

The Beginning Of The End

The Mauve Legacy Book 3

By Emma Hart

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Dedications

To my Mum. We have our differences, some that may never be resolved, but I
never would have discovered my love for the literary world without the nightly
bedtime stories as a small girl. Thank you for introducing me to a place where I can
completely lose myself. I owe my love (obsession) of books to you.

The Mauve Legacy Series:

A Magical History – Book 1

Truth, Lies and Betrayal – Book 2

The Beginning of the End – Book 3

ONE

Safe House

I paced the floor of the front room in the safe house in New Ashford. Chewing my thumbnail until it bled. I'd sent the third team to Goodson Farm for surveillance and now we were waiting for our cues to leave and rescue Ivy.

Luther had really hit a nerve when he called last night giving me a twenty-four hour time limit. I'd jumped out of bed and called everyone frantically. Not that any of them were too impressed at me waking them at 3am, but they soon hopped into action at the mention of Luther's name. I'd spent an hour after the calls packing in a blind panic and running the plan over and over in my mind, calmed only by Josh wrapping his arms around me. I really don't know what I would have done if we hadn't made up.

The question still remained though – did we tell Ivy the truth about our lives and how we found her, or get Louise to work her mind magic? Ava assured me I'd figure it out, but now.. I wasn't so sure. I didn't feel right about using mind magic on one of my best friends, but then I didn't know if it was fair to expose myself and my friends, and our secrets, to a human with no family ties to any of us.

Regardless of her love of Wicca and obsession with Twilight.

At least we'd decided on how Ivy would be 'found.' We were going to drive her to River Forest Park and leave her in the forest where two of Elijah's vampires would 'find' her and phone the Salem Police Department. Not exactly the best idea in the world, but it was all we had.

"Stop making your thumb bleed, love. You're making me hungry." Justin's British accent filtered down the hall and I turned to see him walk through the door.

"Sorry. I'm just.. so nervous." I said pathetically.

"Don't be, I have every faith in you." He chucked himself down on the old, rickety sofa. "Couldn't have got any better furniture, could you?" He asked with a cheeky grin. I scowled at him.

"Take that up with your Master. He's the one that found this place, not me."

"Stole it, more like."

I sighed. We didn't exactly steal it. Ava has the power of compulsion, or influence as it's sometimes called, and kinda talked the owners into selling us the place for a pitiful amount. I have no doubt they would have been extremely confused when they woke up the next day, but desperate times call for desperate measures, and this was a *very* desperate time.

"Sit." Justin commanded, patting the space on the sofa next to him. I wrinkled my nose.

"Really?"

He shot me a look and I reluctantly crossed the room and sat next to him. He wrapped a cold muscular arm around me and I rested my head on his shoulder. Besides Ava, he was the best friend a girl could ask for.

The others were talking in the kitchen, I could hear Ava and Maya enthusiastically describing how amazing Prom would be compared to Homecoming. A lump formed in my throat as I thought about the fact my Dad would never see me attend my first Prom.

"Don't cry, love. What are you thinking about?" Justin asked as he gently wiped a tear from my cheek.

Well. I didn't even know I was crying.

"Prom." I whispered.

"Markus would be proud of you, Lily, and you know it. Take some of that emotion and put it into tonight, okay?" He said softly.

I shook my head and got up, moving to the window. I rested my hands on the cracked windowsill and looked out into the Massachusetts countryside. We were about twenty minutes outside of New Ashford, in a small village. We were surrounded by rolling green fields, flourishing trees and best of all, silence. I gazed out at the sky, the once bright sun was loitering on the horizon in a state of indecision. Did it set? Or not?

Because if it did...

Ribbons of red, orange and purple streamed across the sky as the light blue of day gave way to the indigo of night. If I looked hard enough, I could see the faint outline of the half-moon and a few random stars. I pressed my fingertips against the window as I studied the natural work of art before me. In that moment, I could believe I was a normal seventeen year old girl watching the sunset, and I let myself believe it.

A gentle, warm hand was placed on my shoulder. I didn't need to turn to know it was Josh. Justin must have got him. I leaned back into his chest as his hand slipped down my back to my waist, providing me the comfort only he could give me. My mind was open, but Ava was silent. She knew when not to talk.

"I love you." Josh murmured into my ear, placing a gentle kiss on my temple.

"I love you too." I whispered back. And I really, truly, did. Even if it took some she-wolf enchanting him to make me realise just how much. That reminds me, she still owes me a conversation. Hope Jerome's cell is comfy.

Ava's cell rang in the kitchen as I watched the sun slowly edge lower.

And lower.

And lower.

Lily, we have to leave. I'll see you on the other side. Ava's calm voice echoed in my mind. I heard the click of the back door as the second team left the house.

I love you. Be safe. I said back to her.

Always. I felt her blow me a mental kiss and I shut my eyes. Everything would be fine. It had to be.

"Josh? Can you get Justin? I need to ask him something." I turned to look at him. He was so beautiful.

"Of course." He pressed a loving kiss to my lips and left the room.

"You called, my lady." Justin swept back into the room and bowed with a flourish. I let out a small giggle despite myself. He fit in so well with us it was easy to forget that he was actually born in a different century. Ah, gotta love the vampires.

"I did, my good sir." I replied in a haughty British accent. I beckoned him over with my finger and he was by my side in a flash. Usually, I'd complain about his vamp speed but tonight, it would come in useful. I bent over to whisper in his ear.

"Luther will show tonight, and I need you to help me."

TWO

Goodson Farm

Night had fallen by the time our SUV's pulled up half a mile from the farm. I climbed out of the car and looked up at the night sky. I was doing that a lot lately, but it was comforting.

The stars twinkled with a brightness only they were capable of. My gaze was involuntarily drawn to the moon and I felt a rush of warmth flow through my body. I mouthed a silent thank you as I studied the craters on it's surface.

Josh walked round the car and took my hand, telling me it was time to move. I tore my eyes from the lunar spirit of the goddess, Hecate, and smiled at him. We began our trek to the farm through the trees, Rosie, Grace, Sampson and Justin, plus a small ladder, following behind us.

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The door to the farmhouse was already open when we approached. I knew it might be, that was Ava's signal that all was clear. I was glad our mental connection still worked while she was in the cottage. He hadn't placed a ward. Yet.

I silently lead my group, now plus lyla, into the old cottage. The dust had accumulated since my dream and the stench of neglect was almost suffocating. It was clear to see no-one had been here for years. It was exactly the same as my dream, down to every last beam on the ceiling and moth eaten curtain at the windows. I hurried on through to the kitchen, quickly locating the pantry. I shivered with the sense of deja vu, except of course I had been here. Spiritual me had, anyway.

Josh stepped forward and pushed open the large door as I lit a small, heat less flame in my palm, lighting up the empty room. I looked down and saw the rotten trapdoor. I motioned to Josh to open it and he did, silently. As in my dream, I grabbed a small pebble and dropped it down the hole, a small clunk rose to my ears instantly. I turned to lyla who lit a flame in her hand, identical to mine, before I

dropped down into the tunnel noiselessly. I looked around me as I waited for the ladder to be dropped down and the others to join me.

It was as dank and dirty as I knew it would be. The smell of damp earth circled round me as I gagged slightly. I could almost taste the evil that had once walked these tunnels, and still did I suppose.

How convenient for Mr Witch Hunter.

The others climbed down next to me and Josh took my hand again with a small nod. Rosie and Justin filed in behind us, followed by Sampson then Grace and Iyla. We made our way through the tunnels urgently but slowly, careful not to make a single sound. I couldn't even hear our footsteps. We reached a fork in the tunnels, left or right. I knocked down my empath wall, blocked out the nerves from my family – blood or otherwise – and focused on Ivy. Slowly, ever so slowly, I began to feel a hint of despair and sadness and Rosie directed me right under her breath.

I forgot about her fancy locating powers.

We travelled the tunnels, navigating the passages that way, Rosie locating and me sensing on Ivy's feelings until I barely even needed to concentrate.

I'm coming, Ivy. Please don't give up yet.

After what felt like a lifetime we found the door to the room she was hidden in. Her feelings were overwhelming me now, and I knew I had to reconstruct my wall before I collapsed under the weight of her sadness. I took a deep breath as I did and reached for the lock. I shot a tiny, almost invisible bolt of lightening at the hole and was rewarded with a small hiss, and a click. The door swung open slightly and I let go of Josh to push it open.

She was sat in the centre of the room on a rickety old wooden chair. Like in my dream, her hands and ankles were manacled down and her head was hung over, her beautiful brown hair hanging over her face. I blinked back tears as I studied the rest of the room. Chains, knives, manacles and other torture equipment adorned the walls. I wasn't expecting that. I heard a small gasp from behind me as everyone followed me in and had to swallow the bile that had risen in my throat. I ran over to Ivy and gently lifted her head.

"Ivy?" I whispered.

Her eyes opened and she studied me for a second before they widened in alarm.

"No! He'll kill you! Lily you have to leave! Now! Please!" She croaked desperately.

"Ssh." I moved her hair from her face. "You know I won't hurt you, right?"

She looked at me for a second before nodding her head slightly. I stepped back and positioned my fingers towards her manacles. I broken them all open with four quick bolts of lightening and Josh set them down silently with his magic.

Ivy looked up and stared at me in disbelief.

"*What are you?*"

I beckoned Justin forward and smiled slightly.

"Don't worry about that at the moment. You'll be safe now, okay? Justin will get you out of here."

Justin swept her weak and bloodied body up in his arms and carried her out, pausing at the door and shooting me a glance. I nodded, a quick dip of my chin.

I hate to break this to you Lily but we got company! Ava's voice screamed in my mind and I turned to everyone else. I knew it was too easy.

"We've got company. Cottage, now!" I ordered. They all ran out before I'd even finished what I was saying and I heard their hurried footsteps down the tunnels. Only Josh paused but I shook my head.

"I'm coming."

He raised an eyebrow and gave me a disbelieving look before he left me alone. Hurry up Justin.

THREE

Promises, Promises

My moons began to prickle and I turned to the dark figure in the doorway before he could say a word.

"You know, we really have to stop running into each other like this." I added a smirk to my casual tone for good measure.

Luther's cold laugh echoed off the poorly-constructed walls as he stepped inside the room. I shot my flame towards an old torch in the corner, lighting the room up a treat.

Kept that a secret didn't I?

"Why, I'm obliged to agree with you, my dear. It's rather bad for your health." He chuckled.

I raised an eyebrow as I took in his appearance. He looked older, if the lines around his mouth and purple shadows under his eyes were anything to go by.

"Really?" I drawled sarcastically.

He chuckled again evilly and I repressed a shudder. This is the man who killed my father, gods damn it! My father, the greatest man I've ever known, who sacrificed his life for me. I wasn't about to show this animal he affected me.

"All alone.. Dear me." He tsked. "We made a deal, didn't we? Her life for yours?"

I looked at him coldly as he moved around the room, my jaw set.

"You offered me a deal, Luther. I didn't agree to it."

"Oh, forgive me." He replied dramatically. "I mean to collect anyway." He flashed me an evil grin and I smiled back sweetly, my hand raised ready for him.

"That's a shame, but I have no intention of giving my life to an old man today."

"I see you still haven't curbed that mouth of yours, Lily."

"I see you still haven't got the message, Henry."

I could feel the tension in the air. It clung to my skin like a mosquito, sucking the life out of me until I finally gave in.

In the words of my British vampire friend, *not bloody likely*.

I dodged to the side as a yellow flash came at me, replying with my own pure white bolt of lightening which he diverted. Another flash came at me but I met it with my own.

"You'll regret the day you messed with me, child. " He hissed, sending a red bolt my way for good measure.

I sent a white bolt towards his, neatly stepping aside as a mixture of red and white sparks erupted from the collision.

"You'll regret the day you killed my father, old man!" I yelled back, firing a ball of red lava towards him. Lava?

Well, knock me down and call me Betty. This magic malarkey just gets weirder.

"I don't think so. You'll be joining that excuse for a man soon!"

"Promises, promises!" I shouted as I set the side of the room alight. Justin? Any time now! "All these promises you keep making me, it's a shame you'll never get to carry them through!"

"Need a hand, love?" I heard Justin from the door and I grinned as I dodged Luther's angry flashes of magic. I guess I provoked him enough for today.

"Took your damn time!" I called playfully as another shoot of fire erupted from my open palm, adding to the already burning fire. I leapt across the room onto Justin's back, throwing Luther a wink before Justin carried me through the tunnels faster than the speed of light. An angry roar followed us.

AVA! OUT! IYLA PANTRY! I screamed mentally as we sped through the tunnels.

I vaguely heard her speaking into her radio telling everyone to get the hell out there and back to the safe house.

We climbed the ladder a matter of minutes after leaving Luther in the burning room and I blinked a few times at the sight before me.

Sampson and Devlin were in wolf form, Sampson a sandy blonde and Devlin a dark brown, ripping into any enemy that came near them. I'm sure I saw a vampire heart go flying across the kitchen. A mini tornado swept through the back yard throwing every enemy into the kitchen. I smiled when I met Josh's eye, his hands moving extravagantly above his head as he directed the tunnel of air before disappearing into the darkness.

