocking on my door. "Let us in."

"Leave me alone." I said falling face first on my bed. I wanted to wallow. Okay, so any normal boyfriend could be gone for a week and I'd be okay with that. That, I could deal with, but the feeling of emptiness that was running through my body right now was unbearable and I had to deal with it for two whole days.

Suddenly two days felt like a lifetime. Two days seemed to stretch in my mind to eternity. I threw a pillow over my head and wanted to just sink into nothingness and then reappear in two days.

"Sweetheart, let me in." My dad was now at my door. His voice soft, the voice he always used on me when I was little and scared, when I believed there was a monster under my bed.

I ignored him for the first time in my life. I closed my eyes trying to drown out the pain in my chest. My phone vibrated and I looked at it, immediately slamming it to my ear. "Hello." I sniffed.

"Let them help you, Rose." Ian said sternly, "I don't want you in pain."

Too late. "I'll be okay." I managed to somehow spit that out.

"No, you won't." He said, I could hear a lot of commotion in the background. It made his voice muffled and hard to hear.

"Take care of yourself, don't worry about me." I covered one of my ears attempting to hear him better. Trying to catch any sign of abnormality in his voice.

"I love you Rose. I'm going to worry."

"Well, once I know you're taking care of yourself, I'll be okay." I told him honestly.

"I am." He chuckled, "I've been doing this for years Rose. Just go watch a movie with those brothers of yours or let Mattie take you shopping. Don't lock yourself up."

I sighed. "Fine, for you, I will go venture out into the big bad world."

"That's my girl." He laughed, and I pictured his large smile with his lone dimple on his left cheek. "I love you."

"Love you too." I smiled. Hearing his voice, took away some of the void feeling in my heart.

I closed my phone and threw it on my bed walking to my door and opening it. My family who all looked like they wanted to cry stood in front of it. "I'm fine." I smiled as my brothers pushed passed me, one holding popcorn and DVD cases and the other held chocolates and sodas.

"He'll be back soon, honey." My mom gave me a sad smile and my dad squeezed my shoulder then headed back upstairs.

I flopped down on the couch between Mason and Micah. Mason flopping his large arm around my shoulders. "So we decided that we will sit through a chick flick for you unless you prefer one with goriness." He smirked holding up two DVD's, one *Wrong Turn* and the other *Spanglish*.

"*Spanglish*." I smiled and both of them groaned.

"We figured." Micah laughed getting up and pushing it in the player.

I brought the popcorn bowl in my lap and focused on the movie instead of the burning feeling in my chest. Somehow during the movie I feel asleep.

A sharp pain to my side jolted me straight up screaming. Mason and Micah jumped, the movie still playing. "What's wrong?" Micah asked as I clutched my side.

It was a stinging pain and I felt like my ribs were crushed. I gasped clinging to my side. I slowly lifted my shirt but nothing was there. No bruising or blood. Then I froze.

*We're connected.* Ian's voice ran through my head from the night of the accident.

Ian.

## Chapter 15: Battle of the Mates

~Rose's POV~

I threw my phone on my bed with a frustrated scream. He wasn't answering and he was hurt. I bent slightly trying to ease the increasing pain in my side.

Micah and Mason came up to the side of me. "What's going on?" Mason asked looking down at me with worry etched in his eyes. His hand hovering around my back, most likely to catch me if my knees decided to give out.

I grabbed my cell phone again and with trembling fingers redialed his numbers. Instead of trying to call him, I should go to him. I needed to be there when he was hurt, I could heal him.

The phone kept ringing and it slipped from my hands. What if it happened? What if he was dead? I was near hyperventilating when my phone went off, without bothering to look at the ID, I slammed it to my ear.

"Ian?" I nearly screamed in the phone. "How bad? Do you need me? What should I do?" My words came out of my mouth mumbled and strewn together, hardly making any sense.

"I'm okay." His voice was normal and reassuring. "A Magii healed me, so no worries."

Did he really expect me not to worry about him? For all I knew a Hunter damn near killed him moments ago and he's playing it off like a paper cut. "Really Rose, I'm okay it was just a deep cut, nothing serious, I don't even have a scar." There was no strain or pain in his voice only his usual calmness.

"Okay." I sighed a breath of relief. "Can I kill the Hunters though?" I said through clenched teeth and he laughed.

"Already taken care of, love." I could picturing him smiling, his eyes dancing proudly.

That night my dream revolved around Hunters stabbing Ian and him falling to his knees in blood. I wasn't one for gore, in fact I hated it. The sight of blood even made me somewhat nauseous. In my dream I couldn't get to Ian in time and he died in my arms. It wasn't a dream...it was my worst nightmare.

I slugged into school the next morning, knowing I wouldn't have Ian for my first class. "We should go shopping today." Mattie said brightly skipping along my side.

I looked sideways at her. Her red hair fell in vibrant curls and she added 'bling and shine' to her uniform with a green scarf and dangling necklaces. "No thanks." I said plainly. Honestly, I didn't feel like doing anything. As it was Micah and Mason had to literally drag me to school in the first place.

Not having Ian around gave me such an odd empty feeling. And when I looked in his classroom and he wasn't perched on his desk like usual nibbling on an apple my heart felt like it cracked in two.

"We are going." She said determinedly walking into homeroom, and I glared at the unknown professor, who widened his eyes in shock. "Rose." Mattie whacked my arm.

I couldn't help but feel angry at unknown professor who looked oddly familiar. It was supposed to be Ian standing in front of the classroom not soft-at-the eyes guy who was probably a werewolf by his massive size.

I flopped down in my seat ignoring Reeve's usual arrogant smile at me. "You're mate isn't here." He just had to rub it in my face.

"Leave. Me. Alone" I wasn't in the mood. I didn't want to deal with Reeve, well, with anything.

"I heard he almost died last night." He said and I snapped. I wheeled around in my chair and lunged at him, rage completely taking over my body.

I felt my hands grip his shoulders and push him back. For a vampire I thought he would put up more of a fight as we tumbled in a heap to the floor.

"I said leave me the hell alone!" I shouted. I heard the murmurs of students as many walked towards us and the professor just stood to the side with a look of amusement on his face.

"Oh come on, gorgeous, you know you want me. You're just upset that Ian isn't your real mate." He smirked. This gave me another bout of strength and I tried lunging for his stomach. But this time his vampire sense kicked in and he grabbed my hands before I could even blink.

"He is too." I retorted.

"No he isn't. I am" He smiled his fangs protruding. Many people started whispering around us. My mind was frozen on the aspect that he thought I was his mate.

"No you aren't. I could care less if you die." I yelled lunging at him again, but he put no force against me, he merely grabbed my wrist and easily flipped me over him, like I was a rag doll.

Before I had time to react as his hand pinned my wrist painfully against my back Trevor jumped at Reeve throwing him across the room. Trevor's ears were flattened against his head and his tail swished dangerously behind him.

I glared a little more at Reeve as Trevor circled him. "Ms. Holloway would you like to go to the hospital wing?" The unknown professor asked me. We had a hospital wing?

"No." I snapped. My eyes were glued to the fight between Trevor and Reeve. I looked back at the Professor and noticed he wasn't doing anything to stop the fight and neither did the students.

I watched Trevor slam Reeve against a wall, then Reeve moved so fast my eyes didn't catch when he knocked Trevor to the floor his hands circled around the wolf's neck. I made a move forward to step in but the Professor's arm stopped me. "Leave them." He said. "You don't want to get in the middle of that."

"Why aren't you doing anything?" I cried pointing frantically at how Reeve looked like he was choking Trevor. "He can kill Trevor." I made another move forward but the Professor's hand tightened around my wrist.

"When student's get into a fight like that..." He pointed towards the two, in which Trevor had pulled out from Reeve's hands. "There is nothing that we really can do, except yell at them. But at this point I don't think they will hear me."

I glowered. Some Professor. I wanted to jump in again. But then I saw green sparks shoot from Mattie's fingers and sail straight towards Reeve. It looked as if his legs got glued together as he fell backward. Trevor jumped on top of him, placing a paw on each side of his face.

Suddenly, my body felt so light. I blinked a couple of times and realized that my heart was no longer bruising my ribcage. Ian was close. I dashed from the room ignoring the calls of the Professor.

I ran to the main entrance and saw him standing talking with Headmaster Seeley. I froze for a little while staring at him, he was in the Cavilere uniform and looked amazing, but I was only frozen for a fraction of a second before I flew into his arms.

"I missed you." He kissed my head swinging me around, my feet flying off the floor.

"I missed you." I kissed his lips, ignoring Headmaster Seeley. I

looked him up and down checking for any battle scars or slings, maybe even a missing appendage.

"I'm fine." He chuckled setting me on my feet.

"Well your class isn't." I laughed, he arched his eyebrow. "I sort of started a fight with Reeve then Trevor got involved and now I don't know what's going on."

He laughed waving his hand. "Let them kill him."

"Ian, he's a student." Headmaster Seeley chuckled shaking his head as Dracula meowed and wrapped himself around my ankles.

Ian laughed as we headed to his classroom. I looked him over once more. His navy blue uniform didn't even have a wrinkle, not a hair out of place, his boot laces were tied. I poked his side and he looked down at me. "I already told you I'm fine." He grinned.

"Just making sure." We both froze at the doorway of his classroom. The whole class was now involved. Wolves were growling and circling the students, green sparks were flying through the air. Vampires were shouting and punching. It looked like a mad house and the poor Professor was leaning against the chalk board with his hand over his face.

Ian shook his head releasing my hand and next thing I knew a wolf was standing at my side. But this time his fur was covered in navy blue armor, matching the uniform in was wearing when he was a human. It went from between his shoulder blades and wrapped around his belly. His front and hind legs also were covered in the thin armor.

He growled then barked, the whole class immediately froze and stared at the door. They flew back to their desks and acted like they didn't do anything. Left laying in the middle was Reeve, his sandy-blond hair disheveled and Trevor who was happily sitting on top of him his tail over his face.

Ian formed back and arched his eyebrows at the class. "I leave for a day." He laughed shaking his head. "Mr. Broderick please go to the headmaster's office, Trevor you can get off him now." Trevor jumped off and padded to his seat.

Reeve pushed himself up. "I didn't start it." He spat out.

"Yeah well, it's either that or I kill you myself for touching my mate." Ian's voice dipped low and became that creepy voice I didn't like too much.

"She isn't your mate." Reeve stood up coming up to Ian. Oh this wouldn't be pretty at all.

"Says who?" Ian crossed his arms and leaned back against the edge of his desk.

"I do." Reeve walked over to me and I stumbled backwards trying to get far away from the boy with issues. "She's my mate, I feel it." He reached for me and I pulled away and I saw him cringe.

Ian stiffened and his eyes glanced between Reeve and I, his eyebrows knitting while the corners of his mouth dropped. "Outside Reeve." He directed and gestured for me to follow.

We all stepped out into the quiet hallway. Ian came up to me sliding his arm around my waist. I noticed Reeve flinch away. "Why do you say she is your mate? Its obvious she's mine."

"I feel it wolf." Reeve's voice was confident and didn't waver a single beat. "I feel the pain every damn time she walks away, every time she shouts at me, every time she touches you and not me, every time she rejects me!"

I stared at him wide eyed, the tough vampire, suddenly looked weak, looked so fragile, he looked like I could break him by just poking him. "And you Rose, you feel anything?" Ian turned to me, the pain on his face affected me more then the fragility of Reeve.

"No." I said confidently. "I don't even like him." I saw relief flood

Ian's face as he turned back to Reeve.

"That just proves it." Ian said wanting to end the confrontation. Reeve took a hesitant step forward only for Ian to take one as well. "Don't go against me boy." Ian hissed lowly, a growl forming deeply in his throat.

"She isn't your mate." Tawny suddenly appeared and I groaned. Could this get any worse? Ian looked over at her and rolled his eyes. He probably just thought the same thing I did.

Reeve took advantage of Ian's distraction and took a quick step back towards the wall. Tawny, meanwhile, stood in front of Ian. Her blonde hair twirling around her face. "You know that Ian, after everything..." He hushed her by raising his hand.

"No. You're not." He said through tight lips. What everything? I looked between the two. Their narrowed eyes focused in on each other. Her cornflower blue ones and his silver ones.

"I'm yours." Tawny finished and my fist clenched. How dare she. "I feel that pain and yet you ignore me. You're just so selfish you want the powerful Proteggi for yourself." My jaw dropped and I saw Ian clench his fists while his body tensed.

"What the hell is going on?" Headmaster Seeley appeared and the four of us looked over at him. He stood, Dracula not too far behind. His brown eyes glanced from each one of us.

"He's my mate." Tawny pointed at Ian.

"And she's my mate." Reeve pointed at me.

Headmaster Seeley looked confused for a moment. "What are we living in a soap opera?" He groaned running a hand over his face. Then he looked pointedly at me. "Ian and Rose are mates." He said matter-of-factly.

Ian ran his hand through his hair. "Tawny, you're not my mate." He sighed looking over at her. "We've been through this before." They

have?

"You got hurt last night." She pointed to her side, the same place I felt the stinging pain. "I felt it."

We all stayed quiet for a moment as the information sunk in. Can someone have two mates? I looked over at Ian then the headmaster. Both of them seemed to be exchanging silent words.

I got the air knocked out of me when I felt a hard body land against my own. Tawny's gaze over me was one of hot fury. "I'm sick of watching him touching and kissing you!" My head whacked the floor and my world did a slight spin as I came to stop under Tawny. Her long red fingernails digging into my shoulders.

"Stop!" Ian yelled powerfully running and lifting me up, supporting most of my weight as the walls shifted. I gripped Ian's uniform trying to orient myself.

"Get your animal hands off her." Reeve made a move to jump at Ian, which I think was kind of stupid. Ian merely turned swiftly keeping me in his arms and watched Reeve miss him by millimeters.

"I told you not to mess with me boy." Ian growled under his breath. "Think about who you're going up against."

Reeve snorted coming back in front of Ian. "I have more power than any wolf."

Headmaster Seeley cleared his throat. "Then maybe you should think of an Elder Vampire who is standing right beside you Mr. Broderick. Surely, he has more power than you." I looked over at the Headmaster, his friendly face was replaced with one of pure anger. I cringed as I saw his fangs protrude and the drop tattoo form, but his tattoo was more detailed than the other vampires.

Tawny remained looking from the opposite wall her eyes only on me and Ian's arm that was still securely around my waist. "You Elders are just full of yourselves." Reeve hissed out, sounding more

like an animal then a human.

"Bad thing to say." Ian whispered in my ears. "You definitely don't want to offend an Elder."

I was tempted to ask exactly what an Elder was. But I had a feeling now was not the time. Reeve ran straight for Ian at a speed that was not normal. I felt the shift of the air and a sabloe wolf was standing in front of me.

Reeve smirked, "I'm terrified now." He said rolling his eyes. "The big bad wolf going to eat me now?"

Ian growled looking over at the Headmaster who gave him a single nod and with that Ian attacked. He landed swiftly on top of Reeve pinning him to the floor. I felt a sharp hand grip my wrist and pull me away. "He isn't yours." Tawny looked at me as if I was nothing more then the scum on her pretty little stilettos.

"What is this?" I rolled my eyes. "Middle school?"

Tawny raised one of her perfectly plucked eyebrows. "This isn't your human world anymore." She leaned down so her face was inches from mine. "You need to get that through that little head of yours."

"So be it." I snapped pushing her away from me as hard as I could. "Then, for the sake of argument I won." I said tempted to stick out my tongue. "He is mine, so don't go near him, don't touch him, don't talk to him, don't even look at him." I said pushing her towards the wall.

She only glared at me. "Stupid little human." She sniffed leaning her head down again her fangs visible.

"Proteggi." I corrected her. "I'm as much human as you are."

She snorted her eyes flashing a bright red. "You should really watch what you say to me." She hissed close to my ear. I felt her fingers curl around my shoulders and felt my feet leave the ground and then

I was flying.

My scream was stuck in my throat as I sailed across the hall. I braced myself for a hard impact but none came. "Are you alright?" I turned to find myself in the headmaster's arms. I nodded numbly looking over at Ian and Reeve still circling each other. "I've had enough of this." He said setting me on my own two feet.

His mouth moved quickly in an unfamiliar tongue and silver sparks flew from his hands, binding both Reeve and Tawny. Ian turned around shocked at the sudden change in fight. "Two students shall never disrespect their professor or headmaster for any reason." The headmaster spoke, his voice low but held nothing but authority.

Ian came to stand near me back in human form. He wasn't even breathing hard unlike me. The silver sparks from the Headmaster's fingers formed silver-like ropes around Reeve and Tawny and they struggled to escape them. "Vampires can do magic?" I leaned over to Ian who put his arm around me again.

"Just the Elders." He answered watching the Headmaster. He then stiffened, his body tensing. "Garrett!" He yelled and the headmaster turned and then he too tensed up.

"Is there time to evacuate?" He asked Ian.

Ian shook his head pushing me behind him. "Whatever you do, don't leave my sight." He told me. Many professors were walking out of the classroom having the same frantic look as Ian and the Headmaster.

"Get all the students in the classroom and keep them there." Headmaster Seeley ordered. He walked over towards Ian and I. "How could they have broke our boundaries?"

Ian glanced at Reeve and Tawny. "Somebody from inside the school possibly." He said. He then looked over at the substitute professor who was standing in for him. "Kale, go find the other two Proteggi's and keep them safe."

Kale...Kale Trayhern. I finally realized why he looked so familiar. He was the warrior from Halloween. "Yes General." He said running off quickly down the hall.

"Ian." I looked up at him. "What's going on?"

"You'll find out in a minute." He said pulling me closer to him.

"Remember don't leave my sight. For the love of God, don't you dare leave my sight."

I nodded and just as I did the front entrance doors were blown off making me jump. Ian held me steady as I shrank back into him.

You know that monster when you were a kid? That one that you imagined was under your bed or in your closet? That's what I was looking at, but to say they were the boogiemans was an understatement.

## Chapter 16: Deafening Silence

~Rose's POV~

I was trembling like a Chihuahua. "It's alright, Rose. I'm right here." Ian hugged me tighter to him.

The figures moved silently, black robes fell around them covering their heads and mouths, nothing but their red eyes showed. "What are they?" I whispered my voice shaking horribly.

I felt fear before. But this...this was beyond any form of fear. "Those are the Hunters." He said taking a step back as they continued their silent approach. A bright silver light flashed in front of us. I looked over at Headmaster Seeley whose lips were quickly moving.

A silver screen was set in front of us. Almost like a transparent wall. "Now, we move." Ian tugged my arm. "While Garrett holds up the shield." He tugged me harder as my feet were permanently glued to the floor.

"Hey what about us!" Reeve wailed still struggling in his ropes.

Ian paused for a second to glance at them. "Aren't you more powerful than me?" Ian growled out. "At least that's what you said, so you should be able to get yourself down." He then continued to drag me.

A piercing howl reached my ears making me want to dart into any nearby closet and just hide. I looked over at my shoulder a black wolf with red eyes pacing the shield, his eyes locked on me. "Don't pay them any attention." Ian said in my ear still keeping a fast pace.

"Why do they look so different?"

"They are evil." Ian turned us down a corridor where many students were poking their heads out. "Get back in your classrooms!" Ian ordered and immediately they dashed inside. "The end of your senior year you are given the choice." Ian continued. "To choose between what is good and what is evil."

My mind swirled around that fact. You were given a choice in that matter? It was weird letting people choose whether to be the hero or the villain. "But why would people choose to be evil?" I saw an odd expression cross Ian's features. He even slowed his pace, his eyes looked near nervous.

His gaze finally met mine. "You'd be surprise how well the Hunter Elders can play mind games with the inexperienced and talented."

"How do the good Elders allow that?" I asked as he quickened the pace again. A loud shattering was heard and Ian cursed under his breath.

"They broke through the shield, let's move faster." He tugged my hand harder making me practically run to keep up with him. "In our world, you are free to choose. Our Elders try to teach the right way from the moment we are born, but then, there are rogues and those who stray and find family in the Hunters."

I was trying to keep up with everything and ignore the screaming and the explosion-sounds coming from somewhere behind us.

"Rogues?"

"People of our species who leave their families or have no families. People who don't attend an academy. They just wonder like wild animals." He said peering over his shoulder. "We aren't moving fast enough." He phased into a wolf and gestured for me to get on him.

I threw my leg around his torso feeling the soft texture of his armor. He started running making me gasp and cling tighter to him. This wasn't normal speed, it made my stomach do flips and my head

spin. I clutched my eyes close to stop myself from hurling all over the place.

I saw a flash of red light and I snapped my eyes open. Red sparks flew ahead of me and I looked over my shoulder. A Hunter had his hands outstretched, red sparks flying from the tips of his fingers. I felt Ian's muscles tense as he sprang forward with more speed and took a sharp turn.

I ducked as more red sparks flew pass my ear. I ducked lower, nearly burying my head into the soft fur of Ian's neck. I could hear his steady breathing and the taps of his nails hitting the hard floor as he took another sharp turn.

He wheeled to a stop as a black wolf appeared in front of us. He sharply turned nearly making me fly off his side and dashed up a set of stairs. I could hear the heavy breathing of the wolf close behind us.

The red sparks were still soaring over my head. I gripped tighter to Ian. I felt Ian stumble then he picked up his pace again. But I felt a strong pain in my left ankle. "You're hurt." I whispered but he only ran faster, the throbbing in my leg increased as he picked up his speed.

I looked over my shoulder to see two Hunter Magii following us and the black wolf still closely behind us. Ian stumbled again and this time the pain flared in my right hand, right where red sparks had wrapped around his paw. He continued running.

The Magii were no longer going for me but for the wolf that was trying to get me to safety. They were hurting Ian in order to get to me. A dozen sparks flew around my head then landed straight around Ian's torso making him collapse to the floor.

The blinding pain soared through my body as Ian struggled to get back on his feet. He phased into a human again and grabbed my hand. "Keep running." He said pushing me forward.

"Ian, we meet again." The Magii said his hands sparking brightly in front of him.

"Go Rose." He yelled over his shoulder. I couldn't leave him. I couldn't leave him here alone, especially not if he was injured. "I'll heal fast don't worry about me. Just go!"

I shook my head grabbing his hand and pulling both of us down some unknown hallway. I felt something grip my legs and then I was flying. The scream held in my throat as I was slammed against a wall the air knocked out of me.

"Rose!" I heard Ian's panicked voice and through my blurred vision saw him running towards me. My legs felt extremely heavy, like cement filled them. I groaned rolling over and felt Ian's hand stand me up.

But the black wolf sprang on him making him fly into the far pillar. I watched, horrified as the black wolf snapped his large teeth next to Ian's neck. "Run, Rose." He breathed at me.

"No." I said stubbornly walking towards him. "I'm not leaving you."

"I'll catch up with you." He said his hands coming around the wolf's neck. "Just run and try to get out, they want you not me."

I saw a Magii closing in on me and I took off with one last glance over at Ian. He had formed back into a wolf and took advantage over the Hunter. "Don't run from me Proteggi. I'll catch you either way." The voice was shrill and sent ice darting through my veins.

