

VAMPIRE ACADEMY

"Pilot"

Written by

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Based on the book by Richelle Mead

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INT. CHANGING SALON - NIGHT

Tulle. Satin. A pin in the hair, a bauble in the ear. Bubbles of champagne and perhaps even the smoking remnants of a joint in a nearby dish by a Victorian settee.

Camera REVEALS two fresh-faced young women in front of a long mirror. ROSE MARIE HATHAWAY, 18, and VASILISSA DRAGOMIR (LISSA), 18, formally dressed and elegant.

Could be a Jane Austen movie except no empire waists, and...

ROSE

I look like a fucking macaroon.

She downs her champagne. Lissa, used to Rose saying it like it is, plops a sparkling tiara on Rose's head.

LISSA

And now you look like a princess.

ROSE

(holding up her glass)

If I were a princess, the champagne wouldn't be empty.

LISSA

Allow me, Your Highness.

She fills their glasses, laughing as the bubbles spill over. Rose sips the champagne before it overflows her glass, the tiara slipping as she bends over. She pulls it off --

ROSE

How do you even wear this thing? I just lost a hundred strands.

-- and places it on the head of its rightful owner.

LISSA

Heavy is the head, thin is the hair.

Now they're back at the mirror for last looks. Two lovely young women, best friends at the prime of their lives.

LISSA (CONT'D)

Rose, if anyone looks like a macaroon, it's me. You look beautiful.

Rose smiles her thanks. Playing dress-up isn't her thing, but she knows she looks good.

ROSE

We look beautiful, Lissa. Head to toe.

Rose lifts the skirts of her party dress to reveal a well-worn pair of shit-kicker boots.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Let's party.

Lissa grins and raises her glass. As they CLINK --

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - NIGHT

The FLASH of a PHOTOGRAPHER'S BULB as dozens of decked out partygoers move up the carpet-lined stone staircase that leads to an enormous CASTLE, lit up for a gala.

Jewels and gowns and bespoke tuxedos abound as the arrivals are projected onto a wall that lines the street -- this kingdom's version of E! Red Carpet Arrivals.

A parade of LIMOUSINES crawls towards the entrance.

EXT. CASTLE GATES - NIGHT

A massive gate marks the entrance of St. Vladimir's Royal Court. The seat of the MOROI VAMPIRE KINGDOM. The castle glitters high in the distance as the taillights of limos head up the hillside.

INSIDE the gates, in position, are FIVE DHAMPIR GUARDIANS.

The night is quiet. Perhaps too quiet. One of the Guardians squints. Is something out there?

REVERSE to show nothing but wooded fields and a long lonely road. We're in the middle of nowhere.

INT./EXT. LIMO - NIGHT

At the castle, a window lowers to reveal VICTOR DASHKOV, 50s. Handsome and sophisticated. A GUARDIAN peers in.

VICTOR

Victor Dashkov.

Victor's eyes FLASH GOLD -- the Royal calling card for entry.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

My daughters. Sonya Karp. Mia Karp.

Inside, SONYA, 23, quiet, careful, and decidedly odd, flashes her eyes. However hers flash SILVER.

GUARDIAN

One Royal Moroi, one non. And the third?

MIA, 18, sits back in her seat. Refusing to play.

VICTOR

Mia...

MIA

The Guardians make us suffer through this every time.

VICTOR

It's security protocol.

MIA

It's humiliating.

SONYA

(don't make a scene)
Only if you care about such things.

MIA

How can they not know who I am?

VICTOR

Mia, darling. Be a sport.

Annoyed, Mia flashes her eyes at the Guardian. Silver.

GUARDIAN

(ticking the box)
Non-Royal.

MIA

(sharp)
Not for long.

They disembark from the car heading for the red carpet as we DRONE UP to see the castle in all its glory.

INT. BALLROOM - PALACE - NIGHT

ECU ON a silver swizzle stick with a razor sharp tip as it pricks a finger. As the blood pools on the tip -- WIDEN to reveal a SEXY BARTENDER, who allows the DROP OF BLOOD to fall in like a maraschino cherry. Rose grabs it and a blood-free glass with one hand. In her other are two more flutes.

As she moves through the majestic ballroom in search of Lissa, we see the party through her eyes, a classy but sexy mash up of Royal fantasy and Studio 54.

A stunningly dressed WOMAN magically makes her fingertips emit a shower of sparks, the embers lighting up the air.

****Note:** Every Moroi vampire, whether Royal or not, is able to perform basic Elemental Magic. Nothing too strong -- the equivalent of a parlor trick. We will call them Fire Users, Water Users, Earth Users, Air Users.**

A WATER USER in a LIME GREEN METALLIC SUIT and hair to match waves his hand over a martini glass, causing the gin to swirl and part until the olive is free to be plucked out.

A bevy of Young Royals gather around an elaborate water pipe; a Fire User using magic to heat it, as a Water User spins the vapor into various shapes before being inhaled.

Through partially closed velvet curtains, we catch a glimpse of two ROYAL MOROI PARTYGOERS exposing their FANGS and sinking their teeth into the neck of a rapturous HUMAN. As the human lets his head fall back in ecstasy...

Rose passes a line of Guardians, holding her foot out like a handshake to MIKHAIL, 20s, who slyly taps her boot with his similar one as a hello. The humorless ALBERTA, 30s, scolds:

ALBERTA

Rose. Behave.

ROSE

(never)

Always, Alberta.

As Rose continues on, linger with Alberta and Mikhail.

ALBERTA

Don't encourage her.

MIKHAIL

She's the guest of a Moroi Princess. Let her have some fun.

ALBERTA

Guardians are not here to have fun.

MIKHAIL

She's a Novice. Cut her some slack.

ALBERTA

The last thing Rose Hathaway needs.

Mikhail spots Sonya entering. His eyes light up, but one look from Alberta keeps him firmly in his place.

Mia falls in beside Sonya as her eyes scan the party. Victor already pressing flesh in the background. As Sonya clocks a ROYAL IN FULL MARIE ANTOINETTE drag, including a bird cage holding a live finch in her wig --

MIA

I don't see Andre --

SONYA

(voice raised)

A BIRD IS NOT A TOY.

(then)

Perhaps you should activate your stalker beacon.

MIA

(embarrassed by Sonya)

It's not stalking if one's engaged.

SONYA

(correcting her)

Promised --

MIA

Promised to be engaged.

(then)

Don't be jelly, Sonya. It doesn't suit you. Although, not much does.

She wanders off, leaving Sonya unfazed and unaware of Mikhail's eyes on her from afar.

A Queen's FOOTMAN passes her rolling an enormous CAKE past portraits of the QUEEN from her teenage years spanning decades -- and clusters of Royals in heated political debate. Beneath the frothy facade lay deep divisions.

Finally the Footman approaches the Queen herself, ancient but stately, as she receives the DRAGOMIR FAMILY: Lissa, her charismatic brother ANDRE and their PARENTS.

THE QUEEN'S ANCIENT HERALD

The Dragomirs, Your Majesty.

The Queen waves him away from her ear, annoyed.

QUEEN

Clarence would introduce his mother to his father. How are my delightful Dragomirs?

LISSA'S DAD

Pleased to be celebrating your 200th birthday, Your Majesty.

Andre bows to her, all charm.

ANDRE

Happy Birthday, Fair Lady. You
don't look a day over eighty.

QUEEN

Andre, my dear, you're a cheeky
rascal. And a lovely liar.

Having finally spotted him, Mia steps in next to Andre,
sliding her hand through his arm as she curtsies --

MIA

Happy Birthday from me as well,
Your Majesty.

The Queen's eyes glide over hers to find Lissa behind her.

QUEEN

Ah, Princess Vasilissa, the angel
to your brother Andre's devil.

LISSA

He is shameless, Your Majesty.
(teasing)
How shall he be punished?

QUEEN

Being King of the Commonwealth will
be punishment enough.

Andre's eyes catch a beautiful woman's across the room. This
is TATIANA, 25. All lips and legs and brains. Noticing --

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Though surely he'll find something
to cheer him once he's king.

VICTOR

(approaching)

Now Your Majesty, you know there
will have to be an actual election.

Victor places a hand on Mia's shoulder. Centering her.

QUEEN

Pfft, a formality. Who would deny
me my pick for successor?

As the Dragomir's greet Victor warmly, and the adults chatter
about politics, Mia's sharp gaze lands on --

Tatiana eye-fucking Andre from afar. After giving him a subtle head tilt, Tatiana turns away, passing --

Rose, who finally spots Lissa making a beeline for her.

LISSA
Bubbles, perfect.

