



Selene sat on her bed in her small but cozy room, decorated with one bed, a small oak wood desk that had meant to be a dresser, beside a bookcase, and chair by her window, writing with the new quill her brother had given her. All around her, she could see the shadows darkening, regrouping on the bare wooden walls. The candle by her bedside reflected off her skin, causing stars to dance around darkened room. Her lip curved up into a smile as she thought about her elder brother and what game he was playing with her to amuse calm him of his boredom. Finally, when she didn't budge, knowing he was standing by her door, the creak of her tall wooden door opening caused Selene to look up, her bangs falling down into place as she took in the sight.

There stood Eris, her older brother. His body leaned against the wooden frame, his shoulders slumped, his arms crossed. The boredom in his green eyes made her worry; nothing good ever came out of him looking bored.

"Haven't you finished that spell yet, Selene?"

Resisting the urge to purse her lips up at him and insight a

criticism of her face, she said, "If I had, do you think I would be working on it right now?" Eris, scoffing at her while he walked in, closed the door behind him with a swift kick of his plain brown boots. A chill crept up her spine as she wondered why he had his boots on so late into the night.

"Would you like some help, little sister dear?"

Selene, ignoring his condescending tone, returned her attention to her notebook. "That's the last thing I want. Spells really aren't something you're good at."

"Your point?" he said, leaning against one of her bedposts, his jade green eyes, staring outside, fixated on the dark night. Sighing, Selene rolled her eyes. He could be unbearable sometimes, she thought. Opening her mouth to say such, he spoke first filling up the silence with the simple phrase, "we should go out."

Selene nearly dropped her quill at the deadly proposition. "Are you insane? There are Vampyres out there! They'll kill us." Selene wondered if there was any part of her protest that he had listened to. Or better yet, understood. Sometimes you couldn't tell with Eris. He did what he did, no matter the repercussions.

"Not if we stay within the confines of the runes. We'll be fine little witchling," he soothed in a condescending tone, reaching down to pet her head. He hadn't heard a word she said.

Selene slapped his arm away harshly. "Do not patronize me,

brother. We're Witches and being Touched does not save you Eris." It was an awful thing to say to him, to remind him they that were only half siblings, to remark on what made him different. But whatever would make him listen, she was willing to use. Unfortunately, it seemed to backfire.

His lips curled into an arrogant smile. "Oh, but I'm one of a kind darling."

The pretentiousness that dripped from his curled lips made her want to punch him. Other than magic, Selene was a better fighter and knocking him out never proved too difficult.

"No you're not," she began steadily, holding in her annoyance, keeping her voice level and calm, "you may be Touched, but you know there are others out there, however different their abilities may be from toying with shadows. You brother, are not one of a kind."

"True, but here, I am the only one. Besides, you like it when I 'toy with shadows'." The room darkened magically and he smiled. Annoyed, she looked back at her notes for her current spell design.

"Enough games. I'm not in the mood."

"Then get in the mood, Selene." His tone was cold, harsh. The fact that he was acting more like a child than usual told her that something was bothering him. Selene would have liked to ask him what was wrong with him, but thought against it. She didn't

like dealing with him when he chose to act like a spoiled brat.

“I’d rather not. I want to perfect this spell before the Queen arrives on her journey.”

He sighed in annoyance, his tone harshening. “The Queen is just another Reborn. There is hardly anything special about her.”

*The same is said about you*, she wanted to say, but instead, she bit her tongue and looked at her door for sign of her mother. “Don’t be so rotten, Eris,” she hushed. “What if mother hears you?” She continued to watch the light that leaked in from underneath her door, worried that her mother was roaming the halls. But no lights flickered; no wood creaked under the pressure of footsteps in the dark.

“I don’t care.”

Confusion overwhelmed her. She never understood her brother when he was in these moods, shifting from one emotion to another, going from love to hate so quickly. “You should,” she began softly; “your father was one.” It was what made him different. What made them different. While her father was Witch, like their mother, Eris’s father had been a Reborn, the higher race of beings with wings that shined as brilliantly as their hearts.

“He left—”

“He was killed!” Her voice rose and she looked back at the door. “It’s not the Reborns you should hate, and you know that.

A Shadowling killed him. He'll return when Reborn—”

“You don’t know that.”

From one state of mind to another, that was how his brain was wired. It made being his sister unbearable at times. “What happened to all that arrogance,” she scolded, slamming her leather bound notebook shut. “You’re usually so proud of being a half-breed.”

“Arrogance fades.”

“Not for you Eris, it simply turns into resentment or anger.”

He eyed her, bemused. “Is there a difference?”

“Obviously not for you.” Thunder struck, causing Selene to look outside. “Well come on, we better go before you upset mother.”

“Really? That’s all it took to get you to agree? Hmm, I’ll have to remember this.”

“Oh shut up.” Selene grabbed her long and heavy leather coat for protection against the coming storm, giving her brother one final scathing look before leaving the room to descend the stairs.

On the lower level, they passed the dark fire lit living room. It was a small room, with three oil lamps along the walls with a fireplace near the far wall. Her mother, a woman of only fifty years, still in her prime as far as witches went, with black hair, sat in her small arm chair, knitting needles in her hand, paused in ob-

servance. There were the beginnings of crinkles around her hazel eyes that stared back at them with worry. Selene tried to give her a reassuring smile as she shoved her brother out into the rain. Her father, who was smoking on his pipe, winked at her with his purple eyes. As always, the wink told her to take care of her brother. She winked back in response, her anger slightly subdued.