I stumbled a little over my own feet as I ran as fast as I could. Now I wish I took track or did a little extra laps with my brothers. I was winded and my throat burned with my panted breaths.

I felt two rough hands grip me from behind and yank me. I screamed. I screamed like my life deepened on it, which technically it did. "Oh shut it, will you?" The magii said slamming me to the floor and pointing his fingers at my legs.

Red ropes entangled my legs together and I struggled to free myself. "We have the Proteggi." He told one of the other Hunters standing close by. "Go tell Rufus."

I kicked and screamed as he lifted me over his stinky shoulder. We both flew forward unexpectedly and the ropes fell from my legs. "Run." Mason's voice made a sense of safety run through my entire being.

He grabbed my hand and we were running again. Micah soon joined us, a bloody gash near his eye and looking over his shoulder. "Shit, there's a lot of them."

We had somehow managed a full circle and found ourselves in the midst of a battle field, which was the main entrance of the school. All the professor's were fighting and even some of the students were standing against the Hunters. "Get out of here." Professor Britton ran up to us. Green sparks flying randomly out of her fingers. "Don't let them get to you."

The three of us nodded and headed down the opposite corridor hoping to find a way out. "Ian?" I said looking over my shoulder. But it was hard seeing who was who in all the green and red sparks.

"He can take care of himself." Micah grabbed my other wrist and pushed me to run faster. My feet tangled in on themselves making me stumble every few yards.

We ran deeper into the school going down unknown and unfamiliar corridors. "Do you have any idea where we are going?" I asked trying to catch my breath as my legs trembled with the physical effort of running for my life.

"No." Mason said running up a stairwell. "Just as far as we can get from them." He said, not even sounding winded.

I felt a pressure at my ankles and then ,like an invisible rope was tied around my ankles I was pulled from the grasps of my brothers. "Rose!" Mason yelled turning around. I hit the stairs hard as I

landed on my stomach.

I was being pulled backward by the invisible rope, "Go." I yelled "Get out!" Him and Micah didn't stop running after me. "GO!" I yelled once more as black wolf appeared in front of me. Mason and Micah froze behind the wolf.

"Go." I mouthed knowing the wolf didn't see them. They both shook their heads and they they did that silent-conversation thing. I knew what they were thinking. They wanted to take on the wolf. "No." I said aloud.

The lights in the school blew out, making the atmosphere tense and all the more...well...freaky. My breath hitched as I could hear nothing, it was silent, I couldn't even hear anyone breathing, just my own ragged breaths.

I was too scared to move, to blink, hell to breath. I slowly moved my hands to push myself up, I felt behind me and clung to the wall and I made my way up on shaking legs.

"Micah?" I asked, the silence of the hall seemed to close in on me. All the air was being sucked out. "Mason?" I felt the rough edges of the wall and dragged my heavy feet forward.

I received no answers from my brothers making me all the more nervous. "Twins?" I said once more sounding on the verge of hysteria. I couldn't even see my own hand in front of my face.

I plastered myself to the wall and slowly, very slowly started moving forward. I was terrified that at any moment, a black hooded, red eyed figure would jump in front of me. The silence seemed to grow more deafening as I continued my way forward.

I heard screams from a hallway, and colorful sparks illuminated the dark for short moments of time. I felt like I was thrown into a nightmare and I couldn't run away .

"Lost Proteggi?" I jumped up as hard hands gripped my wrists, I

heard the crack of my own bones breaking. I bit my bottom lip as the pain soared up my arms.

I was flung into the darkness and I felt my back crash into a wall, I needed light, I needed something. I couldn't get up. My legs trembled and my arms flared with pain. I heard a loud crash and strained my eyes to see, but I could see nothing but blackness.

More hands gripped me, and I screamed trying to get up so I can at least try and run away. "Its me." Ian's voice sent a comforting wave through my body and I groped the area around me, I found his robes and gripped them as much as I could, ignoring the pain that was radiating in all my body.

He lifted me in his arms and started running down the hall. "Can you see?" I asked as he made unannounced turns down the darken hallways.

"Yes." He said and I felt his warm lips come to my forehead. "I need to get you out of here." He whispered more to himself then to me.

"Are you hurt?" I asked, desperately wanting to know. It was hard to know if half the pain was mine or if it was his.

"No." His voice was genuine, "but you are." His tone dropping. "I shouldn't have lost you." Guilt was wrapped in his deep voice.

"It wasn't your fault Ian." I said bringing my hand up in the darkness to feel his cheek. I felt his lips turn up a little and his tense shoulders relax as we continued running into the darkness.

Suddenly, we were launched forward and I went flying out of Ian's arms. I was too shocked to scream, I heard growls and figured Ian was now wolf.

I scooted a little back and then was airborne. "Come on." It was a husky, cold voice.

"Ian!" I screamed as I was dragged away. I felt a sharp blow to my head and stars danced in front of my eyes.

The lights finally turned back on, and I blinked waiting for my eyes to adjust, looking around, I had no idea where I was at in the school. I had no idea who I was with, and I had no idea where Ian was, they might as well blow out the lights again.

I looked down at myself and cringed, my white shirt was now stained red and my wrists were bruised and swelling, my right knee was black and blue and my left sock was tinged red, basically I looked like crap.

I flew across the room and looked up at a vampire, his fangs down and his eyes narrowed. "That blood of yours smells awfully good." He smiled, but not a sweet smile, a menacing evil smile.

I tried thinking of a smart comeback, but it didn't come, instead I was trying to remember how to breathe again. He started creeping towards me and I started getting up on my feet thinking of self defense moves...kneeing his crotch...that was classic, but my legs were shaking so bad I didn't know if I could do that.

Punching him in the face in doing so I would probably break my own hand. Which I think was already broken. Why couldn't I have some awesome power? I looked around and saw a door to my right and I lunged for it, pumping my legs as fast as they could take me, I took turns and ran down narrow halls...did this school ever end?

I didn't even want to look over my shoulder I just kept running, I turned a corner and rammed into someone. "Rose," I looked up at Mason and fell into his arms "You look like crap."

"Thanks for the compliment, but we better run some crazy vamp is following me." I said starting again and ignoring the pain pulsating through my body.

He picked me up and took off, why did everyone have it so easy when they picked me up? "You look pretty hurt." Mason said turning down a hallway.

"I'll be okay." I said as he set me down when we finally came to dead

end.

"Shit." His voice was barely audible.

"Where's Micah?" I asked looking around at the enclosed walls. No signs of exit or escape anywhere.

"He's okay, he's with Mattie." He looked around and pressed against the walls like it would magically open up, in this school, I wouldn't be surprised.

"Two proteggi for the price of one." We both wheeled around and looked at a magii and a vamp. Mason stepped in front of me straightening himself out, I've never really noticed how intimidating he really did look.

I clutched to the back of his t-shirt and dug my head in his back, I just wanted to wake up, or disappear, anything but be here.

Whenever I thought of myself in this situation I always pictured I would throw my purse at the perp or knee him, punch him, slap him. But now, in said situation I was cowering like a wuss behind my brother.

Mason shot up in the air like he was yanked by a hook. He hovered in the air above me looking extremely shocked. I looked over at the magii, who had his hand up aimed towards my brother. I took a step forward trying to figure out how I could knock him down. The vamp sprang at me, his hands encircling my neck "NO!" I heard Mason yell from above me.

His hot breathe hit my neck as he lowered his head. "Proteggi blood." He murmured near my ear. "Smells so sweet." I felt his tongue lick my neck and I strained to pull away. His hand grew tighter around me. I felt his teeth graze across my skin. I looked up at Mason who was struggling in the air and looking at me with a sense of helplessness.

I screamed as I felt his fangs dig into my skin. My eyes rolled back

as the intense pain flew through my body. I kicked my legs and thrashed my arms beating them against the back of my captor. But he didn't budge. I heard him give a soft groan. And more pain flared making lights pop in front of my eyes.

"No! no! no! no!" I kept hearing Mason's voice, it felt like my veins were ice cold, so cold they felt like they were burning. The pain...it seemed to go into nothing, sent me into nothing. My teeth started chattering at the fierce chill that was repeatedly running through my body.

"Stop." I managed to choke out trying to push his head off my neck. "Please." I felt tears start running down my cheeks. Break all my bones, shoot me, stab me, anything but this. I felt my arms go limp and fall to my sides and I stopped kicking my legs. The pain was just getting worse, the cold was unbearable.

A wolf appeared and lunged at the vamp shoving him off me. I screamed again as his fangs came out of my skin, I curled into a ball wanting the pain to vanish. Ian came into my vision and dropped to his knees by me, cradling my head in his lap. "I'm right here, love." His voice soothed me as Mason ran around to my other side.

"Will she be alright?" He asked frantically looking over me.

Ian didn't answer but kept his eyes locked with mine. "She lost blood in her wounds...then he took more blood." His voice was pained.

I dug my head in his chest wanting to block out everything. "There coming back." Ian voice said. "You need to get out of here Mason, it's not safe for you."

"I'm not leaving her." I heard his usual stubbornness in his voice, the same tone all three of us held. I felt his hand slip into mine, his touch was so warm to the icicles I was feeling racing inside my body.

"I'll keep her safe, you need to go." Ian ordered.

"I love you, sis." He squeezed my hand and then he was gone.

"Ian." I whimpered feeling myself tremble violently. "Make it stop." I was shivering now, my body basically convulsing with the cold. "C...ol...d" I stuttered out.

Ian stood up keeping me in his arms. "I know, love, I know." He started walking down the hallways taking it slow. Then he screamed, an ear splattering scream and I felt a large, burning pain in my back, he was hurt. My eyes shot open to stare at his blank face.

He fell to his knees but kept a tight hold to me. "I brought down the General." A large man walked around.

Ian's breaths became ragged. "Ian." I brought my hands to his cheeks that were now sweating.

"I'll be fine." He grunted out.

No he wasn't. I knew he wasn't, through my own pain I felt his. He gripped me and stood up mumbling under his breath, the large man clutched his head and fell to his knees screaming.

We found our way back to the main hall that looked like a tornado flew through it. But all the black hooded Hunters were no where in sight and students were fixing their injuries.

"They've all retreated." Headmaster Seeley ran up and right behind him was our gang, Mason and Micah leading them.

Ian laid me on the floor as stars danced in front of my vision, fog slowly filling my head. I ignored my pain and looked over at Ian who was crumbling to the ground. A large group gathered around us.

I picked myself up, I couldn't let him die. I had one power, and I would put it to use. "Ian." I leaned over him pushing my pain away at each movement I made, his eyes were drooping and his face white.

How did my power work? How was I suppose to tap into it? I leaned down bringing my lips to his wanting him to live, to survive, he deserved it. A warm gold glow surrounded us, many gasps filling the hallway.

"No Rose." Ian tried pushing me away. "Don't!" He said more strongly. I ignored him, I felt myself getting lighter, so much lighter, I felt like I would float up.

Ian sat up and caught me before I fell back, my chest got tight and the coldness I was feeling intensified.

"No!" Ian was crying, I didn't like hearing him cry. "No, why Rose why, a Magii could have healed me." His voice was mixed with crying and pleading. I didn't want him to cry.

I brought my hand to his warm face. I couldn't talk my tongue felt big and spongy. "Rose!" Mason and Micah were kneeling by us. "Don't you dare leave us!" Both their faces were identical like always, this time though I hated their expression. Sadness. I hated seeing my brothers sad.

I felt my head fall back and everything went black.

## Chapter 17: Gone

~Ian's POV~

I pumped my paws as fast as they could take me. I felt Rose dodging the sparks that were aimed at her. I growled under my breath, knowing the attacker would hear and hopefully understand the warning.

*You think I'm scared of you Ian?* The Hunter's voice flew through my head as I took a sharp turn. I felt the coldness of a red spark hitting my hind leg making me stumble and a hot flare of pain shoot up.

"You're hurt." Her frantic voice filled my head and I pushed faster. I couldn't let them get to her. I took another sharp turn around a corner and stumbled again as a spark hit my front paw.

*Nice to see you again Ian.* I heard him before I saw him but struggled to stop as the large black wolf sprang in front of me. I felt Rose tense and put her head down between my shoulder blades. My lone focus was to keep them away from her. Far away.

*As you Rufus.* I bit back. *I don't even know why you broke through the school boundaries. With several Elders here and all.*

I sharply turned feeling Rose almost fall off, I slowed just enough to let her catch her balance and started running again.

*Now why would I be scared of your Pure Elders?* His dark voice chuckled in my head and I looked over my shoulder to see very close on my tail.

I felt the sharp pain in my torso making me sprawl on the floor. *Come on now Ian, you are so much better than that.* I phased back into a

human and helped Rose up. I wanted to rip Rufus's neck out, I wanted to bury my teeth in him and watch him die. But I refused to go back to that kind of monster...especially in front of Rose.

"Keep running." I whispered to her, pointing her in the right direction. Her large blue eyes looked up at me, shocked and scared.

"We meet again Ian." I turned to a fowl smelling magii.

I looked over my shoulder at Rose still standing there. "Go Rose!" I yelled trying to make her see sense. I could handle these guys, it was nothing new. But her...she was so fragile, still so human. "I heal fast, don't worry about me."

I saw the stubborn set in her face and she gripped my hand and tugged me away from Rufus and the smelly magii. Her hand in mine was trembling as we twisted down the familiar hallways of the school.

She was ripped from grasp. I wheeled around. "Rose!" I called seeing her in a heap by a wall looking dazed and shaking her head. I pulled her up to start running away, steady her as she swayed. I felt the dull throb in my own head where she fell.

I felt two large paws land on my back sending me flying into a pillar. Rufus landed on top of me and started snapping at my neck.

*I'm going to have me some fresh meat tonight.* He sung in my head.

"Run Rose." I said trying to push Rufus off of me or at least keep his snapping teeth away from my very human neck.

"No." I heard her determined, small voice and I glanced over at her. She was glaring at Rufus on top of me.

*That little thing is highly protective of you Ian.* He laughed in my head.

"I'm not leaving you." She said as I pushed harder against Rufus.

"I'll catch up with you." I said bringing my hands around Rufus's

neck. "They want you, not me."

She looked unsure for a moment then spotted the stinky magii getting closer to her. She ran off with one last look over at me as I phased back into a wolf and butted Rufus off of me.

*"You really going to kill me Ian?"* His voice teasing in my head. He circled me his ears flattened against his head and his teeth bared.

*"Why wouldn't I?"* I sent my voice to his head. *"You would kill me."*

*"I taught you everything you know pup."* He made a step towards me and I took one towards him.

*"You taught me nothing but greed."* I snapped circling him. *"You taught me nothing Rufus."*

He chuckled in my head and sprang at me. I felt his claws dig into my shoulders. *"You would have been nothing without us."*

*"No, I would have been a lot more."* I growled pushing him off me and pouncing on his stomach making him yelp out loud.

Green sparks shot over my head and Rufus was bound. I looked over at Danica and she gave me her usual sweet smile. "Go find Rose." She said. "Micah and Mason took off towards the east corridor."

I nodded phasing effortlessly back into my human form. "Thanks Danica." I ran towards the east. The lights blew out but my eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness.

I ran along the corridors. I felt a sharp pain flare up both my arms. I ran faster. Rose was getting hurt. I phased into a wolf knowing I could get to her quicker. Another pain shot up my spinal cord making me stumble. Rose.

I crashed into a room phasing into a human at the same time. Rose was nearly unconscious in a heap against the wall. Blood covered her front, her wrists were swelling and her knee looked dislocated.

"Oh god." I muttered to myself running up to her. She screamed as I laid an arm on her shoulder.

"It's me." I told her gently lifting her as soft as I possibly could in my arms. Her head leaned into my chest as her hand gripped the top of my uniform.

"Can you see?" Her soft voice startled me since I thought she was unconscious.

"Yes." I said. The halls looked quite clear to me as I ran both of us to the closest exit. I could feel her pain radiating throughout my own body. I leaned down and placed my lips to her sweating and hot forehead. "I need to get you out of here." She could die.

"Are you hurt?" Of course she would worry about me rather than her self. I felt her eyes looking up at me and I glanced down into her tired blue orbs.

"No." I said keeping up my pace. "But you are. I shouldn't have lost you." I said smacking myself for taking so long to get to her.

Her soft hand found my cheek in the darkness. A soft flare of sparks igniting under my skin. "It wasn't your fault." Her voice was so soft, so soft it scared me.

I kissed her palm and gave her a small smile, I felt myself fly forward Rose launching out of my arms. I quickly moved to assemble myself and look for Rose but I felt heavy paws land on top of me. "Ian!" I heard her frantic voice get farther.

I struggled under Rufus's paws. "*Say good bye to your mate Ian.*"

I threw him off me and rolled away phasing into a wolf and landing on my paws. I ignored him as I ran off towards the place Rose was dragged off, but a student landed in a heap in front of me.

I looked at the panting wolf laying on its side. "Trevor." I said kneeling down by him. "Get up son." I put my hand to his shoulder and saw the blood oozing out. He whimpered lowering his snout

and letting his eyes droop closed.

"*Danica*." I called for her in my mind and seconds later I heard the slight 'poof' as she appeared beside me.

"Trevor." She said kneeling down beside him. "Hang in there." She placed her sparking green fingers over him as Brittney came running, tears running down her face.

"Trevor!" She wailed landing in a pile beside him. "Professor Britton can you heal him?" She asked frantically.

"Yes." Danica smiled but kept her concentration on Trevor. I suddenly felt a sharp pain to my neck. I brought my hand there and felt nothing.

Then the coldness spread, the intense pain. I jumped up. "Rose." I said aloud and starting running again.

I entered the circular room to see Mason screaming and thrashing in the air. And a vampire straddling a limp Rose. I phased and lunged at him ready to rip out his throat but stopped seeing Rose curl into a ball and convulse.

I pulled her onto my lap. Her eyes closed, her dark eyelashes brushing her pale cheek. Her teeth chattered violently. "I'm right here, love." I told her pushing some of her fallen strands of hair out of her face.

"Will she be alright?" Mason crouched down beside her not even looking up at me, his eyes zoomed in on his sister and absolutely frantic.

What do I tell a teenager? How do I tell him I think his sister is going to die? That I could feel it rising in my chest like a slam of hot lava. I looked down at Rose's pale face her lips slight parted and turning a shade of blue. "She's lost blood in her wounds..." I started still looking over at Rose. Her blood covered front, her blood soaked sock. "Then he took more blood..." I said, that was all I

could give him.

I looked up at him and saw his eyes pained and he slid his hand into Rose's limp and cold one. "They're coming back." I said. "You need to get out of here Mason, it not safe for you."

He looked up at me with the same stubborn look I saw so much on Rose. "I'm not leaving her."

Our world was about to loose one Proteggi, I couldn't risk it loosing another. "I'll keep her safe, you need to go." I ordered. I saw his eyes shift between Rose and I.

"I love you sis." He said and I saw him squeeze her hand. He looked at me one last time over his shoulder as he ran out towards the door. "Keep her safe." He mouthed then ran out.

"Ian." Her voice was so weak it made my heart clench. "Make it stop. Cold..." She stammered out. She trembled violently in my arms. I pulled her closer as I stood up.

"I know, love, I know." I said racing out of the room. I needed to find her help, and I needed to find it fast.

I heard the words before I felt them. The ancient magii tongue at its worst. I braced myself holding myself over Rose so the curse wouldn't hit her. I felt it hit me straight in the back.

Immediately, I felt like I was on fire. I turned to face the magii who cursed me. He stood smiling arrogantly. "I brought down the General." He sang out proudly.

I used my wolf tongue and sent a curse flying at him. He dropped to his knees screaming. The fire was building in my body, but I had to find help for Rose. I looked down at her and saw her eyes wide with fright as she stared at me.

My lungs felt tight and I struggled to get my breaths out. I felt a cold hand touch my cheek and looked back down at Rose. "Ian." Her voice was no more then a whisper.

"I'll be fine." I lied, struggling to get the words to come out of my mouth properly. I saw in her eyes, she knew I was lying, but her weak body remained limp in my arms.

I emerged in the main entrance hallway. It was a disaster. Garrett came running up to me. "They've retreated." He said and I managed a nod.

His face turned serious as he looked at me then at Rose. I softly laid Rose on the floor, knowing I couldn't hold her much longer.

The fire burst through my chest and kept the scream in my throat as my legs gave in under me. I collapsed to the floor hearing the many screams of the surrounding students. "What curse is it?" Danica came running up kneeling beside me.

I opened my mouth to speak but nothing came out as I grunted, my world slowly filling with a dark fog. I felt movement around me and whispers. Then I felt her soft lips hit mine. I knew it was Rose immediately but I had no idea what she was doing.

A warm feeling flew threw my body and all the pain disappeared. I shot my eyes open and saw the glow around Rose and I. No. "No." I saw her loosing her color, she couldn't die, no, for the first time in years, I felt tears leak from my eyes. "No, Rose No! Why? A Magii could've healed me." I cried cradling her head in my lap and sitting up. I refuse to let her die because of me, for me.

Her small, cold hand came up to my face, her eyes glazed over and her whole body shaking from the venom in the vampires bite, went limp. Her hand sliding away from my face and to the floor. I heard the hall fall silent as all the students gathered around us. I ran my hand down the length of her hair feeling the soft texture.

"Rose!" Mason and Micah kneeled by me looking at their sister. Their eyes wide, the once strong looking men now looked so. "Don't you dare leave us!" Mason roared. His fist clenching and unclenching at his side. Micah's jaw ground together looking at the pale face of his twin.

Her eyes rolled and her head lolled back against my arm. A pain stabbed through my chest and I knew it, I knew it right there, my mate was dead. I felt like I couldn't breathe, I started gasping, she was dead.

I pulled her up to my chest and buried my head in her hair. She was dead. The emptiness filled my chest living nothing but hot, fire in its wake.

Numbness spread through my being. I felt empty, void, vacant. I felt her soft skin under my spread hand. I choked, trying to swallow the animal sound that wanted to erupt from my throat. I looked down at her face, she looked almost peaceful. I ran my finger down her cheek. I half expected her to open those gorgeous blue eyes of hers. "I love you." I said softly bringing my lips to her forehead.

"Rose!" Micah whimpered and broke down in tears followed by Mason, their large bodies slumped over. The rest of the student body was sniffing and wiping tears as the rest of the faculty tried clearing the hallway.

The emptiness in my body grew worse by the moment. "Rose." I whispered her name bringing my lips to her forehead again. "Don't leave me." I clutched her limp body to me. It wasn't supposed to end like this. Not so soon.

I heard a scream and looked up to see Ana and Nathan Holloway entering the hall. They were called immediately I presumed. Ana was clutching to Nathan with tears streaming down her face, Nathan's face was hard as his eyes locked on his daughter's small body in my arms.

Mason suddenly lifted his head and looked at Micah both of them exchanged a glance. "Will it work?" Micah asked.

"It won't hurt to try." Mason's voice was gruff as they approached Rose and I.

Each one grabbed one of her hands and a golden glow

encompassed all of them. The pain in my chest lightened and I stared at Rose, noticing the slight flutter of her eyelids. Mason and Micah broke away breathing hard.