She takes two glasses from Rose just as she's BUMPED by a CARELESS PARTYGOER. One glass slips, but Rose's free hand shoots out with supernatural speed, catching it mid-air.

LISSA (CONT'D)
Nice.

Calling after the sloppy party-goer --

ROSE
Excuse you!

The Partygoer shoots some sparks into the air with his finger spelling "sorry, Rose." As the girls laugh MARIE CONTA, middle-aged Royal, stares at Rose, sniping to another ROYAL.

MARIE
What are the Dragomir's thinking letting Lissa invite that girl everywhere she goes? A Guardian's place is at the gates.

EXT. GATES - NIGHT

POV from the woods towards the gates. Perhaps something IS out there. Watching. Waiting.

CLOSE on a GUARDIAN as his head SNAPS to attention. What did he just hear? He motions to his PARTNERS. Two of them fall into flank position immediately, withdrawing SILVER STAKES from their weapon belts. As the gates start to open --

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

WHOOSH! Music plays as A ROYAL MOROI waves their hand over the enormous cake and its 200 candles ignite in FIRE.

Rose and Lissa gently push through the crowd to get a better view as the Queen steps up to her cake, aided by Victor. Mia lingers behind her father, looking around for Andre.

ROSE
Looks like Mia lost her prince.

LISSA
I'm amazed she let him out of her
sight long enough to lose him.
(speaking of)
Where is Andre?

CUT TO:

INT. COAT CHECK - NIGHT

Andre has Tatiana pressed up against the wall, hidden by hanging coats as they fuck in the coat check. The sound of voices singing Happy Birthday (Moroi-style) startles him.

ANDRE
Shit. I have to go --

He tries to pull away, but she tightens her grip until they both finish. Then, both catching their breaths --

TATIANA
Never leave a girl undone, Andre.
Not even for the Queen.

As he pulls himself together --

ANDRE
Lovely to meet you...?

TATIANA
Tatiana.

He grins, then dashes out, disappearing around the bend of a long hallway just as we CUT TO:

EXT. GATES - NIGHT

Three Guardians move across the road as a unit. Movement in the grasses lining the road grabs one Guardian's attention --

-- as a black BIRD takes flight from the brush, its wings flapping in the startled Guardian's face.

He relaxes, sheaths his stake. He turns to the others, when --

WHAM! Something HITS him hard, tackling him. We hear SNARLS.

GUARDIAN
STRIGOI!

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Andre hurries up to a prime spot near the Queen just as the birthday song finishes. He throws Rose and Lissa a wink.

The old Queen struggles to blow out the candles. Giving up, she closes her eyes. An unseen WIND begins to blow, building until every last candle has gone out. Over hearty applause --

QUEEN

I may be older than iron, but I can
still work my way around Elemental
Magic.

CROWD MEMBER

Air Users Forever!

That starts the rest of the crowd shouting, Earth Users, Fire Users, Water Users. As the chanting takes on a rancorous edge, Andre looks to the Queen for permission to address the crowd. At her nod, he steps forward.

ANDRE

Yes. Air Users Forever -- and don't
forget Water Users Forever --
(Water Users cheer)
And what about Earth Users and Fire
Users?

More cheers. Near the Queen, HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA, 50s, clever and political, pipes up:

HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA

Ever the politician, Andre. Can't
you choose one?

The crowd titters nervously. These two don't see eye to eye. Then, Andre, effortlessly charming, and entirely sincere --

ANDRE

Irena, how can I choose my right
hand over my left? My heart over my
brain? Alone, they're weak.
Together they're strong. A strong
state cares for all its citizens.

MARIE CONTA

(pointed)
Define citizens?

Andre looks at Lissa and Rose, both watching him, rapt.

ANDRE

Those we walk through life with,
shoulder to shoulder. Those we
love, no matter our differences.
Those we fight for.
(to Rose)
And those who fight for us.

Though Marie and Irena don't look happy, Victor and the Queen exchange a proud look.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

To me, that sounds like everyone in this room. The Royal Moroi who value our heritage. The Non-Royal Moroi who keep our society going. And... the Dhampir Guardians, of whom we expect so much.

Surprised murmurs from the Moroi. As the Guardians try to cover their shock at being honored, Andre makes his point --

ANDRE (CONT'D)

We share the same history. We fight the same enemy. And the Strigoi don't care if we're Royal or Non-Royal Moroi, or if we're *half* Moroi, half human like the Dhampir Guardians. They want us all dead.
(to the now hushed crowd)
Like these two hands, and like this head and this heart, imagine what we could achieve if we faced the future as one kingdom, united.

A silent beat -- followed by thunderous applause. Lissa and Rose beam, as Tatiana watches, a sly smile on her lips. Then:

QUEEN

(teasing Andre)

What a scene stealer you are. And what happened to the music? I thought this was a party!

The crowd cheers, MUSIC RISES. Hundreds of rose petals fall as the party kicks in to high gear and as Lissa pulls Rose to the dance floor, not a care in the world, INTERCUT:

EXT. GATES - NIGHT

The Guardians are fighting something ferocious, silhouetted by the bright perimeter lights. Whatever it is, it's strong and unrelenting. One Guardian takes a hit --

More chaos, and snarls outside the gates. Punches thrown, teeth bared, blood and spittle flying. Another Guardian gets LAUNCHED from the scrum, flying twenty feet back.

INSIDE - Alberta gets an alert on her earpiece. A tilt of the head sends Mikhail and two Guardians out. Moving quickly but stealthily so as not to grab attention. As the party goes on...

OUTSIDE - Mikhail and the two Guardians arrive at the gates to find a Guardian dogpile atop their unidentified assailant. HISSES and SCREECHES from below as they try to restrain it.

One of the Guardians raises his stake, but a GNARLY HAND whips out from the scrum and grabs the Guardian's wrist, BREAKING IT with a snap. As the Guardian falls back, Mikhail is there, driving his stake into the center of the scrum. A hideous SHRIEK and then, finally, blissful silence.

INSIDE - Mikhail and the Guardians calmly return to the party, none of the privileged Royals aware of any danger.

That's how it works. The Guardians protect the Moroi vampires from random Strigoi vampire attacks. It's the way it has always been (but not the way it will always be).

As camera lingers on the spirited Rose and Lissa dancing without a care in the world... CUT TO:

EXT. LONG COUNTRY ROAD/INT. SUV - NIGHT

A LIMO flies down the road. Inside, Lissa and Rose are ribbing Andre as the parents try to keep the peace.

LISSA
Darlingest, Delightfulest Andre,
future king of all the land...

ROSE
Oh to be the Chosen One...

ANDRE
Go ahead. Laugh it up.

LISSA'S DAD
Careful or when he's king he'll
have you thrown in the dungeons.

ANDRE
When I'm king I'll be getting rid
of the dungeons. Change is coming.

LISSA'S DAD
Winning the crowd is one thing. The
only ones who matter are the heads
of the twelve families. Win *them*
over, and you'll be able to make
real change as king.

Rose calls up to the Guardian in the front seat.

ROSE

Sebastian, you're going to be the
King's Guardian --

SEBASTIAN, 30, strong, steady, turns around.

SEBASTIAN

Not with the way you're climbing in
the rankings.

ROSE

I've already got a job lined up
when school is done, thank you.

She leans into Lissa, a BFF nudge.

SEBASTIAN

Only Rose Hathaway would pass up
the top Guardian spot in the world.

ROSE

Who wants to guard a king when I
can protect my best friend?

ANDRE

That's Rose settled. At least one
of you has a plan.

LISSA

Oh, I have a plan. Finish school,
and then ask the new king, who I
happen to have an in with, for a
dispensation so Rose and I can see
the world. The *outside* world. And
every museum in it.

ANDRE

(teasing)

And who's going to take care of our
aging parents?

LISSA'S MOM

Not funny, Andre.

LISSA

I'm going if I have to forge the
dispensation myself.

ANDRE

I don't know, Liss. They're not
getting any younger.

(in a fake kingly voice)

What we want and what we must do
can be very different things.

Lissa hits his arm, all in good fun.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Hey --

Suddenly THE CAR SHIFTS like a SONIC BOOM has hit. Everyone is ROCKED from their seats in SLOW-MOTION. Shock and horror as we RAMP SPEED INTO REAL-TIME --

The limo FLIPS on the road, as though something catapulted it into the air. Sparks and screams and fire. CUT TO:

EXT. LONG COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

An empty road. An orange light in the far distance. The light gets closer and closer, until we realize it's the burning fireball of a limousine skidding upside down along the road. It FLIES STRAIGHT TOWARDS CAMERA and we -- **SMASH TO TITLES.**

EXT. CEMETERY - DAWN

Atop an ancient parapet with a view to the sea, a RAGGED WARRIOR ANGEL CARVED FROM STONE stands sentinel over a cloistered cemetery. Below we find THREE NAMES FRESHLY ETCHED IN ONYX. ERIC DRAGOMIR. RHEA DRAGOMIR. ANDRE DRAGOMIR.