Iyla crawled out from under the shelves in the pantry and I grabbed her hand, pulling her out. I shot small bolts of electricity at the wolves on our side as obviously, they didn't have their walkie talkies on them. They flew past us into the doorway as Justin and Jerome grabbed us, pulling us into the front yard.

Is everyone out? I sent to Ava.

Yes!

I looked at lyla and we both raised our hands. Shoots of fire left our palms, making contact with the cottage. I heard screams from inside and winced.

That was his vampires then.

We let the fire flow. Beads of sweat formed on my forehead from the heat and the exertion of the magic we were using, I was nearly at the end of the line.

I dropped my hands at the same time as lyla did and staggered back as the cottage erupted in bright orange flames. I watched them licking at the walls, releasing thick black plumes of smoke into the air as my vision blurred and blackness overcame me.

FOUR

Sight For Sore Eyes

I lay in a place that was neither here nor there for a while. It was dark, but I could hear voices. The voices were muffled and I couldn't make out the words. What were they saying?

Who were 'they'?

I fought against the darkness around me, determined to wake and find out what happened to..

Ivy!

My eyes shot open and I stared at the ceiling. Ivy! Was she okay? Did we get her? What happened?

I took a deep breath and slowly pushed myself up, studying the room. The windows were covered with deep red velvet, keeping any light out. The large bed I lay in was soft, the pillows and mattress felt like I was lying on gooey marshmallow. Antique furniture dotted the room, an old vanity table, a large chest of drawers and a wardrobe. All the wood was dark but well worn, the original colour hidden beneath scratches and scuffs from years of use.

I raised a hand to my forehead as I slowly eased myself out of the bed.

Where the hell was I?

The door opened and Rosie walked in with Grace.

"Oh good! You're awake." Rosie grinned and fell on the bed next to me. She had a large cut healing on her forehead and a bit of mud on her cheeks.

"What happened?" I whispered as Grace gave me a mug.

"Drink it." She ordered. "You'll feel better."

I raised the mug to my lips and took a sip. I grimaced. It was disgusting. It tasted like something in between old socks and cat pee.

"We saved Ivy, killed most of Luther's vampires, plus a few of his wolves and burnt down the farmhouse." Rosie checked each item off her fingers happily.

"Ivy? She's okay?"

"She's fine." Grace assured me. "She'd broken some ribs but I managed to fix those. She'll be at the hospital by now with a few cuts and bruises."

I nodded. "What happened to me?"

Grace darted her eyes to Rosie before she explained. "You used too much magic. You and lyla burnt yourselves out. lyla's still asleep. You've been asleep for about three hours, Lily. And if you don't mind me saying, you look like shit."

I gave a grim smile and slowly walked to the vanity table. My hair was a knotted mess, my skin was pale, more so than usual, and huge purple bags hung under my eyes.

"Eurrngghh." I groaned as I ran my fingers through my hair, removing a random twig. "Is there a shower in this place? Wherever we are?"

"Jerome's Coven House. Down the hall." Rosie grabbed a towel from the chair and helped me to the bathroom.

Never underestimate the power of a good shower. Jerome's shower was like a little slice of heaven on earth. I stood under the hot water for ages, letting it wash away all my aches and pains. After towelling off and dressing in my sweatpants, I shoved my hair into a messy bun at the top of my head and re-evaluated myself in the mirror. The bags were gone and my cheeks were pink. How the hell..?

I heard voices from downstairs so I slowly made my way down. I could feel my strength returning slowly, as well as my magic. Thank goodness.

"Lily! You're awake!" My Mum exclaimed as I entered the room. She wrapped me in a big bear hug.

"Yeah. I'm here." I smiled when she released me. I looked around the room. Jerome, Rosie, Justin, Grace, Mum, Ava and..

"Looking for someone?"

I spun to see Josh stood with a sexy grin on his face. I practically launched myself at him and relaxed as his strong arms wrapped around me.

"I'm so glad you're okay." I mumbled into his chest.

"Hey, I'm a big boy. I can look after myself. You're the one that had us all frightened." He said as he kissed the top of my head.

"Naw, I'm alright. Hard as nails, me." I grinned at him.

"You look better." Jerome said as we sat down on one of his big plush sofas.

"It's that magic juice Grace gave me. It tasted like goblin pee but it's obviously done something."

"How would you know what goblin pee tastes like?" Ava asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I wouldn't." I shrugged. "But goblin pee can't taste any better than what that stuff did."

"You're welcome." Grace frowned at me and I laughed.

"Thank you. You're the best." I winked at her and she shook her head. "So what happened?"

"Well, after you and Iyla made the place go boom," Justin cut in, "you both passed out. Ivy was already on her way to Salem so we decided to skip the safe house and come straight here."

"Do we er.." I swallowed. "Know how many we lost?" I finished in a whisper. I didn't want to hear this.

"Three vampires from this coven, two from Elijah's, and one wolf." Jerome answered quietly.

"Who?" I *really* didn't want to hear this.

"Leon, Samuel, Margie, Lizbeth, Nathaniel and Bryan."

Tears welled in my eyes and Josh pulled me close. They didn't deserve that. They didn't deserve to die. Over the past nine months I'd come to know everyone by name, every vampire in both covens and I knew most of the wolves. They were all friends as well as allies.

"No-one was seriously hurt?" I looked at Jerome.

He drew in a breath and looked at me with sympathetic eyes. "Mia was badly hurt. She's back in Boston regenerating. She'll be fine in a few hours. Everyone else has already recovered."

"She's okay though?" I asked, fighting against the tears that were about to well over at the mention of my friend's name.

"She will be. I'll have Elijah call you as soon as she's awake."

"Thank you."

"What are you going to do about Ivy?" Mum asked softly from the armchair.

Good question, Mum. What was I going to do? Did we tell her.. or remove her memory? I didn't want to do either.

"I don't know." I shook my head. "Give everyone a chance to recover, then tomorrow we'll meet at the house. I can't make this decision alone. I at least need ten people to help me decide. It's not just my life."

"Good choice, sweetheart."

FIVE

Too Many Big Choices

"Hey, how are you feeling?" I said into the phone.

"Better." Ivy replied. "They said I should be able to go home in a few days. Just a few cuts and bruises."

"Good." I smiled.

"So, um. You wanna tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"What you are? And how you made.."

"Okay, stop there." I exhaled deeply. "Not today. When you're home, okay? And whatever you do, don't mention any of that to the police when they ask you. Promise?"

"I promise."

**

"I think we should tell her." Ava said, putting her feet on my dining room table. I took a swipe at them and she rolled her eyes before putting them back on the floor.

"It's a tough decision." Dev conceded. "Our lives could be put at risk, but if we don't, it'll be serious magic on a friend. I have to tell you, Lily, not all of my pack are happy with the idea, but they do understand the circumstances."

I ran my fingers through my hair. "I don't want to do either. She's obsessed with the supernatural and she's already seen me do magic.. And experienced Justin's vamp speed. I just don't want to put anyone's life at risk. There's too many dangers of exposure."

"We keep a low profile for a reason." Jerome agreed.

"Hey, do you think she'd date me if she knew I was a vampire?" Justin asked with hopeful eyes.

"Justin!" Ava cried, swatting him round the back of the head. "Probably."

"Wicked. Well, I'm for telling her. She's hot."

I shook my head in disbelief as I tried to keep the laughter in. Sampson wasn't so successful. His head was buried in his arms at the end of the table and his shoulders were shaking.

"Okay. So one for telling her." I glared at Justin. "But we all have to make a decision. If we reveal one race.. We have to reveal the others. I think I'd rather tell her. She's big on Wicca and could be a big help in our spells."

"And she's the most trustworthy person you'll ever meet." Ava added.

"Exactly. Everyone in Salem loves Ivy, so I know the witches have no problem with telling her. But, I need you guys to agree." I looked at Devlin and Jerome.

Jerome tapped his finger against his chin in thought. "Shall we call Elijah in?"

"Good idea."

He stood to make the call and I sighed. We really weren't getting anywhere.

"He'll be here in five minutes."

"I'll get the blood coffee going then." I mumbled, and heaved myself off the chair into the kitchen.

"Need a hand?" Ava asked as I turned the coffee machine on.

"Please. A new brain would come in handy too."

She pulled everything out of my cupboard and located the blood Mum kept stored in the fridge. I know, it's freaky, but when you're best friends with a vampire it's a smart move. Ava wrinkled her nose as she handed me the milk carton.

Mum's definitely resourceful. Gag.

We finished up making the coffee as someone knocked at the front door.

"Come in Elijah!" I yelled as we passed the hall.

"Thank you, darling. Oooh, blood coffee?" He enquired, shutting the door behind him.

"Would I give you anything else?" I replied with a raised eyebrow.

"Of course not."

We sat back at the table and conversed over what to do. We sat there for an hour before Elijah finally came up with a solution we could all agree too.

"I propose we tell her. If she takes it well, then we have her complete a blood oath swearing she won't tell another human. If she takes it bad, then Louise will be there to remove her memory."

"That sounds fair." I nodded. "But isn't a blood oath a little extreme?"

"I don't think so." Sampson said. "Tell her the ins and outs and she'll probably agree. We need to keep ourselves safe, Lily. The only reason she's finding out is because of Luther. If he hadn't kidnapped her then she'd never know."

"I suppose." I sighed. "I guess we tell her when she's home then."

SIX

Revelations

I really hated school. Gossip, gossip, gossip. That's all I heard. Gossip that Ivy was found, gossip about the random farmhouse that made the national news because it randomly burnt down, gossip about Felicity's disappearance. Obviously she didn't disappear, but hey.

The bright side is it was only a month until Prom, so despite what was going on everyone was more hyped up about that.

Ivy returned to school almost immediately, much to everyone's surprise. Every humans surprise anyway.

She sighed as she eased herself into a plastic cafeteria chair. "I'm so glad to be back. I never thought I'd say that, but hey!" She grinned at us.

"It's good to have you back!" Shauna cried, wrapping an arm around her shoulders and giving it a quick squeeze. "We can't begin to imagine what you went through."

"Uh, yeah." Ivy glanced at me quickly. "It was horrible. I don't want to talk about it though, please?"

"Sure thing." Ava chimed in happily. "This Saturday we should start our dress shopping, agreed?"

She looked so excited. How could anyone say no to her?

"It's a plan." I smile back at her.

**

We were sat in my front room. Me, Ava, Ivy, Justin, Sampson and Josh. It was time to tell Ivy the truth about us. Louise was in the garden with Mum so no suspicion arose.

"So." Ivy looked at us all expectantly from the chair by the fire. "You're finally gonna explain how you got me out of that hell-hole?"

"Yeah." Ava replied, biting her thumb anxiously.

I ran my fingers through my dark curls and looked at her. "You need to keep an open mind, Ives, because it's gonna sound mental."

"Crazy-mental or lock-you-up-mental?" She raised a brow.

"Um, to you, probably crazy-mental. But definitely lock-you-up-mental to some."

"Okay." She frowned at me and crossed her arms across her chest. Lets get to it then.

"I'm a witch." I eyed her carefully for her reaction. Her eyebrows shot up.

"Like a wicca witch?"

"Like a real-live, fire wielding witch."

"Oookay. And Ava?"

"Water witch." Ava said with a small smile.

Ivy looked to Josh. "Air witch." He replied to her questioning gaze.

"Werewolf." Sampson said with a wink when her gaze turns to him.

"I'm a vampire, darling." Justin grinned at her in his cheeky way.

"Okay." Ivy rubs her temples and sits back on the chair. "You're right, that is kinda lock-you-up-mental. But for some weird damn reason, I think I believe you."

"Well, that's a good thing. Because if you didn't we'd have to wipe your memory of this conversation and your rescue." Josh said perching on the arm of the sofa next to me.

"Holy.. You're actually really serious, aren't you?" Ivy looked at us, eyes wide and mouth gaping.

I sighed and held my hand out, palm up. I willed a small flame into my palm. I felt the burning travel down my arm until a small, orange flame danced in my hand.

"Right now you're amazed, surprised and a little bit disbelieving." I told her wide eyed stare.

"How do you?" She looked up at me.

"Empath." I smirked.

Ava put her hand out next to mine and willed a small icicle to appear and twirled it between her fingers before handing it to Ivy.

"Touch it. It's real ice." She nodded and Ivy slowly reached out for it, moving it in front of her face before handing it back to Ava.

"If that's a practical joke, it's a damn good one. But somehow I don't think it is." Ivy shook her head and turned to Justin.

"You're an actual vampire?"

He gave her a flash of his fangs and bowed. "At your service, ma'am."

She narrowed her eyes. "So you're not actually seventeen, are you?"

"Um, no. Somewhere around the region of one hundred and fifty, actually."

"Great." She turned to Sampson. "Can I see?"

"Probably better if we take this into the garden, Lily?" Sampson asked.

"Yeah, I'd rather not have a wolf in my front room if you don't mind." I smirked.

