

PROLOGUE

MEMORIES

In the lunar-lit realm of Tenebrous, where the skies shimmered with a soft, silvery glow, the city of Elyria pulsed with life. Amidst the bustling streets, a cozy restaurant beckoned with the scent of exotic delicacies and the promise of warm hospitality. Centaur's Bistro, a favorite among the city's diverse inhabitants, was aglow with bright overhead bulbs and the gentle hum of conversation. Within its walls, the young Nightwood family savored a joyful dinner, their laughter and smiles a testament to the love they shared. Kai, a beady-eyed seven-year-old, sat beside his little sister, Lyra, as their parents, Arin and Lirien, exchanged tender glances. The family's happiness was palpable, a sense of contentment filled the air around them as they played and ate together, celebrating Arin's new promotion.

The tranquility was short-lived as a group of rogue werewolves, fueled by a twisted desire for chaos, burst into the restaurant, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere. Their leader, a snarling figure with a scar above his left eyebrow, sneered at the patrons, his eyes aglow with mischief. His gaze settled on the family. They had targeted this restaurant specifically, seeking to pay a visit to Joran, the owner of the Bistro who had fallen short on paying his protection money for the past three weeks. *'Maybe we could also have some fun in the moment'* he thought looking at the terrified family.

As the werewolves approached their table, Kai's father, Arin, stood up, his eyes flashing with a fierce determination to protect his loved ones. But the werewolves were relentless, their taunts and jeers escalating into violence. In the chaos, Kai's mother, Lirien, was grabbed by the leader, who snarled cruel threats in her ear. Arin fought valiantly, but the werewolves overpowered him, their blows raining down with merciless precision. In the midst of the mayhem, Lirien was dragged away, her screams echoing through the restaurant as the werewolves vanished into the night, leaving destruction in their wake. The family was torn apart, their laughter and love silenced by the cruel hands of fate. As the patrons rallied to aid the survivors, a small, unconscious form lay amidst the wreckage – Kai, the sole survivor of the carnage.

Centaur's Bistro, once a beacon of warmth and unity, was now a scene of devastation, a testament to the darkness that lurked in the shadows of Tenebrous. The question echoed through the darkness: what will become of Kai, the last of his line, and the city that was once his home? Only time will tell.

CHAPTER 1

THE ART OF SERENITY

Yolanda's fingers danced across the canvas, her brushstrokes smooth and graceful as she brought her latest masterpiece to life. The soft strains of her favorite melody filled her ears, a calming balm for her creative soul. The art studio was her sanctuary, a place where she could escape the chaos of the world and let her imagination soar. As she worked, lost in the rhythm of her music and the vibrant colors of her painting, a group of girls sauntered into the studio, their laughter and chatter piercing the peaceful atmosphere. Yolanda's eyes never left her canvas, but she sensed their presence, her intuition prickling with a hint of unease. Suddenly, one of the girls, a tall, blonde-haired lady named Aryel, a popular (though for all the wrong reasons) student at Moon Academy strode over to Yolanda's easel, her eyes scanning the painting with a mocking gaze. "What's this supposed to be, Yolanda? A kindergartener's plaything?" she sneered, her voice dripping with malice.

Yolanda's earpiece was knocked to the floor, the music abruptly silenced. She looked up, her eyes locking onto Aryel's, her expression calm and collected. "It's a representation of the beauty in chaos," she replied, her voice even and confident. "Something you might not understand." She added with a mocking smile. The group of girls snickered, but Yolanda's quick wit and sharp tongue left them momentarily speechless. Aryel's face reddened, her eyes flashing with anger, but Yolanda didn't flinch. She knew that bullies like Aryel thrived on fear and intimidation, and she refused to give her the satisfaction. Aryel had somehow taken it upon herself to make Yolanda's life a living hell ever since the 8th Grade, so Yolanda had learned to adapt and make herself unavailable as a prey.

With a graceful movement, Yolanda bent down and picked up her earpiece, her eyes never leaving Aryel's face. "If you'll excuse me, I have a masterpiece to finish," she said, her voice dripping with sweetness. "And I'd rather not be distracted by your...uninformed opinions." The group of girls huffed and stormed out of the studio, leaving Yolanda to her art and her music. She smiled to herself as her slender fingers moved deftly across the canvas, her creative energy undeterred by the brief interruption. As she painted, her grey eyes shone with a soft intensity, their depths gleaming like the gentle hue of a winter sky. Her long, blonde hair cascaded down her back like a river of gold, its dark roots adding a subtle dimension to her striking features. The delicate pink of her lips curled into a gentle smile, a whisper of amusement playing on her face as she brought her artistic vision to life. Her attire was a testament to her understated elegance, a grey V-neck sweater draping gracefully across her shoulders, its soft fabric complementing the subtle shine in her eyes. A delicate choker encircled her neck, its intricate design sparkling with a subtle hint of silver, while other necklaces of varying lengths and textures added a touch of eclectic charm to her overall look. The artistic ensemble was a reflection of Yolanda's personality – a harmonious blend of creativity, intellect, and quiet confidence.