Lissa lays three calla lilies to honor her family. Behind her, family friend and tacit uncle, Victor Dashkov, waits. The weight of her grief shows through as he shepherds her toward the entrance and a waiting limo --

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S ACADEMY - DUSK

Perched on a turret, Rose watches as that same limo travels the hillside up from the gates.

Tucking something in her jacket, she checks no one's watching -- then PARKOURS TO A LOWER TURRET, THEN ANOTHER, all speed, grace, and supernatural athleticism.

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S ACADEMY - DUSK

The car pulls to a stop in front of the entrance to St. Vladimir's Academy, sprawling grounds lit by bright lights.

Rose lands unseen nearby. As a door opens, she rushes up --

ROSE

Lissa...

-- and suddenly finds herself FLAT ON HER BACK, a muscled arm pinning her down. Her eyes lock on her assailant's. Intense, focused, belonging to a very handsome face. She stares at him, wind knocked out of her in more ways than one.

This is DIMITRI, 25, no-nonsense and stoic. At least on the outside. Inside are wells of emotion always kept in check.

Victor emerges from the car, opening an umbrella to block the setting sun.

VICTOR

It's all right. Rose won't harm
Lissa.

DIMITRI

She has something.
(to Rose)
Show me.

Rose pulls a small carved wooden unicorn from her jacket.
Flustered and a little pissed.

ROSE

It's a super-dangerous welcome home
gift.

Still holding her, Dimitri looks to the gift, then to Rose --
a tiny chemical beat passing between them, before --

LISSA (O.C.)

I love it.

Rose turns her head to see Lissa, standing underneath her own
parasol. She smiles --

LISSA (CONT'D)

I mean, I'm not twelve... but...

ROSE

(beaming)
Shut up. It's fucking adorable.

Rose scrambles to her feet. The girls barrel into each other.
They hug, laugh, swing each other around.

As they settle, Rose takes Lissa's face in her hands. Asks
with her eyes, *you okay?* Lissa's eyes glint with tears: *No,
but I'm trying.*

Dimitri watches the girls, observing the powerful intimacy of
their friendship. Rose gives Lissa a final nod, like a
promise to always be there, then takes charge.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Nice to see you, Victor. I'm taking
Lissa back to the dorm.

Dimitri starts to follow, but Victor holds him back --

VICTOR
They're within the wards. They'll
be fine.

As Rose escorts Lissa away --

ROSE
Who is that guy?

LISSA
(don't kill the messenger)
That is Dimitri... My new Guardian.

As Rose looks back, her stare boring a hole through his
skull, their eyes locking again from afar...

ROSE (PRELAP)
But *I'm* your Guardian.

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S CAMPUS - NIGHT

Rose and Lissa cross the brightly lit campus drawing glances,
hellos, and furtive whispers from students in posh uniforms.
But all Rose can focus on is --

ROSE
Or I will be when I graduate.

LISSA
Shouldn't you be heading to class?

ROSE
They kept us apart for three
months. Class can wait. And don't
deflect. We don't need that guy.
I've got your back. Always.

LISSA
I guess they want someone with
field experience now that I'm the
Head of the Dragomir Family.
Whatever that means. Family of one.

This is heartbreaking, but Rose knows how to handle it.

ROSE
No. Don't get sad yet. I have a
whole thing planned involving a lot
of booze and sloppy drunk tears.
We're not gonna let *Dimitri* ruin it
or our plans for the future.

LISSA
(alright then)
Sloppy drunk sounds good. After a
nap...
(also)
He *is* good looking, though.

ROSE
(stubborn)
I didn't notice.

As they move towards the building that contains the dorms...

DIMITRI (PRELAP)
Will Rose Hathaway be a problem?

INT. ALBERTA'S OFFICE - GUARDIAN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Dimitri is with Victor and Alberta.

ALBERTA
Rose is always a problem. She's one
of our best Novices, but she's a
handful.

VICTOR
The girls have been friends their
whole lives. We've spoiled them,
let them break all the rules, even
let them be roommates in the Royal
Dorms. Is it any surprise Rose has
certain expectations?

ALBERTA
A Guardian's duty is to do as
they're told.

VICTOR
That may be, but this is a big
change for both of them. As the new
Head of Family, Lissa is an
important Royal. With her parents
and brother gone, she'll need Rose
more than ever. For her sake,
you'll have to navigate that
relationship carefully. The last
thing Lissa needs is more stress.

DIMITRI
With all due respect, I'm not a
nanny. My job is protection.

VICTOR
A word that can take many forms.

As Dimitri takes this in...

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Finally "home" in their room, as Lissa adds Rose's gift to a bevy of carved unicorns on her dresser. Referring to each:

LISSA

From when I broke my collarbone,
when I broke up with Antonia Diaz,
my first hangover. And now...

ROSE

(holding up a black dress)
...Should we burn this?

LISSA

Please. I never want to wear black
again.

ROSE

I wish I'd been with you.

LISSA

I tried. Victor said your place was
at school, in training. That Royal
mourning was for family only.

Rose winces. *Weren't they her family too?*

ROSE

Victor, who isn't a blood relation
either?

LISSA

He was my parent's best friend; and
as my godfather, he's the boss.
(then, a smile)
But not for long.

ROSE

(grinning)
Not for long. First, graduation.
Then, every piece of art for you --
and pizza for me -- in Europe --

LISSA

-- and then the world.

Rose finds a pouch jammed with prescription medicines.

ROSE

Um... Not sure these will pass
through human customs...

LISSA

...Unlike you, I didn't make it out
of the accident totally unscathed.

At the mention of the accident, Rose grows quiet. Then --

ROSE

(re the pills)

No wonder it was so hard to get you
on the phone.

LISSA

...I hated taking them... The only
thing worse was not taking them.

ROSE

Oh, Liss.

LISSA

They said I was all bruised up and
my arm was broken. But I couldn't
feel my body. All I could feel was
my insides shaking. Like I was
trapped inside with all this
feeling and nowhere to go to get
away from it. So they started
giving me drugs.

(then)

But there isn't a pill in the world
strong enough to make it better.

ROSE

(soft)

I wish I could.

LISSA

I know. Just being with you helps.

ROSE

Good.

(considering the meds)

Though maybe my plan will involve
less booze than expected.

LISSA

It's okay. I'm tapering off. And I
don't wanna blow my surprise party.

ROSE

What surprise party?

LISSA

(a knowing smile)

Thanks, Rose.

(MORE)

LISSA (CONT'D)

All I want is for things to go back
to normal. You lying badly is a
nice first step.

Rose grabs sunglasses and a hat. Holding them out to Lissa.

ROSE

Do me a favor later? Bring these.
And act surprised?

PRELAP: Marie Conta: *"The accident that took Andre and his
family has wounded us all, Your Majesty..."*

INT. QUEEN'S PRIVY CHAMBER - NIGHT

Marie Conta addresses the Queen.

MARIE CONTA

...and though I loathe to speak ill
of the dead --

QUEEN

You will anyway?

MARIE CONTA

I hope Andre's policies will be
buried with him. We need strong
leadership now. I assume you'll
name your successor soon? I have
some thoughts --

The Queen perks up as Victor arrives at the door.

QUEEN

And I have a date with an old
friend. You're excused, Marie.

Irritated at being brushed aside --

MARIE CONTA

Yes, Your Majesty.

She exits as Victor enters.

QUEEN

You see what I'm up against?
Sniveling children. Instead of
mourning the man who could unite
them, these idiots are all
scrambling for the crown. All of
them for personal gain. Not a
compassionate soul among them...

(feeling her years)

I adored Andre.

(MORE)

QUEEN (CONT'D)

He was no saint, which I suppose
made me like him all the more...
Losing him now...

VICTOR

With no one to bridge the divide...

QUEEN

(shaking it off)
Enough. There's work to be done.
You must prepare Lissa for her role
as Head of the Dragomir Family.

VICTOR

It won't be easy for her. You know
she was planning to apply for a
Royal Dispensation so she could
study art at a human university.

QUEEN

Those dreams are done. Lissa will
finish her schooling and take her
place within the Royal Court.

VICTOR

And Rose?

QUEEN

When she completes her training,
we'll find her a placement in one
of the other provinces.

VICTOR

She won't like that.

QUEEN

Moroi come first. Rose knows that.
She'll do her duty.