We all filed out into the garden, me and Ava throwing Louise and Mum discreet winks to say it was going well. We went to the end of the yard, standing under the maple tree twenty feet from Sampson.

He stood tall, pulled off his shirt and stopped. I watched in fascination as the air shimmered around him, his body crouched over and sandy fur sprouted from his skin. I'd never actually seen Sampson change before.

Where Sampson stood was now a large sandy blonde wolf. Everyone else was looking at him hesitantly, hey, the only time we'd seen him in his wolf form he was tearing apart a vampire or two.

I stepped forward, shaking off Josh's hand on my arm and moved over to Sampson. I crouched in front of him and grinned.

"Hey, boy." I said sarcastically.

He nudged my hand with his muzzle and I raised my hand, scratching him behind the ears. That was pretty weird. I bit my lip to stop the bubble of laughter that was about to surface and waved the others over. Surprisingly, Ivy was the first to arrive and knelt next to me, scratching Sampson the same way I did.

"This stuff is actually real." She breathed quietly.

"Yeah." I cocked my head to the side. "It was pretty surreal to me when I found out, too."

"You mean, you didn't always know?"

"No. I didn't find out until we did that power raising spell before Homecoming, remember?" She nodded. "Since then I've had crazy stuff happening. I've got more powers than I know what to do with." I sighed.

We moved away from Sampson and sat on the grass under the warm May sun.

"Obviously, I can control fire. I can control lightening and shoot balls of lava. Apparently they're all a form of energy. I dunno." I shrugged. "I can dream walk, which is how I knew where you were."

"You mean, that dream where you came was actually you?" She gasped.

"Yeah. I didn't know until after though. But yeah, we actually had a conversation." I nodded. "I'm an empath, I can feel what others are feeling. And me and Ava have a mental connection, we can talk in our minds."

As soon as I said that, I heard Ava's voice. *I hope she's taking it okay.*

Seems to be, yeah. I'm explaining. Come over. I replied.

"Did you just talk then?" She looked between us.

"Yeah. She wanted to know how you were taking it and I told her to come over. That's not the end of it unfortunately."

Ava, Justin, Josh and Sampson came back over, Sampson still in his wolf form.

"Oi, wolf-man, shift back!" I called to him. He nodded his head -which looked really strange on a wolf- and within seconds human Sampson was back.

"Pretty cool, huh?" He winked at Ivy again as he sat down. Justin had claimed the spot next to Ivy, Josh next to me and Ava and Sampson in between.

"What else is there?"

"That man that captured you.." Ava started then swallowed.

"He's a witch hunter." Josh finished matter-of-factly. "He's been after us for centuries. He steals our souls when we die and gets more powerful. He hates us, but wants our powers. Work that out." He shrugged one shoulder.

"My Dad didn't die of a heart attack, Ivy. Henry Luther, the man that captured you, killed him. You know the damage that happened to the old church? Yeah.. That was kinda us." Josh took my hand and squeezed it. I was thankful for his never-ending support. "We had a big fight there. All magic. My Dad died to save me."

"What a bastard!" Ivy exploded. "And why did he capture me? I'm a human!"

"Because of us." I whispered. "He wanted me. He sent me a ransom note. Your life for mine. I'm sorry."

"Don't you dare be sorry!" She wrapped her arms around me. "It's not your fault. Besides, he lost. You got out alive."

"Yeah. Justin's vampire speed comes in useful sometimes. He came back for me for our dramatic getaway." I laughed.

"Lily, you held your own in there, love." Justin reassured me, leaning over Ivy to pat my knee.

"Yeah, but it's not enough, Jus." I shook my head as Ivy released me. "Anyway, we're not the only ones."

"What?" Ivy said.

"Maya, Carson and Grace are all witches." Ava told her. "Robbie's a wolf, so is Janey and Felicity was too."

"Where is Felicity?"

Sampson coughed. "Under the vampire coven house in a cell. She was working for Luther."

Ivy's mouth went into an 'o' shape. "There's more vampires too?" She looked at Justin.

"Yes, love. There's about fifty in my coven, and there's one in Boston of just over one hundred. They're the largest coven in Massachusetts, and we're very lucky to have them onside."

We all nodded in agreement.

Somehow though, I couldn't help but think that luck wouldn't be enough.

SEVEN

Prom

The next month flew by. Literally. Ivy was introduced to all the witches, a few of the vampires and most of the wolves. The tension between her and Justin seemed to have increased tenfold since the day she found out he was a vampire so it was no surprise when she announced they were going to Prom together.

Mum and Rosie came into my room just as I was pulling out the white dress I'd worn for the Annual Supernatural Ball. We didn't really have the money to buy another dress.

"Put that away." Rosie demanded, tearing it from my hands and hung it back in my closet.

"What?" I was bewildered, what were they playing at?

Mum placed a large box on my bed and opened the lid. "Your prom dress, madame." She lifted a silver gown from the box. It was gorgeous. The sweetheart neckline was beaded, so was the halter-neck strap. It was slim, a simple beaded rose pulling the skirt together at one side.

"How..?"

"Grandma Bea." Rosie grinned. "She said she wanted to send her baby witch a dress now 'she's all growned up.'"

"Grandma Bea knows about us?" I raised my eyebrows.

"Of course." Mum said. "Let's get you dressed, shall we?"

**

I stood on the front porch waiting for everyone to arrive in two limos, Mum snapping away with her camera. Grandma Bea had sent along a pair of strappy black heels and a black clutch to go with the dress, and I felt like a million dollars. I hadn't seen Grandma Bea for years and I missed her so much. I wondered if Mum would agree to a little trip this summer?

My musings were interrupted by the view of two limos pulling up the drive. I suddenly felt really nervous. I shook my head in an attempt to dispel those silly thoughts. The limos stopped and my heart fluttered when Josh stepped out in a full blown tux. He was even wearing a bow tie! His blonde hair hung in his eyes, tamed but still wild. He broke into a huge smile when he saw me and I couldn't help but beam back. He approached the steps as everyone else filed out of the cars for Mum's famous photography parade.

"You're beautiful." Josh said quietly as he took my hand.

"You don't scrub up so bad either." I grinned and he dipped his head in and kissed me, slowly and softly. I heard Mum's camera clicking next to me and I turned my head to look at her. She shrugged and winked before bounding down the steps towards everyone else.

Apparently my Mum was the only Mum in the world who didn't have an aversion to taking photos of her youngest daughter kissing her boyfriend. Go figure.

Josh held his hand out to me and gathering my skirt with one hand, I allowed him to escort me down the steps. There was something about my four hundred year old house and yards that made it the perfect setting for pictures. The rose bushes and various other plants Mum planted over the last few months were in full bloom, brightening up what was once a desolate, pathetic excuse for a front yard.

Mum commenced with her enthusiastic clicking, but this time we were all here, so she had a lot more pictures to take.

"Mu-um, can we go now?" I whined after standing for half an hour, posing.

"I want one more picture of everyone!" She called back, waving the guys over. How she imagined she could get a good shot of our whole crew, I'll never know, but apparently it was possible.

We smiled for one last time before I let out a sigh of relief and bolted to the limo, ready to head to the hotel.

The walkway to the Salem Hotel was lined with white climbing roses on trellis' intertwined with white fairy lights. It was magical. Not literally, of course. But whatever, you get it.

We posed for our school couple pictures at the door before walking into the makeshift ballroom. More fairy lights adorned the walls, casting a pale glow across the circular tables and dance floor.

There was a day where I thought we'd never get to go to Prom. Ava said in an awed tone.

Honestly, neither did I. But after seeing this I'm determined we'll be here next year. I shot her a grin as we sat at our table and she laughed.

We all ate our way through the three course meal, chattering and laughing. It was nice to be so carefree, like a normal person would be at Prom. Of course, I couldn't completely banish the memory of Maya's stabbing at Homecoming. By the way her eyes occasionally darted across the room, neither could she.

But this time there was a big difference. We could all use our magic, and there was more than just inexperienced witches in the room.

The DJ started the music and Ava grabbed my hand excitedly, pulling me towards the dance floor, meeting Grace halfway there. I was reminded of Rosie's birthday and our drunken dancing. Thankfully there was no alcohol available tonight, and my boyfriend was safely mine.

Flo Rida's Wild Ones was blasting out the speakers and we danced until I thought we'd drop.

"You're as wild as they come, love." Justin winked as he passed me in a blur. I laughed at his brazenness.

Watch it Vamp, there's a lot of humans here. Don't make me tell Jerome!

"I'm shaking!" He shouted over the music and I laughed again, enjoying the time with my best friends, allies and self proclaimed family. Because despite what was thrown at us, we always came through on the other side.

EIGHT

Ivy's First Spell

The darkness was suffocating, pulling me down. I tried to wriggle my toes, lift my hands and kick out but I was paralysed. I fluttered my eyelids in a desperate attempt to open my eyes but they were glued shut. My breathing began to come in short, harsh pants as I attempted to thrash my body around to break the invisible bonds that were holding me.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

I tried to move again, harder, faster, but it was no use. I couldn't move and the thumping was getting louder.. and louder.. and louder..

I opened my eyes on my window seat, my head pressed against the glass, drenched in a cold sweat. My book was still in my hands. Darkness had fallen outside and I could see the faint outlines of the stars.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

I stretched my aching legs from the seat and moved to my door, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes.

"What?" I demanded when I opened it and saw Rosie stood with her hands on her hips and a frown on her beautiful face.

"Were you asleep?"

"Yes. I fell asleep when I was reading. Why?" I ran my sleeve across my forehead, hoping to soak up some of the sweat from my nightmare.

"Everyone's downstairs waiting for you. It's time for the power-raising spell."

Of course. Ivy's first spell with the witches. How could I forget that?

"All right. Give me a minute." I turned back into my room and quickly changed, wanting to get out of the sticky clothes. I ran a brush through my hair and made my way downstairs.

I walked through into the yard which had been set up for the spell. The night was warm, almost too warm. Ava shot me a worried look as I sat between her and my cousin, lyla.

You okay?

I'm fine. I assured her. *Just a nightmare.* I sent a few images of it to her through our connection and turned to Ivy who was radiating excitement so strong it was seeping through my protective barriers.

"Imagine an impenetrable steel wall behind the one you have now." lyla whispered in my ear with a sympathetic smile.

"Thanks." I whispered back and closed my eyes so I could construct the wall. Immediately her excitement was blocked out. Phew. Might keep that wall up.

We lit the elemental candles, asked for the gods and goddess' blessing and clasped hands, ready to begin the spell. Ivy was practically bouncing by now.

"Hear now the words of witches
The secrets hid in the night
The oldest of goddess invoked here
The great work of magic is might
In the night and in this hour
We call upon the ancient power
O' Great Goddess Hecate
Hear my plea
Release my power unto me
Bring the power within the hour
So mote it be
O' Great Goddess Hecate
Blessed be, blessed be."

As it had so many times before, the wind picked up, circling us. The ground below picked up in a gentle rumble, the candles flared and the bowl of the water in the centre began to bubble in response.

I relaxed and allowed the power to fill me. The energy spread through my blood like wildfire, warm but cold at the same time. I was immediately filled with calm, the same comfort I felt whenever we performed this spell. This time though, something felt different. There was more energy, more than I was used to. It filled me until I was bursting with power. My shoulder began to tingle, the way it did when my magic was about to be dispelled. No, no, no! If it shot out now lyla would be immune but everyone else would feel a helluva shock. I gritted my teeth and battled against the feeling until gradually the elements died down.

"Blessed be." Everyone whispered as Iyla extinguished the flames with a wave of her hand. As soon as the candles were out I clambered up and ran a few feet down the yard, aware of everyone's eyes on me. The tingle I was fighting was winning, it was halfway to my elbow.

"Let it go." Ava whispered in my ear. She must have followed me. "The tree."

I turned towards an old, dead tree in the yard and raised my arm, focused on a large branch. Before I could control it, a blinding flash of white light erupted from my fingertips and there was a deafening crack. I watched the branch fall to the ground with a clunk before sinking down onto the grass, my hands in my hair.

"What happened?" Rosie cried as she knelt in front of me.

"The power. There was too much." I looked up at her. "I couldn't handle it. It's never happened before."

She wrapped her arms around me and I was never so glad for my sister than in that moment.

She released me and helped me stand on shaky legs. Ava, Iyla, Josh, Carson, Maya, Grace and Ivy followed us into the front room. Rosie and Ava helped me onto the sofa and I glanced at Josh. His face was void of any blood and worry was evident in his gaze. I wanted nothing more than to fall into his arms.

Grace stood in front of me, her hands out. "Hands."

"I'm not hurt, Grace." I protested.

"Hands." She demanded with a ferocity I'd never heard before. I immediately placed my hands in hers. She closed her eyes and I felt her healing power flow over me, giving me back some of the strength I'd apparently lost. Magic was flowing through my veins, but I felt shaky.

"Thank you." I smiled up at her when she stepped away.

"For you, any time." She half-smiled back.

"What was that?" Ivy asked from the corner, her arms wrapped around her waist.

"A normal day in the life of Lily Mauve." I replied with a sad smile. Why couldn't my life be easy?