As she worked, the soft music in her earpiece provided a soothing background hum, a melodic accompaniment to the vibrant colors and textures emerging on her canvas. The art studio, once disrupted by the brief bullying episode, had returned to its serene state, the atmosphere now filled with the sweet scent of creativity and self-expression. Yolanda was in her element, lost in the world of art and imagination, where her beauty, both inside and out, shone like a beacon of inspiration.

Soon she was done and admiring her work. The once plain canvas had now been transformed to a beautiful masterpiece full of colours and emotions. Yolanda's eyes widened as she checked her phone, realizing she was 20 minutes late for Special Anatomy Class, one she couldn't afford to be late for again as she had already missed it twice this week. She hastily packed her art supplies and rushed out of the studio, her long blonde hair bouncing behind her. The school halls seemed to blur as she hurried to class, her eyes fixed on the door ahead. As she burst into the classroom, the unfazed faces of her fellow students turned towards her. Kaida Xel, their stern teacher, stood at the front, her piercing green eyes narrowing. "Ah, Yolanda, fashionably late as always," she said, her voice firm but laced with a hint of amusement.

"I'm sorry" Yolanda felt a flush rise to her cheeks as she made her way to the back of the classroom, her grey V-neck sweater and choker necklaces a stark contrast to the formal attire of her peers. Kaida Xel's gaze followed her, her eyes seeming to bore into Yolanda's very soul.

"So, Yolanda, tell me, what held you up today?" Kaida Xel asked, her voice dripping with curiosity. Yolanda hesitated, unsure how much to reveal. The eyes of everyone glued to her "I lost track of time in the art studio, Professor," she replied, trying to sound contrite.

Kaida Xel raised an eyebrow. "I see. Well, let's hope your artistic talents don't cloud your focus in my class. Take your seat, and try to keep up." Yolanda nodded, feeling a mix of relief and embarrassment as she slipped into her seat, her eyes scanning the room to avoid her teacher's intense gaze but to no avail, her eyes were locked onto Yolanda with an unnerving intensity. "Yolanda, come to the front, please. I believe you can enlighten us on the digestive system of vampires. After all, you've been very dedicated to attending classes" She requested, her last sentence dripping with sarcasm.

Yolanda's heart sank as she reluctantly rose from her seat, her grey eyes fixed on Kaida Xel's stern expression. She felt a flutter in her chest as she made her way to the front of the classroom.

"Ah, yes, vampires," Kaida Xel said. "Those creatures of the night, so elegant and refined, yet their digestive system is quite...fascinating. Yolanda, do tell, how do vampires process the blood they consume?" Yolanda's mind raced as she tried to recall the details from her studies. She took a deep breath and began, her voice steady but laced with a hint of nervousness.

"Vampires have a unique digestive system, Professor. Their stomach lining is adapted to break down the proteins in blood, and their intestines are specially designed to absorb the iron and other nutrients. The blood is then processed through their liver and kidneys, which are highly efficient at filtering toxins..."

Kaida Xel raised an eyebrow, her gaze piercing. "Go on, Yolanda. I'm sure the class is on the edge of their seats."

Yolanda swallowed hard, her grey eyes darting around the room as she continued, her voice growing more confident with each sentence.

"...and the waste products are eliminated through their urine, which is highly concentrated to conserve water. Additionally, vampires have a specialized circulatory system that allows them to control their body temperature and heart rate, making them highly efficient predators..."

Kaida Xel nodded, a hint of approval in her expression. "Very good, Yolanda. It seems you've done your homework. But tell me, how do you think this knowledge would be useful in a real-world scenario?" Yolanda hesitated, unsure where Kaida Xel was leading. "Well, Professor, I suppose understanding the digestive system of vampires could be useful in...medical research or...treating vampire-related injuries?"

Kaida Xel's smile was almost undetectable. "Indeed, Yolanda. And perhaps in other, more...practical applications. Class, take note: knowledge is power, and understanding the intricacies of supernatural anatomy can be a matter of life and death." The room fell silent, the students exchanging uneasy glances as Kaida Xel's gaze lingered on Yolanda, her expression a mixture of challenge and warning.

As Yolanda returned to her seat, her grey eyes scanned the room, taking in the elegant atmosphere of Moon Academy. The institution's 800-year history was evident in its grand architecture and refined decor. The academy was exclusive to high-class supernatural creatures, and Yolanda still couldn't believe she had been granted a fully paid scholarship to attend.