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S ACADEMY - PRIVATE GARDEN - DAWN

Rose leads Lissa towards a GAZEBO tucked away behind
manicured shrubbery. Lissa's parasol gets snagged on a tree.
Sunlight hits her face.

LISSA

Ow.

She steps back under the umbrella.

ROSE

Easy. You can't wear third degree
burns to your surprise party.

As they round the bend -- SURPRISE! Lissa feigns surprise as she surveys the Moroi in their sunglasses and stylish clothes taking shade under the gazebo. Meanwhile, Novices bask in the sunlight they get so little of living by the Moroi schedule - - one in which school and social time are at night, while sleep and illicit activities happen during the day.

MASON, a fun hunky Novice, who everyone knows has a huge thing for Rose, approaches with drinks.

MASON

Lissa -- Rose isn't the only one who missed you.

ROSE

Mason helped me plan this.

LISSA

Meaning Rose told you what she wanted and you did all the work?

ROSE

No fair. I helped.

MASON

Whatever you say, Rose.

Lissa spots Mia all in black. Seeing --

ROSE

Mia's really working it.

LISSA

I feel sorry for her.

MASON

I don't. She just wants attention.

ROSE

And we didn't throw you a party to talk about Mia. Drink up.

JUMP CUT: Party hijinks, St. Vlad's style. Novices show off physical skills, diving through WATER RINGS that hang in the air, courtesy of Moroi Water Users.

At a makeshift bar, MEREDITH, 18, a matter-of-fact Novice, whips up cocktails, her nerd-brain excited by the various combinations.

Rose dirty dances with Mason. On a nearby lounge, JESSE, Royal Moroi, 18, makes out with a ROYAL GIRL, while two ROYAL BOYS make out with each other.

Tipsy now, Lissa's surrounded by friends, enjoying herself.
REVERSING we see Mia watching her as she orders a drink.

MIA
Vodka tonic.

MEREDITH
Wouldn't you like something more --

MIA
(a cold glance)
Extra lime.

MEREDITH
Last thing you need is more acid.

Meredith mixes as Mia frowns. *What's that supposed to mean?*

MEREDITH (CONT'D)
Aren't you hot in all that?

MIA
I'm in mourning.

MEREDITH
Right. Andre. Your...almost fiancé.

MIA
Excuse me, we were very close.

MEREDITH
(hands her a drink)
Sorry for your loss.

MIA
This isn't what I ordered.

Meredith levels her with a look.

MEREDITH
Maybe not. But it's what you want.

Yep, that's chemistry between them. It unsettles Mia.

MIA
What do you know about what I want?
How dare you talk to me like that.
(...takes a sip)
What's in this?

MEREDITH
Basil. It's complex and fragrant.

MIA

Well, it's a ridiculous thing to
put in a drink...

MEREDITH

You want another?

MIA

Yes.

Rose and Lissa approach the bar, seeing too late that Mia is there. Rose turns to walk away to avoid her, but Lissa is kind and a little bit drunk. Steps forward.

LISSA

How are you, Mia?

MIA

I'm grieving, Lissa.
(pointed)
With dignity.

Rose hears this and spins back, but Lissa can handle herself.

LISSA

Rose... Have a drink. And one for
me -- Meredith?

MIA

I wouldn't if I were you. I hear
you have a big day tomorrow.

LISSA

I've taken more than one exam with
a hangover. I think I can manage an
early morning at the Royal Court
with your dad.

MIA

Head of a Family isn't something
you can fake your way through.
Looks like no more dancing through
life and being best friends with
Guardians...

ROSE

Looks like more Royal advice from
Non-Royal Mia...

Still, they know she's right. The old days of being together
doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted it, are in
jeopardy. As the girls consider their fate -- **CUT TO BLACK.**

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S ACADEMY - DUSK

It's magic hour on the quiet campus. Whereas humans would be settling down for dinner, vampires are rising for breakfast.

Lights come on one by one, illuminating the falling shadows.

INT. CHURCH ARCHIVES - NIGHT (DAY 2)

Seated at a desk in a candlelit vaulted room of brick and stone, a fuzzy headed Lissa tries to focus as Sonya sets an ANCIENT PARCHMENT in front of her. As she stares at the indecipherable script (WRITTEN IN "OLD MOROI"), to Victor --

LISSA

It might help if we flicked on an actual light.

SONYA

That would damage the paper.

LISSA

Oh. Of course.
(looking down at it)
Not sure it would help anyway...

VICTOR

You only need to recite this small passage.

LISSA

Recite...?

VICTOR

For the consecration. Tradition dictates when there's a new Head of the Family they be blessed in the presence of all the others.

LISSA

Recite Old Moroi in *front* of people? Today?

VICTOR

I need to see the High Priestess. You'll be fine.

Victor leaves. Sonya follows, then looks back at Lissa, curious. When Lissa looks up, Sonya smiles.

SONYA

That's a beautiful yellow you're wearing.

Lissa looks down at her black and white school uniform.

LISSA

Okaaay. See ya, Sonya.

Lissa looks at the paper, tries to sound it out. Rising, she paces, mumbles, squints at the odd writing. Then, suddenly --

ALL THE CANDLES FLICKER OUT. Lissa looks around, creeps out... After a beat -- THEY FLICKER BACK ON...

Lissa freezes. Then -- A WARM FLAME OF LIGHT APPEARS OVER HER PARCHMENT making it far easier to see. Suspecting a prank --

LISSA (CONT'D)

All right. Who's there?

MALE VOICE

Thought you could use some light.

Emerging from an alcove is CHRISTIAN OZERA. Smoldering, brilliant, wounded, and a new student at St. Vlad's. The two hold their gaze for a beat, an instant chemistry between them. But there's something more, something they can't pinpoint. Realizing she's staring, Lissa raises her chin --

LISSA

And you are?

CHRISTIAN

New.

She waits for more. Then, wondering if this next admission will drive her away -- he almost dares her with it --

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I'm Christian Ozera.

LISSA

...Oh...

Armoring up, he adds with snark --

CHRISTIAN

And just to get it out of the way:
No, I don't know why my parents
decided to turn Strigoi. And since
they're dead I can't ask them.

Not sure how to take this, Lissa bites back --

LISSA

So you, what, just hang around
church archives waiting for girls
to... need a light?

CHRISTIAN

Or I might have some questions
about where you go after you die.

And click. That's it. The connection - loss. Both orphans.

LISSA

...I'm sorry about your parents.

CHRISTIAN

(armor coming down)
I'm sorry about yours.

A beat as they look at the only other person with any idea of
how they feel. Then, a bit desperate --

LISSA

So, you actually read this stuff?

CHRISTIAN

I've gotten better at it. It's
really... kind of... beautiful.

LISSA

I don't suppose you have any idea
what this third line means?

He comes closer to see the parchment.

CHRISTIAN

It's a vow of protection. The head
of each family takes an oath to
fight against demons.

LISSA

(fuck)
Wonderful...

Moving closer, he reaches for it. Reads in English -

CHRISTIAN

*With my body and my life I swear to
defend against all demons living
and dead, and any who would stray
from what is right.*

(then)
Say it with me.

Both holding it now, their hands touching, they read off the paper together in the Old Moroi language, intensely aware of each other as they do. He turns to her; they're so close.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Where's the rest of it?

LISSA
(breath catching)
...There's more?

Then -- footsteps. Lissa turns to see Victor arriving.

VICTOR
Ready?

LISSA
...I wouldn't be, except...

She turns back to Christian but he's gone. Off Victor's look:

LISSA (CONT'D)
...Except, I didn't want to
disappoint you.

As she follows him out --

INT. PALACE CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

SACRED MOROI MUSIC fills the cathedral as a PROCESSION OF TWELVE ROYAL MOROI dressed in matching ceremonial robes move toward the altar. Among them, and the youngest by far, is Lissa, feeling very small.

The cathedral is full of Royal spectators -- including students in head to toe St. Vladimir's Royal uniforms.

As Victor watches with the Queen, Christian enters, receiving dirty looks, especially from Marie. Ignoring them, he takes a spot on an aisle. As he lands, THREE ROYAL MOROI in the aisle move to another. There is no doubt, Christian is an outcast.

As the processional reaches the altar, it splits, leaving Lissa alone. High Priestess Irena nods. Lissa, nervous, recites her oath in Old Moroi.

LISSA
*With my body and my life I swear to
defend against... against all...*

She looks out and spots a judgmental Marie Conta. Then -- Christian in the back. Oddly comforted, she continues --

LISSA (CONT'D)
*Against all demons living and dead,
and any who would stray from what
is right.*

The Queen watches as Lissa and Christian share a smile.
Watching as Lissa's warmth melts Christian's armor.