"It worked." Micah breathed out. "But I feel like crap." I looked at the identical twins in awe. They just healed a proteggi, something never heard of and on top of that they were still alive.

"Co..l..dd." Rose chattered and I smiled, just thrilled to hear her small, musical voice. I was handed a blanket and wrapped it around her bringing her closer to me and lifting her up in my arms.

"Honey." Ana came up to me, tears still rolling down her cheeks and ran a finger down Rose's cheek. "Why is she so cold?" She looked up at me.

"Vampire venom." I said and both her and Nathan's eyes went big.

"Mom," Rose chattered out. "I'm ok...ay." I smiled even when she was half dead in my arms she was still telling everyone she would be fine.

"Sleep love." I kissed her forehead and her eyes fluttered shut. I looked up at Mason and Micah who looked drained and were leaning against the walls with their eyes closed.

"Will she be okay?" Mason looked up at me, his voice barely audible.

"We can heal her the rest of the way and then she will be." Danica walked up leaving Justice hanging back.

"We'll take her to my place." I said turning down the destroyed hallway and down the east corridor.

I knew everyone was following me, Mason, Micah, Mattie, Jaemi, Ana, Nathan, Danica, Justice, Trevor, and Brittney.

"Ian," her weak voice floated through my ears and I looked down into her blue-violet eyes. "You hurt?" She asked, her words garbled and labored.

"No." I smiled. "I'm fine." She nodded her head ever so slightly then rested it against my chest and fell back asleep.

I gently laid her down on my bed bringing the comforter over her and Danica went to work. "How long till she's better?" Nathan came up behind me and stared down onto the bed.

"She will get stronger each hour." I explained, "but it will take her a couple of days to get back to her normal strength."

He nodded in understanding and looked at the guys flopped down on the couch. "And them?"

I chuckled. "Give them some food and a couple of hours and they'll be back to normal."

"Someone say food?" Mason looked back at us, a little color now returning to his face.

"My kitchen is around the hall, help yourself." I laughed as both of them pounced up and headed for my fridge.

"These Prof dorms are so much better then ours." Brittney looked around my wide living room.

"Isn't fair." Trevor grumbled falling on the couch. He cradled his arm against his chest protectively.

"How are you doing?" I asked gesturing to his arm.

"I so didn't see that stupid black wolf." He growled. "I so could have taken him if he didn't use the blackness to his advantage. He cheated!"

I chuckled shaking my head. "I'm sure you could have Trevor, but don't over use your arm so quickly."

He snorted trying to move it, winced and set it back in his lap. "Professor Britton said I'll be better in a couple of days." He whined out looking down at his useless arm.

Danica walked out at that precise moment and fell onto my couch near Justice looking exhausted. She looked over at Mattie then at Justice. "You two need to hurry up and learn how to heal, I'm drained over her." She smiled lazily.

Justice stood up. "You have some hot tea Professor?" He looked at me and I nodded pointed to the kitchen.

I sat across from Nathan and Ana. Ana still weeping into a tissue. I leaned forward and squeezed her hand. "All three of them are alright." I reassured her and she gave me a watery smile.

She pushed some of her dark hair out of her eyes and looked at me. "Will it always be like this for them?" She sniffed and Nathan put an arm securely around her. "I mean with Hunters chasing after them all the time."

I looked up at Micah and Mason who both held incredibly large sandwiches in their hands. "Not if we can help it."

## Chapter 18: Crash Course 101

~Rose's POV~

Everything was so hazy. Was it all a dream? A bad nightmare? I finally summed up enough courage to open my eyes and found myself lying in an unfamiliar bedroom.

It was nice though, the walls were a soft blue color with a floor length window with pillowing black curtains. The bed I was lying in! A dark cherry that must be king sized. The sheets were a soft gray and the feather comforter was black. And there were tons of pillows on the bed itself, all different shades of gray. I looked around the room, noticing the dark cherry dresser, matching chest of drawers, and matching nightstands. I also noticed that this room did not have a television.

I slowly sat up hearing a dull ringing in my ears. Where was I? I swung my legs over the edge of the bed and looked down at myself. I was in a large male's tee shirt, it fit me like a dress.

The smell then hit me. Ian. I was at Ian's. All the events rushed before my eyes, Reeve and Tawny, the black hooded Hunters, Ian hurt...that's the last thing I remember, Ian hurt. Was he still hurt? How long has it been?

I was beginning to panic as I stepped out of the large bedroom into a darkened hallway. I saw a soft glow coming a little ahead and saw the TV playing. The living room had been painted a bright white and offset with three tall pine bookcases pressed against the main wall. Directly in front of the bookcases was a long, dark brown leather sofa and a coffee table. The wall that separated the two bedrooms was completely taken over by the television, which was

affixed directly to the wall, just as I had suspected. Underneath it was one long, low bookcase full of DVD's. Sitting on the sofa was Ian, in a pair of sweats, that's all.

"Come sit with me." He said softly, he didn't even look back. I smiled and made my way over, my bare feet hitting the cold wood paneled floor.

He pulled me up against his chest as I climbed up on the couch bringing my feet under me as I cuddled into his side. I could hear his heart pounding at a staccato pace. His hands seemed to subconsciously rub along my body and I knew that he was reassuring himself that I was fine. I was content to lay there cradled in his arms and let his touch soothe me. "You scared me." He whispered in my ear, "I thought I lost you."

"Never." I smiled filling his arms tighten around me.

He took my cheeks in his palms and stared down at me, his silver eyes swimming in drops of gray. Our eyes stayed locked on each other as the TV softly played in the background. "I love you, Rose, so much." He spoke in a soft, unfamiliar voice. His strong features drooping around the corners "I don't know what- if —" His voice cracked and his eyes glanced away from mine.

I crushed my lips to his than. I wanted to take away the pain of the memories. "I love you Ian." I said between kisses. His tense body relaxed under me as I applied more pressure to his soft lips. His hands dropped to my back and pulled me closer to him, his warm chest moving up and down rhythmically.

I ran my fingers over his chest and along the edges of his sweats. His hands came up under his shirt that flowed around my body and ran up and down my bare back and stomach, goose bumps forming everywhere his fingers traced.

His lips moved tenderly to my neck and then to my collarbone, I ran my hand through his long hair and down his neck. I never wanted this moment to end, it made everything in my body spark with life

and everything that was wrong feel right.

It felt like I was soaring. As corny and clichéd as it might sound, I felt like I was on cloud nine. I felt whole.

He brought his lips back to mine and gently planted a warm kiss. "You hungry?" He asked breaking the kiss and running his fingers the length of my hair.

I wanted to say no, so I could just stay here on the couch with him for the rest of forever, but my stomach at that precise moment decided to growl. "I'll take that as a yes." He chuckled getting up and walking out of the living room.

I jumped up and followed him into his kitchen area. The walls were painted light yellow and it complimented the white counter tops and light colored cabinet doors perfectly. All of the cabinets were filled with plates, bowls, cups, and glasses. "I love your place." I smiled pushing myself up to sit on the counter.

He smirked and walked over leaning over me, jeez even on a counter in was taller than me. "Thanks," he whispered seductively near my ear then kissed it.

He turned quickly and I scowled, I saw his shoulders shaking as he laughed. "So you like pasta?" He looked over his shoulder at me as I nodded finding a bag of chips that were already open, so I dug my hand in and started munching on them.

"You have a lot of food for a single man. You hiding someone here I don't know about?" I laughed as he closed his over filled fridge holding some type of sauce.

"Wolf, remember?" He chuckled placing water on the stove to boil and put that weird looking sauce in another pan and turned on the heat.

He padded over to me and grabbed some chips from the bag and flung them in his mouth chomping on them. I laughed at his

expression as he stopped chewing the chips. "What the hell am I eating?"

I looked at the bag, "Sour cream and onion." I said waving the bag around and he rushed to fridge and grabbed a soda downing it in one gulp.

"So you own chips you don't like?" I arched my eyebrow.

"Well, half the time, when people come over and bring stuff, they leave it." He gestured toward the bag of chips I was still shoving my hand into.

He walked back over to the stove and poured angel hair pasta into the pan. "So is everyone okay?" I brought up the subject setting the bag back down on the counter.

"Everyone is good and accounted for." He leisured back, leaning against the counter opposite me.

"What about that mess with Reeve and Tawny?" I asked and his face scrunched up.

"I don't know." He said through clenched teeth. "I was talking about it with Garrett earlier while you were asleep. He has a theory." He stopped to turn around and stir the now very good smelling sauce.

I waited patiently while he put garlic and butter on some bread and shoved it in the oven, hey the man could cook, I like that very much, especially since he was shirtless. He turned back towards me wiping his hands on a towel. "He figures that we really are their mates, but not their true ones since we don't feel anything back. He's heard of it happening, just never seen it before."

So Reeve and Tawny were telling the truth, but in the overall truth we weren't really their mates, since we didn't connect with them back? This was all too confusing.

"You are my mate." His hand cupped my chin. "No one else's. What he feels for you is little compared to what I feel for you."

I couldn't help but smile at his words. When I was a little girl, I always dreamed who my Eric would be, you know the Eric from *The Little Mermaid*, to me he was my dream guy, the one who would literally sail to the ends of the earth for you and destroy all evil. So I would prance around my room imaging my self dancing with my Eric, and now, the here and now, I had someone who surpassed my *Eric* dreams, I had Ian.

"Penny for your thoughts?" His voice snapped me from my reverie of thoughts and his fingers tickled my upper arm.

"Just thinking about my dream guy." I smiled and he cocked his eyebrows. "Have you ever seen the *The Little Mermaid*?"

"Yes." he said still looking at me curiosity in those silver-gray eyes. "Thanks to my highly active five-year-old niece." He muttered more to himself then to me.

"Well, Eric was my dream guy." I smiled and pulled his hand so he came closer to me, "and I was just thinking how incredibly better you are then that silly cartoon character."

He beamed and kissed my forehead. "I love you." He said into my hair. I loved it when he said that, the way the words rolled off his tongue and were meant only for me. The way they went through my body like a warm flame touching every inch of me and feeling me up.

"I love you." I said right back and he kissed my cheek and headed back to the stove where he drained the pasta then stirred it into the sauce. I hopped off the counter and walked up behind him wrapping my arms around his waist, looking under his arm at the steaming meal, the garlic scent feeling the air.

"Smell delicious." I said sniffing loudly and he chuckled pulling me around to his front and looking straight down into my eyes.

He smile and reached over me bringing down some bowls and served us, then cut up the bread. He pulled out two trays and fixed

them up and then put out some sodas. "Dinner and a movie Madame?" He carried both trays and offered me his elbow.

I smiled my hands going around his elbow as we walked back out to his sofa and flopped down. He set my tray over my lap and pulled the remote from between the cushions and pressed several buttons.

The fireplace turned on, the lights dimmed, and a movie started. "Wow." I laughed looking at the small remote in his hand. "Fancy, fancy Professor McAllister." I nudged his side both of us laughing.

The movie started and it was one I've never seen or heard off, but it was good, and perfect with the wonderful Italian dinner that we were both eating. I never wanted to leave, I could stay like this forever, and there was no doubt in my body about it.

The halls looked normal. Everything back in place, like nothing ever happened. "The work of our Magii." Ian leaned near my ear as we headed to his classroom.

People whispered as I passed them and pointed at me. "Why did everyone have to witness my death?" I grumbled and Ian linked an arm around my waist.

I felt his lips hit the side of my head as the familiar sparks flew through my body. "Sis!" Mason and Micah came bounding up to me and had their overly large arms around me and muttering things I couldn't even understand.

"You missed it!" Micah exclaimed throwing his arms widely in the air.

"It was amazing!" Mason said his usual mature demeanor falling.

"The glow-"

"The warmth-"

"The power-"

"Oh..." Mason sighed. Finishing the twins battle of words. I rolled my eyes.

"What are you talking about?" I asked as Ian chuckled and slipped into his classroom.

"You saving Ian and then us saving you." Micah said matter-of-factly. "It was so...cool!"

"So I hear." I grumbled. "Everyone is talking about it but I can't seem to remember much." I shivered. "Just the cold."

Mason furrowed his eyebrows. "I want to kill that vamp who did that do you, in fact I think one of the Warriors did. At least, that's what Jaemi and Mattie were talking about." He shrugged as the bell rang.

They strutted off to their class waving at a few of the freshman girls. I rolled my eyes turning towards Ian's class. Mattie was pouncing in her seat looking at me expectantly, while Trevor looked in a sour mood clenching and unclenching his arm and wincing a little as he did so.

"You were amazing." Mattie said in a not-really-there whisper. She pushed some of her fly-away red strands out of her eyes. "You should have seen it." She grinned. I looked around, everyone was acting normal. Like no Hunters attacked their school only yesterday.

I glanced at the Wayland students most of them glowering at me. "It's because of what's-his-face." Trevor grumbled out not looking up from his hand. "They're mad that you got him kicked out."

"Huh?" I asked confused.

"Reeve." Mattie said. "He hasn't been seen since yesterday." She shrugged. "But who cares about that. A Proteggi used powers and lived to tell about it!"

That was refreshing to think about. "Did you badger Micah about this already?"

"Of course." She grinned. "He said it felt like his body got really warm...what did it feel like for you? When I used my magic my hands feel really warm, like..."She paused glancing at me and tilting her head. "Never mind." She blushed. "Answer my question."

That girl could talk. "I don't remember." I said. "I just remember Ian being hurt and I couldn't let him die."

At this I saw Ian glance up from talking to one of his students and give me a weak smile. "You should have seen him." Mattie whispered near my ear, so no one else could hear. "When you died. I mean, I've heard the horror stories of when people loose their mates how they basically die themselves, loose their souls. But I never imagined that."

My eyes widened and I looked up at Ian who was laughing with a student who was throwing green sparks out of his fingers which were turning into some type of figure. "What happened?"

"He sobbed." Mattie said looking near tears her self. "He wouldn't let you go, not even when Mason and Micah went up to try and save you."

I felt my heart clench. I couldn't imagine Ian sobbing. "Well, honestly I think the whole school was crying." Trevor added in and we jumped thinking no one was listening. "You should have seen Mattie and Jaemi." He juttet his thumb at Mattie, who in return stuck out her tongue.

"Very mature Matilda." He chuckled.

"Don't call me that!" She screeched and a pillar from the roof fell flat on his desk making him jump back and topple over his chair landing in a heap.

"Damn Mattie." He dusted off his jeans as Ian made his way over,

scowling at the huge part of the ceiling on Trevor's desk.

"Mattie, anymore of this and you're going to destroy my classroom." He chuckled removing the beam like it didn't weigh anything. He leaned it against the far wall shaking his head.

Trevor glared at Mattie rubbing his arm. "You alright?" I asked gesturing to his arm.

"Yeah I'm good." He said, settling himself down in his chair again. "I just thought this would be better by now."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Bit by a Hunter wolf." He said lazily and my eyes widened. I already knew what a vampire bite did to you but I never asked what a wolf bite could do to you. "Harmless to other wolves, but the poison it releases weakens our muscles. Almost like a paralyzing drug." He said as if reading my mind. "Now if another species was to be bit by one of us, the consequences are worse. You actually become paralyzed and then you feel like you're burning alive."

I cringed, the opposite of a vampire bite. "Can it kill you?"

"If the wolf wants it to." Ian added straddling a chair in front of them. "Just like a vampire. If they wish it, it can cause death. But many of them just like to see people suffer."

I looked over at Mattie. "Can Magii do anything like that?"

I saw Ian wince. "More then you know." He said. "They curse."

"Curse?" I asked. My mind was starting to spin with the freaky part of this world. Behind all their cool powers and their beauty they were dangerous creatures. Beautiful but deadly soon had a whole other meaning to me.

Ian nodded. "What happened to me." He pointed out. "I was cursed by a Magii."

"But only a really powerful Magii can curse." Mattie added in. "For instance, if I tried cursing you right now..." She paused cringing away from the glare Ian gave her. "I'm just giving an example Professor. Anyways, if I tried to curse you, all that would happen is you fell a slight uncomfortable sensation and then it would disappear."

"What does the curse do?" I asked.

"It depends, there are three main ones." Ian said, sounding very much like his professor-self. "The biggest one is the Curse of Fear. It makes the victim feel like they are in their greatest fear, making them not only feel it by hallucinate it as well. To the point of insanity."

"The second in the Curse of Mirth." Mattie continued. "Mirth, was an Ancient Elder who grew furious at his son for falling in love with a human. So through rage and hate he threw a curse at him. It was his instant death, but miles away his mate suffered a long, painful one. So basically, it kills both mates. It's also known as the Curse of the Mates."

"And the final is the Curse of the Elements." Ian said and his face visibly paled. "It a curse of torture. They make the elements, in which Magii get their power, go against every rule in the book. First the victim feels like he is burning alive, then like he is drowning, then like he is suffocated. Fire, Water, Air."

I took a deep breath. So much information in the span of minutes and most of it was still floating around in my head. "Which one hit you?" I looked up at Ian.

"Elements, but I only felt the fire before you healed me." He said giving me a weak smile.

"Welcome to Crash Course 101." Trevor chuckled. "We learn this since the day we are born and you have to learn it in the span of homeroom."

I gave him a sarcastic smile. "Thanks." I rotated all the information in my head. When something occurred to me. "Elders." I simply said, remember what Mattie said about Ancient Elder Mirth.

Mattie and Trevor both looked at Ian. "We'll let him explain that one." Trevor leaned back stretching his arms above him and slightly wincing as his left arm rose.

"Elders are the most powerful of their species." Ian said looking deep in thought. "Only a select few are given the honor, and usually aren't given a choice. The Power selects them.

"No more than five Elders are in each species. Besides Proteggi, they have no Elder as there are not enough of them." He took a deep breath his silvery eyes locking with mine. "Ancient Elders are the how we refer to our dead Elders."

"You said Headmaster Seeley was an Elder that's why he could use magic. But I remember you using magic." I babbled out remembering how he sent the Magii to his knees screaming in the halls.

He gave me a half smile. "You noticed that huh?" He quirked his eyebrow up. "Yes, Elders use their native tongue to use magic. And yes I used magic."

"But you're not an Elder." I pointed up and I saw the looks Mattie and Trevor gave me. "Wait you're an Elder!"

He shook his head. "Not yet, but I will be. The Power has already been given to me."

"Well, when do you become an Elder?" I asked leaning forward. What else didn't I know about him?

He shrugged. "Whenever the Power decides to escalate, to show itself. I was given the Power as a boy, so I don't know when to expect it." I pursed my lips at his explanation. Why was he barely telling me this now?

"But when you are what we call, a Power. You are regarded just as high as an Elder." Trevor said gesturing to Ian. I saw an odd glance that Mattie threw Trevor.

"And how many Powers are there?" I asked.

"Just as many as Elders. It goes by generations." Mattie smiled.

"So for our generation." I gestured to Mattie, Trevor, and I. "There are five Powers somewhere?"

Mattie grinned elbowing Trevor who whistled and turned his head. "Yes." Ian answered also looking at Trevor who suddenly phased into a wolf and laid his snout on the desk feigning sleep.

Mattie leaned into my ear. "Trevor is one of them."

My mouth popped open and I leaned over and swatted his good arm. "And you...out of all people...didn't tell me this. I thought you would be flouncing it for all the world to hear." I laughed.

"Oh trust me, Brittney does it enough for him." Mattie rolled her eyes. "I'm surprised she hasn't told you."

"She doesn't speak much to me." I pointed out. "Anyone else I should know is a Power?" I asked looking squaring at Mattie.

"I wish." She snorted. "I would be so much better then my clumsy magic." She giggled. "But Professor Britton is, that is why she is such a powerful healer."

"That's a reason why everyone was so sure her and Professor McAllister would be mates." Trevor said ignoring the murderous glare from Ian. "They both grew up together, both came here and graduated together, and both were Powers." I blinked a couple of times, I didn't even realize when he phased back to his human form.

I snorted. "Now don't be jealous." Mattie said in a sing-song voice. "Professor McAllister never looked at her like that, just like a sister." She grinned. "Especially after Justice came along."

"You know I am sitting here." He chuckled running a hand through his tousled hair.

I leaned over and kissed his cheek, feeling the slight scratchiness of his stubble. "So anything else I need to know?"

"For right now?" Ian tilted his head glancing around the classroom. "I really need to pick up in here."

I tugged on his sleeve to grab his attention. "Ian?"

"Oh well, no." He shrugged. "There is a lot, yes. But you will learn in time. I don't want to overwhelm that pretty little head of yours." He ruffled my dark ringlets.

Throughout the rest of the day I sat in my classes not really paying attention. My mind still lingering on my crash course. But I did notice the slight differences in my classes. My history class not only went over the American Civil War and stuff like that but it also went over their history.

Interesting was the fact of the myth of the wolf and vampire being mortal enemies. It started when two Ancient Elders, one vampire and one wolf, were on a power high. Each wanted the others position, which in the end led to a battle and many deaths. Since then, it is said the vampires and wolves hate each other.

When I thought my mind would explode with all this new and out-there information I went to Biology. Now, Professor Britton wasn't only making us look at plants and dead frogs but brought up the mating and breeding process and how our souls 'scientifically' fit together.

"And I thought school was boring." Mason snorted in my ear during that lesson. Each class was not only a stereotypical, normal class but also now held pieces to 'their' world.

After the final bell I walked swiftly to my locker eager to meet with Ian. I looked over my shoulder at the Warrior who stood ten feet

from me. "They are following me too." Micah leaned in from behind making me jump with surprise.

"So I'm not just imagining it?" I asked looking into the familiar face of the Warrior. Why did he always look so familiar?

"No." Ian then turned up at my side. "I ordered you three to have your own Warriors following you. The Hunters are still in the boundaries of the city."

"I don't think you only have three Warriors in the school Professor." Mason came up carrying Jaemi's red purse in his hand. "Just in case you haven't noticed."

Ian chuckled looking at the little purse in Mason's large hand. "Yes, I'm aware of that. The school needs higher protection. If they penetrated our protective border once, then they can do it again."

"What's with the purse, bro?" Micah eyed it with a devilish smile on his face. "Is there something you need to tell me?" He lifted one eyebrow and I saw the tips of Mason's ears turn a light shade of pink.

"Oh grow up." Jaemi rolled her eyes grabbing the purse from Mason as she exited the bathroom. "He was just being a gentlemen."

Both Micah and I laughed at that one. Clearly, she had never witnessed Mason in our old high school. Girls were nothing more than pleasure to him, as sickening as that is.

Ian chuckled pulling me away from the bickering. He leaned down near my ear making me involuntarily shiver. "You staying with me tonight?" His voice deep and very, very appealing.

"I..." I closed my eyes at the sensual feeling floating throughout my body. My mind became jumbled and all meshed together. I heard Ian chuckle.

"I didn't know I had such an appeal to you." He laughed pulling me closer.

My mouth wanted to open and talk to him but for some reason I just felt like I was drooling. "Ian McAllister." I heard the slight giggle of Professor Britton. "Stop torturing the poor girl."

"What?" Ian laughed. "I can't help what I'm feeling. And I can't help that it's rubbing off on her."

"Control yourself." She swatted the back of his head as she continued down the hall.