She had taken the entrance exams on a whim, not expecting to pass, and had been shocked when she received the acceptance letter. At the time, she had thought she being just a simple human (unaware of her true nature) from a Foster Home stood no chance being admitted into a such a Prestigious Academy even though she had written the Exam. And now, she was the only "*human*" student in a sea of Supernaturals.

Yolanda's thoughts were interrupted by the whispers and snickers from her classmates. She tried to ignore them, but it was hard to shake off the feeling of being an outcast. In the five realms of Tenebrous, Humans were naturally lowly esteemed. They took on menial jobs and were at bottom of the hierarchy chain.

Despite the challenges, Yolanda was determined to discover herself and her nature, believing she was much more than a human. She was thrilled to be a part of Moon Academy, and she was determined to make the most of this opportunity. She focused on the lesson, trying to absorb as much knowledge as possible, but she couldn't help feeling like an imposter.

As the class continued, Yolanda's gaze wandered to the intricate tapestries that adorned the walls, depicting the history of Tenebrous and its struggles. She felt a sense of wonder and curiosity, knowing that she was now a part of this world, but unsure of where she truly belonged.

As the class emptied, Yolanda lingered, packing her bag slowly. Kaida Xel's voice called out, "Yolanda, a moment, please." The teacher's blue eyes fixed on her, and Yolanda felt a shiver run down her spine.

Kaida Xel approached her, her gaze intense. She was a tall beautiful woman with straight brown hair and beautiful blue eyes, her ears protruding. She was an elf after all. "Yolanda, your behavior in class has been...unsettling. Your lack of focus, your constant questions...it's as if you're searching for something." Her voice was firm, but a hint of mystery crept in.

Yolanda shifted uncomfortably, unsure where this was leading. Kaida Xel's eyes seemed to bore into her soul, as if seeing beyond the surface. Elves were creatures of understanding and knowledge. Kaida Xel continued, her tone taking on a mystical quality. "I see that your path, Yolanda, is lined with danger."

Yolanda's heart raced as Kaida Xel stepped closer, her voice barely above a whisper.

"You have not recognized what you are, and that has protected you...so far. But your search for identity will only lead to peril. I urge you, Yolanda, quit this quest for self-discovery. It will only bring harm to yourself and those around you."

Yolanda felt a chill run down her spine. How did Kaida Xel know her motives? And what did she mean by "what you are"? The questions swirled in her mind, but before she could respond, Kaida Xel turned and left the classroom, her tall slender physique retreating mysteriously, leaving Yolanda with more questions than answers.

Yolanda left the classroom, still reeling from Kaida Xel's enigmatic warning. She needed a distraction, something to clear her head. The library beckoned, its musty scent and dusty tomes a comforting refuge. She spent hours immersed in books about mythical creatures and their origins, fascinated by the rich history.

As the sun began to set, casting a golden glow through the library windows, Yolanda finally tore herself away from the pages. She returned the book to its shelf, promising to continue her research tomorrow. As she exited the library, she noticed two figures entering, their presence commanding attention.

A handsome, tall man with dark well-gelled hair dressed in a black three-piece suit strode confidently, his majestic cane tapping against the floor. Beside him, a dark-haired woman with a leather jacket and a viper tattoo on her neck walked with an air of quiet intensity. Though their faces were obscured by the fading light, Yolanda sensed something dark and foreboding emanating from them, especially an Electrifying presence clouding the man which sent shivers down her spine.

She quickened her pace, eager to escape the unsettling feeling. As she disappeared into the night, she couldn't shake the feeling that she had just glimpsed something sinister, something that lurked just beyond the edge of perception...

Soon Yolanda settled into her dorm room which was on the fifth floor of the large, well-built Hostel. The warm shower and comforting food, a welcome respite from the day's events. As she lay on her bed, her mind began to wander, replaying the encounters with Kaida Xel and the mysterious duo.

Kaida's enigmatic warning still lingered in her thoughts: "Your path is lined with danger...quit your search for identity." Yolanda's curiosity, however, only grew stronger. She couldn't shake off the feeling that there was more to her life than met the eye.

As she drifted off to sleep, her mind kept returning to the two dark figures she had seen entering the library. Who were they? What was their purpose? And why did they seem so... ominous?

The questions swirled in her mind, refusing to let her fall asleep.

Finally, she managed to put her mind at ease, Tomorrow was another day. Another day to uncover the many mysteries that surrounded her, she thought as she finally yielded to a peaceful night sleep.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NIGHTWOOD

Kai Nightwood and Astrid strode into the library, their presence commanding attention. The cane's tapping echoed through the hallowed halls, a rhythmic signal of their arrival. They made their way to the Librarian's seat, a diminutive gnome with a penchant for knowledge and secrets.

"Greetings, Mr Nightwood and Astrid," the gnome said, his voice low and gravelly. "I have the information you requested." He handed them a folder, its contents bulging with details on their target. Kai's eyes scanned the documents, his gaze lingering on the photographs and notes. Astrid's eyes narrowed, her mind processing the intel.