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S ACADEMY - TRAINING FIELD - NIGHT

Rose exits the dorms. Stops when she sees Dimitri standing
outside, eyes straight ahead in Guardian-mode. Confused --

ROSE
You know we have magic wards around
the gates to keep us safe. Lissa
doesn't need a 24/7 detail.

DIMITRI
(without looking her way)
Lissa's still at the church. Royals
only.

ROSE
So you're just...having a staring
contest with the air?

DIMITRI
You've studied perimeter control.

ROSE
Yes. Got an A.

DIMITRI
What's around this perimeter? Don't
look, just tell me.

ROSE
Street clear, gates secured,
rooftop empty, turrets contained.

DIMITRI
How do you know?

ROSE
I've trained for years to know
every inch of this place.

DIMITRI
Exactly. You're able to operate on
instinct because you are intimately
familiar with your surroundings.
But I'm new here. A lot to learn in
a little time.

(MORE)

DIMITRI (CONT'D)

So I suppose you can say I'm having
a staring contest with the street,
the gates, the rooftops and the
turrets.

He still hasn't looked her way. She studies him. Then grins.

ROSE

You're kind of a Guardian nerd,
aren't you?

At this, he nearly cracks a smile. She starts walking away.
Toying with him a little.

ROSE (CONT'D)

It's cool. Respect. Do your thing,
Perimeter-man. But just know, I
plan on getting your job when I
graduate.

DIMITRI

I agree. Lissa would be in
perfectly good hands with the best
Guardian at St. Vladimir's Academy.

ROSE

Thank you.

DIMITRI

Although that may be hard, given
your ranking.

ROSE

I'm number one. I'm always number
one.

DIMITRI

Then perhaps you're not as good at
Perimeter Control as you think.

Rose looks at him, confused. His gaze shifts to something
behind her. She turns, following his gaze to see --

The LEADERBOARD above the training field. Rose Hathaway is
listed in FIFTH PLACE. Mason in first.

ROSE

What the fuck --

EXT. TRAINING FIELD - NIGHT

Rose chases Alberta who leads warm-up drills through rows of
Guardian Novices working in perfect precision.

ROSE
How am I fifth?

ALBERTA
You missed class yesterday.
Automatic ten demerits. It's very
tight in the top five.

ROSE
I missed class to welcome Lissa
back to school.

ALBERTA
Find me a Strigoi who will accept
that excuse and we'll talk.

A nod of her head tells Rose to fall in line with the group.
Frustrated, Rose does. Mason throws her a sexy grin.

MASON
Game on, Hathaway.

ROSE
Don't get comfortable, Mace.

Rose goes through the warm-ups. Her body is fierce and fluid,
but her mind is racing. Across the yard, she spots Dimitri
back in position. She doesn't notice, but his eyes flick to
watch her for just a moment. She has made an impression.

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - DUSK

Back to bedtime. The girls prepare for bed, a lot on their
minds. Lissa notices Rose is uncharacteristically silent.

LISSA
Wanna do Worst Day Ever?

ROSE
Oh my god, yes. Me first.

Lissa sits on the floor, legs crossed. Rose lies down, her
head in Lissa's lap. She stares up at her, unleashing --

ROSE (CONT'D)
First, Alberta's on some mission to
bring me down, and I've had Mia's
stupid voice in my head all day,
and Dimitri's a dick. And now that
he's assigned to you, I'm afraid
they'll never let me be your
Guardian out in the world after
graduation. Anyway, I pretty much
hate everyone. Except you... What?

LISSA

(smiling)

Your well-intentioned outrage is my favorite thing about you.

ROSE

Good, because I'm pretty sure you're stuck with it forever.

LISSA

Okay. A. Don't worry about Dimitri. And B. Do not listen to Mia. We know who we are. And where we're going. Pretty soon our biggest problem will be finding Feeders for me and Italian food for you.

ROSE

Preferably in Italy... And how was your day?

LISSA

Well, I had to speak Ancient Moroi in front of a hundred Royals.

ROSE

Oof.

LISSA

And Victor said from now on I have to be up, dressed and pretty by 7pm. Oh, and I'm not allowed to drink anymore.

ROSE

Jesus. You win. Switch.

They switch positions and now Lissa's head is in Rose's lap.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Maybe that's not the worst thing, though, with all those meds you're taking.

LISSA

No. I'm totally off those now.
(off Rose's surprise)
No one wants a pill-popping princess.

ROSE

They can't put a timeline on grief.

LISSA

It's fine. I'm tired of living in a fog.

Rose looks down at her. Gently --

ROSE

What do you see now that the fog is lifting?

LISSA

...I miss them.

Rose nods. They sit in silence feeling the weight of this. Lissa closes her eyes, letting her exhaustion wash over her. Rose sits silently while her friend falls asleep.

EXT. ACADEMY/EXT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

The campus is deserted as Moroi ready for bed. Except for Sonya, who is surrounded by several birds, seeming happier amongst animals than humans. As she hums and feeds them, one flies off toward Victor's house where --

INT. MIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

VICTOR enters to find Mia in her PJ's looking out a window.

VICTOR

Anything interesting out there?

MIA

Just Sonya, the bird lady.

VICTOR

Be gentle on your sister.

MIA

I am. Sometimes. But really...

He glances at a JEWELLED NECKLACE on Mia's vanity.

VICTOR

You need to give that to Lissa.

MIA

I do not. And anyway, I'm wearing it to the reception tomorrow.

VICTOR

...I'm sorry, Mia. It's Royals only. The Queen was very insistent.

MIA

So that's it? One minute I'm the future king's fiancée and the next I'm invisible? I'm keeping the necklace.

VICTOR

It's a Dragomir family heirloom.

MIA

And a Dragomir gave it to me.

VICTOR

(gently)

With Andre dead, you can't keep it.

MIA

I was so close. I know everyone thinks it was just an arranged marriage, that you wheedled a favor from the Queen. But she adored Andre. She only allowed it because he asked her. He thought I was smart. He may not have loved me; I didn't love him. *That way.* But we were good together... I would have made a great queen.

VICTOR

There's a lot you can do without ever sitting on a throne.

MIA

You're Royal. You don't get it. The only way to wield power is to *have* power. Thanks to being adopted, Sonya and I live with the trappings of royalty, but the restrictions of not being Royal.

VICTOR

Having the ear of the Queen can be just as powerful...and the Queen has big plans for Lissa.

Mia turns back to the window.

MIA

Lissa is a twit... And what is up with Sonya and those fucking birds?

EXT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - GROUNDS - DAY

We go back to Sonya as she watches a bird soar overhead. Suddenly it's joined by another...then another. The sky shifts, the world becoming stylized. The day darkens.

More birds gather into a murmuration of starlings, and now instead of Sonya down below, we find Rose staring up at the sky in fascination. The mood is gothic, ethereal (if it feels like a dream sequence, that's because it is).

The birds move and shift, flying lower to the ground. Rose is startled by this. They take the shape of a MAN. The Bird Man starts moving towards Rose. As it gets closer, the birds disperse, revealing an ACTUAL man in their place. It's ANDRE. Bloody. Skin torn, teeth smashed. Horrifically injured.

ROSE
(terrified whisper)
Andre.

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - DAY

Rose BOLTS up in her bed, covered in sweat, breathing heavily. She looks around to get her bearings, seeing --

Lissa is in bed, thrashing around in the midst of a terrible night terror. Rose scrambles over to Lissa's bed, shaking Lissa awake. Lissa looks at her, wild-eyed, but then --

LISSA
Rose.

ROSE
Shhhh. You're having a bad dream.

Lissa nods, her eyes drooping again. As she drifts off --

LISSA
All those birds...

Rose's head snaps in her direction. Did she and Lissa just have the same dream? **CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. ROYAL FEEDING CHAMBER - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE FACE OF A HUMAN WOMAN, eyes wide as a pair of fangs search her neck. She begins to pant. Is that fear? No, it's desire. She grips her right hand with her left to keep from pulling whoever's attached to those fangs in.

Finally the fangs pop the surface of her skin and sink slowly in. A gasp of pleasure escapes her lips. REVEAL Jesse seated behind her, feeding from her neck.

He's among a row of RECLINERS in a spa-like setting, where a dozen ATTRACTIVE HUMANS, all high from the bite, lie in various states of repose as Royals enjoy their 'breakfast.'

Lissa enters. Looking for the COORDINATOR, she sees him watching Jesse, who's going to town on his Feeder's neck. As the Feeder's eyes roll back into her head from blood loss --

COORDINATOR

Mr. Zeklos. This is your second warning. We have rules. This is a human Feeder, to be respected.

The picture of smug Royal privilege, Jesse wipes his mouth --

JESSE

And you're a Non-Royal nobody. So piss off.