"Right." He took a deep breath and pulled away from me. My head immediately cleared up.

"What did you do?" I asked rubbing my forehead. He put on wide, innocent eyes.

"Sorry." He smiled pulling me close again. "I forgot to control the whole empathy thing. It's hard being around you sometimes." He chuckled running a finger through one of my ringlets. "So are you staying with me tonight?" He asked again.

"Yup." I smiled just as he veered to the right of the east corridor. I would stay with him for eternity.

## Chapter 19: Broken Soul

~Rose's POV~

Being in Ian's apartment felt like home. Felt like I had lived here my whole life and just realized it at that moment. I loved watching him as he dug through piles of paperwork muttering to himself, loved watching him scour the fridge to fill his never empty stomach, and I loved sitting on the counter and smelling the delicious aroma of whatever he was cooking.

The list I can compile could probably go on for miles. For example, I loved sitting across the table from him and watch him grade papers while he yelled at them at the same time, or the way he could never find that one shirt he is always looking for. The way he always glances over at me, just to make sure I'm still there.

I glanced down at the plate in my hands and smiled at the baked chicken. "Smells good."

He looked over at me, his cheek puffed out as he was already shoving his face. "Thanks." He garbled out swallowing his food at the same time.

I cut into my chicken and laid back against the couch and enjoyed whatever movie he popped in. "*Wolfman*?" I choked out seeing the titles.

"What?" He laughed. "I can't enjoy the classics?"

"Seriously?" I shook my head. "This movie makes you guys look like puppy dogs."

"Puppy dogs?" He raised his eyebrow. "So from fur ball to puppy

dog now huh?"

I nodded my head as my mouth was full of rice. I watched out of the corner of my eye as he placed his plate down silently. "I'll show you puppy dog." He chuckled and I felt the slight breeze hit the side of my cheek.

I looked over and was eye to eye with a sable wolf. His teeth were bared at me and he was growling. "You're drooling." I pointed out and he pounced on me sending my plate crashing to the floor and my head into the many soft pillows.

His large claws fell on each side of my head caging me in. His snout right in my face. I laughed running my hand through his soft fur. "I don't think I can ever be scared of you Ian McAllister, but I can say you can be quite frightening."

He responded by running his very sloppy soft pink tongue across my cheek. "Ugh, gross." I wiped my hand across my wet cheek. "You're worse then Shanzie." A wolfish laugh rumbled against me he shook his head.

In the midst of closing my eyes to wipe the drool, I felt the sloppy tongue become a gentle kiss on my lips, and the paws were now hands running through my hair. "I'm worse then Shanzie?" He chuckled near my ear. "So now I'm being compared to a dog?"

"Technically you are from the same species." I giggled as he laid a kiss on my forehead and pushed him self off me, his clothes more rumpled then normal.

"No, I think I am more human." He pointed out picking up my food mess from the floor.

I looked down at my uniform and scowled. "You ruined my shirt." I said as he threw the plate in the sink. "Between dog drool and particles of flying food."

He laughed shaking his head and disappeared down the hall. He

threw me one of his shirts and pointed towards the bathroom.

Inside the bathroom I put the grey v neck shirt to my nose and inhaled. It smelt like Ian, the natural essence that I loved. I stripped off my uniform and tugged on his shirt letting it drop to my knees. I braided my hair back and discarded my uniform in the corner.

When I walked out Ian was back on the couch watching the movie and a new plate of food was sitting in my place. "Thanks." I smiled flopping down on the couch and grabbing the hot plate.

"Mmhm." Was all he could muster out because his mouth was full. He glanced over at me and I saw his eyes go over his shirt and he swallowed. "I didn't know you were that tiny." He laughed tugging on the bottom of his shirt. "It fits you like a dress."

I narrowed my eyes at him and continued cutting up my chicken.

I stretched and smiled opening my eyes, I remembered falling asleep sometime during the movie and Ian carrying me to his bedroom and kissing me goodnight. I sat up and looked around the sun-brightened room. Ian's professor robe hung from the back of his door and some dirty sock lay by his dresser. I laughed as I swung my legs over the edges and practically danced out of his room, I was floating on cloud nine.

It was amazing at the feeling that got left behind when I was with Ian. I turned the corner of the hallway and froze when I saw Tawny sitting on the couch.

"What are you doing here?" I hissed and she craned her neck to look at me. A hot flare of jealousy raced through my body. Why would Ian have another girl here? Especially a girl he knows is stalker-psycho.

"Ian invited me." She smiled, since when did she call him *Ian*?

I looked around the apartment for him, but heard the shower going. "I would get dressed, since you'll be leaving soon." She started filing

her nails. I was in the midst of wanting to ram that stupid nail filer up her nose.

I looked down at myself, still in one of Ian's t-shirts, my feet bare, and my hair probably resembling a hay stack. I looked back over at her, she was sitting straight up, her blonde hair swooped up perfectly and her legs crossed in stilettos and a mini skirt, a pink halter to top it all off.

I suddenly felt so small and average compared to the creature sitting in front of me. She of course, paid no attention to my inner struggles as I shifted on my feet. Ian would have told me if he invited queen bitch over, right?

I ran my fingers through my tangled ringlets self consciously and licked my dry lips. "I don't think you should be here." I tried to make my voice sound cold and hard but I think only a squeak came out.

She glanced up from her nail filing at me and cocked one of her perfectly, plucked and shaped eyebrows. "No, I don't think *you* should be here."

"Ian is my mate." I pointed out.

She rolled her eyes and placed her filer in her purse that probably caused more then my parent's car. "Shall we go through this again?" She said standing up and placing her hands on her hips.

Ian came out of the shower just then. His wet hair falling around his face and in some faded jeans and a blue v-neck t-shirt. His eyes darted between Tawny and I. His face seemed drawn and tired and my stomach did a flip flop in my body. Something didn't feel right.

"Ian what is she doing here?" I walked up to him wanted to wrap my arms around him but he took a step back. I stopped immediately feeling a pain hit me straight in the heart. Why was he stepping away from me?

Tawny laughed a high pitch, very annoying laugh and stepped over to Ian who draped his arm around her. I watched as she leaned her face into the crook of his neck to kiss it. I physically cringed, I felt like I was stabbed. I looked up at him wide eyed but his face was hard and cold. "Ian..." I whimpered starting to feel myself shake.

What the hell was going on? Where was my loving man from last night, my dream guy? My eyes went from his arm that was securely around Tawny's waist to her eyes that were dancing with love. I took another step back, surely I was just dreaming.

"Ian..." I said again, but it sounded more like a hysterical plea. What could have happened in the span of one night that made him want Tawny? Was is something I did? Did he hate the puppy dog bit that much?

"Go away Rose." His voice was laced an ice as he spoke to me. It felt like a knife was stabbed through me a second time. I've heard him use that voice before, at the Hunters, at Reeve, but never at me. He never used that voice against me. Where was that gentle man from last night?

"Ian, I love you." I sounded pathetic, like I was begging at his feet on my hands and knees.

"Get the hell out Rose." His voice was final. The pain that followed became unbearable as I stumbled backwards my eyes focused on his unwavering face. It felt like my whole entire body was shattered, like many little glass shards.

"Ian?" I felt the hot tears rolling down my cheeks, what happened? What did I do?

"Show some respect." He growled, "Professor McAllister." My mouth flew open as the hole in my chest ripped itself for everyone to see and I crumbled to the floor not caring if I lived or died. All I wanted at that moment, was to die.

It felt like something in me broke away, split in half, shattered. I was

no longer whole. I curled on the floor, not knowing what to do with myself. I wanted to feel Ian's arms wrap around me and tell me it wasn't real, that I was just having a nightmare. But I only heard the distant laugh of Tawny.

I heard commotion at the door. "What the hell is going on?" Mason's voice waved over me like fog. Somehow, they always knew when I was in trouble.

"Get her out of here." Professor McAllister's voice sent cold daggers through my entire body. I shivered curling myself into a tighter ball. My mind raced over everything and what I did to make him suddenly hate me.

"Come on, sis." Mason's voice was near my ear and I could fill him trying to pull me up, but I just wanted to stay there and rot, let me die, just please let me die.

He finally picked me up and walked out the door, I could hear him talking with Micah but I didn't understand anything. Everything in me was dead, was gone, was left with the one I thought loved me.

## Chapter 20: Bidding Her Time

*~Mason's POV~*

I paced in the living room, my parents sitting on the couch quietly and Micah mumbling to himself. How could he do that to Rose? Weren't they mates? It was proven time after time, they felt each other, were attached to each other, they were connected.

Rose, well Rose, wasn't Rose anymore. She hasn't spoken since I found her crumpled and in a heap on McAllister's floor, his arm confidently hung around that bitch's shoulders. It's been a long two days since then. Anger flared in my body, I was supposed to protect from these kinds of assholes. I was supposed to make sure she never got hurt.

I clenched my hand into a fist and glanced over at Micah, he seemed to be having the same inner struggles as myself. His face was drawn and his lips held in a tight line. Rose was always close to us, so when I looked around our living room and she was sitting on her favorite chair in the corner more rage flowed through me.

Rose died to save him and this is what she gets in return? "Did she eat?" My dad asked. Micah and I shook our heads. She wouldn't touch food or water for that matter.

My dad clenched his fist and stood up quickly and I jumped back thinking he was going to plow something. I've never seen him so livid, so angry, so ready to blow. My father was a very reserved man, so seeing that emotion on his face made us all on edge.

My mom, who usually was the first to overreact, was eerily quiet. "We should keep her home from school today." My mom said ever

so quietly. I'm surprised I heard her. I glanced at the clock and scowled at the time.

"I think you're right." My dad added sitting back down, taking a deep breath and running his hands roughly over his face.

I heard shuffling behind me and saw Rose, her head hung and in her uniform. She didn't say anything or even look up at us but she slung her bag over her shoulder and walked out the door. My dad looked worriedly after her, his brow creasing. "Watch her." He ordered.

Both Micah and I nodded and went outside. She was already sitting in the back of the rental car and had her head leaning against the window. "She looks terrible." Micah whispered in my ear.

"I know." I said climbing into the driver's seat, for once we didn't fight over the keys.

We walked into the courtyard of the school. Many people glanced our way, most likely the story of McAllister and Rose had already spread among everybody. Even the Warriors looked curious.

Mattie and Jaemi came walking up their faces pinched and worrisome. Jaemi came to grab my hand. "How is she?" She whispered quietly into my ear.

I shook my head. "Worse every day." I muttered back.

Mattie heard what I said then walked up to Rose looping her arm through Rose's small arm. Rose made no attempt to acknowledge any of them but kept walking. Mattie looked over Rose's head and Micah and frowned, her usual spunky face was gone.

Reeve, who along with Tawny had mysteriously showed up at school again walked towards us. There was something I didn't like about him, maybe it's just because my sister hated him, but he gave me the heebie-jeebies.

His hands were shoved in his pockets and he didn't even glance at any of us except for Rose. "Hi Rose." Was all he said. She didn't

even look up at him but unlooped her arm from Mattie and pushed past Reeve and into the school.

"Stay away from her." Micah growled at him pushing him aside.

"Don't mess with me Proteggi."

"Is that a threat Vampire?" I stood up to him, he was a little shorter than me, which helped.

"Back off." He growled turning on his heel. "You would never survive." He muttered walking away.

We hurried into the school after Rose and found her leaning against the lockers outside of McAllister's class. She made no move to go in as the bell rang. Trevor bounded up behind us and his smile automatically fell off his face. "What's wrong with her?" Apparently he had no idea what was going on.

As Mattie quickly filled him in I saw the color drain from his face. Rose didn't flinch as he leaned down to her level. "Rose, why don't we skip class. We can go get milkshakes or something."

"Of course it would be food for you." Jaemi rolled her eyes while Trevor glared at her.

Rose pushed herself away from the lockers and walked into the room. Trevor and Mattie both ran in after her.

"I could kill him" Micah snapped in my ear and I nodded, I felt exactly the same damn way.

I followed her into her class. I wanted to make sure she was going to be alright. She was sitting in her normal spot, Trevor and Mattie on each side of her. People in the class were whispering and looking at her with sympathetic expressions.

McAllister was perched on his desk watching her. I noticed something in him that made me freeze, he had the dark smudges under his eyes, the permanent frown on his face, he looked the same

as Rose, and as she glanced up at him he flinched.

I looked at Micah. "Something isn't right" He said and I nodded, exactly what I was thinking. I was ready to tell him off but the look of him as he watched my sister slump down in her chair biting back the tears, told me against it.

"Professor, may I speak with you?" Jaemi startled me, I looked at her then to McAllister who nodded and came out into the hall. He saw my brother and I and basically turned around ready to head back in when Jaemi grabbed his wrist.

"Please hear me out, Professor." She said and Headmaster Seeley popped up behind us. He nodded stiffly and looked between us.

"What's going on Ian?" Headmaster Seeley asked "Something isn't right."

"Everything is fine." He said confidently straightening out and running a hand through his hair.

I clenched my fist I wanted to punch him, I wanted to ram his head into the wall and watch him suffer. Jaemi put a hand on my arm and I instantly relaxed. "Headmaster I think something is funny, especially since now his mate is Tawny." Jaemi squeezed my hand as her words came out smoothly.

"Don't talk about her like that." McAllister growled at Jaemi and once again I wanted to plow his head into the wall. Micah wasn't holding up much better, I could basically see the steam coming out of his ears.

Suddenly Rose was flying out of the room with her hands over her mouth. Mattie came out right behind her. "She's sick." She said and ran after her.

I saw for a fraction of second from the corner of my eyes, the pained expression that quickly passed over his face, but just as quickly as it came it was gone.

"What's going on?" Tawny sauteed towards McAllister and her hands slid around his waist, I could plow her too.

"Tawny, if you would come to my office so we can speak privately." Headmaster Seeley said somewhat politely to her. She smiled kissing McAllister's face and headed down the hall. "Mason and Micah, maybe you should call your parents to pick up Rose or take her home, she needs rest. Everyone else back to class." He turned with the wave of his hand.

I turned back towards McAllister. "If anything happens to her because of you – " I hissed in his face. "I will kill you myself." I stormed away from him, Micah and Jaemi at my heels towards the restrooms I saw Rose running too.

Jaemi went in while I pulled out my cell to call my dad. "What's wrong Mason?" My dad immediately asked as he answered his phone.

"Rose." I said and I heard my dad sigh.

"How bad?" He asked

"Bad, she's in the restroom with Mattie and Jaemi."

"I'm on my way." He hung up when Mattie and Jaemi emerged with Rose under their arms. She looked like she would break at any moment.

As the cold November days turned to the snowy mornings of December, Rose got worse. Now, we had to force feed her and even that she would throw up, she simply gave up her will to live, she went to school, but talked to no one, or even looked at anyone, she was just there, bidding her time.

Professor McAllister seemed to change too, he was always with Tawny. He seemed a hell of a lot better than Rose, but he still wasn't that friendly, kind, and gentle guy we met two months ago, he now

was distant, and almost snapping at everyone.

It was the snow filled day on December seventeenth, our eighteenth birthday that changed everything.

## Chapter 21: Shattered Heart

*~Rose's POV~*

"Happy birthday, sis!" Micah barged into my room with Mason right behind them. Their faces bright and happy, one holding balloons the other holding a teddy bear larger than I was.

I slipped on my book bag and walked passed them. I didn't deserve to celebrate, this past month I have been racking my brain trying to figure out what I have done to McAllister to make him hate me.

My mind constantly rewound to that last night at his house and then night before that. Every little detail had unstrung itself inside my head. Every word I said repeated itself in my ears. Maybe, he didn't like the way his shirt looked at me, or maybe he was mad for giving up his bed to me while he slept on the couch. Or maybe, I just wasn't good enough.

I walked the school halls in a daze ignoring all the sympathetic gazes thrown at me. Some people I passed wished me happy birthday but I kept walking, I thought time healed all wounds, but as time passed it felt like everything got worse.

Have you ever held your arms out and spun and spun around watching the clouds in the blue sky swirl together? And then you stop and look straight again watching the world shake around you? I had my fun time spinning and spinning around watching everything fall into a beautiful swirl and now my world was shaking; only it wasn't resetting itself.

The bell rang and I waited for the final bell, the final minute to walk into his class. He was perched on his desk like usual, today Tawny

was standing near him, his head bent and whispering to her.

Ice daggers plunged in me and I bit my bottom lip to keep from screaming out. I sat in my chair and ignored the worried glances Trevor and Mattie shot me. Reeve tapped my back and I ignored him, I heard him curse and fall away.

"So, my house tonight." Trevor whispered into my ear. "A big bash for you and your brothers. You only turn eighteen once." His voice was pitched with tight excitement.

I didn't even bother to look at him, he knew very well that I didn't want to go. I heard Mattie let out a sigh. "How bout we just hang and watch some movies tonight? Chocolates and all." She bumped my shoulder giving me a fake, small smile.

I leaned onto my hand. There was really only one thing I wanted for my birthday and it had nothing to do with gifts and cake. I ran my hands over my eyes. They always felt so heavy but when I tired to close them and sleep, nothing would come. Not even peaceful blackness.

I now understood the meaning of a mate's broken soul. I no longer felt like me. Like I was whole. I felt like I shriveled up and couldn't mend myself. My soul was literally torn in half. And it hurt. It hurt like hell.

I kept my eyes focused on the black board behind McAllister, that was how I dealt with being around him, I really didn't look at him. Although, my eyes would find him somehow, god I missed him. I missed his soft lips on mine, his gentle touch, his safety, the warmth of his arms, his breath on my skin, his words, him, god I missed him.

I moved my gaze to the book on my desk, focusing on the little triangle patterns along the edge, they started to blur and I quickly wiped the back of my hand across my eyes. Why couldn't someone just end this misery, take a knife and shove it in my chest, it would feel better then this.

I looked towards the windows and saw the snow softly falling towards the ground covering the courtyard in a blanket of white. I remember once, when I was a little girl, Shanzie was chasing after me in our backyard that was piled in snow, Dad was sitting drinking coffee with mom as we just finished building a snowman. The boys were hurdling snow balls at each other. That was the first time I've ever seen snow. And now looking at it, I loved it, how the white laid so quietly and mysteriously beautiful on the ground.

I removed my eyes from the world outside to the here and now and looked at McAllister who kissed Tawny goodbye and she danced out of the room as my heart clenched. I remember when he first told me about mates, how they couldn't survive without each other, now I knew why.

I did research a couple of weeks ago about people who lost their mates to death and such, they wound up killing themselves, or as everyone says 'died of a broken heart'. My heart was beyond broken, it was shattered into a million pieces, stomped on a few times and still it seemed to keep breaking into smaller and smaller pieces.

My eyes shifted involuntarily to McAllister. His lips were in a tight line, his eyes held no emotion, and he looked exhausted. He looked probably almost as bad as me, but he was the one pushing me away, he was the one who no longer loved me, who didn't want me in his life.

I've never been one for thinking the end of the world when a boyfriend left me, but this was different. Now, it really did feel like the end of the world, like the world had no meaning. Am I being over dramatic? Probably, but in a sense Ian was me and I was him. I needed him for my soul to survive just as he needed me.

But he didn't need me. That's what tore me to shreds. That's what kept me awake at night. Why didn't he need me? Does that mean he wasn't really my mate? The thought made it feel like a ten ton brick of cement was laying on my chest.

I gotten pretty use to the pain by now. The intense pain that was left

by his absence. It was now a numb feeling in my body, it would only flare up when I saw him.

I looked back up at him, he was now going on and on about some dance that was coming up. I ignored his speech but listened to his voice. How is still seemed so rich and laced with silk that could lure anybody in, but now it held a hint of weariness, or exhaustion, like he was forcing the words to spew from his mouth.

His shirt was untucked a little in the front, how he often left it, simply because he was too lazy to do it properly and it was too uncomfortable for him. His dark slacks hugged his hips nicely but that's not what caught my eyes. The blue gems that set the hilt of his dagger is what grabbed my attention. I knew the adult werewolves carried around their daggers and I knew once werewolves graduated they were presented their very own.

Most of the time coming from their fathers, or grandfathers. Ian told me his was handed down to him from his great-grandfather. It was passed generation to generation and one day Ian would give it to his very own son.

I let my eyes linger on the hilt of the dagger. The delicate silver detailing around the sapphire gems. I looked back out at the snow, the beautiful snow.

That's when I knew it had to end. All this pain, all this agony, all this misery. It would end for Ian too, he would no longer have to worry about me, no longer have to worry about looking over his shoulder to see if I was watching him and Tawny. He could just relax and live a happy life with her.

I never thought I would give up so easily but I just wanted him to be happy. It scared me how little I thought about everything else.

I stood up walking to the front whatever McAllister was saying he stopped mid sentence and the class hushed. I stopped right in front of him looking at every angle of his features.

Those silver-gray eyes that could send me to my knees, the small dimple on the left side of his cheek when he smiled, how his hair laid messily around his head. His eyes went over me, I thought I saw a glimpse of my Ian, those smoldering silver-gray eyes that would touch my soul. But then I smelled the high flowery perfume on his professor's robe and so suddenly my body flared with heat, he smelt like Tawny now, not like natural and fallen rain, and soap.

I moved my hand not taking my eyes off his face towards his waistband. His eyes were moving fast to someone over my shoulder then someone behind him. I gripped his dagger before he even realized it.

I flipped the blade in my hand, it was heavier then I expected. I knew I should be thinking of everyone else. Like Micah and Mason. Mom and Dad. But somehow my mind was being selfish, it was on a one track route.

"Rose, no!" I scarcely heard Trevor but I did feel the weight of his body hit me. I heard other people shouting too. I even think Headmaster Seeley was saying something. But nothing mattered anymore.

I looked once more up at McAllister, his eyes had darkened and his lips were pressed in a hard line. "Go ahead, Rose." His voice was final. His words alone tore me apart and I didn't even feel the blade as it went in me.