"That was Lily being given too much power for her body to handle." Iyla cut in. "It's never happened before." She bit her thumbnail anxiously and I knew she'd head home and scour her witching books for an explanation.

"Do you think..?" Carson said quietly.

"Think what?" Josh asked him.

"That it's another power coming. Or her third moon."

I shot him a deadly look. "It better bloody not be. I've got more than my fair share, thank you very much."

He held his hands up in defence. "Hey, I was just saying."

"Well don't." I snapped back. I don't want another damn power!

Josh sat next to me on the sofa and pulled me into him, enveloping me in his arms. I took a deep breath and relaxed into his chest.

"Third moon?" Ivy's brow was furrowed in confusion.

"Have you heard of a triple goddess, Ives?" Maya asked her, carrying in a tray of lemonade from the kitchen. Everyone pretty much lived at my house so I wasn't surprised.

"Yeah." She nodded in response.

"Well, Lily's Grandma made a prophecy when Celia was pregnant with her that one would be born with the power to defeat the witch hunter, and she would be a goddess among people." Maya stated matter-of-factly.

"Lily was born with a circular birthmark at the top of her neck, hidden by her hair." Rosie added.

"And a few months ago she got another mark, a crescent moon next to it. She's destined for great power and while we sit around with our average gifts hers don't seem to stop coming." Ava finished fondly, squeezing my shoulder from the back of the sofa.

"Trust me." I grumbled. "You can have them."

"But that's good, right?" Ivy looked at me. "That you'll have the power to defeat him?"

"Well, she's come up against him twice and survived." Josh chuckled.

"Hey!" I protested. "I wasn't alone."

"The second time you were." Grace pointed out. "You took him on one on one and still walked away without so much as a scratch."

"I suppose." I sighed. I knew I wouldn't win this argument. When will they see that just because I have these fancy birthmarks that pop up randomly I'm not a goddess in the making? A leader, yes. A goddess, in the same league as Hecate? No.

NINE

Summer Break

"Hello?" I answered the phone.

"Lily, darling!" Grandma Bea's voice sang down the line to me.

"Grandma Bea!"

"How are you?"

"I'm fine, you?" I'd never been so happy to speak to my Grandma.

"Still alive and kicking, dear." She chuckled. "Did you like the dress?"

"Oh it was amazing, thank you so much! I meant to call you but.."

"You've been busy, don't worry Lily Lou, your mother has been keeping me up to date with everything."

I frowned. "Yeah, how do you know about us, anyway?"

"That's a story for another day, dear. I was calling and hoping to catch your mother. Is she around?"

"No, she's out with her camera somewhere or another."

She chuckled again. "Typical Celia. I'll pass the message through you then. I wanted to invite you three girls down to Florida for a week this summer. I'm missing my daughter and granddaughters."

A week in Florida with Grandma Bea? "Count me in, Grandma Bea!"

"Somehow I knew you'd say that, dear. Celia was telling me you have a boyfriend, is he one of you?"

I flushed. Typical Grandma Bea, always in it for the gossip. You wouldn't believe she was knocking on seventy. "Yes, Grandma I do. He's one of us. His sister is my best friend."

"Ah, the one with the connection with you?"

"Yes, that's her, Ava."

"Invite them too, Lily. The more the merrier. This big old house is empty and I could do with some youngsters running around for a while."

"Okay, Grandma Bea. I'll talk to Mum and everyone later and get her to give you a call."

"Okay, darling. Be good. I love you."

"I'm always good, Grandma!" I exclaimed. "Love you too."

She clicked off the phone and I put it back on the hook.

Mum came strolling in the house half an hour later where I was cleaning the kitchen.

"Lily, cleaning? Are you ill?" She gasped.

"No, Mum, don't be silly." I grinned. "Grandma Bea phoned earlier. She wants us to go down for a week. She says she misses us."

"Ah, I see." She smiled knowingly. "And you thought that if you cleaned I'd be more inclined to go down and see my dear old mother."

"Well.." I winked at her.

"I think it's a lovely idea, Lily. We could all do with a break, I think." She sighed slightly and smiled.

"She invited Josh and Ava too. Can they come?" I asked her hopefully.

"As long as Jack and Hannah say it's okay, I don't see a problem if Grandma Bea is okay with it."

"Yes!" I ran to her and kissed her cheek. "You're the best, Mum."

"You always say that when you get your way!" She called after me as I grabbed my keys from the hallway.

"Bye, Mum!"

**

"Hello, dear." Hannah greeted me as I strolled into Ava's kitchen.

"Hey, Hannah. How are you?" I smiled as I helped myself to an OJ.

"As good as always, Lily. You?"

"I'm fantastic." I grinned. "Hannah..?"

"Yes, dear?"

"I spoke to my Grandma Bea earlier and she's asked us to go down to Florida for a week. She invited Josh and Ava too, and Mum said it was okay as long as you agreed. Would that be okay?"

She thought for a moment. "I don't see why not, Lily. The gods only know you kids could use a break from Salem for a while."

I squealed and gave her a one-armed hug. "Hannah you're the best."

"You kids always say that when you get your way."

"You know," I mused as I left the kitchen. "Mum just said the exact same thing to me." I heard her laughter as I ran up the stairs.

Ava's door was open and I could hear her laughing on the phone. I waved and put my drink down before flopping on the bed.

"I've gotta go, Lily's here. . Yeah, okay. . Sure. . You too. . Bye." She hung up and looked at my grinning face.

"Why are you so happy?" She asked.

"Read my mind."

I waited for a minute as she listened to my conversation with Grandma Bea and then her Mum. She bounced on the bed and screamed in excitement.

"Florida? Are you serious?" She exclaimed.

"Yes! Grandma Bea has a big house and she owns a private strip of the beach. We went there a couple of years ago, it's sooo amazing!"

"Private beach? I'm definitely there!" She shouted in excitement. We had a girly, arm flapping giggly moment.

"What on earth are you doing, Ava?" Josh strolled casually into her room and grinned at me.

"Haven't you heard of knocking?" Ava frowned.

"Yes, but your door was wide open and I heard the two of you screaming like banshees over something. Plus, I wanted to see my girl." He sat down next to me and kissed my head.

"We're going to Florida!" I said.

"Florida?"

"Lily's Grandma Bea owns a place on the beach and she's invited us to stay for a bit!" Ava bounced on the bed again.

"How long are you going for?" Josh turned to me.

"Just a week." I shrugged, glancing at Ava who was grinning wickedly. We wouldn't tell him... yet.

"So I won't see you for a week or so?" He frowned.

I looked down and smiled before turning back to him. "Yes you will."

"What?"

"Grandma Bea invited you too, silly! Like I could go away for that long and leave you here." I nudged his shoulder playfully and he laughed.

"Good, because otherwise I'd have to follow you there. When are we going?"
"I don't know. Mum's gonna ring her later and sort it out. Hopefully soon."

TEN.

Can We Go Yet?

"What's up? I asked Ava as she packed her bikinis into her suitcase.

"I'm just thinking."

"About what?"

She didn't answer.

"You have five seconds or I'm gonna search you." I warned.

"Go ahead." She said quietly, her head bent over.

Okay then. I entered her mind and read what she was thinking with a gasp.

"You're breaking up with Carson?"

She shrugged. "I don't know, Lily. It just doesn't feel the same anymore. She folded a towel before placing it down carefully.

"Why not?" I asked softly.

"I don't know. It just doesn't. There's no spark there anymore." She sighed and looked to me. "Not like there is with you and Josh. I want that, Lily. I want what you and Josh have."

"Oh Ava." I jumped off her bed and gave her a side hug. "What are you going to do?"

"Break up with him, I guess. I just have a feeling everything is about to change. In a good way!" She quickly added, seeing my horrified expression.

"Well, thank the gods for that." I laughed. "I can't take anymore bad changes. But, Ava.. Do what you need to. I want to see you happy."

"I know you do. You're the best." She hugged me tighter.

"I know." I giggled.

**

"Yellow?" I snatched my phone from the side.

"Isn't it supposed to be hello?" Jerome's amused voice said to me.

"Yeah but I thought I'd change things up a bit, ya no, keep it interesting."

"Nothing is ever boring with you around, Lily."

"Well, duh." I rolled my eyes even though he couldn't see. "To what do I owe the honour of this phone call, oh great Master Vampire?"

"You're going on holiday."

"Cleverly observed, your Lordship."

"And what about a leader for the groups in Salem?"

Hmm, I hadn't thought of that. "You can do it."

"I can, can I?" He sounded amused again.

"Of course you can. You know all the plans, Jer. There's enough witches left in town. Work with lyla and Grace if you need to."

"As you wish."

"Has Felicity said anything yet?"

"Not a thing."

"Okay." I frowned. "Was that everything?"

"It was."

"Good, because I need to pack for my holiday."

"Have fun, Lily. Stay safe."

"I always do."

"To what?"

"Both." I chuckled. "Bye Jerome!"

"Goodbye, Lily."

I chucked my phone on the bed, still chuckling to myself. Fun I can do, yes.. Staying safe.. Well, that depends on your definition of the word. He he he.

ELEVEN.

Florida

We stepped out of the plane in Florida. We were surrounded by bright blue, cloudless skies and hit by a wave of heat. Whoosh.

The heat in Florida was nothing like it was in Massachusetts. Massachusetts was a sticky warmth, but Florida was a dry hotness. I was glad I changed into shorts on the plane, I'll tell you.

Josh reached over and took my hand as I ran my fingers through my hair, pushing it back from my face.

"I'm so excited!" Ava clapped her hands as we waited for our bags to appear on the carousel. Apparently a week in Florida was enough to override her bad feelings about actually ending things with Carson. Thankfully Josh didn't give her a hard time.

"Me too! I can't wait to see Grandma Bea." I smiled at the thought. It'd been too long since we saw her.

We grabbed our bags and made our way through the crowds following Mum and Rosie. I scanned the heads of people around until I saw a woman of Mum's height, her salt and pepper hair curled on her head in that typical grandma style, with bright green eyes and a smile on her face.

"Grandma Bea!" I shouted across the airport. I charged past Mum, lugging my suitcase behind me and all but jumped into her outstretched arms. I was immediately encased in her strong scent of cinnamon and cookies. Mm, she'd been baking.

"Well if it isn't my little Lily Flower." She proclaimed loudly, stepping back and holding me at arms length. I blushed slightly under her scrutiny. "Not so little anymore. You've grown into a real beauty, haven't you?" She chuckled me under the chin and kissed my cheek before stepping to the side to greet Rosie and Mum.

"Grandma!" Rosie grabbed her in a hug and suffered the same scrutiny I did.

"Beautiful." Grandma Bea said to herself before turning to Mum who had tears shining in her eyes. I knew how much she missed having Grandma Bea around, especially since Dad died. Grandma Bea wrapped her arms around Mum, stroking her hair and rocking her slightly as she cried into her shoulder.

"I'll have no more of that, Celia." Grandma Bea told her after a few moments, tapping her nose.

"Oh, Mother." Mum said, rolling her eyes as she wiped her tears. Me and Rosie shared a look and giggled at Mum acting like a teenager. Grandma Bea winked at us and turned to Ava.

"You must be Ava." She smiled widely and beckoned her for a hug. Ava accepted gladly.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Mrs Vermont."

"Mrs Vermont!" Grandma Bea cried incredulously. "Nonsense, child, call me Grandma Bea. Everyone does." She winked and Ava giggled.

"Okay."

We all froze as Grandma Bea turned her eyes to Josh and approached him. She cupped his chin, turning his head left to right, studying him.

"Grandma.." I groaned.

"Shush, Lily." She dismissed me with a wave of her free hand, eyes still on Josh. He looks so confused it was all I could do not to giggle like Mum, Ava and Rosie already were.

"I'm just making sure he's good enough for my Lily Flower." Grandma Bea informed me. I clapped my hand to my forehead, shook my head and leaned into Mum.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. She did the same thing to your father when I first brought him home." She reassured me.

Oh, great. Josh, I hope you're ready for the Grandma Bea inquisition.

"Handsome young fellow, aren't you, dear?" Grandma asked him.

"Uh..I guess so."

"Good choice, Lily." She winked to me before turning back to my boyfriend. "Well come along, offer an old woman your arm and let's get to know each other."

She hooked her arm through Josh's and lead him towards the exit. I glanced at Rosie who had her eyebrows raised. I shrugged and picked my bag back up before following them.

We travelled in two cars, Mum, Rosie and Ava in one following me, Grandma Bea and Josh.

"Uh, Grandma?"

"Yes dear?"

"Are you sure you're okay to drive?"

"Lily Louise! I'm old, not blind, and I'll thank you to remember it." She scowled at me.

"Okay, okay. Just asking." I grinned and she tapped my knee.

"Cheeky little witch. Are you going to be like this the whole time?"

"Dunno. Depends if you give me reason to."

Josh sat in the back chuckling at us. I turned to him from the front seat and shrugged.