LISSA

Leave him alone, Jesse.

Covering his annoyance, Jesse takes his leave. As he goes, the Coordinator waves Lissa toward one of the Feeders. An older woman, ALICE, 50s, with a perma-stoner grin.

LISSA (CONT'D)

Hey, Alice. Haven't seen you in a while.

ALICE

I've been working in the Non-Royal feeding chamber. I think I aged out. But one of the skinny hot Feeders fainted and here I am.

LISSA

How are you? What does Carly have to say about life out in the human side of things?

ALICE

Well, according to my daughter, it's a cesspool of poverty, racism, and don't even get her started on carbon emissions. Which is why your neck of the woods is so much more appealing to an old lady like me. No pun intended.

As they chat, Lissa sits behind her, getting comfortable.

LISSA

It's only a matter of time before
Rose and I finally get to see it
for ourselves.

ALICE

Don't know why you'd bother. Except
Shake Shack. You vamps eat, right?

LISSA

Sometimes. You ready?

Alice nods. Lissa arches her neck and delicate FANGS appear.
As she gently bites into Alice, who falls into bliss --

ALICE

Oh that's nice...

ANGLE ON THE DOOR, where Mia enters (still in black). Her
eyes scan the room, finding Lissa. She heads over.

Lissa releases Alice's neck and raises her head to find the
Dragomir necklace dangling from Mia's outstretched hand.

MIA

I guess this is yours now.

LISSA

Thank you.

Able to see how much this bothers Mia --

LISSA (CONT'D)

I like your dress. It's really nice
for you to mourn him this way.

MIA

Thank you.

LISSA

You have such an eye for fashion.
Any idea what I should be wearing
to the reception tonight?

MIA

I wouldn't know. I'm not invited.

LISSA

Oh, I'm sorry -- I didn't realize --

At that, the Coordinator approaches Mia.

COORDINATOR

This is a Royal Feeding Chamber.

MIA
(snappish)
Do you see me feeding?

LISSA
She's with me.

COORDINATOR
I'm afraid it doesn't matter,
Princess. That's the rule.

Mia darkens. She hates this. Lissa feels terrible.

LISSA
Well, then we'll both go.

As they exit, Mia steals a look at Lissa, remembering her father's words about power.

MIA
Definitely floor length. It says
cocktail attire but Marie Conta and
all the girls from that family
notoriously overdress to make
everyone else look like garbage.

They head through the door... MUSIC UP:

EXT. TRAINING GROUNDS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE LEADERBOARD. Rose's fifth place ranking mocking her from above. She heads for the field stopping when she sees Dimitri standing with Alberta.

He gives her a polite nod. She nods back somewhat less politely then makes a beeline for Mason. Alberta to Dimitri --

ALBERTA
It's Friday. Challenge Day.
(an eye on Rose)
The only day of the week it's
possible to lift your score.

Rose approaches Mason. Slaps a CHALLENGE CARD into his chest.

MASON
C'mon, already? I've only gotten to
be number one for like a day.

ROSE
I'm more comfortable on top.

MASON
Don't I know it.

A look flashes between them that doubles down on their subtext. There's some history there. CUT TO:

Mikhail whistles the start of the Challenge Match. Rose and Mason start to spar. They dip and move like elegant boxers, no one throwing the first punch. Mason grins at her.

MASON (CONT'D)
C'mon. Make it hurt --

BAM. Rose lands a brutal punch -- and they're all in.

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Mia helps Lissa get ready. Piles and piles of dresses cover both beds. Mia is good at this. She pulls pieces together, using them unconventionally to build a stunning outfit. As she places the Dragomir necklace around Lissa's neck...

EXT. TRAINING FIELD - NIGHT

Challenge Night continues, as Rose and Mason spar, the other Novices split in their allegiance, cheering on from the side.

The fighting is a blend of primal hand-to-hand contact with elements of Martial Arts. Guardians punch harder, run faster and jump higher than ordinary humans.

From the sidelines, Dimitri watches Rose in action. His face doesn't react, but inside he's impressed.

At the BUZZER, Rose and Mason stop, panting. Finally, Alberta raises a WHITE CARD. Mason lets out a whoop.

ROSE
A fucking draw?

ALBERTA
Round two: weapons.

Rose smirks. Game on. This is her sweet spot. As she grabs a special training vest, putting it on...

EXT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - NIGHT

From the window we see Lissa exit her dorm, dressed to the nines for her next event.

REVERSE to reveal that Christian is watching her head off into the night like Cinderella. As he gets an idea, CUT TO:

INT. PALACE - NIGHT

Mid-conversation with a FUSSY ROYAL at the Queen's private cocktail party, Lissa eyes champagne floating by on a tray...

LISSA

I had no idea there was so much to know about tea...

FUSSY ROYAL

I've made quite a study of it. King Abdullah never drank anything but in his era. Except a little rosewater now and again.

AT THE ENTRANCE, Christian approaches in a bespoke suit, looking very Royal. Recognizing him, the DOORMAN hesitates --

DOORMAN

I'm not sure you should be here.

Christian's eyes flash GOLD (a mark of a true Royal):

CHRISTIAN

I'm still an Ozero and my bloodline still has a vote. You can't keep me out.

No choice, the Doorman lets him in. Ignoring the disapproving glances, Christian peers around. Finally, he sees Lissa.

As though sensing she turns and sees Christian, their gaze holding until someone cuts across the room, breaking it. They circle through the crowd toward each other. Finally meeting, neither quite knows what to say...

Nearby Victor spots them. Not happy, he excuses himself from his conversation. As he makes his way over -

EXT. TRAINING FIELD - NIGHT

Rose and Mason finish suiting up with vests that register if your stake has reached your opponent's heart.

DIMITRI

I'm impressed so far. Rose is half Mason's size but she's using it as an advantage.

ALBERTA

Yes, she's quite good. But she's impossible to control.

DIMITRI

Everyone's a little unpredictable
at her age.

ALBERTA

Trust me, she'll do something to
fuck it up.

(hitting the timer)

Rose, Mason. Time. First to three
hits wins.

INTERCUT WITH LISSA'S EVENT

...Where, aware of all the disapproving stares --

LISSA

I'm surprised to see you here.

CHRISTIAN

It's been a while since I've been
to one of these.

LISSA

Being here must be hard for you.

CHRISTIAN

It isn't for you?

LISSA

It used to be easier. Now I'm
biding my time until I graduate and
get out of here.

CHRISTIAN

Aren't we all.

LISSA

So why are you here?

CHRISTIAN

(with a grin)

I just came to see if you needed an
Old Moroi tutor. Your heart's in it
but your pronunciation is terrible.

Lissa laughs, feeling her face flush as Victor reaches them.

VICTOR

The Queen is looking for you.

With a curt nod to Christian, as Victor leads Lissa away --

AT THE FIELD deep into the fight, Rose struggles to reach
Mason's heart. Then DING. Mason has hit hers.

Frustrated, Rose eyes Mason as they spar. DING. He hit it again. But this time Rose clocked how. DING. She gets a hit in. As they continue -

AT THE EVENT, as Lissa looks back to Christian --

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Christian Ozero is a non-starter.
His parents chose to turn Strigoi.
That is a mortal sin. The last
thing you need is the church
against you.

LISSA

Why does anyone care who I like?
Can't I be left alone to live my
life the way I want to?

Victor laughs ruefully, then gently:

VICTOR

Oh, Lissa. That is the opposite of
what your life will be.

(switching gears)

We need to discuss your schedule.
With so many families in town for
St. Vladimir's Day, and your
installation as the leader of the
Dragomir's, there will be several
privy Council meetings. Attendance
is mandatory. Also...

As Victor carries on, Lissa sees Christian, who, aware of
disapproving eyes on him, quietly slips away.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

...The other Heads of Families will
be inviting you to a series of less
formal events, also mandatory.
Starting tomorrow --

LISSA

No.

Victor looks up. Lissa's face flushes, anxiety creeping in.

LISSA (CONT'D)

I don't want this. I'm not Andre. I
don't want any of this.

VICTOR

(compassionate but firm)

What we want and what we must do
are often miles apart.

Lissa's breath catches as she --

FLASHES BACK TO THE NIGHT OF THE ACCIDENT, seeing Andre --
only this time as he speaks --

ANDRE

*What we want and what we must do
can be very different things...*

-- THE CAR SHIFTS like a SONIC BOOM has hit, his dialogue
bottoming out as we see him in SLOW-MOTION be sprayed with
flying glass. As blood begins pouring down his face -- --

BACK TO Lissa as she starts to hyperventilate.