*"No, it's mine!" He roared pulling the teddy bear from my grasp. I puffed out my lower lip and my eyes filled up.*

*"No, mine." Micah stumbled over and pulled the teddy bear from Mason, who immediately starting wailing.*

*I put my hands over my ears. Soon, both of them were wailing, and the teddy bear went sailing across the living room. I moved over between my Micah and Mason and reached for the teddy bear and brought him close to my chest,*

*proudly sticking my tongue out at my brothers.*

*"I had it first." Mason pouted and gripped an arm and tried to tug it from my grasp.*

*"Nab-uh." Micah grabbed a leg and pulled . "I did."*

*"No." I said pulled the head towards me. "My teddy."*

*We tugged, we cried, and we yanked. None of us releasing the teddy. Finally, a loud tearing noise was heard and both boys fell back on their butts, one holding a leg and the other an arm.*

*I looked down at the stuffing coming out of my teddy bear and screamed. Then Micah did, then Mason. "Now what?" My flustered mom came running into the room and looked down at the three- year- old faces all tear stained. Then to the teddy bear. "You have many teddy bears and all three of you want this one." She laughed shaking her head. .*

*"My teddy." I cried seeing the stuffing covering my skirt.*

*Mason looked over at me and wiped his eyes. He handed me the arm. Then Micah came over and handed me the leg. "I'm sorry." Mason kissed my cheek.*

*"We fix it." Micah said putting the pieces together. And like that, the fighting three -year-olds were best friends again.*

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*"What if you slobber on me?" I stuck my tongue out and Emory quirked his eyebrow.*

*"I'm not a kid." He pointed out. "I know how to kiss."*

*"You're thirteen." I rolled my eyes. "You're no adult either. And what other girls have you kissed?"*

*Pink colored the tips of his ears. "Well, I haven't technically kissed any other girls." He scratched the back of his head, sending his brown curls going every which way.*

*"So who did you kiss then?" I asked feeling the slight breeze hit my cheek on the football field*

*"No one." He muttered. "But I want to kiss you."*

*I felt my cheeks flare under his gaze. "But why me?"*

*He shrugged. "You're different, Rose. You're not like all those other girls."*

*"How do you know?"*

*He grinned and pushed up his dark rimmed glasses up his nose. "I just do." He leaned and quickly pecked my lips.*

*"Hey!" I groaned looking away from Emory. "What do you think you're doing with my sister!"*

*"Yeah, get your filthy little hands away from her!" Micah stomped over right behind Mason.*

*Emory's brown eyes came up to mine startled. "I'll see you later, Rose." He dashed off just as my brother's reached the bench.*

*I scowled at them and crossed my arms. "What?" Mason asked innocently. "That little twerp had his lips all over your face. You're only thirteen you know."*

*"So are you." I said standing up. "That didn't stop you from kissing Kimmi Bates."*

*"You kissed Kimmi!" Micah whirled on Mason. "I like her!"*

*"How was I suppose to know?" Mason said holding his head up a little higher.*

*I laughed and walked away, at least it got them off my tail.*

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*"Do you have to go?" Her arms settled around my neck and she sniffed loudly.*

*"Yes." I pulled away from my best friend. Her chestnut hair cropped short and*

*her dark eyes red from crying.*

*"You call me." She said. "Promise? And don't go meeting any hot guys without me."*

*"I promise." I hugged her once more.*

*"Rose, let's go darling. We have to keep the time schedule up." My dad looked over his shoulder at he talked to the moving truck.*

*"Miles says he wished he could say good bye to you." She whispered quickly in my ear. "But you're brothers..."*

*"Would kill him if he got within fifty feet of me." I laughed. "I know. And tell Miles I said bye and I wish him the best." I hugged her once more and then turned to leave with my dad.*

They weren't lying when they say you see your life flash in front of your eyes.

I felt warmth creeping up my body. Maybe, I should have just gone back to California. Get away from this. From the Hunters, the mate deal, magic, everything. Instead of shoving a knife in my chest I should have just left.

But would it have helped any? No matter how many miles I was to put between McAllister and me, I would still feel the pain.

My soul would never mend it self.

## Chapter 22: Powerless

*~Ian's POV~*

Her blue-violet eyes ran the length of me. I could feel her stare as if it was a scalding iron into my skin. She was taking me in, just like I took her in. I saw her hands trembling at her side, how she was gnawing on her bottom lip, how her eyes were so sad I could no longer look into them.

I wanted to reach out to her. I wanted to pull her in my arms, bury my hands in her soft hair. Tell her how much I loved her. I moved my arm an inch, to try and reach out to her, but an electrifying shock ran the length up to my shoulder, making my arm freeze.

I gritted my teeth. I tried telepathically sending her a message, calling out to her. But my mind hit a hard wall. It was frustrating.

I turned my head to glare at Tawny. She had tapped into the dormant vampire powers along with Reeve. She stood leaning against my door frame, her eyes glued to Rose and her closeness to me.

I pulled my lips back over my teeth feeling the growl growing deep in my throat. I then felt like I was choked and closed my mouth. How could students have this power over me? The General of the Cavilere?

My eyes went over Rose's head to stare at the class. All of them sat wide eyed staring at us. Most held expressions of shock, anger, and hate, all mostly aimed at me. I abandoned my mate, left her to suffer, left her to die.

Mattie and Trevor wouldn't even speak to me and well, Micah and

Mason were probably conspiring a way to get me killed. Sometimes, I think death would be easier then watching the slow death of my mate.

I brought my eyes back down to Rose. I missed her beautiful smile, she never smiled anymore, not even a fake one. I missed her laugh and how it sounded like little, magical bells in my ears. I missed the feel of her hand against mine, soft and warm. I missed her.

Now, I stood in front of her. Seeing the effect of the lose of mate right in front of my eyes. It was killing her. It was a merciless death. Torturous. Her eyes were blood shot and had dark bags underneath, her uniform hung too loosely around her small frame, and her eyes...her eyes held no more life in them.

I was killing her. I was killing the person who meant everything to me. I looked up at Reeve, his eyes flashing red. I looked back at Tawny, her eyes intent on me and my next move. Maybe, I wasn't the one killing her, but I sure had a hand in it. And it was killing me too.

I wanted to scream. Hell, I just wanted to move. I wanted to move my arm and wrap it around Rose's waist. I wanted to pull her to me and tell her everything was fine. I wanted to hold her and never let her go, never loose her again.

I looked back down at Rose. She was now moving her arm. I followed her gaze and saw what she was looking at. The silver and blue hilt of my dagger. I wanted to reach for it, beat her to it, but my arm felt like a block of cement.

I looked on with horror as Rose moved away from me, my dagger in her small, trembling hands. Oh God no. I looked over at Tawny, pleading with her. If only, I could reach out to Rose, even just for a moment. Just to let that sadness leave her eyes, just to get her to put the dagger down, just for a moment.

Tawny only smiled at me. Her eyes flashing with a spark of red and something like excitement. This is what she wanted. She wanted to

get rid of Rose forever. But she didn't want to kill her herself, no that would be too easy. She wanted to watch Rose suffer, wanted to see Rose get weak.

I looked over at Reeve. His eyes were narrowed but the same look of excitement was held in them. If he called himself her mate, how could he stand and watch her like this. Watch her flipping the dangerous object in her hand. See that agonized look on her face. See her tortured features. How could he stand by and watch?

She was like their toy. We both were. We were their favorite past time and practice. Their mind powers were strong for young vampires but they were being trained. I could tell. That flash of red was none-too-familiar. They had outside help. And I opened myself up for it. I exposed Rose along with me.

I needed to think. And I needed to think fast. In all my training and all my experience never had I been put up against two young students, but two young students who were being played like puppets. I didn't want to hurt them, but yet with my life and Rose's life in danger, something had to be done.

But I couldn't. I was trapped in their mind games. I couldn't break free. No matter what Power surged up through me, I couldn't release it. It was like it hit some invisible force and fell away. Never in my life have I ever felt so powerless, so vulnerable, so helpless...so human.

I finally made a small step forward, I wanted to reach out to her. Give her some kind of comforting gesturing. But my tongue felt like it twisted and swelled inside my mouth, my hand froze, my legs got glued together. I was stuck, stuck like monkey in glue.

"Go ahead Rose." I cringed at my own voice. The words flew from my mouth but I had no part in it. I bit my tongue. Her blue-violet, vacant eyes came up to meet mine. I saw the flash in them. That flash that made her soul snap.

No.

I wanted to run to her. I wanted to yell it wasn't true. Not to go ahead. Not to bring that dagger down. But it all happened in such slow motion. Her hands raised she lifted the dagger over her chest.

Trevor jumped up, everyone jumped but no one could get to her. As the knife lunged forward, I felt myself crumble. She was going to do it. And I could do nothing but watch. Watch my mate die in front of my eyes.

I couldn't loose her again. I couldn't deal with it. I couldn't.

The pain soared in my chest. I watched as Rose fell to a heap on the floor. Blood pooling around the front of her uniform. I distantly heard the shouts and cries of my students. I saw through blurred vision as Trevor ripped off his shirt and slammed it over Rose's front. I saw Mattie bawling then her eyes shifted to me.

I saw hatred. Something I never believed I would see in Mattie. Pure hatred. I clenched my fist. The pain was vibrating through me. But it wasn't only physical pain, it was her anguish and her sadness and her loneliness.

I dropped to my knees hopeless. I couldn't move closer to her. It was like I was tied to this one spot. Close enough to see her perfectly, but far away enough so I couldn't touch her.

Oh Rose. No.

I choked. I was trying to talk. Trying to let the words flow from my tongue, but my tongue tied up, swelled up. I tried crawling to her, but my hands wouldn't go to the floor.

I wanted to scream. Trevor was shouting orders at the students. Go get Danica, go get her brothers. Go find them. Stop crying. Bring me towels. He was taking order. I should be doing that. I should be holding her in my lap and my shirt should be the one that should be over her front trying to stop the bleeding.

My dagger lay in her limp hand, blood smearing the silver blade.

The embedded name of McAllister smeared under it. I wanted to scream again. My own weapon was killing her.

Mattie's eyes flashed to me and then she was out of the room. I looked up at Tawny, she was laughing behind her hand. Her eyes sparkling with glory and victory. I never in my life wanted to hurt a student until then. I glanced over at Reeve. He was staring at Rose, then looked down at his own chest in astonishment, but he was smiling.

"Everybody out!" Garrett walked in. "Now!" He yelled ushering all the shocked students in to the hall. "Tawny and Reeve my office immediately."

I watched them go. Garrett moved his lips but I heard no words but saw the soft silver glow around his body shoot at me. I felt it hit me. It didn't hurt, but it felt warm as it weaved through my body.

Then I felt light.

My mind cleared, my tongue untwisted, my body uncoiled itself. Garrett was looking at me. "Go to her." He gestured to where Danica was kneeling over Rose's limp form.

I staggered to my feet and slowly made my way forward, waiting for the electric, painful shock to race through my body. It never came, my eyes snapped up to Garrett and he was smiling at me. "I should have guessed they had you under mind control."

I sighed in relief and raced towards Danica. "How is she?" I looked at her pale face and her limp hands hanging at the side. I pulled my dagger from her hand and flung it on top of my desk.

Danica looked up at me, her swirl tattoo around her eye. "She'll be fine Ian." She patted my arm. "I think all she needs now is healing that I can't give her." She stepped away from Rose. "She'll be tired."

I moved forward. I brought my hand to her face. As my fingers made contact with her skin, I felt the familiar heat run through me.

The comforting, wonderful heat that only she could cause. "I love you Rose." I whispered leaning down and kissing her forehead. "I always have and I always will."

I turned to the commotion at the door and saw Mason and Micah standing there. Their eyes furious. "It wasn't him." Mattie stepped up and pulled Micah inside. "He was under mind control."

I saw Mason still look warily at me. "Is she alright?"

I nodded pulling her into my lap and standing up. I kept her body close to me. Never again would I let her go. Never.

## Chapter 23: Mending a Broken Soul

~Rose's POV~

Was I dead? Was my misery over? I felt warm all over, like I was wrapped in a heated quilt, and my body was numb, but it was a good numb. The numb that you feel after a very long, deep sleep.

I opened my eyes to a vaguely familiar room and wanted to scream, it was his room. I bolted up looking down at myself, I was in one of his tee shirts.

Was it deja vu? Was it a nightmare? Did all of that happen? I slowly got up from the bed away from his smell that sent glass through me and walked out into the darkened hallway. No glare from the TV this time but a faint light from the glow of a lamp.

I walked in the living room and there he was, sitting down hunched over, his face in his hands and his shoulders shaking, was he crying? Why would he be crying? I felt a fist clutch in my stomach and twist my insides. This was something I never wanted to see...him in pain.

I walked over to him, his head not lifting. I knelt down, he was so very close, why wasn't any one helping him? Why was he crying? Why wasn't Tawny taking care of him! She was suppose to take care of him, keep him happy. Where was she?

I brought my hand to his shoulder. I was timid to touch it, I knew he didn't want my comfort anymore. But he looked so hurt, so sad. His head bolted up and he locked eyes with me. "Rose." His voice was so soft, baby quiet. His hand came to my face and I let it rest there, letting the warmth feel my body, but what about Tawny? I didn't want to give her the pain I went through so I forced my body

to pull away and stood up his eyes following me.

He stood up and grabbed my shoulders bringing me to his chest, I let my arms hang limply at my side, I would not cause pain to anyone, I would not! "I love you Rose." He said into my hair and felt the words run through my body. I let the words bump around in my head. They sounded so nice coming from him. But was it true? "It was mind control." He said and slowly it started to seep in. Could he really still love me? Was this really happening? Was he wanting me again? "Tawny and Reeve have been arrested. They had me under mind control."

They hurt him! How dare them! I looked up at him. "Did they hurt you?" I asked. My voice raspy from not speaking in over a month.

"I lost you, that was the pain." He whispered closing his eyes. I wrapped my arms around him and felt my shattered heart slowly piece itself together.

He held me for who knows how long, minutes, hours, for all I knew it could have been days, but each second that his arms were around me, each time he whispered how much he did love me, my heart was healing and the pain was lifting.

The true soul mate. That is why I felt better so quickly. I was with him. He still loved me. Everything would be alright. I was left with no scar on my soul, because he healed me opening and honestly.

I should have seen it. I should have known he would never leave me. He always told me he only had eyes for one, that I was his only one. So why didn't I see it?

I glanced up at his now sparkling silver eyes and I decided that I didn't have it so bad. He was the one that was tortured. He had to keep living, he had to watch everything, and he wasn't able to do anything. He could just watch, and that to me was so much worse. "I'm sorry." I ran my hand down his cheek, where I could feel a little stubble where he hadn't shaven.

I loved the feel of my hand against his cheek. It was so familiar and yet still so comforting. The warm sparks flew through my hand, it was really happening again. My mind was reforming itself to before that awful day.

"Why are you apologizing? It should be me." He leaned forward kissing my forehead in that oh-so-familiar way that I loved. The firecrackers under my skin exploded along my forehead like they erupted from his lips. It was wonderful.

I shook my head. "I should have realized something was going on. That she was hurting you, I should have been there for you, fought her-" I started sobbing. It was gut wrenching and all of a sudden. The tightness in my throat just opened and cracked and everything flew out. I couldn't stop it. His arms pulled me towards his chest and he held me.

"Shh, love." His voice was tight and strained, like he was trying not to cry. "It was natural that you didn't know. They are powerful and can make you believe anything. Don't you dare blame this on yourself." He started rubbing my back in circular motions holding me close to him.

I slowly started to calm myself down in his arms. I just wanted to erase the last few months, swipe them clean. But it couldn't happen, it was done, the damage would always be there. But my soul was slowing mending itself, as was his. I could see how the life sparked back in his eyes, how his tight features was softening, and how his tense shoulders were relaxing.

"Why didn't Reeve do the same to me?" I asked looking up at him and he wiped the last traces of tears from my cheeks.

"I was wondering the same thing." He chuckled. "I heard them talking, he said he couldn't get to you, it was like you blocked your mind from everything."

"I did." I let my head hang, "I felt weird." I shrugged and took a deep breath.

"Talk to me Love." His voice was so comforting and his arms around me were so warm.

"It was like nothing had purpose anymore and literally every step I made was painful." I felt his arms tighten around me but I continued. "Every time he tried to talk to me, I really didn't hear. I didn't really hear anyone actually, it was like I was thrown into a time warp and everyone was moving but that's all, no sounds, no nothing."

"I'm so sorry." He rested his head over mine. "I tried to break it each chance I got. Damn, I'm general of the Cavilere and two students had me under their control, but each time I tried they became more powerful."

"Where do you think they got their power?" I brought my feet under me on the couch as his fingers started playing with my hair.

"I have a theory." He said, "naturally Vampires are born powerful, but to an extent to how they use their powers, almost like umm..." he paused "...an unwritten rule." He said and I nodded in understanding. "Half of vampire's powers lie dormant and they only use it in battle and somehow even underage Reeve and Tawny tapped into theirs."

I considered it for a moment. "How did they tap into it." At this, I saw his face constrict, his eyes get dark.

"Hunters." He said simply. "I think Reeve and Tawny have made their choice."

I let the information process in my mind. "What will happen to them?"

His face turned even darker. "They picked the worse person to try and control, I'm the General." He let it hang at that. I guess if it was like someone trying to control the President of the United States.

"What if they try again?" I asked rubbing my hands along his.

He shook his head. "I'll be prepared next time around. I know how to protect my mind but it was so unsuspected and surprised that I didn't have time to react. Like I said I didn't know a student could have that kind of power."

I leaned my head down on his chest and he pulled a throw blanket on me. "Are you hungry? I know you haven't been eating right." He looked down at me as his fingers ran up and down my arms.

I smiled, a real honest smile. "Mm-hmm" I answered closing my eyes. I felt him get up and he laid my head on a pillow.

Soon the smell of something delicious filled his apartment and next thing I knew he was shaking me. "Grub time." He helped me sit up and placed a tray of some type of chicken and rice in my lap.

"It's good having a guy who can cook." I smiled smelling the food.

"When you've been around as long as I have, you're bound to learn things along the way." He chuckled settling with his own tray which held ten times more food than mine.

I laughed seeing his plate. "What?" He asked a mouth full of chicken.

"Dog." I laughed nudging his side and he smirked swallowing his food.

He gave a fake 'woof'. "One and only." He looked down at my plate, "Now you eat."

I happily obliged, for once my stomach wanted food and I downed it. "What time is it?" I asked after finishing my food looking around the darkened apartment.

"A little after three." He said picking up our trays. "Once you're up your parents want me to take you home. Your mom has been a hysterical mess."

I bit my lip thinking the effect this has been on my family. "And

your brothers nearly killed me," he chuckled. "Well tried but they calmed down after they found out what happened."

I shook my head and laughed that would defiantly be my twin brothers.

## Chapter 24: Beginning of the End

~Rose's POV~

My feet crunched in the snow as we walked foreword. I was shivering but it wasn't from the cold. Ian's hand tightened around mine. Why exactly were we doing this?

He had to slightly tug my hand to keep me walking. It was deathly silent in this deserted, far away hide-away. It was somewhere in the middle of the forest. Everything looked the same to me, that tree and that tree held no difference to me.

But Ian led the way confidently. I felt a heavy coat fall over my shoulders and I looked up at Ian. "You're shaking." He pointed out. I hugged his Cavilere outer jacket tighter around myself. I didn't want to tell him it wasn't from the cold.

I felt like I was walking into the devil's house, like I was walking the row of death. "We're almost there." He assured me squeezing my hand.

Micah and Mason wanted to come too. Not just to see the all-famous Conservatory Prison, but well, now they were refusing to let me out of their sight. Apparently, I'm more then just some death-magnet, it's like I go looking for it. In their words, not mine.

I don't purposely go looking for death, I just always find myself in sticky situations. Especially after starting Alvar. Before I would just accidentally slip into a pool, run face first into a wall, tumble down a couple flights of stairs, and once I even fell straight in the middle of a busy San Francisco street. Sometimes my feet just don't agree with my head.

Now, I'm being chased by Hunters, psycho hormone-raged vampires, and of course, myself. I hardly remember sticking his dagger in my chest, its all a big blur to me.

I shuffled my feet looking around at the looming dark building. Ian's hand gripped mine and pulled me forward, he was in his Cavilere uniform his hair pulled into a pony tail.

Did I ever mention how hot Ian looked in his uniform? Well...he does. The navy blue uniform hugs him just right, like it was molded for his body. The stars on his shoulder shine brightly with authority, his weapon...which I didn't want to look at for long...the long silver dagger hung from his hip looking threatening.

Everything this past week has been happening so fast, everything was falling back into its normal routine. Even back at school, where everything was decked out in silver and white and fliers were strung up everywhere for the 'Snow Ball'.

"General." A Magii put a fist over his chest and did the respectful bow as we came up to the iron gate doors.

Ian briefly smiled then walked in still leading me by the small of my back. I clasped my hands together to keep them from shaking. "Why are we doing this again?" I whispered scared my voice would echo throughout the bare gray walls, where you could probably hear a pen drop.

"You have to give your story." He said kindly, but his deep voice bounced off the walls making me jump.

I looked over my shoulder as though something was following me when Ian pulled me closer to him. "Calm down." He laughed rubbing my upper arm.

It was hard to get calm in a place like this. It was nothing but dark stone and lighted candles. It looked like it popped out of a medieval movie, or Frankenstein's bedroom, either or.

We rounded a corridor where a steel bar door rose up and I gulped. We were buzzed in then were led to a table in the middle of an empty room. More Cavilere warriors were huddled talking, as soon as they saw Ian they all did the respectful bow thing.

But there was something on their faces, something that told me something was wrong. "What is it?" Ian asked realizing the look too.

The warriors glanced at each other daring the other to say something, everyone stayed quiet. "Now." Ian's voice was deep and sharp, every inch of him spoke, 'I'm the one in charge.'

"They're gone." One Warrior finally said, but he couldn't bring his eyes up off the floor and Ian's brows furrowed.

"Whose they?" He asked through his clenched teeth his hand coming down around me.

"Reeve and Tawny, we don't know how they escaped." One Warrior said his dark eyes staring straight at Ian. I just stared at them, my knees wobbling, they were out? Out to do as they please?

Ian stiffly nodded his head and led me out his hand still down over me. "Ian." I whimpered looking up at his stone expression.

He smiled briefly then looked down at me. "I won't let anything happen, Rose." He squeezed me tighter, he turned his attention back to where he was walking keeping his pace in step with my slower one.

"What happens if she tries to get to you again?" I asked looking at him but he didn't seem to hear me, like he was deep in thought. I shook the hand I was holding and his head snapped down to look at me.

"Huh?" He asked making me laugh at the lost and confused expression of his face.

"What happens if she tries to get to you again?" I repeated as we stepped out into the cold weather, the snow falling heavily around

us.

He pulled his warm arms around me as we walked towards his car parked a few feet away. "She won't," he said, "but she could get to you." He opened my door and let me in.

I waited for him to get in the car as he did I stared at his silvery eyes. "What do you mean she can get to me?" I asked.

"You don't know how to block your mind." He ran a hand down the length of my hair as the other one steered the car out of the parking lot.

We stayed quiet the rest of the way to my house and as he pulled in he still seemed faraway, swallowed by his thoughts.

So when I thought everything was over, I was wrong? It was that whole beginning-of-the-end thing. Tawny and Reeve were now somewhere out there. They knew how to get into Alvar, they were powerful, and they were most likely working with the Hunters.

Yup, it was all just beginning.

## Chapter 25: The Perfect Dress

*~Rose's POV~*

All of us sat around the living room, the fireplace was causing a nice, cozy warm atmosphere and my mom had brought out hot coco for everyone. Shanzie was nestled near the fireplace but as far as he could get from Ian.

Ian was sitting there with a serious expression on while he explained to my family about Reeve and Tawny escaping. I wasn't particularly paying attention. I personally didn't want to hear it again. But Micah and Mason had shocked expressions on their faces.

I knew what they were thinking because I was thinking the same thing. Reeve and Tawny were teenagers. They were our age. But yet, they were controlling people's mind, near murdering, and just plain crazy. And they were siding with the Hunter's. It was a very scary thing indeed.

"What do you think, Rose?" I snapped my head up at Ian's question. I was struggling to catch up in the conversation, seeing that I hadn't been paying attention. "You mind staying with me until they find Reeve and Tawny?" He asked.