Eris raised his collar up against his neck and looked back at his half sister as she shut the door behind her. Selene could see her own purple eyes glowing with rage reflected in his gaze. She could tell by the pinch of his cheek that he was trying hard not to laugh at her. The light from the oil lit street lamps revealed the stupid happy look in his eyes.

“Oh what now?” chuckled Eris, shoving his hands into the pockets of his long and heavy trench coat.

“You’re insufferable Eris! We’re standing in the rain, because you’re bored.” Selene spread her arms exasperated.

“Your point being?”

“You should be more in tune with your spell casting instead of disturbing mine.” She turned her back to him and walked down the dirt path. “You won’t always be able to fall back on your tricks.”

“It’s a talent, not a trick.”

Selene looked back at her brother sadly. “It’s a great talent,

but playing with shadows can only get you so far.”

“Really? And what was it you were perfecting huh? What spell were you working on tonight?”

“Fire, you arrogant dolt.”

“Amazing, fire. That’s the thing that powers these lamps right?” His tone dripped with sarcasm. “Why is it so important that you finish before the Queen arrives, hmm?”

“Oh don’t act stupid, she’s an Original Reborn, I have hope she has some knowledge of Fire magic.”

“You just want to see the palace.” Selene smiled at his relaxing tone. Looking up at him, happy to see that he was returning to his simplistic self, she wrapped her arms around him.

“Yes, that would be a plus.”

“You can be sneaky, Selene but you do not compare to me.”

“I know.” she said, smiling. They continued on their stroll, the thunder lightening their way as the clouds grew thicker, dimming the moonlight on the path. Shadows danced along their way, making Selene smile and laugh.

Something moved in the darkness to her right, a shadow of odd proportions, almost like the shape of a human being. In the corner of her eye, a shape caught her attention and she jerked. The rain had dimmed the street lamps, covering the glass above them with condensation, making it hard for her to exam the air.

But there was nothing there, she assured herself, looking for the two moons in the darkened sky.

Her coat became heavier as the rain beat against it. Her leather booted feet stopped moving in a puddle. Eris watched her with concern, trying to see what lay behind the shadows.

“Selene, there isn’t anything there.”

“I could have sworn that I saw something.”

“It could have been Jeanette or Blake. Come on out guys.”

“Shh.” She shook her head. “They have more sense to stay inside.”

“It’s probably just a cat then—”

“Eris, shut up for a moment and listen.” Eris obeyed and looked around. There was something in the shadows and even with the rain and thunder he felt silence surround them.

“Let’s head back home.” Selene nodded and grabbed her brother’s arms fearfully.

The rain pushed against them as they made their way back home. Her long black hair was drenched and clung onto every part of her. A twig broke and she jerked.

“Eris, please find out what that is.”

Eris was hesitant, but his curiosity got the better of him. He



pulled away from the shadows, but whatever it was, was gone.

“Selene, we—ugh!” Eris fell to the ground. His head hit the ground and water flew over his head filling his nostrils. He faintly heard his sister calling out for him, could hear the struggle, her screams for help as something else attacked her, but his fear of what had hit him drowned her out. Above him was a woman; her skin was as pale as the moon except devoid of any light. She snarled down at him, licking her lips, allowing Eris to see her long thick fangs perfectly. Out of the corner of his eye, as he heard Selene call for him, he saw her do what he was unable to do: get the animal off.

“*Entida!*” The Vampyre flew off him, leaving Eris shaky. He looked up at his sister, thankful that she had appeared unscathed from her attacker. It wasn’t until she got closer, lifting him off the ground that he realized her eyes were unfocused, as though she had just left a daze.

“Selene?”

“No time Eris. *Ignis!*” Fire flew from her fingertips and spun out in tendrils around them, living through the stormy rain that beat down. Selene dragged him along after her. Their feet pounded on the wet ground that the rain had turn to mush, splashing water all around. Sparing a look behind him, Eris could see the gazes of both Vampyres. They both reminded him of dreams he had, but only the girl stuck out. Her eyes had been blue in his

dreams, her snarls laughs. Why did she look like the girl from his dreams, like someone he knew? Why did he get the sense of familiarity when she touched him, having him pinned to the ground?

Stumbling out of his reverie, he fell to the floor of the house as Selene shoved him inside. Eris looked up to Selene as she slammed the door. Shavings of wood fell to the ground near their feet as she began to inscribe a rune across the back of the door frantically, her blade digging deeper and deeper. Eris stood, using his gift to manipulate the shadows and make darkness fill the house. He hoped he could hide their presence if not their scent. Their mother and father ran from other rooms, their voices barely escaping before Selene hushed them. Eris and Selene stared at the door and backed away once the banging began. The rune glowed softly in the darkness, proof that it was working. That did not stop Selene from bracing herself. She was a fighter, a survivor. Selene was the girl who studied sword fighting, she was the one who could handle a sword, could see the opponents move before the opponent. She was the one who would argue and fight until her last breath, who never let her fear overwhelm her, even when it was at their door.

Eris sat down in front of the fireplace, admittedly scared. This shouldn't have happened; the magic surrounding his home should not have faltered. And if that magic faltered, who was to say the magic Selene had put up would hold? There was nothing to say

his home was safe, and with each pound on the door, he was reminded of the dire facts: Vampyre's had gotten through the barrier.