AT THE FIELD, Rose goes in for Mason's heart --

-- As Lissa's panic rises, her vision starts to blur. Dizzy
now, as she reaches out to keep herself from falling --

-- Rose, about to successfully complete the move - falters.

Lissa starts to sink into a faint, Victor props her up as --

Rose's knees give, almost as though she is fainting too.

DING. Mason gets the hit. Alberta gives Dimitri a 'told you
so' look. As Rose wonders what the fuck just happened, she
faints and we...**CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - DAY

Rose enters, slinging her gym bag down, losing her hoodie --

ROSE

Sorry to wake you. I was in the
infirmary. This really weird thing
happened where --

Rose looks at Lissa's bed. Sees the covers are mussed, but
Lissa is gone. CUT TO:

INT. DORM ROOFTOP - DAY

Lissa stands in the sun staring at the sky. She's still, even
peaceful as an angry rash starts to rise on her skin. Then --

ROSE

Lissa... What are you doing?

Lissa turns to Rose. Tears standing in her eyes --

LISSA

I don't know why I'm here. Andre was the special one. He should have lived, not me.

ROSE

Oh, Liss. That's not true. It's just the grief talking. You've been through so much.

LISSA

But it's all a blur. I feel like they were here, we were *all* here, together. And then there was an accident I can't even remember -- and then they were gone... and I...

Rose pulls Lissa into a protective hug. As she cries it out:

ROSE

I know... I know.
(after a beat)
...You really don't remember anything about that night?

LISSA

No. It's all one big brain fog that won't clear.

ROSE

Mine's more like a complete blank.

Is that weird? Time will tell. As Lissa settles --

ROSE (CONT'D)

There you go. Just blow your nose.
Oh, okay. On my shirt's fine.

Then, suddenly knowing what Lissa needs, what they both need -

ROSE (CONT'D)

But Lissa? If we're gonna sunbathe, I know where I want to be.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Rose pedals a well-worn bike with Lissa on the seat behind her under her parasol, both girls giddy with freedom.

As they arrive at the edge of a lake on the outskirts of campus, past the gates, Lissa lights up. Rose smiles --

ROSE

This is the first place your family
took me.

LISSA

I remember. Right after I met you.
Standing all alone on Family Day.

ROSE

You ran straight up to me. Your
clothes were so clean I was afraid
your parents wouldn't let you play
with me.

LISSA

They loved you.

ROSE

I didn't know what a family was
until then.

As that lands on Lissa --

LISSA

You keep asking if I'm going to be
okay. Are you?

ROSE

They were... everything a family
should be. You said Andre should be
here - I feel like Sebastian should
be too. He was a great Guardian to
Andre. But he died too. They were
all so strong... But somehow we're
the survivors.

LISSA

(beat, trying to deflect)
I guess that can be our band name.

ROSE

Well, it's time we have our own
memorial. Our own chance to say
goodbye.

She reaches into the backpack she has with her, and as she
pulls out TWO COLORFUL SKY LANTERNS we CUT TO:

EXT. ACADEMY ROOFTOP - DAY

Dimitri steals private time to do his physical and meditative
training on the roof under the sun as the campus sleeps. His
body is a temple, reflected in his flow.

He looks out at the campus for a moment, a part of him always on duty. Then, as he carries on with this regimen --

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Under the shade of the tree, Lissa and Rose hold hands. In their free hand they each hold a lantern. Then Lissa, simply:

LISSA
Mom, Dad, Andre. We love you. And
we'll never stop missing you. Be at
peace.

They release the lanterns. After a beat...

LISSA (CONT'D)
Remember the first time we came
here?
(a grin starting)
...And I beat you to the pier.

ROSE
Did not. That's crazy.

LISSA
I totally did. And I still can.

ROSE
You've never once beaten me to the -

But Lissa BOLTS. Diving in the water she races to the Pier.

ROSE (CONT'D)
CHEATER --!

As Rose dives in after her.

EXT. ACADEMY ROOFTOP - DAY?

Something catches Dimitri's peripheral vision. He looks up. And sees two lanterns floating in the sky. And something tells him to head to -

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - DAY

Dimitri knocks. No answer. He nods to DORM MATRON OKSANA, who opens the door. She looks in, then opens the door wide so he can see. The room is empty. The girls aren't in their beds.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

The girls lie under a shaded tree, Lissa's parasol giving her extra protection from the sun.

LISSA

Thank you for that. I feel better
than I've felt in a while.

ROSE

You're lucky you didn't burn your
face off, but yeah, I know. I can
kind of feel it coming off of you.
Is that weird?

LISSA

Not really. You've always been
pretty tuned in to me.

ROSE

Yeah, I guess.
(broaching carefully)
Though, since you got back, I'm
feeling all this stuff, but it
seems...more like your feelings.
Like, last night I got this flash
of panic and I knew you needed me.

LISSA

I was panicking. I did need you.

ROSE

That's weird. Right?

LISSA

Very.

As they think about this --

LISSA (CONT'D)

Earlier, when you found me on the
roof. How did you know I was there?

ROSE

I don't know. I just... did.

They look at each other, understanding that this isn't
normal. But then a bird FLIES overhead and Rose checks the
sky, mindful of the time. The sun is getting low.

ROSE (CONT'D)

We should head back. It's one thing
to be outside the wards in the sun,
but if we get caught out here
during Strigoi hours, we're fucked.

LISSA

Fine. But I'm driving.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DUSK

Lissa's pedaling with Rose on the back, pumping hard.

ROSE
You're stronger than you look.

LISSA
(looking back)
Just because I'm not a Guardian --

The bike hits a rock, tossing both girls to the ground.

LISSA (CONT'D)
Ow -- shit.

ROSE
Are you okay?

LISSA
Something's bruised. Maybe my ego --

Rose checks Lissa's knee, which is torn up from the fall.

ROSE
Can you walk?

LISSA
Yeah. Sorry, Rose.

Rose helps her to the bike. And sees the wheel is bent. Shit. She checks the sky again. Sunset is nigh.

ROSE
Forget about walking. We need to run.

Rose grabs Lissa's hand, pulling her along as she races towards the Academy. CUT TO:

INT. VICTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Victor, his voice panicked, into his phone --

VICTOR
You need to find her. Immediately.

EXT. ACADEMY GATES - PRE-DUSK

On the other end of the call, Dimitri nods to the Gatekeeper to open the gate. Before he takes off in a full SPRINT --

DIMITRI
I'll call as soon as I do.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Rose and Lissa race back through the woods. In the growing night, every snapping branch underfoot feels frightening.

They approach a back GATE, split by a STONE WALL. Rose is about to climb the wall, when suddenly she stops, sensing something. A wave of unease, bordering on nausea.

LISSA

What's wrong?

ROSE

I don't know. I feel sick -

Then -- something DROPS INTO FRAME behind Lissa. It's shadowed and snarling. Rose immediately LUNGES for Lissa -- grabbing her, using Lissa's weight to her benefit (like earlier with Mason) and HURLS her upwards. As Lissa lands on the wall, their Pursuer follows -- hitting the top of the wall and INCINERATING in a shocking electric FLASH.

LISSA

Rose...

ROSE

The wards worked. It's dead.

Lissa stares at the smoking dead Strigoi just inches from her. Ew. She looks down in the nick of time to see --

LISSA

ROSE --

Another Strigoi is BARRELLING towards Rose. Rose turns just a beat too late and the Strigoi SLAMS into her, getting her up against the wall. The Strigoi and Rose are nose-to-nose and for the first time we get a look at it --

Blazing red eyes. Long jagged fangs. Veins protruding. A feral energy. The face of nightmares.

Rose struggles against it, searching for a weakness to exploit, but there is no escape from its grip.

UP ABOVE, Lissa looks for some way, any way to help.

Rose's Strigoi EXTENDS ITS JAW to go in for the kill. Lissa SCREAMS, when -- CRACK. The Strigoi FALLS, revealing --

Dimitri standing behind it. A bloody stake in his hand. Rose and Dimitri stare at each other. Both breathing heavily, both terrified by what just happened. Rose can see it in his eyes. She's in trouble. Big trouble. So she deflects --

ROSE

Don't suppose there's any way you
could keep this just between us?

Just then -- KLIEG LIGHTS everywhere. Busted. **CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. GIRLS' DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Victor paces before an exhausted Lissa.

VICTOR

That kind of risk was unacceptable
at any time. Now, the future of the
Dragomir Family is in your hands.

LISSA

A tiny family with no Andre, in a
society with antiquated rules. What
does it even matter?

VICTOR

If you think the rules are
antiquated now, wait until you see
what happens if any of the vipers
jockeying for the crown get their
way. Andre's rule meant change for
us. If the crown falls to the wrong
bloodline, any progress your
brother hoped to achieve -- will be
impossible. The Dragomir vote is
key to preventing that.