Would I mind? What kind of question was that? I wanted to jump up and down with joy at the thought of staying with him. "No, I wouldn't mind." I managed to hold down my excitement.

I looked over at my parents. "We think it's the best and the safest thing to do" My dad smiled.

I nodded and dashed downstairs to my room. I threw open my closet and dug around the messy bottom for my duffel bag and

yanked it out from the mess. I don't even remember what I threw in there. I just shoved pants, shirts, bras, panties, socks, everything I could possibly think of and shoes, if I forgot anything Mason and Micah could bring them to school.

"That was fast." Ian smirked as I reentered the living room.

I held up my duffel bag "Hopefully you own an iron." I laughed and he stood up, my mom taking his empty mug.

After all the goodbyes we were back in his car again. "Is it bad for me to feel this excited?" I squealed doing a little jump in my seat making him laugh.

"No." He side-glanced at me. "I'm probably more excited then you." His lips pulled up into a smile and he turned into the familiar black gates of the school, now it felt welcoming.

We walked into a side entrance of the school, the halls were dimly lit, but not in a creepy way, just a soft glow so you could see where you were and where you were walking. We walked through the winding corridors which proudly I can say are starting to look familiar.

We entered the faculty's dormitory area and he swung out his keys and opened the door and I entered his cozy apartment. He took my duffel to his room and set it on his chest of drawers then draped off his jacket slinging it on a hook behind his door.

He turned smiling at me, wrapping his arms around my waist, as mine went around his neck. "I love you and I won't let anything happen to you." His voice muffled as he was kissing my earlobe.

Shivers sparked up my spine, I tangled my fingers in his hair, getting on my tip-toes and kissing him back. "I love you too."

I felt him smile under my lips as he pulled back, the gray in his eyes completely gone again. I loved it when his eyes did that, it made him seem so...magical.

"You tired?" He asked and I wanted to shake my head no and stay up all night with him and watch movies but a big yawn escaped my mouth just I began the shaking of the head.

He laughed ruffling my hair. "Get into your pajamas and call it a night. Besides both of us have school tomorrow." He smirked grabbing a pair of his sweats and headed out of the room.

I quickly changed into the very cute pj's I 'accidentally' grabbed. They were a white, laced tank top which fit to my body and a pair of shorts which barely reached past the top of my thighs that I loved but never actually wore.

Ian tapped the door then walked in and I smiled. He was shirtless, just in some sleeping sweats, and need I exaggerate how incredibly hot he is. "You look beautiful even in pajamas." He smiled kissing my head.

He pulled down his black feather comforter and gestured for me to get in. I slide in and he brought the covers to my chin. "Night." He smiled grabbing a pillow and heading for the door. I bolted up grabbing his wrist.

"Stay with me." I said pulling him down on to the bed. He just stared at me for awhile then smiled and slide under the covers, his warm body rubbing against my pajamas as I snuggled into his side.

"Rose, you're going to be late." He chuckled in my ear, jousting my from a very, very peaceful sleep.

I grumbled something pulling the covers over my head. I didn't want to leave the dreamland, suddenly I was in the air and I squeaked looking around to see Ian had me hoisted over his shoulder and was walking down the hall.

"Not fair." I grumbled running my fingers along his spine and he chuckled setting me down on my own two feet at the bathroom. My

uniform was already draped behind the door.

By the time I got out of the shower, the smell of bacon filled the apartment and I walked into the kitchen, where Ian was serving two plates at the stove already in uniform his professor robe draped over the chair.

He set the plates down at the table and I flopped down next to him "Thanks." I smiled digging in, the man could really cook.

"Rose!" Mattie locked arms with me as I walked away from my locker. "You're living with Professor McAllister!" She squealed loudly in my ear.

"Thanks, now I'm officially deaf." I smiled walking towards Ian's classroom, "and yes I am."

"You're so lucky." She sighed looking like she was drifting off into a dream world. We walked into Ian's classroom and he had all the desks pushed aside making the middle of the room look large and empty.

"Alright!" Trevor walked into the room and pumped his fist in the air. "We're fighting today!"

I blinked and looked around, fighting? "Species with same species, pair up. Rose with me." He ordered and everyone found another Magii, vampire, or werewolf to be with. I stood on the side of Ian.

"You're goal." He smiled leaning back against the desk. "Is to get to the Proteggi." He stepped away from me, wait what? I snapped my head to look at him and he just smiled confidently.

I was back to thinking about kneeing someone's crotch, pushing their nose into their brain, pulling their hair...when a set of wolves lunged at me. I put my arms in front of me as if they were a barrier when another wolf jumped between us sending the other two flying across the room.

Ian became human again and stood near me. "What? You think a Proteggi will be unprotected?" He asked as many students groaned. I held my head a little higher as some of the fear left me and my heart decided to stop thumping painfully against my ribcage.

"Professor, we'll never get passed you." Some guy in the back with a Wayland student whined.

"Which is why you are being graded." He put his finger up as some more protests were about to get thrown into the air. "Each group has three minutes to try and get her, the longer you last in those three minutes the higher your grade, the quicker you fall the lower you grade."

"So necessarily we don't have to get her, just out last you for three minutes." Mattie asked as a swirl tattoo forming around her right eye. I noticed all of them had their tattoos. I would have to ask Ian about that.

"Not so Mattie." He chuckled. "If you want an A you have to get Rose, if you outlast me you get a B, if you don't make three minutes you grade will fall lower. If you are creative in battle strategy then I'll give you some bonus points."

More shouts of protests and Ian leaned patiently on his desk. "Now if you are ready, Magii first." He motioned to Mattie and some other chick from Wayland.

I looked at Mattie's sparkling green fingers with fear starting to creep up on me. I love and trust Mattie, but when it came to her magic...well she turned Micah's hair pink for crying out loud.

They stood facing me their tattoo an amazing emerald color, Mattie's lips were moving fast and suddenly I felt that odd sensation at my ankles, like before, like a rope tying itself around me, then I was heading to the ground.

Ian's arm caught me before my head snapped into the ground and his lips were muttering and soon the invisible rope I felt vanished. I

stood up again dusting off my skirt.

Safe to say, nobody got through Ian, which may me feel incredibly safe. People however, did come close and he had to phase into a wolf, but I didn't mind wolf Ian at all.

One of which was Trevor and his partner. Trevor actually used some of his Power, but it was only a soft silver glow, nothing compared to Ian's and definitely far from the silver magic that came from Professor Seeley.

"So now that your mate has tortured us all class when are you going dress shopping?" Mattie asked as we headed to Biology, her tattoo now gone.

I ignored the question and asked one of my own. "How do your tattoos just appear and disappear?" I asked.

She smiled. "Whenever we use our power they form instantaneously, like you and your brothers will have vine like tattoos somewhere on your arms the next time you use your power, or think about using your power, or dress in the Proteggi attire." She counted off her fingers. "Now back to my question."

"Oh umm," I searched my brain. "Tomorrow, I guess since its Friday."

"Great, we'll meet after school then head to the mall." She smiled and then danced away towards Micah who was leaning against the door frame of the biology lab.

I was happy to see him too, it was hitting me harder then I thought being away from twins. I don't know why. I can stand nights without them but the thought of a long period with out them, kind of made me anxious.

"We miss you, sis." Micah wrapped his arm around me.

"I was thinking the same thing, big brother." I nudged his arm as we walked in to where Mason was already sitting down at the lab table.

"No way." I said flopping down in the chair beside Jaemi in the dress department in some fancy store in the mall.

Mattie threw the wad of dresses in my lap. "They are all super cute and all will look super cute on you." She said going back to the racks of dresses flipping through them either scrunching up her nose in disgust or letting out a little yelp when she found something she liked.

I picked up the first dress, a pale pink gown, I looked at the price tag and gasped. "This is too expensive." I choked out looking at the ridiculously large number on the itty-bitty price tag.

Mattie stopped looking at the dresses to turn her gaze to me. "Didn't Professor McAllister give you his credit card?" She asked poking her head out from a tower of dresses. I fidgeted filling the card in my back pocket, it was true, he simply handed me his black card and told me to find something I really liked. I tried giving it back but he just continued to munch on his potato chips.

"Yeah, doesn't mean I want to go overboard." I said wagging the price tag around.

Mattie and Jaemi both rolled their eyes and giggled. "Girl, you know how loaded McAllister is?" Jaemi nudged my shoulder. "He's been around awhile, is a top professor, and the General of the Cavilere. It all adds up and he's rich, rich, rich." She laughed.

"That dress is probably pocket change to him." Mattie held up a green dress to herself, looked down, scrunched her nose and placed it back on the rack. I slumped in my chair, I still felt bad for spending so much.

"Get yourself in that dressing room." Jaemi pushed me out of the chair and into a dressing room. I groaned hanging up the many dresses, flipping through them, they were all gorgeous and all highly expensive.

The first one I pulled on was an off the shoulder white gown with a pink sash, it looked too Easter-ish for me. Then, I pulled on the pale pink one, to me, it looked like I faded into it. "Are you ever going to show us?" Mattie yelled from outside my changing room door.

"Not till I look decent in one of these." I pulled off the pink one and grabbed a floor length, halter silver, with over the top sparkles over my head.

"I look like a disco ball." I walked out and they held their sides laughing so I turned back in and grabbed another one. I went through six and didn't like any of them.

I came out of the dressing room, and hung up the dresses on the rack, Mattie and Jaemi were both holding their newly acquired dresses. Mattie had a strapless, deep emerald green ballroom gown that brought out her eyes. Chunky beading dazzled on the bodice, highlighted with exposed boning, before floating into a floor length, flowing tulle skirt. Jaemi purchased a pale shimmering gold strapless, mermaid dress with a sweetheart neckline and ruching from a tulle overlay through the bust and bodice.

"Next store." Mattie smiled walking out into the packed mall, where a Santa was seen with a screaming boy in his arms. I followed them store to store getting more frustrated that I couldn't find a dress.

"Lets try in there." Jaemi pointed to a 'hole-in-the-wall' boutique, that any person could easily pass it by.

I shrugged walking in, seeing everything from formal dresses to incense. It was small and cramped in the store and little room to move.

I started moving through the dresses. "Nothing," I said as nothing caught my eye and I heard Mattie and Jaemi groan.

"I think I may have something for you. It will bring out those eyes of yours." The sales lady came up me. "I just finished the dress yesterday." She smiled proudly, "I'm the owner." She motioned to

the tiny boutique.

"She'll see it." Mattie bounced up smiling.

As she went into the back I wandered around the store, Mattie and Jaemi looking at the jewelry. "This is it." I turned to the lady and my mouth fell open, it was gorgeous. It was a deep blue and strapless, with a corset bodice and floor length chiffon skirt. Silver beads embroidered into the bodice and the back laced up by a zigzagging dark blue silk ribbon.

"Its beautiful." Mattie squealed.

"I'll take it." I smiled, not evening bothering trying it on.

After buying the dress, Mattie was dragging me in to a shoe store.

"Silver shoes." She said and Jaemi shook her head.

"The dress is all blue, she needs blue shoes." She started to go through the rows of heels.

I flopped down rolling my eyes as both of them came bearing mile high shoe boxes.

## Chapter 26: Colors & Tattoos

~Rose's POV~

I fiddled with the door knob willing it to magically pop open. I had several bags in my hands, which were slipping from my fingers and ready to thud to the floor. I finally gave in and kicked the door. Moments later Ian swung it open and looked down at me with a mixture of an amused expression and I'm-ready-to-burst-out-laughing expression.

I scowled at him as I pushed my way in and let on the bags finally fall to the floor. "You should fail Jaemi and Mattie." I huffed falling down on to the couch.

He chuckled sliding into the couch next to me. "And why is that?" He pulled me closer to him.

"They are horrible to shop with!" I exclaimed. "They argued over the color of my shoes for an hour, then they made me try on probably every single dress in the mall, then they went so far as arguing whether my necklace clipped in the back or had a magnet as a clasp." I fell onto Ian's shoulder dramatically.

He laughed. "Did you find yourself a dress?" I nearly melted into his side when I felt his fingers brush through the length of my curls.

"Yes." I smiled trying my hardest to keep my train of thought. "But you can't see it till next weekend."

He puffed out his bottom lip and tried giving me that oh-so-adorable puppy dog look, but he chuckled and merely laced his fingers through mine. "Than can you at least tell me the color so I can go find a tie."

"Dark blue."

"That will bring out those beautiful eyes of yours." He ran his finger around my eyes making me snuggle closer into him.

The week in school was filled with snow bliss! Literally, someone bewitched the halls so snow was falling into our hair all day, but it wasn't cold, actually our halls had this warm feeling everywhere and the scent of a fireplace.

"So, how did you think you did?" Mason asked as we waited for Professor Britton to hand out the exam for biology.

I shrugged. I hardly remember taking the exam, it was during 'that time'. She came up to me and handed me my test face down and I opened it then proceeded to bang my head against the table.

Mason pulled it out of my hands. "My sister got a C, that's a first." He chuckled and I whacked his arm grabbing my paper from his hands.

"Professor McAllister takes care of make up test Ms. Holloway." Professor Britton smiled. "You can go speak with him now if you like, before the period ends." She handed me a pass and I slugged out of the room.

The halls were quiet as everyone was in class. All I could hear was my own shoes hitting the floor. For some reason, I felt like I was walking on death row. I mean yeah, it's just a C, but I had to go to my mate and tell him I needed to retest...a little embarrassing.

I turned the corner and peeked into his classroom, he was leaning against the black board and there were two werewolves in the middle of the room battling it out against each other.

It was a little terrifying. The wolves were growling and their tails were swooshing dangerously and those paws looked like death weapons towards the other. But the class was watching with intensity and Ian seemed to have control of the situation.

"Rose." Ian smiled as he spotted me in the door. "What brings you here?" He asked as I shuffled my feet.

I very slowly handed him the pass and tried not to make eye contact. But when I did look up at him, his face was all stern and a frown covered his lips. "Which class?" He sighed taking my pass.

"Biology with Professor Britton." I said keeping my eyes down.

"You have the test with you?" He asked walking to his desk gesturing me to follow him.

I handed him the test and he took it looking at my grade. "That isn't like you." He looked at me and I frowned. "What happened?" He asked.

"Well..." I scratched my head shifting my weight to my other foot. "I wasn't myself." I finally answered and it finally hit him and ran a hand through his hair.

"Alright." He gave me a sad smile, signing a blue paper "You come retest tomorrow after school in my classroom." He squeezed my hand and I nodded walking out.

I beat Ian home after school, he had a meeting or something, so I curled up on the couch with my Biology book focusing on cell division.

The light faded in the living room and the wind howled from the falling snow as I pulled a blanket over my lap and looked at the time. Ian still wasn't home.

"You must have been studying hard." I jumped up at the deep voice and rubbed my eyes looking around. Ian was crouched down hovering over me smiling.

"I guess I fell asleep." I looked at the time, it was well past nine.

"You must have." He chuckled sitting on the couch, pulling me close and taking my biology book from me. "I'll help you study." He gave

me that adorable grin while rubbing my back.

"So, how do you think you did?" Mason asked meeting me outside of Ian's classroom, I shrugged, I felt like I did okay. Ian drilled me till the wee hours of the morning, so I hope I did okay.

"Sure you did fine, sis." Mason patted my back as Jaemi came flying down the hall waving around something in the air and smiling like an idiot.

"I got them!" She screeched throwing her arms around Mason who temporarily lost his balance but quickly regained it by sliding up the wall.

"Got what?" I asked looking at the white slips in her hands. It was astonishing to see Jaemi this vocal and excited, that was usually Mattie's department.

"Tickets for the Winter Bonfire, they sell out quickly." She waved them around some more when Ian walked out holding my test paper.

"How did I do?" I started chewing the inside of my cheek. He shrugged and lifted my paper an A plastered on the top.

"Good job." He smiled kissing my head then turned to Jaemi. "You barely got yours, cutting it kind of close." He laughed.

"I know." She sulked then spiked up again as Mattie came running down waving the same white slips in her hands.

They both squealed and started dancing around in circles, I was still in the process of trying to figure out what the Winter Bonfire was.

"More shopping, Rose!" Mattie twirled me into their dancing in circles.

"Shopping?" I groaned "Why??" I asked.

"We have to look cute for the bonfire." Jaemi smiled and I looked to Ian for help but he was digging in his pocket and held out his credit card.

"That's no help." I crossed my arms staring at him. "I don't want it."

He chuckled slipping it in my back pocket. "What's mine is yours." He gently kissed my cheek. "Have fun."

Meanwhile, Mattie did a cat hiss and hooked her fingers towards Ian. "Professor McAllister getting frisky." She laughed and he arched his eyebrow.

Why is it that when I think I know everything about this school, I don't. "What's the Winter Bonfire?" I asked as Mattie dragged me away from Ian's classroom, he was just leaning against the door frame laughing.

"It's the coolest, best, awesome, incredible..." Mattie went on and on and I just stared at her.

"Point please, Mattie." I laughed.

"It's the end of term party. It's in a secret garden on the castle grounds. Only the profs know how to get to it and it's just amazing. It happens right after the Snow Ball." Jaemi laughed answering for Mattie.

"So then why don't we just go in our dresses?" I asked and both of them looked at me as if I grew another head.

"One, no way!" Mattie screeched picking up her pace to her car. "And two, you have to go in your color." She smiled as if I knew what she was talking about.

"Huh?" I asked, I felt like I would never understand this school and their traditions. Why couldn't I start as a freshman like everyone else instead of being dropped in my senior year.

"You know, Magii are green, vamps are red, werewolves silver, and

the Proteggi white." Jaemi explained as we zoomed out of the school parking lot and to the closest mall. Which to Mattie's standards probably was the town over, she would drive us to Manhattan if she wanted to.

"Why can't I wear the white dress I wore last time?" I asked and both of them, once again, looked at me as if I had completely lost it.

"You have a lot of learning to do girly." Jaemi laughed and I sunk back into the chair and sulked, I guess I did.

We ended up going to the same boutique where I found my dress and the owner recognized us and immediately went rummaging through her packed racks for something white, red, or green.

"You notice we are kind of Christmas colors." I laughed as the lady approached with a lot of red and green garments in her hands.

Jaemi and Mattie both looked at me. "You really need to stop looking at me like I'm a dancing purple banana or something." I laughed as they shook their heads and went into the dressing rooms.

I started flipping through the racks and found a long, white voile bubble skirt that would fall below my ankles and pulled it out smiling. "That would look cute on you." The owner said from behind me, "and I have a top that would go great with that." She disappeared into the back again as I slung the skirt over my arm.

"What do you think?" I turned to Mattie who was twirling around in a lacy, emerald baby-doll dress with a skater skirt.

"That's cute." I smiled and then frowned at myself. I just commented a dress as *cute*. I was surely spending way too much time with the girls and not enough time with my brothers. "But won't you be cold, isn't the bonfire outside?" I asked.

She laughed and shook her head. "No, the Magii Prof's do some type of enchantment that keeps the area warm." She smiled dancing

back into the dressing room.

"Here you are." I turned and the owner was handing me a white racer back tank top. It had lace trimming and white beads along the seams.

"I love it." I smiled.

We made our purchases, Jaemi also went with a baby-doll dress except it was read and open backed with a flared skirt and luckily we didn't have anymore shopping, we even got our shoes in the same store.

Ian opened his door before I even reached it and he smiled looking down at my bag. "Find something you like?" He asked and I nodded.

"But seriously, Ian. is there anything else I should know about this school? Things just keep popping up." I threw my hands up for exclamation dropping my bags to the floor.

He chuckled grabbing my bags and let me in. "Not much." He smiled. "Some things you just have to stumble upon."

"Yeah knowing me I won't stumble, I'll trip." I grumbled pulling the skirt and tank top out. "So you guys really warm the place up or will I be freezing my butt off." I waved the tank top.

"No, we warm it up." He laughed, "and that's cute." He gave me a devilish smile.

"What's with the colors anyway?" I asked putting the clothes back in the bag.

He shrugged. "Just are I guess. Red, obviously represents blood which is what a vampire is known for. Green, is the Magii. I don't know, I always associated the color green as natural and Magii powers are natural. Wolves, we are silver, I think is for the myth as that is the only thing that can kill us. Proteggi are white meaning pure, because you have to be pure hearted in order to save

someone." He finished and I stared at him for a moment. I was still stuck on wondering if silver really can kill the wolves. I mean, they all carried silver daggers, so surely it wouldn't be poisonous to them, right?

Shaking my head from the thoughts I didn't want to think, I moved on to my next question. "What about the tattoos? Mattie said they form when you use your powers but can you just make them pop up yourself?" I asked and he removed his shirt and as I watched the paw print tattoo appear on his chest.

"We can make them come by ourselves." He laughed pulling on his shirt, I was still trying to hold my drool from when he was shirtless. "Come here." He grabbed my arms and held them out. "Think about that feeling you had when you saved me and bring up that power."

I thought about the warm glow, the feeling of my energy going into him knowing that I could save him. "Look Rose." He smiled and I followed his gaze down to my arms and gasped.

I had a vine-like tattoos lacing my right fingers going all the way up my shoulder, "They are on your back and around the back of your neck as well." He grinned moving his fingers along them.

"Wow." I smiled looking at my tattooed arm.

"Another interesting thing about Proteggi, they don't have the same tattoos, like the rest of us do, each one is different." He explained as I watched my tattoos fade.

"So Mason's and Micah's will be different from mine?" I asked and he nodded.

## Chapter 27: Promises, Woes, & Possible Ends

~Rose's POV~

"Rose, you are going to be late." My mom tapped on the bathroom door. I was getting ready for the Snow Ball at her house and I was having a hard time with the corset top.

"Can you do this for me?" I asked my mom and she walked in, her eyes watering up immediately.

"Oh honey, that's a beautiful dress." she said dabbing at her eyes.

I smiled and turned around so she could lace up the back of the dress. When she finished she turned me around and looked me up and down, "Beautiful" she mouthed and I smiled as Mattie barged in with Jaemi right behind.

"I'll do make up." Jaemi wiggled the red box she was carrying. She opened it and poured the contents all over the bathroom counter. My mom, knowing her job was done, chuckled and left the bathroom.

"I'm at hair." Mattie was fluffing my curls and started pinning them up.

"Okay, hi, to you guys too." I laughed and let them do whatever to me. They looked great so I trusted them when it came to making sure I didn't look like a clown.

Jaemi's dark hair tumbled down her back perfectly, the dark tan of her skin reflecting brilliantly with the gold, shimmering dress. And Mattie's red curls were pinned up in a messy yet chic sort of way that left the bare back of that green baby doll dress look amazing.

"You girls ready yet?" Mason yelled from downstairs.

"Almost." Jaemi called down and applied lip gloss to me.

"Professor McAllister is already here and Shanzie is officially hiding behind the couch." Micah yelled up laughing.

"Alright done." Mattie said after clipping one more thing in my hair so I faced the mirror and wasn't sure if it was me facing back.