"Excellent work, as always, Glimble," Kai said, his voice smooth as silk. "You've proven yourself to be a valuable asset."

Glimble bowed, his pointed hat bobbing in respect. "It's my pleasure to serve, Mr Nightwood. I hope this information proves...enlightening."

Astrid's gaze flicked to the gnome, her eyes glinting with a hint of danger. "We'll be in touch soon, Glimble. Count on it." With that, the duo retreated, disappearing into the night, leaving Glimble to wonder what darkness they were about to unleash...

Kai and Astrid slid into their sleek black car, the engine purring to life as they began to review the folder's contents. Kai's eyes scanned the documents, his brow furrowed in concentration.

"Astrid, this job requires precision and stealth. We're dealing with a pack of werewolves connected to the crime underworld. They won't go down without a fight. Remember the plan?" Kai hinted.

Astrid's gaze narrowed, her mind flipping over their already set strategy. "I got it. Quiet and clean. No collateral damage."

Kai nodded, his eyes locked on the folder. "Our target is the pack's alpha, Viktor Blackwood. He's been linked to several high-profile heists and murders. We need to take him out without alerting the rest of the pack."

Astrid's fingers flew across her phone's screen, mapping out the location and potential escape routes. "I've got the layout. We can enter through the abandoned warehouse on 5th and Main. It's a blind spot in their surveillance."

Kai's eyes gleamed with approval. "Good work. Let's get to it then."

With a shared nod, they set off towards their destination, their car disappearing into the night, ready to unleash a deadly and silent storm upon their unsuspecting prey...

Kai and Astrid arrived at the abandoned warehouse, their eyes scanning the perimeter for any signs of surveillance. Astrid produced a set of lockpicks, her fingers deftly working the mechanism until the door creaked open.

Inside, the air was thick with the scent of dampness and decay. They moved swiftly, their footsteps echoing off the walls as they made their way to the heart of the warehouse. A faint hum of music and muffled voices grew louder, signaling their approach to the pack's hideout.

Astrid signaled to Kai, her hand raised in a silent gesture. He nodded, his eyes locked on the door ahead. With a shared breath, they burst into the room.

The pack's members froze, their eyes fixed on the duo as Viktor Blackwood, the alpha, sneered from his throne-like chair. "Well, well, well. What do we have here?" Signalling an end to the Rave. "Two little Reapers, come to take us down? I've been expecting you."

Kai's smile was cold and calculated. "Viktor Blackwood, Your Crimes have been a source of terror to the inhabitants of the Land. I'm here to pass your judgement.

The pack snarled, their eyes flashing with a feral light. Viktor's gaze narrowed, his voice dripping with menace. "You'll never take me alive."

"I don't have any such intentions." Kai offered.

As Viktor's werewolves transformed into their lupine forms, their eyes blazing with fury, Kai and Astrid stood firm, ready for the onslaught. The pack charged forward, their jaws snapping wildly, but Kai remained calm, his eyes fixed on the approaching horde.

With a confident smile, he spoke a single word: "Unveil."

His cane, once a mere accessory, now shimmered and transformed into an ancient, powerful sword - Tempest. The blade gleamed with a fierce Silver light, its very presence commanding terror. The werewolves halted their charge, their eyes widening in fear as they beheld the legendary sword.

Viktor, the alpha, took a step back, his voice barely above a whisper. "Tempest...how is this possible?"

Kai's grip on the sword tightened, his eyes gleaming with a fierce intensity. "This sword is the least of your worries."

Astrid moved forward, her eyes locked on the pack, her hand on the hilt of her own sword. "Let's finish this, Kai."

With a shared understanding, the duo charged forward, with Tempest and Astrid's sword flashing in the dim light, the duo cut through the werewolf pack with deadly precision. Their movements were swift and synchronized, leaving the pack no chance to counterattack. Within minutes, the warehouse floor was littered with the bodies of Viktor's followers.

Kai approached Viktor, who cowered in fear, his eyes fixed on the sword still humming with power. "Please...have mercy...I surrender..."

Kai's expression remained unforgiving, his voice cold and detached. "I said before, I didn't come here with plans to take you alive." With a swift and deadly motion, Kai struck down Viktor, ending the alpha's reign of terror once and for all. The warehouse fell silent, the only sound the heavy breathing of Astrid and the soft hum of Tempest.

Astrid approached Kai, her eyes scanning the carnage. "What the hell happened to Stealth? And no Collateral damage?"

Kai smiled, his grip on Tempest relaxing. "I had a change of heart."

Astrid's gaze locked onto his. "Really? In the middle of the mission?"

"Yes." Kai breathed

With a final glance at the fallen pack, the duo turned to leave the warehouse, disappearing into the darkness of Night...