Grandma Bea twisted and turned through the streets, interrogating Josh the whole way until we approached her residential area. Hightail Avenue was one of the more expensive places in the area and that was the exact reason Grandma lived here. We drove down the street, Grandma Bea enjoying the look of shock on Josh's face.

Holy hell, Lily! You never told me Grandma Bea was rich! Ava shouted in my head.

I laughed out loud. *Was the private beach not enough for you?*

I am sooo gonna enjoy this summer. She replied excitedly.

I laughed out loud again and Grandma Bea frowned over at me.

"She's talking to Ava." Josh informed her with another chuckle.

"Oh dear." She sighed as she pulled up to the gates. "Has no-one ever told them that's rude in company?"

"Yeah." Josh nodded. "Jerome does all the time, but they still do it anyway."

"Who is Jerome?" She unwound the window and pressed a code into the pad, resulting in the gates slowly swinging open.

"Master vampire of the Salem coven, Grandma." I replied.

We navigated the curving driveway, passed by lines of trees and bushes until the house came into view. Grandma Bea's house was huge. She had seven bedrooms, three or four bathrooms, a living room, dining room, large study/ library, modern kitchen and a conservatory. Not to mention the yard that opens onto her own stretch of private beach. Yep, Grandma Bea had it made. Of course, when Grandpa Bert was alive he was the towns only attorney so he raked in the cash, setting Grandma Bea up for life and then some. I climbed out the car and took a breath of the sea air that always swirled the property and grinned. Grandma Bea and Josh followed suit climbing from the car, with Grandma moving to the front door.

"What about the bags?" Josh asked, taking my hand.

"Harrison will collect those." She replied as the door opened, revealing a tall man in his fifties. His graying hair was swept back from his face and he stood tall in a white shirt and black trousers.

"Harrison?" I called after her, hearing Mum's car pull up.

"My hired help." She called back, waving after us to follow them.

"Hired help, of course." I mumbled to no-one in particular. Josh laughed and kissed my head.

"He can't possibly do it by himself, Grandma Bea." I protested.

"Harrison, this is my granddaughter, Lily, and her boyfriend Josh." She introduced us.

"Pleasure to meet you both." Harrison fixed us with his black eyes and bowed slightly.

When we reached the top step I suddenly realised how he would be able to carry everything without strain in his fifties.

"Um, Grandma?" I asked cautiously.

"Yes, dear?"

"Is there any particular reason your butler is a vampire?" I cocked my head to the side as she laughed.

"Lily, this whole street is a vampire coven."

"Oh." Now she's got me. Clearly I needed to work on recognizing other supernaturals from a distance. I followed her into the living room, still holding Josh's hand. I heard Mum greet the vampire butler and introduce him to Rosie and Ava. I sank down onto one of the plush cream sofas and kicked off my shoes.

"Does that bother you?" Grandma Bea asked as the others made themselves at home.

I snorted. "Grandma, I roll with vampires and werewolves daily. My life is like Harry Potter mixed with Twilight."

"Well then. You shouldn't be surprised."

"Grandma.. It's one thing for a witch to hang out with vampires but a bit different when you're an old human lady." Rosie pointed out.

Grandma Bea scoffed and didn't answer her, instead turning to Mum. "Go and pop the kettle on, love."

Mum got up, knowing the request was a dismissal and disappeared into the kitchen.

"You don't think the only reason I asked you down here was for a holiday, do you?" Grandma Bea raised her eyebrows.

"Gee, thanks Grandma. We love you too." Rosie huffed, folding her arms across her chest.

"Oh don't be so melodramatic, Rose Marie. You're surrounded by vampires. They live here for a reason, as do I. They want to help you."

"I thought the whole point of this was to get away from that shit not come and do more... Business transactions?" I said heatedly.

"Lily Louise Mauve, your language!" Grandma Bea chastised me. "Yes, you're here to get away but that doesn't mean you can't make new alliances while you're here."

"Whatever." I leant back and Josh wrapped an arm around me.

"Oh I don't know what to do with you, Lily. How does anyone listen to you as their leader with that attitude?" She shook her head.

"Hey..!" I started to protest until I caught a glimmer of amusement in her eyes. "Oh, horrible old woman!" I huffed fondly.

"You love me really."

"Yes, Grandma Bea, and that's the problem." I scowled at her.

She just blew me a kiss and winked, much to everyone's amusement. Okay, so let's get this clear. Even though Grandma Bea is the definition of the phrase 'rich bitch' she's the most down to earth person on this planet, and she's also the coolest Grandma like, ever. She's nearly seventy but acts like she's twenty something, and somehow, it works. She can banter in a way that even Carson couldn't compete with. Hmm.. Carson..

Ava, you okay?

Yeah, I guess. I feel better being there though.

"I have two people for you to meet tonight. They're staying down the road with a friend of mine. Valerie is a sweetheart." Grandma thanked Mum for the tea and sat on the sofa opposite to us.

"Who?" Rosie asked.

"Jayden and Jasmine."

"Who are they?" Ava questioned, the first words she'd spoken aloud since we entered Grandma Bea's house.

"Jayden is the same age as you kids, about to go into his senior year and Jasmine, his sister, is a year younger."

"That's really cool, Grandma, but why are we meeting them?" I interjected. May as well get to the point.

"Because, Lily," she turned to me, her eyes twinkling, "they're witches."

"Witches?" I cried loudly. "Are you serious?"

"Of course I am, child."

"I didn't know there was any besides us in Salem." Josh whispered.

"There's none besides you in Salem and Jasmine and Jayden."

"No." I whispered. It was one thing to know that you could be the last witches but to find out you definitely are? "Oh gods." For want of a better word. The words running through my mind were not something I could say in front of my dear, sweet grandmother.

"Yes." She answered solemnly.

"Grandma?" Rosie said suspiciously. "How is it, that a human like you, is living amongst vampires and two teenage witches?"

"That, my darling Rose Petal, is a story for another time. You should get settled in. Lily and Ava I hope you don't mind sharing. I like to keep some rooms free."

"Of course not but.." I began but was interrupted by her.

"It's a story for another time. Off you go."

That was us dismissed, then.

TWELVE

Two New Witches

I looked around my shared room with Ava after I finished unpacking. Our room was at the back of the house providing a breathtaking view of Grandma Bea's private beach. It was still early afternoon and the sun was beating down hard. I could feel the warmth through the window.

"Hey Ava?" I turned as she walked out of our bathroom we shared with Rosie.

"Mm?"

"Wanna go down to the beach?"

She looked up at me and grinned. "Let's go!"

In no time we were changed into our bikinis, had towels over our shoulders and big, dark sunglasses resting on our heads. We made our way through the kitchen to the patio where Mum and Grandma Bea were catching up, drinking iced tea.

"Off to the beach?" Mum asked as we stepped out of the sliding doors.

"Yeah." Ava nodded.

"Make sure you stay on the strip. It's protected." Grandma Bea ordered us. "Your father cast some spells when me and your Grandpa Bert moved in here."

"Sure Grandma, no problem." I gave them both a kiss on the cheek and we hopped down off the patio and trudged across the yard.

I took a deep breath of the salty sea air as we stepped onto the golden sand. Nothing was better than the feeling of sand between my toes. I slid my glasses down and searched for a place to lie down. Not that we were spoilt for choice, 'the strip', as Grandma Bea had dubbed the mile long private beach, was deserted. We made our way over to a pile of rocks and lay out our towels before relaxing back on them.

I cant even begin to describe how nice it was to just lie on the beach next to my best friend, listening to the waves crawling along the shore and the gulls flying overhead. I felt almost normal. As we lay there in silence I let my mind clear of everything. There was no magic, no vampires, no wolves and no looming battle.

There was just pure bliss. I closed my eyes, listening to the sounds of the beach and faded away, only waking slightly to roll over. Hey, even in her sleep a girls gotta keep her tan even.

I woke completely to the feel of soft lips against mine and Josh's scent enveloping me.

"Mm, hello." I said quietly when he sat next to me on the sand, noting he was just wearing a pair of shorts. Oh, yum.

"Hello. You looked so peaceful I didn't want to wake you." He tucked some hair behind my ear as I propped myself up on my elbows. "Grandma Bea said to wake you for dinner. Jayden and Jasmine will be here soon."

"Oh okay." I rolled over and poked Ava in the side.

"Wha.. What?!" She sat up and lifted her glasses from her eyes.

"We need to get ready for dinner. And I need to get this sand out of my hair."

"Oh. Okay."

We gathered our towels up and as we made our way back to the house Ava sent me a message.

I wonder if Jayden is hot.

I bit my lip and choked back some laughter. *Maybe. You'll find out soon.*

Mm, if he is I want first dibs.

You'll get them. I doubt Rosie will want a high school boy and I'm happily in love.

Ugh.

After a cool shower I was de-sanded and feeling much better. I slid on a white sun dress and got Josh to dry my hair with his magic. It saved me getting split ends, and made my curls oh so soft and manageable.

Grandma Bea had set a table up on the patio and had a barbecue I hadn't noticed before warming up in the corner.

"Who's cooking the barbecue?" Rosie asked, stepping out the sliding doors in a green dress.

"I am!" Grandma Bea replied, stoking it with a stick.

"Are you sure you should use a stick?"

"What else should I use?"

Me and Rosie shared a glance and I waved to my favourite old lady sarcastically. "Uh, hello? Human matchbox here?"

"Oh yes!" Grandma Bea's face broke out into a big smile and I couldn't help but laugh at her. I danced across the patio leaving blazing fire trails and shot four fireballs alternately from my fingertips to the BBQ for her amusement, ending in a round of applause from everyone. I bowed and giggled.

"Impressive." I heard a new voice call from the doorway. I turned to see a guy our age with longish copper hair, bright blue eyes and muscular arms. His skin was tanned darkly as was acceptable in Florida and I heard Ava in my head.

Oh Hecate I love you.

I glanced to her and she was making eyes at him obviously. He was kinda hot. Maybe devastating good looks are a supernatural thing.

I put on my best smile and walked over to him.

"Thank you. You must be Jayden. I'm Lily." I stuck out my hand and he shook.

"That's me. This is Jasmine, my sister." He stepped out revealing his sister. She was equally as striking, her own copper hair streaked with blonde from the sun, her skin the same dark brown as her brothers. I always thought redheads burned, but apparently they didn't in Florida. She had the same blue eyes but they were ringed in violet. Hmm, she was quite powerful.

"Hey! I'm Lily." I reached forward and caught her off guard with a hug but she happily hugged me back.

"I'm so glad we can finally meet you! We thought we were the last witches until we met Bea and she told us about you." She told me in a nervous, breathy voice.

"Well there's more of us in Salem, so you're definitely not alone." I smiled at her and noticed Ava had sidled up next to me.

"Hey, I'm Ava." She unleashed her dazzling smile upon Jayden and he immediately looked her over and kissed her hand.

"Hey there."

I caught Josh's frown and bit back laughter. Overprotective big brother alert!

"Hi Jasmine!" Ava turned her smile on the girl in front of me and she instantly relaxed. I knew exactly what she'd done.

Ava! I chastised her mentally. You can't just use your influence that way!

She raised an eyebrow at me. I didn't use it on Jayden. I only used it on Jasmine because she looked really nervous and I wanted her to feel comfortable around us.

Okay, so you can't argue with her reasoning. I nodded and noticed Jayden's eyes flitting between us questioningly.

"Oh, sorry. We can talk telepathically. We do it without thinking." I smiled apologetically and shrugged.

"That's really cool!" Jasmine chirped in. Hm. I could like this girl!

I waved Rosie and Josh over for introductions. When Mum had greeted them and Grandma Bea had them situated with drinks we gathered on the yard to get to know each other. After Grandma Bea had me fling another fireball at her BBQ.

"So what elements are you?" Rosie asked our new friends.

"I'm fire, and Jas is water." Jayden replied.

I gasped and clapped my hands. "That's amazing."

"Really?" Jayden cocked his head to the side slightly.

"Yeah, only me and my cousin, lyla, are fire elements, and only Rosie and Ava are water elements. We have.." I scrunched my face up for a second. "Four earth witches and four air witches so with the two of you it evens out better. We also have a mind witch, Louise."

"Wow, so you're pretty balanced?" Jasmine looked impressed.

"Yeah, and we all live in one little town." Josh shrugged, his arm round my waist. I leant back so my back was against his chest and he kissed my head.

"And of course our very own goddess in the making." Ava smirked at me.

"Just couldn't help yourself, could you?" I scowled at her.

"Seriously, that's you?" Jasmine's eyes widened considerably as she looked at me.

"I thought that was just rumour." Jayden frowned.

"She's a pretty amazing rumour then!" Josh laughed and Rosie chuckled along with him.

"Seriously my sister can throw out magic like no-one I've ever seen." Rosie said with a fond smile to me. I grinned back at her and winked.

"What powers do you have?" Jasmine asked me.

"What doesn't she have?" Ava laughed. I scooped an ice cube from my drink and flung it at her playfully but she just caught it, refroze it in her palm and popped it into her drink.