My curls were pulled up but fell loose from the bun and around my face. My blue-violet eyes were rimmed with eye liner and the mascara made my long eyelashes look longer and they seemed to curl at the end. My eyes popped out and looked sexy with the whole smoky eye affect I had going on. There was a light blush on my cheeks that gave the whole innocent look. I smiled and twirled around in front of the mirror. "Thanks," I smiled picking up my dress so I could walk.

Jaemi and Mattie dashed down to Mason and Micah who were in tux with ties matching the girls dresses and I tried not falling down as I reached Ian who was beaming. "You look gorgeous." He whispered in my ear softly kissing it.

"You don't look bad either." I smiled running my hand down his black tux and his matching blue tie. He let his hair fall messily around his head which made him look even hotter.

"Pictures." My mom smiled walking in waving a camera over her head ,my dad right behind her grinning ear to ear.

We stood through what seemed like a billion pictures before they finally let us leave. Ian like the proper gentleman that he was even opened the car door for me, while Jaemi, Mattie, Micah, and Mason took our newly restored Silverado.

"You excited?" Ian asked me pulling out of the driveway and onto the road.

"I am." I smiled looking over at him, the blue in his tie were

bringing out the blue flakes in his eyes, and it look amazing. "You?" I asked.

He smiled, "For once I'm not just chaperoning." He chuckled rubbing my hand that rested near the edge of my seat. "So yes, I'm very excited."

He pulled into the gates of the school and parked getting out of the car and came around to help me out. He pulled me close to him his arm fitting around my waist and he led me towards the school, but the school halls were darkened, "The dance is here?" I asked looking at the deserted halls and the rest of the gang came up behind us.

"Thank God we have a professor so we don't have to wait for one to pop up." Mattie smiled.

I looked up at Ian, he read my mind and laughed. "The location is like the secret garden, only we know how to get to it." He smiled leading us down a dark hallway.

Now, why they would keep certain rooms secret, I would need to ask. What was the point? Couldn't we remember which way we went the first time?

"Professor, wait up!" We all turned and saw Trevor and Brittney running towards us. He was in the midst of trying to get into his tux jacket and Brittney was watching him with a raised eyebrow. Now, Brittney looked like one of those oh-my-god-pop-out-of-vogue people. Her white, hombre patterned dress featuring a plunged V neckline was molded onto her body ending just above the knee and her sparkly shawl lay rested on her shoulder. Her white-blonde hair lay perfectly straight. "Good now we don't have to wait for one." He smiled as he finally got his coat on.

We walked through several hallways and by the time we reached the fourth corridor I knew I would never be able to find my way out. "Just when I thought the halls were starting to look familiar to me." I grumbled.

Ian threw back his head and laughed opening up a door. "Now that looks too creepy." I planted my heels into the ground looking at the narrow stone, spiral staircase that led down into darkness.

"You think I would actually let something happen to you?" Ian looked down at me and I couldn't help the way I completely melted around him. I would probably forget my name if he asked me to.

So I let him lead me down the staircase of doom. Emerging from the staircase I was engulfed by a cold breeze and I hugged myself then managed to glance around at the iced walls and the icicles hanging from the ceiling, simply put, it was beautiful.

We continued to walk down the icy hallway, silver and white streamers hung up ahead and by the vibrations in the wall we were close to the dance. "This is great." Jaemi said walking through the streamers. We finally emerged into the ball room and it was decorated in pure white and silver, icicles and snowflakes hung from the ceilings, and a large ice sculpture of a snow flake was in the middle of the munchies table.

"Wow." I said shaking my head, this dance out did everything I have ever been too. Despite the chilly atmosphere, large magical heaters sat in corners that cast a warm glow and heat around surrounding areas.

"Lets dance." Ian whispered in my ear pulling me onto the dance floor, this time I didn't put up a fight, he wrapped his arms around my waist and started moving to the rhythm and I couldn't help but follow, I was in heaven, a snow filled heaven.

I remember when I was a little girl, I would stand on my dad's feet and he would try to teach me to dance. Even then I would fall and my feet weren't even moving, my dad would always chuckle but help me back up and try to teach me again.

Now I was dancing with Ian and I felt like I was floating on clouds, everything seemed to fall into place as the music pulsed around us. Suddenly Ian's grip tightened on me and he stopped dancing his

head snapping up and surveying the room. "What's wrong?" I asked watching him as his eyes darted around the packed ballroom.

He looked quickly down at me. "Stay close to me." He whispered and started pushing our way off the dance floor. He kept his arm around my waist as he made his way over to a Warrior who was standing by the entrance.

"General." He did that respectful bow thing.

"They are here somewhere, find them." Ian ordered and the warrior nodded and took off stopping at other warriors to pass the news.

"They are?" I squeezed his hand and he smiled looking down.

"You have nothing to worry about, love." He leaned down and kissed my cheek then led me over to a nicely decorated table and he grabbed sodas.

I flopped down and sipped at my soda staring at him, trying to figure out if he was lying or not when the rest of the gang sat down. All of them out of breath and the guys had their ties loosened and their coats unbuttoned and hanging open.

Ian smiled at me in a reassuring way and squeezed my hand under the table. "What's going on?" Jaemi asked her eyebrows furrowing.

Ian didn't say anything and neither did I. "I Reeve read minds if I have to." She threatened and Ian arched his eyebrow.

"I'd like to see you try." He chuckled.

"Okay, maybe not yours but I'll read Rose's." She huffed pointing at me.

"Reeve and Tawny are somewhere around here." I said before she poked into some very private thoughts of mine.

Everybody's mouths flew open and glanced at each other. "Not everyone speak at once now." Ian laughed and shook his head. "The

warriors are searching and everyone is safe." He said calmly and everyone nodded.

"Then what are we doing sitting down at a dance?" Mattie popped up and grabbed Micah and dragged him out onto the dance floor.

Ian pulled me to my feet. "One more dance." He smiled and I scrunched my eyebrows "Then its off to the bonfire." He chuckled.

"Already?" I asked looking up at the clock and sure enough it was almost midnight, time really does fly when your having a good time.

The last dance was slow and I rested my head on his chest as we swayed back and forth, somehow moments like this are what made you forget everything bad in the world and made you think of everything you had, moments like this, that I wanted to last forever.

That forever was broken as Mattie pulled me from Ian's grip causing me to nearly snap her head off. "We have to change." She said her eyes wide at my glare.

I stomped off the dance floor with her and Jaemi trailing me. We all quickly changed in the packed restroom where a whole bunch of other girls were getting ready and gossiping about the upcoming bonfire. I saw Jaemi's tattoo appear and then Mattie made hers appear, I closed my eyes and thought about what Ian said then heard many people gasping around me. I snapped my eyes open to see everyone staring at me. "What?" I asked.

Mattie dragged me in front of a mirror and my eyes went wide. "Those weren't there last time." I pointed out, now the vine like tattoos came up my neck around my ear and lining my eyes.

"They are beautiful." Jaemi said.

"Micah only has them on his shoulders." Mattie said walking around me.

"Mason only has them on his hands." Jaemi said. So then why did I end up with all the tattoos?

I turned around in the mirror and saw the back of my neck and the top of my back had the same tattoos. We walked outside and Mason and Micah were in front of me their eyes large as dinner plates.

"Why do you get all the tattoos?" Micah asked.

"This is more then the last time I tried it with Ian." I said and Ian appeared his eyes glazing over me and he eyebrows furrowed and he turned quickly away and up to a very stunned group of warriors.

That didn't look like a good sign. I pushed my way through the gawking crowd and found Ian looking deep in conversation with some warriors and Headmaster Seeley. "Ian?" I squeaked and he looked at me then came over. Terror was probably sprawled across my face. "What's going on?" I asked.

"Nothing to worry about." He smiled running his fingers along the tattoos on my face, but his own face looked distraught and worried.

"That's a lie." I stated crossing my arms and for the first time realized he was already in his silver sweats.

He leaned down to my level. "Lets enjoy the rest of the night and then I'll explain everything." He said taking my cheeks in his hands.

"Promise?" I asked and he nodded his head placing a soft kiss on my lips, that was promise enough for me.

"Students find a professor and stick with him or her." Professor Seeley yelled out as many students scrambled to find a Professor. "Have your tickets out and ready."

Ian gripped my hand and looked at the many students behind him. "Everyone stick close." He said over his shoulder as he started leading the way out.

I looked up at his face and studied it, he looked calm, but his eyes crinkled a way in the corners telling me he was worried. "Stop worrying love." He squeezed my hand then pulled me close to him.

We started our decent into the school. "Does this place ever end?" I

asked as we walked through a darkened hallway.

He chuckled squeezing my hand. "It runs really far underground." He smirked continuing down the hall and down to another creepy staircase leading into more darkness. I followed quietly as we walked through the halls, many shuffling feet could be heard.

As we turned down a corridor heat filled the hall and we were lead outside...well it looked like outside. It looked like a cave and the bonfire was set up in the middle, tables lined the far end of the cave and each circular table had its own munchies and drinks.

"Your tickets have your seat numbers." Ian said and took me to a table in the far right where my usual gang was already settling down.

The music was softly playing so everyone was just lounging around and talking to each other, or making out by the edge of the bonfire. "So they call this a secret garden?" I asked Ian as I was looking around, I always pictured gardens with flowers and trees and well...colorful.

This was a cave, if it wasn't filled with beautiful tables and a bustling bonfire I would say it was creepy, but this one was beautiful.

"Garden doesn't necessarily have to mean flowers." He smiled down at me wrapping his arm around my waist.

I leaned into his chest and he softly started stroking my hair and gently kissed my ear. "You excited about graduating?" He asked and for the first time, it hit me, it really hit me, I was a senior, I was graduating.

"I...well..." I stammered, what was I going to do after graduation? Now where was I headed? I am no longer a normal teenager figuring out what college to go to, now I was one of the most hunted teens around. "I don't know." I finally breathed out.

"What has you so worried?" He asked gently playing with the tips of my curls as my hand played with his other fingers.

"I mean I'm no longer normal." I said, "I wanted to go to NYU, I was already accepted, but now, all that life seems so far away." I tried explaining, but it just wasn't coming out right.

"I know what you mean love." He said. "Micah and Mason, I believe are going into the Cavilere Academy, have you given that any thought?"

I didn't know about this, I'm taking the Cavilere Academy was the training place for the warriors. "I don't know if combat is for me." I scrunched up my face. "I trip when I run and the last time I encountered hunters I nearly died," I pointed out.

"That is what the academy is for, it trains you and there are many positions not just combat ones." He smiled kissing my forehead.

Ever since I started this school I haven't given thought to my future what so ever, and now with it looming in the close future, it was staring me straight in the face. "You still have one more term." He reassured me.

I nodded my head looking out at everyone huddled in the cave, laughing and enjoying themselves. What would my future hold though? With hunters after me all the time, when will I be needed? Proteggi's existed for a reason, so when will I be called upon?

A loud commotion interrupted my raging thoughts. Ian stood up immediately. "Stay here." He said squeezing my shoulder and headed over to the entrance where many warriors were gathered around.

"No just kill me now then!" I heard a familiar voice shriek and I shuttered getting up to glance up everyone heads to make sure I was right.

I saw the blonde head and I knew I was right, it was Reeve and right behind him was Tawny. I sunk back down into my chair, this wasn't happening.

Suddenly, he was in front of me nearly making me tumble out of

my chair, right, vampires had that super speed thing going for them. "Tell them you are my mate!" He yelled in my face and all I could do was stare wide-eyed at him. He wouldn't give it up.

I could just stare at his wild eyes. Why was I freezing up in front of a psycho teenage boy. I clenched and unclenched my hands around the edge of my seat. It was like everything around me just disappeared and it was just Reeve and I standing there.

"Tell them!" He shook me, then he was out of my site and thrown across the room. Ian was left standing in front of me, his arms across his bare chest and his eyes were cold, making me look away.

Tawny waltzed up as if nothing was out of the ordinary. "So why are you two lying and telling everyone that you are each others mates?" She asked looking at her manicured finger.

Ian's eyebrows furrowed and nodded his head gesturing to warriors who were standing around staring, and at his nod they all started towards Tawny and Reeve. Both of them looked at the warriors then were out of the warriors intruding circle.

I glanced around trying to spot them and then saw Reeve, it was slow motion to me, the dagger he was pulling from his waist band. "Ian!" I screeched and he whipped his head around to look at me, he saw my eyes gazed behind him, and spun around as Reeve lunged forward with the dagger.

I caught my breath trying to see if blood was coming out of Ian, but he was a wolf now throwing Reeve to the ground, the dagger flying out of his hand. He had his front paws on Reeve's shoulders growling in his face.

Warriors ran up to Reeve and cuffed him with weird glowing blue cuffs. I would have to ask about that. Ian was still in wolf form looking around, then he hopped over my head making me jump. I turned around and he was trying to pin Tawny.

Mason and Micah were now standing right by me. "You alright?"

Mason asked and I nodded my eyes glued to the sable wolf that was battling the psycho vampire.

I felt a pain slash my right wrist and I look down but nothing was there, which only meant one thing, she was hurting Ian. Another pain slashed my other wrist and that was it.

Not giving it a second thought, I lunged forward over Ian and down onto Tawny, she fell to the floor with a loud thud as I landed on top of her. "Get off me." She growled pushing my shoulders and I went flying across the room. I hit a wall and slid down ignoring the pain as I ran back towards her, spotting the dagger in the back of her shorts, so I lunged for it. Ian was growling and circling her.

I reached my hand out and gripped the handle of the dagger but Tawny twirled around smacking my hand and placing her hands around my neck pushing me against a cold wall of the cave. I could feel the sweat build around my spine. "He's mine bitch." She sneered in my face.

I kicked my legs trying to find her legs as her hands just tightened on my neck. "How dare you?!" Micah growled as he gripped Tawny's shoulders and shoved her to the ground, Ian jumping on top of her pinning her down.

But her hand was wrapped around the dagger and my hand flew to capture around her wrist as she tried lunging it in Ian's silky fur. She was stronger than me though and my hand started shaking trying to hold her back. A warrior gripped it just as I lost grip on her and cuffed her with those funky blue things.

I ran over to Ian who was standing on his hind legs, like a dog begging, his front paws bloody. "I can heal him." Professor Britton kneeled down and let her hands hover over his dangling paws.

His tongue was lolling out and his hind legs shaking as he tried to keep up right. As soon as Professor Britton finished he phased back to his human self and came over to me wrapping me in a hug. "You alright?" He asked and I nodded hugging him tighter.

"Are you?" I asked and he chuckled.

"Not even a scratch." He held up his wrists, and sure enough not even a faint pink line was left.

Everyone was scattered around the cave as they escorted Reeve and Tawny out. "You want to get out of here?" Ian whispered in my ear and I nodded quickly.

I watched the backs of the warriors as they led the two fugitives out. Would that be the last time I saw them? Or would I constantly be looking over my shoulder for the two of them?

## Chapter 28: The McAllister's

~Rose's POV~

The fire cracked as we sat on the couch. I was leaning against his chest, my shoes thrown off and feet curled under the cushion. "So, you said you would explain after tonight." I reminded Ian as he pulled the many pins out of my hair letting my curls fall to my waist.

"I did say that, didn't I?" He chuckled still picking out the pins.

I nodded, quietly letting him dwell on his thoughts. "We have a prophecy." He finally said and I scrunched my eyebrows, like in storybooks prophecy type-thing?

"Are you going to tell me about this prophecy?" I asked him after he stayed quiet too long.

He shook his head "Maybe when you graduate. I think we should just enjoy right now." He smirked pulling me close to him.

I thought about it for a little while, I did want to know about the prophecy, I know some part of it had to deal with me, but in an other sense I did want to put it off for a little while, enjoy what I have now. Because right now, I was safe, so safe in Ian's arms. Reeve and Tawny were once again captured and there were no sign of Hunters.

"Alright." I smiled leaning in to him, if he could wait so could I. I trusted the man with my life.

He pulled me close to him and the only noise that could be heard was the crackling of the fire. I just leaned against Ian and let all my thoughts flow together. I was startled by a soft snore and glanced up

and smiled as Ian had fallen asleep against the armrest of the couch his arm still securely around me.

"Love," Someone was shaking me. "Morning." Ian smiled as I opened my eyes, I was still leaning against his chest where I had fallen asleep.

"Morning." I yawned.

He grinned and tossed me my duffel bag. "Get dressed, I have a surprise for you." He left back to his room where I heard drawers opening and closing and him talking to himself.

I unzipped the bag and saw all the winter clothing. "Where are we going?" I hollered.

"Surprise." He popped his head around the corner. "I already told you that."

After two hours I was leaning against the window watching the trees zoom by, when I saw approaching mountains and we started our climb. "Please tell me you aren't taking me skiing?" I could just picture myself rolling down the side of a mountain into one big snowball.

He laughed looking over at me. "I know you better than that." He shook his head still rumbling with laughter.

I sighed glancing out the window again. He had turned onto a road that wasn't even there. Unless you count dirt and rock as road. "I feel like a jack hammer." I said as the Range Rover bounced up and down on the road.

"It's secluded, sorry." He smiled squeezing my hand that was under his. "You have no patience do you?"

"Not when I'm hours away from home and still don't know where I am." I pouted making him laugh even harder.

"I'm kidnapping you and making you learn how to track in the dead of the woods." He said this with the most serious face that my heart started thudding extremely hard in my chest.

"What?" I sputtered. "You can't be serious...I mean, I'll get lost, eaten by wolves-"

"Eaten by wolves?" he laughed harder but left it at that.

I was still in a semi-panic attack mode when we pulled into a clearing, just on the edge of the forest, with a large three-story cabin resting in the middle. It had a weathered look from years of exposure to the elements but was still maintained with a solid stone chimney, shuttered windows, and a small porch. As we pulled closer I noticed a slim yet curvy woman leaning over the banister. Her sable hair fell around her face perfectly and cascaded down her shoulders. She glanced up and dropped the coffee cup in her hand and then started waving her arms vigorously at us.

Ian chuckled. "That would be my mom."

I blinked and shook my head. She hardly looked to be in her thirties. "Your mom?" Ian was already out of the car and helping me with my door.

"Oh!" Ian's mom came running at me. "You must be Rose!!" Her arms circled around me and she kissed my cheek. "I've been yelling at Ian to bring you to come see us! It's about dang time!"

"Hi." Was all I could pathetically get out.

"Oh dear." His mom held me at arms length. "So tiny." She laughed. "Call me Joni."

"Is that my baby bro?" I heard a booming voice and glanced up just in time to see a huge figure bound down the steps of the patio and tackle Ian. Mid tackle both of them phased into wolves.

"Don't mind them dear." Joni wrapped an arm around my shoulder. "Boys." She led me inside.

If I thought the outer house was amazing the inside was breath taking. It looked like it popped out of one of those 'my dream house shows'. On my left was a fireplace with tall pottery vases standing on either side, surrounded by a brown couch and a rocking chair. Near the middle of the living room were three large, red sofas forming a U with a rather low coffee table in front of them, nothing but a large vase with three beautiful red roses sticking out. In front of the sofas, was a flat screen TV with two units on each side. Several photo frames covered wall, pictures of family and friends, along with several framed awards and certificates.

On the brown couch was another woman. Her chestnut hair was pulled back into a fancy twist and a book was in her lap. "Was that Chauncey and Ian, I just heard?" She turned to face us and her bright gray eyes landed on me. "You must be Rose." She smiled getting up. "I'm Jaclyn, Ian's sister."

Did they all have to be so beautiful? You would think I would be used to it by now...but nope. "Hi." There was that pathetic reply again.

A tall, lean male walked into the room. He had short sable hair that was neatly formed into spikes that were standing out in all directions and mossy green eyes that zoomed into me. "He finally brought his mate. Hell, he finally has a mate."

"Shut it, Chestley." Jaclyn rolled her eyes.

"What?" He grinned. "I'm just saying..." He walked up to me and stuck out his abnormally large hand. "I'm Chestley, Ian's brother."

I didn't even know he had siblings. Now, I was being thrust to a handful of them. "So is Ian the oldest?" I bit my lip.

Chestley did a laugh that sounded more like a bark. "More like the baby." He glanced around. "Where is that kid anyway?"

"Probably getting mauled by Chauncey." Jaclyn's gray eyes flicked to the door where seconds later both Ian and Chauncey stomped in

covered in mud and snow.

"Ah!" Joni ran up making towels appear mid air. "Boys! What have a told you?!" She threw the towels at them.

Chauncey glanced over at me. "How rude of me." He grinned, coming and burying me in his arms. "I'm Chauncey." He pulled away and I was astonished at how much he looked like Ian. The same sable hair and bright gray eyes. He was just a...bigger version.

Ian came to my side and pulled me close. "Welcome to my house." He whispered in my ear. "They are harmless." He chuckled.

"Well look who finally decided to drop by." I heard a deep voice and glanced behind me to see a man standing in the doorway dusting the snow from his boots.

"Pops." Ian grinned hugging his father.

"And this little thing must be Rose." He came and wrapped his arms around me. He had chestnut hair that rested over his ears and against the collar of his shirt and gray eyes. "I'm Chet."

"Have a seat!" Joni motioned us all to the couch. "I'll go make some tea, hot chocolate, coffee. What do you want?"

"Chocolate." I smiled still feeling a little nervous. They were all...just...so nice.

Ian's hand squeezed mine and I felt the side of his leg vibrate. He slipped his hand into his pocket and pulled out his cell. "Hello." He said just as his mother reappeared with everybody's drinks. "Why?" His voice dropped and his hand let go of mine. He disappeared into another room.

I looked after him. "I'm sure everything is alright dear." Joni patted my shoulder.

Ian walked into the room moments later with a face that looked like he swallowed a lemon. "What's wrong?" I stood up setting my mug

on the coffee table.

"Nothing." He kissed my forehead. "But I have to leave."

Just like that I went into panic mode. My heart picked up and my hands started trembling. Ian had to leave? For how long? Why? Was he in danger? "Calm down." He ran a hand through my hair. "I'll be back before you know it."

"Why?" I asked.

"Hunters are coming into the east border." He said quietly, calmly. "I have to go make sure everybody knows what they are doing."

Hunters equal danger. Ian will be in danger. "I'll be fine." He reassured me, as if he read my mind, which I wouldn't be surprised.

"And we'll keep you busy." Chauncey came and looped an arm around my shoulders. "You won't even realize he is gone."

I'll realize it.

It was hard to watch him leave in his uniform. I was terrified he wouldn't come back. "Please don't worry so much about me." He said in my ear.

"I can't help it." I sounded like a child throwing a tantrum. I was being selfish. But I loved the man. I couldn't watch him march off into his own death.

He ran the pads of his thumb down my cheek. "I won't be gone long, I promise." He leaned his and softly pressed his lips to mine. "I love you."

"I love you." I mouthed back under his lips.

Then he was gone.

## Chapter 29: Kill or be Killed

~Ian's POV~

I hated leaving her. It was like that cliché saying where half my heart is left behind. But in our sense, in our world, it's literally true. Half my self, my heart, and my soul gets left behind every single time I'm separated from her.

I dug my paw through the fresh snow on the eastern border. No footprints, no track marks, no scents. Nothing for us to go by. But I know they are out there. I could sense it.