LISSA

Fine. You can tell me how to vote.

VICTOR

I could. And you could carry on
without a care in the world as the
empty vessel of leadership everyone
expects you to be. Is that how your
parents raised you?

A long beat as she lets his words sink in.

LISSA

No. But they raised Andre to be
more.

(then)

I'll stay until the succession is
assured. Then I'll graduate. And
get on with my life. Will that do?

After a beat, Victor nods, resigned.

LISSA (CONT'D)

And please tell them not to be mad
at Rose.

Almost laughing at her naivete --

VICTOR

Oh, Princess. We're well beyond
that.

EXT. ST. VLADIMIR'S - NIGHT

Rose exits the administrative wing to find Dimitri standing
outside in his 'spot.' His eyes meet hers. Steely.

ROSE

No need. I just got an earful and
then some from Alberta.

He doesn't break her gaze. She stares at him, almost
challenging him. Then --

ROSE (CONT'D)

You saved me. Thank you.

(off his silence)

I should've told you I was taking
Lissa outside of the wards. And I
should have built in more time on
our return for exigencies like the
bike getting damaged. But I got her
back in one piece. I made sure she
was protected. *They come first.*

Dimitri finally speaks. Low and even, but hard.

DIMITRI

Protecting Lissa is my job. My only
role here is to ensure that nothing
happens to her. What you did was
reckless and impulsive. Yes, you're
strong, but you're a liability. And
tonight you almost got the person
you say you care about most in the
world killed.

(eyes boring into hers)

There isn't a rank low enough on
that board for you right now.

Rose can't respond. She knows he's right.

INT. GUARDIAN BARRACKS - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Mason and other Novices finish breakfast in the lounge of their barracks. More utilitarian than the Moroi dorms, furthering the class distinction between the two.

Rose enters with her duffle bag. As Mason watches, Rose heads for one of the rooms, where -

INT. GUARDIAN BARRACKS - WOMEN'S SLEEP ROOM - NIGHT

A row of beds and desks. Meredith looks up from making her bed as Rose enters.

MEREDITH

Guess you're slumming it with the rest of us now.

As Rose wordlessly drops her bag onto an empty bed --

INT. LISSA AND MIA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Lissa enters her new room and drops the bag she's carrying.

MIA (O.S.)

I thought we'd be sisters, not roommates.

Lissa turns to find Mia, dressed in Saturday casual, who adds to the woman on tap to be the next queen:

MIA (CONT'D)

You can have the window side if you like.

Lissa forces a smile. Then looks out the window and sees Christian walking, alone. Aimless. He looks sad. She opens her hand, looking down at Rose's unicorn tucked in her palm.

INT. GUARDIAN REC ROOM - NIGHT

Rose is checking email on a computer, staring at the words - *"let me and yourself down. As a Guardian I was shocked at your behavior. As your mother, I'm ashamed..."* Then --

MASON

Rose?

She looks up. He can see that whatever she was reading hurt.

ROSE

How come our mothers, the same
women who leave us on the doorstep
of this school as infants so they
can to go back to being Guardians,
still get to tell us what to do?

MASON

...I wanted to see if you're okay.

ROSE

You didn't get that many good shots
in. I'll live.

MASON

I didn't mean that.

Rose rises, and face to face with Mason --

ROSE

Mason, I really only have two uses
for you right now. And I'm not in
the mood to spar, so...

She kisses him. Starts to pull at his shirt. He pulls away.

MASON

Whoa. Whoa. Wait a minute, Rose. I
can't believe I'm actually going to
say this -- but I'm not here for
that. Now. In this moment. I
thought we could talk. With
everything that's been going on, I
thought... I could be a friend.
Just pretend I'm Lissa. Don't
laugh. What would she do now?

ROSE

...You'd sit cross-legged... and
one of us would put our head in the
other's lap and we'd argue over who
had the worst day -- which
obviously today I would win.

Mason sits, crosses his legs. His lap is ready.

MASON

I'll be the judge of that. Legit,
this had better be good.

Rose smiles. Then lies down with her head in his lap.

ROSE

I just wanted to make Lissa feel better...

INT. MOROI DORM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Christian moves down the hall, most others keeping their distance. He arrives at his door, where a small wrapped BOX sits. He looks around, curious about and wary of its source.

He opens it. Inside, Lissa's unicorn, and a note: *I wondered if you knew how to say unicorn in Old Moroi?*

As he allows himself a touched smile.

INT. LISSA AND MIA'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Lissa dresses for yet another party. The dress. The pin in her hair. She stares in the mirror, hollow. Then, a KNOCK --

She opens the door to Dimitri holding an ornate wooden box:

DIMITIRI

This was left with the Matron for you. I already checked it.

He hands it to her, politely exiting. She checks it out. It has a delicate pearl inlay. She opens it to find a parchment scroll. She unrolls it, seeing the Old Moroi passage she was working on earlier within a larger reading.

As she opens the card that came inside the box, we hear --

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

The passage you read today was an oath to slay demons. The rest of this passage, the parts that they don't feel the need to teach you, says why. You fight for family, for justice, and for love. I agree. Christian. PS. I think unicorn in Moroi? Is Lissa...

As Lissa stares at these words, lit up...

VICTOR (PRELAP)

We were wrong about Lissa...

INT. ROYAL COURT PRISON CELLS - NIGHT

As the red eyes of a BOUND AND BEATEN STRIGOI glare from the shadows of its cell, the Queen listens to Victor.

VICTOR

She's not ready. Not emotionally or any other way.

WHAM! The Strigoi throws itself against the cage door. Hissing and baring its fangs. The Queen doesn't flinch.

QUEEN

Ready is a luxury we don't have. We already live our lives in quiet dread, but with the Strigoi getting bolder those lunatics on the right will legislate the very air we breathe in the name of keeping us safe... While the pie-eyed dreamers on the left whisper about releasing the Guardians from their service, threatening the very protections our species needs to survive...

VICTOR

She doesn't have a political bone in her body.

QUEEN

Exactly. She is untainted, able to see the good in all people. Everything I was before the vipers nest made me cynical and haggard.

VICTOR

You are hardly haggard, If you could just hold on a bit longer...

QUEEN

I'm tired, Victor.

WHAM! The Strigoi hits the cage again. Victor shoots a wary look at it. The Queen remains unbothered.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

And I'd like to live out the rest of my days in some semblance of quiet. I think I've earned tha --

But the Strigoi ATTACKS again, only this time the door RIPS OPEN and it heads straight for her.

The Queen's GUARDIANS leap in and SLAM the Strigoi to the ground. One grabs a BLADE and SLAMS it onto the Strigoi's neck, decapitating it. The Queen stares at its writhing body.

QUEEN (CONT'D)
We're going to be late for the
party.

As she sweeps away...

INT. PALACE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

... We HEAR the CLINKS of GLASSES. As the Queen raises hers:

QUEEN
A toast to you all on St.
Vladimir's feast day.
(to Irena)
And to the service today. The last
I'll witness as your sovereign. It
is time to name the next.

The crowd is surprised. Irena and Marie Conta share a look.

HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA
Your Majesty, protocol demands the
announcement be made in a more
formal setting.

QUEEN
Protocol can kiss my aging Royal
buttocks. *Protocol* may be helpful
as a tool, but when the knife
wields the chef, it ceases to be of
use. I am ready to name my heir.

MARIE CONTA
We'll still need to vote to approve
him, Your Majesty. Wouldn't it be
prudent to survey the candidates
with the privy council first to
ensure a swift and unanimous vote
of the twelve families to approve?

QUEEN
I think we all know the likelihood
of a unanimous vote for any of the
so-called "frontrunners" here.

"Frontrunner" Marie fights a scowl, as standing next to
Irena, Tatiana, sips champagne, enjoying the proceedings.

QUEEN (CONT'D)
But there is someone we've
overlooked... Having ruled since I
was a girl, I know the virtue of
youth, and of compassion in this
position. But I am old.
(MORE)

QUEEN (CONT'D)

And dare I say cynical. Still, fear
not, the future of the monarchy
will be in good hands.

At that, the Queen turns to Lissa.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

As the next heir to the throne, I
name Vasilissa Dragomir.

Lissa registers confusion, then fear. And as every eye in the
room lands on her --

INT. GUARDIAN BARRACKS - WOMEN'S SLEEP ROOM - NIGHT

Rose jerks awake, upset, feeling Lissa's fear as we CUT TO --

INT. PALACE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

-- Where we find Lissa in the center of the ballroom looking
around helpless. As the ballroom erupts into scandalized
chatter --

END OF EPISODE