"I can wield energy, not just fire. I can control lightning and create lava. Um, obviously me and Ava have the mental connection, but I'm an empath and I can dream walk too." I shrugged like it was no big deal. In fact, I was so used to my powers that they weren't to me anymore. As long as I didn't get any new ones. But that was highly unlikely.

"That's so cool!"

"Food kids!" Mum's voice echoed across the yard and we needed no encouragement. We all got up and ran towards the patio.

THIRTEEN

Grandma Bea's Secret

The next day was spent getting to know each other. Jayden and Ava kept making eyes at each other and I could almost see the sparks between them. Jasmine fitted in really well with us despite being younger and was ultra excited at the fact that they would be moving back to Salem with us when we left. I had to admit, it was pretty cool. They also admitted they didn't have much control over their powers so I promised we'd help them with it. It turns out they'd lost their parents to Luther three years ago and had been staying with Valerie ever since. The only reason they were alive was because they were staying at a friend's house. I actually felt my heart break a little when they told us.

I climbed out of bed and padded my way through the house in darkness. Night in Florida was much cooler than the daytime and I was thankful for the reprieve. I

was passing the library on the way to the kitchen for a drink when I heard Grandma Bea and Mom arguing. Being the nosy teenager I am, I stopped outside the door.

"Mother you can't keep it from her for much longer. She needs to know!"

"Celia I'm aware I need to tell her. It's not exactly the kind of thing you just come out with!"

"She needs you! What if she gets the same power as you Mom, what then? You've seen her use her fire powers. She's powerful."

Grandma Bea? Powers? What?

"Celia.."

"No Mother, don't 'Celia' me! She's the triple goddess Markus' mother prophesied and she has one moon to come. Her powers are only going to increase and you know that! She already has more than the average witch does! If she's a master of the elements she'll need your guidance. No other witch has the control you..."

What in Hecate's name is that?

"It's two am Celia. I'm no longer discussing this. I will speak with my granddaughter when I'm ready to."

I heard footsteps and quickly darted back into my room, glass of water forgotten. Did I really hear what I thought I did? Was Grandma Bea a witch? And if she was, why wasn't Mum?

**

"Breakfast Lily." Mum popped her head round the doors.

"I'm not hungry." I replied, staring out at the beach from my seat on the patio.

"Okay, love."

I wasn't hungry. I was still mulling over what I'd overheard last night. It didn't make sense to me. Of course, it would explain why Grandma Bea lived surrounded by vampires. It's certainly an odd arrangement given that our blood is addictive. But even odder if she was human.

I sighed and ran my fingers through my hair. I could hear everyone's voices as they entered the kitchen and hopped off the patio, making my way towards the beach.

The early morning breeze teased my hair as I padded along barefoot in the surf. The cool water rolled over my feet as the early morning sun gathered its heat.

"There's something on your mind, Lily Flower." I heard Grandma Bea's voice behind me.

"I don't want to talk about it." I muttered, kicking the water as it swirled my ankles.

"But I do." She insisted. "You can tell me anything."

But apparently that rule doesn't apply the other way around, I wanted to say.

"I just don't want to talk about it."

"This is a holiday, sweetheart. You're supposed to be relaxing."

I spun around and fixed her with a glare. "Relaxing, huh? Then why the secrets? I came here thinking I could escape the supernatural shit but no, I'm introduced to two witches and I'm staying amongst a vampire coven. Really relaxing, Grandma."

"Lily.." She said quietly.

"No, Grandma Bea! Do you even know what it's like for me? I'm not even eighteen yet, yet I have the weight of a secret world on my shoulders! By day I'm a high school student, keeping my grades up so I can go to college and by night I'm a witch slash goddess in the making, leading witches, vampires and werewolves to a battle we might lose. Families have been torn apart, people have died and it's all on me! It's all on me because I'm the leader and I have two stupid moons on my neck! And if that isn't enough, I'm going to get yet more powers because I haven't reached goddess status yet!" I took a deep breath. I felt bad for letting my emotions out on her but I was angry she was keeping something from me.

"Lily we need to talk."

"Damn right we do."

Her eyes widened momentarily before narrowing at me. "You know, don't you?" Deep down, I suppose I did.

"I want you to tell me. Now." I crossed my arms in front of me.

"I'm a Supreme, Lily." Her blue grey eyes fixed me. "I'm a witch."

"Why couldn't you tell me?" I demanded.

"Because you knew nothing about your heritage until last year. Your mother didn't know until she met your father. She never manifested in any powers and I fear she never will. I couldn't tell you anything." She sighed.

"What is a supreme?" I softened my tone.

"I can control the elements to an extent, cast spells and make potions. We're sometimes called a Master of the Elements. But I'm not as strong as you, Lily. I've never seen power like yours in one so young." She held her hand out to me. "Come. I need to show you something."

**

Grandma Bea lead me through a side door into her study/library to avoid the ruckus and inevitable questions from everyone in the kitchen. This was probably my favourite room in the house with the shelves lined with books and the open fireplace. In the winter we were younger me and Rosie would lie on the fluffy rug, books stacked around us in front of a roaring fire. An ancient piano sat in the far corner surrounded by shelves filled with music books. Pictures of Grandma Bea, Grandpa Bert and Mum as a child perched in various places on the bookshelves and Grandma's vintage desk. Pictures of me and Rosie as kids were dotted around as well - there was no doubting this was Grandma's favourite room too.

I stopped next to her as she approached a bookcase filled with classics, both American and English. My eyes scanned the titles, A Tale of Two Cities, Tess of

the D'urbervilles, Little Women. Grandma Bea reached out and pulled an unnamed book out halfway.

"Step back."

I did as she ordered. I watched with amused awe as the bookcase slowly slid open revealing a dark stairway.

"Seriously, Grandma Bea, you've been watching way too many films." I shook my head. She moved to the top of the steps and gave me a secret smile. Tugging her shawl around her, she motioned for me to follow.

The room I entered was dark. So dark I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I took my initiative and lit a flame in my palm at the same time Grandma Bea approached me with an armful of candles. Where did she find them?

I lit each one with my magic and watched the room take shape as Grandma Bea placed them in random candlesticks. Piles of books were stored haphazardly on a desk next to me. Shelves were attached to the stone wall above the desk which held more books. I shifted my gaze and saw a large rack lined with small, clear bags of leaves and other random things. Herbs, I guessed. A circular table sat in the centre of the room surrounded by chairs, bits of paper scattered across the top of it. An old blackened cauldron sat in the far corner surrounded by empty vials and beakers. The stone floor was deathly cold under my feet as I eyed my grandmother.

"A cauldron? Really? Isn't that a little cliché?" I spoke at a normal level but my voice echoed off walls of the large open space.

Grandma Bea chuckled lightly. "Yes, but it's best for mixing tinctures and potions."

"What kind of stuff do you mix?" I asked, moving to the table to look at the books. Vampires, werewolves, fairies, witches, demons.

Demons? Come again?

"Harmless things. Mostly healing creams and drinks. All herbal with a hint of magic. I sometimes mix tinctures for fledgling vampires to help control their blood lust."

Because that's totally normal.

"Why do you have a book on demons?" I picked up the faded leather book and thumbed through the pages absently, noting they were crinkled and yellowed with age.

"Why do you think, child? The same reason I have books on vampires, werewolves, fairies, etcetera."

"Demons are real?" I snapped my head round and raised my eyebrows in disbelief.

"Of course." Grandma Bea scoffed incredulously.

"Let me guess, I shouldn't be surprised?"

"You've had this conversation before." She smiled knowingly.

I nodded, looking down and attempting to swallow the lump that lodged itself in my throat. I gently set the demon back on the pile and blinked.

"Dad." I whispered. "Before I knew about vampires and wolves." I smiled slightly as my voice cracked. "He told me I shouldn't be surprised because we were supposed to be mythical creatures too. Then he told me about the fairies being banished because of their cheese stealing habits." I let out a small laugh as I remembered the day all the witches first convened to plan against Luther. Did Dad know he would die then? Was he already planning his death to save me? I sniffed and wiped a few tears from my face. Grandma Bea lay a gentle hand on my shoulder.

"I miss him, Grandma. He was supposed to be here to help me." I could feel the tears spilling from my eyes as I whispered. "I really miss him."

"He loved you, Lily, and he was so incredibly proud of you. He would call when you were out and tell me about your powers, the friends you were making and how you were adjusting to your new life." She said in a soft voice and cupped my cheek. "Don't ever forget how proud he was, and would be of you. I bet you anything he's up there with the gods watching you with a big smile on his face. People like your father may leave us in body, but never in spirit. He's always with you, Lily Flower. He's in your heart, and no-one can take that from you." She gave my shoulder a gentle squeeze and moved to the door. "I'll send the others down shortly."

**

"I cannot believe Grandma Bea had this room and never told us about it." Rosie looked around the room with a shake of her head.

"And the fact she's a witch." I pointed out, looking at her from over the top of the demon book I was reading. After Grandma Bea left me down here and I'd composed myself I decided to do something worthwhile and see what I could learn. Naturally, demons were my first choice considering I knew nothing about them apart from the fact they existed.

Which I'd known for all of thirty minutes.

"This room is so cool." Ava ran her fingers along the cabinet with all of Grandma's herbs. "Grace would have a field day."

I chuckled at the thought. My cousin, Grace, was an Earth witch and a healer. She was always mixing pastes and horrible tasting potions for us to drink when we were ill. Admittedly, they did work, but that doesn't mean I had to like them any more.

"Iyla would love these books." Rosie agreed, thumbing through the books on the shelves. "Hey, Lils, she's got one on dream walking!"

"What?" I put my book on the table and walked over to Rosie. She handed me an old green volume with 'Dream Walking' embossed on the front in faded gold. I blew a layer of dust off the top and looked at the contents page.

1. *What is a Dream Walker?*

2. *What can a Dream Walker do?*

3. *Achieving Lucid Dreaming and taking control of the Dream.*

4. *Levels.'*

"Mine." I said and moved back to the table, settling down with the book.

'A Dream Walker is someone with the ability to enter another person's dream. The only requirement is that the Dream Walker knows the person who's dreams they wish to enter. This is easier when there is a strong physical or emotional connection with the dreamer.

Dream walking and astral travelling are very similar. Astral travelling tends to be something you do alone, where dream walking is a more conscious experience where you can choose someone to join you.'

Hmm I already knew that. I knew what Dream Walking was.. Just not how to do it. I flicked through the pages until I reached the third chapter, Achieving Lucid Dreaming.

'The easiest way to achieve Lucid Dreaming is by recognizing the fact you are dreaming. When you dream, look around and ask yourself if it's real. Ground yourself with 'reality checks' simple things, such as pinching yourself. If you're in a dream, it really won't hurt. When your mind realises you are in a dream you can take control, call people to you and enter another's dream (as long as they are dreaming).

For a witch with the natural power to Dream Walk it is much easier to enter the Lucid State of dreaming, and they almost always realise they are dreaming. Some witches even enter another's dream without realising they've done so. Dream Walking is very realistic. You can smell, taste and feel everything as if it was real.

Controlling the dream is the easiest part. Once you've realised you're dreaming, you can do anything. You can go anywhere, take anyone and experience anything.

To bring someone into your dream, simply close your eyes and imagine their face while calling their name. If you spin at the same time you will enter their dream. You can also use the spinning technique for changing the places in your dream, similar to teleporting. Imagine the place in your mind and spin. Your dream will take you there.

Remember, if you realise you are dreaming and take control, no-one can hurt you. It is your dream, no-one else's.'

"Good book?" I looked up and saw Josh sat next to me. I was into into the book I didn't even notice.

"Yeah." I grinned. "I know how to do it now. Hopefully I can do it more often now. I can go anywhere as long as I realise I'm in a dream. If I do that then the dream is under my control and I can't be hurt. Pretty cool, huh?"

"Very." Josh bent forward and kissed me. "Jayden and Jasmine are upstairs. Jasmine said something about shopping."

"Shopping?" Ava chimed in in delight. "Well why are we still sat here girls? Come on!"

FOURTEEN

Three Is The Magic Number

Three hours of Jas pulling us round shops and I was exhausted. Completely and utterly shattered. I dumped my bags on the floor and flopped backwards onto my bed as the fan doused me with cool air.

"Lily?" Mum poked her head round the door.

"No." I replied.

"Lily." She repeated, more forcefully.

"Noooo." I groaned, covering my face with my hands. "I'm tired, Mum."

"Lovely, but perk yourself up because we have visitors."

I begrudgingly sat up. "Who?"

"The vampires from the street."

"Seriously? Has no-one ever told Grandma Bea what the word 'vacation' means?" I grumbled and got up, smoothing out my clothes.

Mum looked on amused as I passed her. "No, love, I think they passed her over the day that word was explained."

I snorted and made my way downstairs.

"Where is everyone?" I turned back to Mum, seeing the house empty.

"Downstairs."

"I am downstairs."

"Down-downstairs."

Oh, the secret-magic-potions-library. I see. I opened the study door with my hip and secured my hair into a loose, messy bun with a tie from my wrist. Random curls flipped into my face and I blew them up impatiently. Grandma Bea had left the door open to the secret room, thankfully, as I didn't know which book I was supposed to pull out.