I flicked my ears back as a cold rush of wind blast through the forest. Along with the wind comes a musty, rustic smell. I started running towards it, sending out a message to my surrounding warriors.

I usually held no fear when I was running towards the enemy. But now, I did have a fear. What if something did happen to me? What would that do to Rose? My pace slowed as the smell became stronger. I kept my nose close to the ground and my tail tucked in.

A wolf bounded out in front of me nearly making me pounce him.  
*There are four in the clearing General.*

I nodded my head in understanding. I didn't recognize the young warrior, but guessed he was fresh out of the academy. I went around the last tree and saw four Hunters sitting around a fire.

They were huddled around the heat eating. *They aren't suspecting anything.* The rookie pointed out.

*If it isn't the betrayer.* I wheeled around at the familiar voice that ran

through my head. I found my self staring at the black wolf with the penetrating red eyes.

*Hello Remus.* I turned to fully face him while pushing the rookie back into the trees with my hind leg.

*I see that your little mate saved you.* His red eyes glanced around the darkened forest. *Too bad she isn't here now.*

I felt the growl growing deep in my chest. He can threaten me all he wants, but once he brings my Rose into this...

I shifted just slightly so I had a higher advantage. He shifted right with me, his red eyes glowing as they locked with mine. *You can't beat me Ian, you know that.*

*Watch me.* I said and jumped at him, my front paws hit him square in the shoulder. I sank my teeth into his fur, a grimy metallic taste feeling my mouth.

His growl was loud that my ear drums felt like they shattered and just like that he had my pinned on the ground, his own teeth snapping near my neck. I pushed, struggling under his weight and felt him loose balance. I gave one more push and he was off me.

Where were all my warriors? I took off for a run where our camp was set up. I felt Remus behind me, his anger washing off of him in waves. I could hear the slight limp he was getting from my venom working it's magic and starting to weaken his muscles.

As I ran into our camp site I nearly froze in terror. They were more Hunters, and all of them were facing off with my Warriors. We needed back up fast. I stopped and turned so suddenly, I took Remus by surprise and he ran straight into me. I buried my teeth in his other shoulder.

His paw ranked across my side and felt the searing pain go up my body from his claws. I spun around using my hand legs to push him down on to the ground. *Kale!* I called running into the mess of the

mini-battle.

Kale Trayhern appeared before me, his eyes glowing. *How many down?* He was my right hand man and the one I trusted the most.

"None so far, everybody is holding there own." He answered looking over his shoulder where a group of Magii were battling with curses.

I looked over Trayhern, he had to fang marks near his collarbone and a claw mark going up his cheek. "I'm fine." He said.

I nodded. *Get everybody into the circular formation the Tribattle won't work here.* I ordered. He gave me a swift nod and jogged off in the other direction.

"Where do you need me?" I looked up to see Danica, green sparking from her fingertips. "I just got the word, more powers and elders are on their way."

I phased back into a human and saw how she glanced at my bleeding side. "I want all the Powers and Elders split up." I said quickly looking back at Remus who was struggling to get up. "Evenly."

She nodded and took off as well. I felt heat blast my back and I wheeled around, a Magii was standing there holding out her red sparking fingers. "Say goodbye Ian." She grinned.

"Ines." I said holding up my hands. "Don't."

She walked towards me, keeping her hands up for defense. "Why not Ian?" She cocked her head to the side. "You abandoned me."

"No I didn't." I said calmly. "I made the right choice."

Her laugh was more a cackle and my heart twisted. "I hear you mated with a Proteggi."

"Don't." I repeated, watching her red glowing eyes. She had

chopped off her long sable hair to curve around her neck and ears.  
"Don't bring her into this."

"Oh, but isn't that the whole point." She narrowed her eyes. "We have no Proteggi on our side, surely we can get at least one of them." She stepped closer to me. "And if she doesn't agree then she is dead."

I kept my stance, reminding my self to stay as calm as possible. I knew this day would come. I just was hoping it never would. "Don't touch her." I said keeping my voice as even as possible.

"Or what?" She placed a hand on my chest. "You'll kill me?"

I could never kill her. I glanced over her shoulder, memories floating through my mind. "She doesn't even know about me does she?" She circled me. "Nobody ever talks about me I presume. To them I'm dead."

"You're not dead, Ines." I said turning to stare her full in the face.  
"But you can come back home."

She snorted and rolled her eyes. "Sure, sure." She cackled again and twirled around to stand behind me. "And be treated like an outcast forever. That seems welcoming."

I turned around again, she was standing with her hands on her waist. "You know it won't be like that." I took a step toward her, holding out my arms. "Come home, Nesy."

She looked at my arms, her red eyes flickering to her old gray ones for just a moment, then she took a step back shaking her head. "I have a mission now Ian and that is to kill your mate."

"Nesy-" I took another step towards her. "You can't to that, you can't do that to me. I'd rather you kill me right now then hurt Rose."

Her eyes softened around the corners as she lifted her fingers, which were still sparking red. "I can't kill you Ian." Her hands went back down to her sides and her head dropped. "But I can kill someone I

don't know or love."

"Nessy, she's part of me." I called after her retreating figure. "I won't let anybody hurt her."

She turned to face her. "What will you do to the person who does?"

"I'll kill them, but watch them suffer first."

"Then you will have to kill me brother." She said before walking off.

I balled my hand into a fist. "That was Ines wasn't it?" Danica walked up to me putting her hand on my arm.

I nodded. "She's going after Rose and if she hurts her..." I looked down at Danica. "How am I suppose to hurt her even if she rips my heart out?"

Her hand squeezed my arm. "You don't have to hurt her, you can just arrest her."

"Same difference." I muttered.

"General." I turned around to see Kale coming towards me.

"Everybody is in position."

"Let's go then." I said walking towards the now empty clearing. Only confused Hunters were left standing there. Most of them murmuring how they won and scared us off.

Remus finally found his footing and was standing among his ranks when he spotted me. "Is this a white flag Ian?" He asked running a hand through his matted black hair. His dark eyes boring into mine.

"I would never give that to you." I stated. "This is your chance to turn and go back to your own territory."

Remus's dark eyes roamed over me. "You clearly don't know us as well as I thought you did." He smirked and with a tiny flicker of his finger everybody lunged at me.

My mind was confused as I felt heat as many red sparks hit me. My legs were bound, my arms were glued to my sides, I was blinded. I felt my breaths coming in huffs. I had to stay calm.

I could see nothing but shadows circling around me and felt another blast to my abdomen. Then everything became crystal clear. Rose was standing just a short distance away behind all the Hunters. I wanted to scream at her, but she wouldn't move only her hand was outstretched towards me.

I struggled against my binds. I had to get her to safety, away from all these people who wanted her. I opened my mouth to yell at her, but no sound came out. I watched Ines come out of the shadows, right behind Rose. I struggled more feeling the burn of the magical binds on my legs.

Ines had her hands lifted, red shooting straight at Rose's back. My heart thudded in my chest, Ines wouldn't hurt her. Would she? I watched in horror as the red shot straight through Rose's chest, her mouth open in a silent scream.

I couldn't move, I couldn't talk. Rose...I watched as she fell to the ground, her eyes rolling in the back of her head, her chest stop moving. I felt the emptiness in my chest. She was dead.

I sank down into the binds, no longer struggling. I couldn't help her. I couldn't do anything. I could only watch her die. Then I saw somebody else step out into the clearing. My mother. Her sable hair whipping behind her in the fierce cold wind.

Her eyes landed on Rose and a frown formed on lips. Her eyes glanced up at me, a sadness etched in them. *Why didn't you help her?* Was what they were asking. Ines stepped out again staring at our mother.

My mother raised her hands to her mouth. "Ines." She mouthed reaching for her daughter. Ines lifted her hands and once more red sparks shot through and I watched as my mother fell to the ground limply.

I glanced from Rose to my mom, both lying dead in the snow.

"General, can you hear me!" I heard shouting, but I couldn't move. I couldn't take my eyes off my mother or off of Rose. They were just laying there. In the cold.

"Ian! You have to move!" It was Danica. But I wouldn't move. I couldn't. I let Rose down and I let my mother down.

"I think he was cursed." I vaguely heard an unfamiliar voice.

I felt strong arms going under me and lift me to my feet. "Ian, we have to move, you will get killed if you stay in the middle of this clearing." It was Kale. But what did it matter if I was killed. I deserved to die. I sat by and watched while my own sister kill our mother and my mate.

I fought against Kale, I had to at least put them where they weren't laying in the cold with snow already covering them. "Ian, snap out of it!" Kale shook me. "It isn't real!"

I heard him say the words. But how could it not be real. Could he not see my mother and Rose laying face first in the snow...not breathing? I struggled some more with him, even swinging out my fist.

I felt cool hands go over my cheeks. "Ian look at me." I heard Danica but my eyes were still trained over her head. "Ian...focus!" She shook me and force my eyes to look in hers. I saw her lips move with the ancient tongue of the Magii.

It felt like the ground shifted under my feet. I blinked and shook my head. Confused and disorientated I looked over at the horrid spot only to see that my mother and Rose were not longer there. I took off at a run towards it.

Kale jumped in front of me grabbing my shoulders. "Danica broke the curse, Ian." He said, his voice low and steady. "It wasn't real, whatever you were seeing wasn't real."

I looked over at Danica who was leaning against a tree with her eyes closed. "The curse of fear." Kale stated. "Somebody hit you with it."

"So it wasn't real..." My voice cracked. That meant that my mother and Rose were still safe at home. I took a deep breath and turned towards the formation, everybody looking at me.

"They ran off into those woods, I'm pretty sure they are waiting for us." Kale said pointed to the woods where moments ago I saw Ines appear and kill mom and Rose.

I nodded. I wanted to get this over with and get home. Kale, Danica, and I walked through the woods, the dimness falling over us. I phased feeling the snow seep between my claws. Danica went right and Kale took left while I went straight.

It was going to be a long night.

## Chapter 30: Far From Normal

*~Rose's POV~*

Jaclyn was flipping through a photo album on the couch with me as I shifted uneasily waiting to hear from Ian.

"Wasn't he adorable?" She was saying. "He looks like a cute puppy dog."

I glanced down to stare at a small puppy. It's sable fur all fluff and fuzz. "Is that Ian?" I giggled taking the book from her.

"Sure is." She laughed. "I think he was two here." I flipped the page to stare at all three brothers standing together by a Christmas tree. Ian looked to be about twelve or thirteen, all legs and arms. I glanced at the picture by it. It was Ian around five years old with his arm around a small girl, who had the exact same eyes as him and same color sable hair, even had the dimple in her left cheek.

"Who's that?" I pointed to the small girl.

Jaclyn's face dropped. "Ines." She said taking the book from hands. "I suppose Ian hasn't mentioned her to you?"

I shook my head. "He hardly talks about himself." I just realize this now as I look through all the photographs.

"Ines is his twin." She said running her finger over the old picture. "They were close."

I was stuck on the 'his twin' part. He was a twin? He didn't bother to mention this to me, seeing as I'm a twin? I wasn't mad, but frustrated. Why couldn't he share this part of himself with me?

What else could he possibly be hiding.

"Were close?" I asked, noticing her past tense.

Her eyes flickered to Chauncey and Chestley who were sitting on the opposite couch. "She's a Hunter now." She finally said.

"A..." I shut my mouth and licked my lips. She was his enemy now. How would I feel if suddenly Mason or Micah decided to go evil? I shuttered not even able to bear the thought.

Suddenly I felt pain soar up my side and I dropped the book and clung to my side. Ian. "What?" Jaclyn asked her hands going over my shoulders. "What's wrong?"

*Anger, fear, confusion...* unknown emotions ran through my head. That has never happened. I was used to just feeling his pain...not his emotions too. I closed my eyes trying to separate his screaming emotions from my own.

I shoved my hand in my pocket in search of my cell phone and dialed in his number. I nearly threw my phone across the living room when he didn't answer. "Ian." I whispered rubbing my side.

Jaclyn's eyes went wide with understanding and Chauncey jumped up and phased. His tail swooshing behind him as he paced the living room. I buried my face in my hands. Ian was hurt and there was nothing I could do.

Unless...

I jumped up and grabbed my coat. Rough arms went around my shoulders. "What are you doing?" Chestley asked basically carrying me back to my couch.

"Going to go find him." I said through my teeth struggling against his hold.

"And get yourself killed?" Chestley asked flopping me on the couch near Jaclyn. "I don't think so."

"But..." I looked towards the door. "He's hurt."

"And I'm plenty sure they have Healers around." Chestley said sitting on the other side of me.

Joni and Chet entered the room with worried expressions as they sat on the love seat. "I wonder what is going on." Joni said so quietly it was almost hard to hear her.

I started tugging on the edge of my sweater. *Hurt, betrayal, love* slapped me so hard that I whimpered and put a hand to my head. What was happening? Jaclyn put her arm around me and stroked my hair.

It was torture sitting in the quiet living room surrounded by his family. I heard loud footsteps coming up the steps and immediately Chet, Chauncey, and Chestley were phased and crouched low to the ground. Jaclyn and Joni were standing in front of me, their fingers starting to spark green.

I looked up just as the door bursts open. Three Hunters stood in the doorway, with the same black flowing robes and glowing red eyes. "We didn't come here to fight." The one in the front said looking straight at the wolves. They didn't relax their defensive crouch. "We came here to talk to the Proteggi."

I stood up behind Joni and Jaclyn and shifted on my feet. "You have the choice to join us." The other Hunter said. He was joking right? I mean, did he really think I would go easily over to the dark side?

"No." I said still struggling to separate my emotions from Ian's which were becoming more and more pronounced.

"If you don't join us, then you will be killed." He said matter-of-fact.

"I'd rather die than be with you guys." I said through clenched teeth, Ian was now in a lot pain.

"Then so be it." The one in front said and nodded his head to the other two. One phased and the other eyes started glowing while his

teeth elongated.

Chestley and Chauncey immediately jumped forward growling as they pushed the two to the ground. "Come on." Joni grabbed my hand as Jaclyn sent green sparks sailing towards the other Hunter who in return shot red sparks.

I followed Joni into the kitchen where she unlatched a door that blended into the wall. "In." She said pushing me into the darkened room while she bolted the door behind us. "Watch out there are steps in front of you." She led me down the steps and then flicked on the lights.

We were standing underground, in a makeshift cellar. "This is our safe room." She explained. "Every family in our world has one connected to their home." She went around the room as if looking for somebody. "only somebody with the same blood line as the family who owns the house can get into it."

I looked around. It was like a mini apartment. Bunk beds lined one wall while food was stacked in another. A bathroom was even in the corner. "Where are they?" She was still digging through the shelves while mumbling to herself.

That's when I felt it. Ian. Ian with no hope. He was giving up. "No!" I screamed out loud pulling at my hair. His feelings were hitting me like a brick wall. He was so sad, so hurt, so guilty.

"What?" Joni was in front of me her hands on my shoulders. "What's happening?" She asked her frantic eyes going over me.

I felt the tears streaming down my face. He wouldn't give up. He wouldn't. But I felt it. I felt his hopelessness. His anguish.

"I have to find him." I screamed running up to the door but I was blown backward landing at the bottom of the stairs slightly dazed.

"I told you, only bloodline can touch the door." She said helping me up. "Just calm down sweetie and tell me what's happening." She sat

me down on the one couch.

"It's what he is feeling." I cried rubbing my temples. "He's given up." I yanked my fingers through my hair. "Why would he give up?"

"They must be messing with his mind." She answered quietly.

"Telling him stuff, making him see stuff." She rubbed my back.

"Don't worry, he's strong, he'll pull through it."

His heart was hammering fast, I could feel it with my own. Why wasn't anybody helping him? Was he all alone?

The door opened and Chestley limped down closely it behind him. His face was puffed up on one side and bleeding and he had a huge gash in his hip and was practically dragging his leg behind him.

Joni jumped up and helped him to the couch and propped his leg up. Her hands hovered over the wound while a green glow sparked from her palms, her lips moving silently. I stared at him as he leaned his head back and closed his eyes.

They were getting hurt because of me. I looked away from back at the door, but there was no way I could get out, unless I wanted to be electrocuted again.

It felt like I sat there for hours. Waiting. I felt useless. Eventually, Jaclyn came to sit with us. The Hunters had left but she said there were still more out there. Chauncey and Chet stood guard by the door.

I started pacing. I hadn't felt anything from Ian in several hours. Nothing. I knew he wasn't dead, I would surely feel that. Right? I continue to pace. Chestley was now laying in one of the bunks asleep and healing.

That's when I felt the pain surge up my legs to the middle of my back. I fell to the knees at how sudden it happened. Joni jumped up. "Ian?" She asked and I nodded pulling myself to my feet. He was hurt...again.

I bit my lower lip as the pain kept pulsating through my body. But this time he was feeling hopeless he was feeling determined. I slumped on the couch. Why couldn't I do anything? Why couldn't I help him?

I felt like eternity that I sat there. Feeling his pain mix into my body. Feeling his thumping heart with my own. The door opened again and by this time I had my face buried in my hands.

I felt warm hands encompass mine and in a moment I had my arms around his neck and I was crying. How could I not realize he was standing in the same room with me. His hands dabbed at my wet cheeks. "I'm here now." Ian whispered in my ear.

I pulled back to look at him. His cheek was swelling at his uniform was ripped and bloody. "Oh, Ian." I said wanting to heal him. His hands caught mine.

"Don't even think about it. My mom and Jaclyn can heal me." He kissed my forehead as Jaclyn stood off to the side, green already sparking from her hands.

"Are they still out there?" He asked his dad who had just entered the safe room.

"Yes." He nodded. "But not as many. That Reeve boy is standing on our porch."

Anger surged in me. I jumped up ready to make a run for the door again, when Ian's arms wrapped around my waist. "Don't." He said into my ear. "I can't lose you." His voice held pain in it that made me turn around and stare into his gray eyes that had specks of silver in them.

I ran my fingers down his cheeks. "You won't."

His eyes closed briefly as he caught my hand in his. "Just stay by me, don't leave my side. Not till you are safe again."

I nodded holding his gaze. The door opened again. "I told you to

stay guard Chauncey-" Chet started then froze..

Ian pushed me behind him. A slim woman stood at the top of the stairs. Her sable hair cropped short and her eyes glowing red. "This safe room doesn't give you all much safety anymore does it?" She smirked walking down the stairs. "I mean I can still get in."

Her eyes flickered to me and I felt Ian tense. Reeve emerged at the top of the steps. His smile wide and victorious. "Don't." Ian said to the women. "Please." His hand never left mine.

She put her finger to her chin. "The Curse of Mirth." She said. "I could kill you both with just a few words."

"Ines." Chet said stepping forward. "Don't do this."

So this was his twin. I pushed in front of Ian, too fast for him to react. "How could you?!" I yelled, all my anger about her hurting Ian shooting straight out of me to her. "He's your brother! Your twin!"

Ian's eyes snapped to mine and then they narrowed over at Jaclyn who shrugged. "I could never hurt one of my brothers, because it would kill me." I continued venting. "Are you so wrapped up in evil that you would hurt your own twin?!" I was practically standing on her feet. "If you want me so bad, then have me. But don't you dare touch Ian."

Her eyes were locked on mine. Then I was flying across the room, fire exploding in my chest. "No!" I heard Ian scream. "How could you?!" He was then holding me. I was on fire. I could feel it building deep in my chest and spreading to my toes and fingers.

"Rose." Ian cradled my cheeks in his hands. "Look at me." I blinked my burning eyelids and just as I did, I saw Reeve behind him.

"Ian." I croaked in a pathetic warning. But he knew. He swung around, his lips moving at the same time. A silver light flooded the room, blinding us. Ian voice rose in a language I didn't understand and then Reeve was suspended in the air, his mouth frozen open

and his eyes wide and unblinking. I would think him dead, if it wasn't for his chest heaving up and down, and suspended right next to him was Ines.

"Take it off her Ines." He growled through his teeth. "Now!" His spoke again in that language and Ines dropped to the ground. "Do it."

She looked at him, then looked over at me. Now, the fire was gone. But it felt like I was under water. Floating. But the water was pouring in my mouth, closing off my throat and lungs. I started coughing rolling on my side, trying to get the water out. "Now!" Ian roared. "Or so help me..."

"You'll kill me?" Ines cackled. "You wouldn't kill me."

"If you kill her..." Ian looked her straight in the eye. "I will." His words shook me. He would kill his own twin for the sake of me? No.

I tried calling out his name, but the water closed everything off. Ian was at my side immediately, rubbing my hair and pulling me up. "Ines!" Black dots started to dance in front of my eyes. I gripped Ian's torn uniform jacket. I couldn't breath. All my air was taken away from me.

Jaclyn knelt in front of me. "Ian...I'm sorry." Her green eyes were hovering over me. "I'm not powerful enough to stop a curse..." She had tears spilling out of her eyes.

"Mom..." He looked up at Joni who was standing right behind Jaclyn.

She shook her head. "Only a Power, Elder, or the one who cursed can remove it, you know that Ian." She said sadly.

I tugged on Ian's jacket trying to get a gulp of air in. "Ines!" He looked up, his eyes glowing silver, not his normal silver, but the kind that Professor Seeley had when he threw the shield.

Ines stepped up to us and knelt in front of me. "Why should I help her?" She smirked. "Say goodbye to your mate Ian." She stood up and headed for the door.

Ian yelled in his language and Ines fell to her knees screaming. I saw Ian flinch, his lips moving swiftly. "Don't make me do this, Nessy." He said, pain lacing his voice.

"You're going to use your Power against me?" She said through bits of gasps.

Then like she knew that Ian needed her, Danica appeared running down the stairs and moving around Ines. "Danica." Ian sighed closing his eyes and she knelt in front of me.

Her hands hovered over me but I couldn't hear the words that were coming off her lips. Then, wonderful air rushed into my lungs. I took a big gulp of air. "Thanks." I croaked out.

Ian pulled me in his arms, burying his face in my hair. "I swear you are going to give me a heart attack." He said into my hair, sending his warm breath down my neck.

"I'll be back Ian." Ines said standing up and disappearing with a snap of a finger. He sagged and let out a long breath.

"Are you alright?" I asked pulling back to look at his face. He was hurting, not physically, but he was hurting.

He gave me a stiff nod. "I will be." He leaned in and kissed my forehead.

"Hey bro?" Ian looked up at Chauncey who was poking Reeve's foot. "What about this one?"

Ian muttered some words under his breath and Reeve was a heap on the floor then he was running. Chauncey and Chet phased and took after him.

"Will it always be like this?" I asked leaning into his chest. "With

Hunters and all?"

He was quiet for a long moment. "Yes, unless I can do something about it."

"I don't want you getting hurt." I ran my fingers along his side that looked like he was clawed.

"I will." He said. "It's part of the job and I would do anything to keep you safe."

I shook my head. "I can't stand the thought of you dying while I stay alive."

"Then we won't think about death." He ran a hand down a lock of my hair. "For now, we enjoy the holidays."

"So normal." I laughed leaning into his chest. He smelled of woods and mud.

"We can try and be normal." He stated with a soft chuckle into my hair.

I snorted out a laugh. "We will never be normal." I said. We'll always be far from normal. But I guess that just makes my life a whole lot more interesting.