I stepped into the room, which was lit, and noticed I was the last person to arrive.

Fabulous.

"Lily." Grandma Bea smiled and appeared at my side. "Sorry to drag you away from your relaxing, dear, but this is our usual meet night so I thought it appropriate for everyone to join us."

"Oh, no, that's fine. I was just putting my bags down." I smiled back sweetly and felt Ava try to disguise her laugh. A giggle threatened to erupt in my chest and I bit it back down. Sometimes, the mental connection was a real pain.

"Well, we'll try to be quick so you kids can get an early night. Jayden mentioned you were going to work on using magic with him and Jasmine tomorrow?"

I nodded.

"Well then, let's introduce you to everyone." She hooked her arm through mine and lead me to a spare seat at the table where a group of vampires were sat. "This

is Valerie, Jayden and Jasmine's guardian." She motioned to a tall, regal looking woman sat next to me. Her white-blond hair was pulled into a twist at the back of her head and her warm brown eyes regarded me kindly. If she was human, I'd guess her age as somewhere in her forties judging by the slight crows feet at the corners of her eyes and laughter lines by her mouth. But, as it was, she wasn't. And I wasn't even about to attempt her real age.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Lily. Bea has told us so much about you." Valerie's voice was raspy, I-smoke-forty-a-day kind of raspy.

Could vampires even smoke? I'd have to ask Justin when we got home.

I put on my best smile. "All good, I hope? I know Grandma Bea can get carried away sometimes."

Grandma Bea snorted from behind me while Valerie laughed.

"Yes, she's kept us up-to-date with the happenings in Salem. Luckily we've had minimal activity here in Florida."

Lucky you.

"Yes, well, with so many witches, vampires and werewolves living so close it's bound to be more.." What was the word? "Lively." That'll do.

Grandma Bea proceeded to introduce me to the rest of the Coven. I say the rest, but not everyone was here tonight, only the elders. There's was apparently a small coven of twenty five, come together out of distrust to larger covens. I thought it would be best to mention one of our covens was over one hundred strong.

"Do not concern yourself with such matters, dear. We all wish for the same as you. Your grandmother lives surrounded by us where we can keep her safe." Another vampire named Eliza reassured me.

"I'm sorry, but I have to ask this." Ava bent forward and rested her elbows on the table. "You have no idea how much we appreciate your support, but the issue remains that you guys live almost one thousand, four hundred miles away. How long would it take you to get to Salem? And also, Grandma Bea, as amazing as she is, cannot compete with that speed. It would take her at least a day and a half to drive."

Point to Ava for her research. Who knew there was such information in that pretty blonde head of hers?

"Your last confrontation with the witch hunter was arranged, was it not?" Harrison asked me.

"Um, yes." I raised an eyebrow, not quite sure where he was going with this.

"Then what makes you think that the final, inevitable battle of strength won't be?"

Man.. er.. Vampire.. has a point there.

"So we arrange, call you, and you arrive?" Ava summed up.

"Precisely." Grandma Bea agreed. "But you need not worry about me, dear children, I'll be coming home with you on Saturday."

Seriously, what is it with my family springing things on me?

"Really?" Rosie clapped her hands excitedly.

"Of course! You all have much to learn."

"Talking of learning." Jasmine yawned from her perch on the desk. "I'd like to go to bed now."

"Of course, Jas." Valerie stood and offered me her hand.

I followed suit and took her hand, ready to shake. She pulled me into a hug, a very cold hug. Really, you'd think I'd be used to cold skinned vampires, but apparently not.

"It was a delight to meet you, and I trust you'll stay in contact with us? Jayden and Jasmine have been with me for a little over three years and they are my family. I'll do whatever is in my power to keep them, and you, safe." Valerie reassured me.

"Of course. We'd be delighted to have your assistance." I smiled at her and turned to Jay and Jas. "I'll see you guys tomorrow. Ten am sharp!"

"Yes, ma'am." Jay mock saluted me and I frowned.

"Watch it, buster, or I'll change my mind about going easy on you tomorrow." I warned.

"Roger that."

FIFTEEN

Magic Lessons

"No, Jay. You're not focusing!"

"I am! It's hard to focus."

"You've used your magic before!"

"Yes, but not really intentionally. More.. accidentally."

I groaned. This was not going to be easy.

"Look at that tree. Do you see it?" I pointed to an old, dying tree. He nodded. "Good. Hold your arm out in front of you, your palm facing towards it. How did it feel when you used your magic before?"

"My arm burnt."

"Good, okay. Focus on that feeling, and will your magic into a ball of fire. Focus on that tree, focus on it burning. Feel the burning sensation as it travels down your arm, the release as the magic leaves your body through your palm." I explained. I watched as his face hardened into a mask of concentration and his arm began to shake. Sweat beaded on his forehead and BAM! A fireball the size of my head erupted from his palm.

Oh, gods.

I stared at the fireball as it raced across the garden, wishing it would stop, wishing it would just go away, off towards the beach where nothing could burn. A foot in front of the stump it stopped suddenly, before changing direction and heading towards the beach where it collided with a sand dune and fizzled out.

"Uh, what happened?" Jayden looked at me, confused.

"Good question." I cocked my head to the side for a moment before shaking it and turning back to him. "Again." I ordered.

"Are you kidding?"

"Do I look like it? You used too much energy. Imagine that feeling but less, not so much burning, not so much fire." I lifted his arm and directed towards the beach.

"Just in case." I winked.

"Okay. So not as big."

"Not as big. You can do it. It just takes practice. Believe me, I nearly burnt my yard down my first attempt." I smiled sadly and was transported back to the day when my Dad decided to train me with my magic.. The stream of fire that erupted from my hand when Rosie goaded me, the panic on his face as I zapped a branch and it fell behind him. His exasperation when I set piles of leaves alight and Rosie put them out. But now.. Now it was me teaching another witch how to use their powers. I sighed and looked up at Jayden who was watching me carefully.

"Are you okay?" He asked softly, placing a hand on my arm.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just.. memories." I took his arm in my hand and pointed it back to the beach. "Do it. Now."

**

Four hours, three burnt tree stumps and a round of fireballs later, Jayden had some control over his magic. Thankfully.

We clambered up the porch, flanked by Rosie, Ava and Jasmine, who'd been working on water magic, and all collapsed onto the dinner table. Jayden and Jasmine may have used the most magic, but if teaching her was as hard as teaching Jay was, then we were all decidedly exhausted.

Mum appeared from nowhere and placed three plastic bags in front of us.

"What is it?" A topless Josh asked, taking a seat next to me. Oh. My. Gods. We may have been together nearly a year, but sheesh, seeing him with his top off still nearly sent me into overdrive.

"Chinese. I thought you kids could use some unhealthy food. Just don't tell my mother, she's off out with Valerie somewhere." Mum winked at us and I grinned. Sort of.

"You're the best, Mum."

"I know, love, I know."

She took her own plate and settled into the chair at the end. Josh and Jayden wasted no time in delving into the bags and laying everything out. Josh placed my favourites, sweet and sour chicken, egg fried rice and soy sauce noodles on my plate. I thanked him with a smile and rested my head on his shoulder before

realising I had no cutlery. I gazed longingly at the drawer at the opposite end of the kitchen, wishing it could open and a fork would magically float over to me.

Wouldn't that be nice.

The draw opened. Of its own accord.

"Oh hell!" Ava cried, staring at the drawer accusingly. "Why didn't Grandma Bea tell us her house was haunted?!"

"It's not." Rosie frowned and looked at me. I shrugged and looked back to the drawer. That was the second time today something had moved when I wanted it to.

Hmm.. I wonder..

I focused on one of the forks, painting an image in my mind. I could see the white handle, the shiny metal of the top lying amongst spoons and knives. I willed it upwards, and towards me, to rest on my plate.

Sure enough, a fork slowly rose from the drawer and moved across the living room in mid air, resting on my plate. I pushed the drawer shut with my mind and nodded, satisfied.

"What the hell?" Jas's voice shook and Rosie glared at me.

"Why didn't you warn us?" She demanded.

"I didn't know I could do that." I laughed. "I just wanted a fork and wished it could come to me instead of having to get up. And it did. Must be magic." I said, stabbing a piece of chicken with my flying fork and placing it in my mouth.

"So now you're telekinetic?"

"Tele-ki-what?" Jay and Ava asked in unison, both cocking their heads. I swear they're made for each other.

"Telekinetic. She can move things with her mind." Josh explained. "That's pretty cool."

I grinned. "I could have so much fun with Jerome with that..."

"Lily." Mum scowled at me but I saw the amusement glinting in her eyes. She knew he was the easiest to wind up, and this telekinetic power or whatever it was, would just amp the game up. I suddenly couldn't wait to be home.

"Come on, Mum. You have to admit it." Rosie giggled. "He's so fun to annoy."

She smiled and I knew she was remembering one of the many times we'd played a practical joke on him, like switching his blood coffee for blood and coke. He wasn't expecting it and the bubbles went straight up his nose. I giggled at the thought. Ah.. memories.

I looked at Josh's plate and saw him trying to get noodles on his fork. I pursed my lips and willed the noodles to move whenever his fork went near them. He played the game for twenty seconds before turning to me and covering my eyes with his hands.

When he moved his hands he held his noodle-wrapped fork up triumphantly. I raised an eyebrow and moved the noodles back to his plate, causing everyone at the table to burst out laughing when he frowned at me. I caught the playful glint in his eye. Oh no. I knew that look.

"No.. No!" I shrieked, jumping up from my chair and running around the table before launching myself out the back door. I jumped off the patio and ran across the yard, ending up on the beach. I stopped and turned but couldn't see him anywhere. I bent over, pressing my hand to my stomach while I tried to stop laughing. Even though our lives were still serious, Josh always made me feel like the teenager I actually was. I loved it, and I loved him.

A gust of cold air flew past me and I was tackled to the ground screaming. A gentle breeze flew over my face removing the sand and I opened my eyes to Josh's smiling face over me.

"I always catch you." He grinned.

"Not always. I let you catch me this time." I insisted, knowing full well it wasn't the truth. He always got me in the end.

"Yeah, yeah, if you say so."

"I do."

He bent down and nuzzled my nose with his before capturing my lips in a kiss. His lips moved across mine softly and I reached up, tangling my fingers in his messy, blonde hair. The kiss deepened as he rolled me over so I was lying on top of him in the sand. His hands stroked my waist gently, caressing the bare skin as my dress rode up. I was wearing a bikini anyway, and he'd seen me in that before. Still I was vaguely aware of how intimate our kiss was becoming, but I couldn't pull myself away. I whimpered slightly as he pulled away and kissed my nose.

"Gods, Lily, you're so beautiful." He pulled me down again and I sunk into his embrace, the warmth of his hands on my bare skin. I ran my fingers down his neck and across his broad shoulders as he pulled me even closer. We rolled to the side slightly and his hand cupped my neck, holding me to him. Our bare legs tangled.

Someone cleared their throat.

I snapped my head up to see Grandma Bea regarding us with amusement.

"Uh oh." Josh whispered in my ear. My sentiments exactly, Mr Adams.

"Grandma Bea." I said meekly, my cheeks flushing.

"Lily, Josh." She smirked at us, her eyes alight with laughter. "I hope I wasn't er, interrupting anything."

"No, no, of course not." Josh answered as we both sat up.

"Oh good, because I just wanted to remind you that although my beach is private, there are others in the house that use it."

"Yes, thank you, Grandma Bea." I mumbled, averting my gaze.

"I also wanted to remind you to use protection." She chuckled and turned off to the house.

"Grandma Bea!" I gasped at her retreating figure. Josh burst out laughing next to me as I sat in shock, mouth gaping. He leant over and gently shut my mouth.

"She has a point." His eyes twinkled and I could almost read his thoughts. There would be nothing he'd like more than to have protection in his pocket I bet.

"Hmm."

"She has to be, the coolest grandma ever." He whispered in my ear and kissed my neck, moving my hair to the side.

I slapped his hand and laughed. "Come on, Mr. You heard what the old woman said."

"Yes. But I don't need protection to kiss you." He pushed me back onto the sand and kissed me again, deeply, sweetly, lovingly.

As long as I had Josh, I'd always have magic.

SIXTEEN

A New Level

Mum and Grandma Bea had gone out for the evening. They said they needed some 'quality time'. Whatever, that was cool with us. We ordered pizza and sat eating it on the beach. We'd found out that afternoon that when we went home Jayden and Jasmine would be living with us, as well as Grandma Bea. Grandma Bea had insisted that she shared Mum's room, with Jay and Jas taking the spare rooms, so me and Rosie could keep our own. Her excuse was she didn't want any of us to have to give up our privacy and she winked at me. Yes, she winked at me. She was never going to let me live last night down.

We discarded the pizza boxes off to the side and even though Josh had directed the sea breeze around us, it was still cold.

"Shall we build a fire?" Ava asked, looking to me.

"Good idea. Let's go get some wood." I took her hand as we stood and made our way back over to Grandma Bea's yard.

"You really like him, don't you?" I asked her as we trudged through mother nature's litter.

"Who?" She glanced at me, appearing indifferent but I caught the slight flush of her cheeks.

"Jayden."

"Maybe.. I.. I don't know. He's gorgeous, and he's so kind to me. I think.. I do. Yeah." She sighed and bent to pick up a twig. "I just feel so bad because I only broke up with Carson a week ago. It just wouldn't look very good, yano?"

"I get what you mean." I said reassuringly. "But don't let it stand in your way. If you like each other then go for it." I smiled and walked off a few feet away from her, leaving her to mull over my words.

A branch cracking to my right froze me momentarily. I looked in the direction of the sound but saw nothing. I shook my head and mentally chastised myself for

being so ridiculous. We were in the trees – there's bound to be some kind of wildlife making noises, right?

I collected a few more twigs from the ground, adjusting the bundle in my arms. A shadow flew by me and I stopped. No, I definitely wasn't imagining things this time. I stepped back quietly, my eyes scanning the trees. Something was out here. If it was Rosie, Josh, Jay or Jas, then they were going to get a mouthful because it wasn't funny.

I hit a solid surface and jumped forwards, my heart thudding in my chest. A hand grabbed mine and I realised I'd walked right into Ava.

"We aren't alone." She whispered, fear lacing her tone.

"I know." I whispered back, squeezing her hand.

We stood still, the only noise the sound of my blood rushing through my body. Another shadow sped by me and my breath caught. Forcing myself to breathe in deeply, I wished I was a vampire and had super night vision.

Two red, beady eyes blinked out at me from one of the trees. They were bright against the darkness of the trees which blocked out the moonlight. I didn't need to ask what they were from.

I was staring at a demon.

My senses returned as Ava began to shake behind me. I guessed there was more.

On the count of three, run. I sent to her. I didn't know if the demons understood English, but I didn't want to risk it.

One.. Two.. Three!

We shot off out of the trees at a speed I never thought possible, nearly tripping on loose pine cones and tree roots. I could see the others sat on the beach laughing and joking in the moonlight. My breathing was heavy and I could hear Ava's was the same. We came to a stop right in front of everyone else and they immediately stood up at the same time we dropped the sticks.

"Rosie I need your phone!" I demanded.

"Why?"

"Just give it to me!"

I snatched the phone out of her hand and dialled lyla's number as Ava explained to everyone what had just happened.

"lyla it's Lily."

"Hey what's up? How's Florida?"

"Yeah it was great until about 2 minutes ago. We have a er... Situation."

"Demons?"

"How.. Never mind. I need to know how to cast a circle of protection. Will it work?"

She was silent for a moment and my foot began to tap impatiently. Ava grabbed my arm and I looked up at the sky. Dark clouds were starting to gather. Oh, gods.

"Yes. It should. As long as you ask for protection from demons when you summon Hecate."

"How do I do it, ly? I don't have much time. I don't know how many there are but they're coming."

"Draw a circle around you, call each elemental guardian from the watchtower at each quarter, start at the south for fire and go clockwise. When it's complete say why you've cast the circle. You need to find something to channel Hecate in, even if it's a rock and summon her, welcome her to your circle and thank her. When you're done thank her again, close the circle from the south anti clockwise and thank each guardian. Say 'merry meet, merry part and merry meet again' before the usual. That should work."

"Okay got it. Any idea how to kill a demon?"

"No, but fire doesn't work. We found that out last night."

I rubbed my forehead. Why did I not know this? "I'll Skype you later. Be online." I hung up and passed Rosie her phone.

"Do you know how to do it?" Jayden looked at me. Jasmine was clutching to him like a limpet and I could feel her fear. In fact, I could feel everyone's. It was really off putting.

Fighting demons was not on my agenda for this summer.

Henry Luther you bastard. Sigh.

"Yes. Ava pass me that stick." I pointed to the largest one in our pile. "Does anyone have anything on them we can use to channel Hecate?"

I took the stick from Ava's outstretched hand and moved to the south. Thank heavens I was on the beach and knew the water was to the east!

"Here." Jas removed her necklace with shaky hands and passed it to me. I immediately handed it to Ava.

"What is it?" She asked Jas.

"Amber. For love, healing, protection, power and luck."

"Perfect. Could use some of that right now." Ava mumbled in reply.

"Okay everyone, stand tightly together." I ordered. The sky was completely clouded, blocking the moon. Not good.

"I call thee, the guardians of the watch tower of the South, the Fire element. Welcome to our circle." I put the stick in the sand and moved to the West, dragging it behind me.

"I call thee, the guardians of the watchtower of the West, the Air element. Welcome to our circle."

Following it to the North, I repeated the mantra.

"I call thee, the guardians of the watch tower of the North, the Earth element. Welcome to our circle."

Then to the East, closest to the sea.

"I call thee, the guardians of the watch tower of the East, the Water element. Welcome to our circle."

I completed my circle back to the south with the words: "I cast this circle to separate the children of Hecate from those who wish us harm. Guardians I ask thee for protection. Our circle is now complete." I could feel the magic swirling around me and joining the circle as I turned back to the others and held my hand out for Jasmine's necklace. Ava placed the cool stone in my hand.

"Stay close and don't step outside the line." I ordered, gently putting the amber in the centre.

Jasmine's shriek stole my attention for a moment. I looked up and her face was ashen, her eyes wide as she looked toward the north. I followed her eyes and saw tell tale red eyes in the distance. A lot of them.

"Ohhh shit." Ava whispered, stepping back and grabbing Rosie.

"Lily now would be a good time to hurry the hell up." Jayden hissed acidly at me. I slid my eyes to him and glared.

"Now would be a good time to shut the hell up and let her finish before she throws you out the circle." Rosie told him coldly.

I turned my attention back to the stone and laying my finger upon it, I called for Hecate.

"Great Goddess Hecate, I summon thee to our circle. I ask as your daughter for protection against the demons that wish us harm."

A gentle breeze, barely noticeable touched my cheek and I curled my lips slightly.

"Great Goddess Hecate, I welcome you to our circle and I thank you for your protection and energy."

I bowed my head, stood back up and cracked my knuckles. Everyone was looking at me expectantly.

"Well? Is she here?" Jayden demanded.

Okay, seriously? We were in a bit of a pickle by all accounts but there was no need for that attitude, and I still needed a plan of action. And fast. The little buggers were getting closer.

"Yes, Hecate is here." I replied, calmer than I felt.

"How do you know?"

"Because they're connected, goon." Josh snapped. "Shut up and let Lily think."

Jayden opened his mouth to argue but Rosie cut him off.

"Now isn't the time. My sister is the best chance we've got at getting out of this situation so let her think." She turned to me. "What did lyla say?"

"Fire won't touch them. They're from hell."

I could hear Jas whimpering behind me. Emotions were running high, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety. And I could feel every damn one. Ava took my hand and opened our connection, allowing me to take some of her strength and sharing the emotions.

Thank you.

"What do we do then?" Josh asked. The demons were nearly upon us. I knew they couldn't harm us but gods damn them, they were ugly little runts. They were two feet tall, as dark as the night with wickedly sharp claws. Their beady red eyes had no pupil and they glowed in the darkness. If I had to guess there was at least twenty.

Use your strength a soft voice whispered through my mind.

"What was that?" Ava whispered in a panicked voice.

"What was what?" Rosie looked at her funny.

"That.. That voice"

"Use your strength.." I murmured. "That's it! Ava and Rosie you need to ice them. They're immune to fire but ice is its opposite!" I turned to Jayden and Jasmine. "Jas I need you to shoot jets of water at them, just keep them back. Jayden you need to watch, when you see someone's strength going take their hand and transfer your energy to them. Just will it to go to them." I added before he could ask and faced Josh.

"Mini twister?" He said with a boyish grin.

"You bet."

"What are you going to do? And who was that in my head?" Ava asked as Josh and Jas began their defensive attacks.

"I'm going to zap them and Hecate but we'll discuss that later now freeze!" I said forcefully and took a deep breath, eyeing the horde in front of us. "And remember no-one leave the damn circle!"

Josh's mini twister took out nearly a third of the demons, sweeping them up and throwing them back. Jas's water jets, although shaky and a bit weak, pushed them backwards a few feet.

The demons in the front row immediately found their legs frozen to the sand. Without thinking I shot bolts of white lightening at them systematically and thankfully, it seemed to destroy them, bursting them to ashes. The only foul thing was the smell of burning flesh. Could have done without that if I'm truthful. Ack.

"Come on you spineless runts, you'll have to do better than that!" I shouted.

"What is she doing?" Jayden muttered behind me.

"She's doing what Lily does best!" Josh chuckled over the sounds of the magic.

My words had the desired effect. The demons took offence and began to charge us but we were quicker than them. Luck was on our side.

I gotta get me some of that amber.

Flashes of light left my fingers, mingling with Josh's steady wind, and the girl's ice and water sprays.

Ava froze the last demon and I shot a final bolt of lightening into his chest. His red eyes blinked once before he collapsed into dust.

"Well. That was fun." I gave a self satisfied smirk.

"What do we do now?" Jas asked, still shaken up.

"I have to close the circle."

I bent to the amber and touched it gently.

Well done, my child. Hecate's voice rang out in my mind. *There is the leader I see. More are coming. You know what you must do. I bless each of you with strength, love and protection.*

Great. Another spell for my tired body to wield. Despite that, I smiled.

"Thank you. We accept your blessings." I bowed my head. "Great Goddess Hecate, I thank you for joining our circle and offering your protection. You may depart. Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed be, Goddess."

I removed my finger from the stone and another breeze, stronger than the first passed through the circle, touching each of us in a soft caress before dissipating. I felt a small bit of my strength return and stood.

"What was that?" Rosie asked. "That breeze?"

I looked at my sister and smiled. "That was Hecate leaving the circle. She blessed each of us."

"How do you know?" Jayden asked, eyeing me speculatively.

"She told me." I replied simply, returning to the edge of the circle to close it. I smudged the line with my foot to the East point.

"Thank you, guardians of the watchtowers of the East, the Water element. You may depart."

I felt a small amount of energy leave the circle as I moved to the North, repeating my mantra. I carried on to the West, and felt another small energy leave as I thanked air. I smudged the rest of the line to the beginning of my circle.

"Thank you, guardians of the watchtowers of the South, the Fire element. You may depart." I wiped the last part of the circle. "By my hand, this circle is closed. Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed be, Guardians."

Jas put her necklace back on as we started walking back to the house.

"What time is it?" I asked Josh.

"Nine."

"We have to perform another protection spell on Grandma's house against demons. More are coming."

"Hecate told you?"

"Mhmm."

"Okay, seriously girl, now you can explain who the hell that was in my head." Ava demanded, looping her arm through mine.

"Hecate." I answered simply. "She spoke to me and because we were connected you could hear her too."

"That's freaky as hell."

"Mhmm."

SEVENTEEN

Making A Point

I hooked my laptop up to Grandma Bea's wireless internet from the front room and logged into my Skype. Lyla was online and I immediately opened a conversation.

Hers and Grace's worried faces came onto my screen a few seconds later.

"Oh gods Lily is everyone okay?"

"We're fine, ly, thanks to you."

"Did the circle work?" Grace asked.

"It did." I smiled and waved Jayden and Jasmine over. "Guys these are my cousins, Grace and Lyla, this is Jayden and Jasmine. They're moving back to Salem with us. Fire and water." I smirked as they both waved.

"Hey guys!" At least my cousins sounded excited. I needed words with Jayden about his damn attitude. Guys *gotta* learn to listen to me or he's gonna be on my shit list.

"Hey!" They both repeated back before I spun the web cam back to me.

"Okay, so you said about demons? What's happened?" Look at me getting down to business, oh yeah.

"We were all at river forest park last night just chilling out. The witches, Sampson, Robbie and Justin that is. They came out of nowhere and I didn't even have time to cast a circle. Justin called Jerome and the vamps got there as quickly as they could and literally tore them apart. Sampson and Robbie ripped into them as well. Sampson said after that a shifters saliva is poisonous to demons."

"How is that possible?" Ava asked.

"I have no idea." Lyla replied, looking slightly lost. "But whatever it does it helped. Me, Grace and Maya got a few scratches but Grace fixed us up in seconds."

"And er, is Carson okay?" Ava said quietly.

"He's okay. Sorta." Grace smiled apologetically. "He's feeling better than he was a few days ago. I think he's just a bit lonely now. He understands why you ended it though and doesn't have any bad feelings towards you."

Ava blew out a sigh of relief. "Good. I still want to be friends."

I squeezed her hand and directed the conversation back to the little red eyed runts. "So these demons, how has Luther got control of them? We all know it's him."

"A summoning spell." Lyla answered without hesitation. "I went to the shop this morning and got every book I could get hold of about demons and summoning. He must have used a really strong spell to get so many."

"Is there no way to counteract it?"

"Only if we're in the presence of demons but it's a long and complicated spell. It wouldn't be worth it."

I sighed. Not what I wanted to hear. "Okay. Well this definitely complicates things."

"You can say that again." Grace agreed.

"Well this definitely complicates things." I repeated with a grin. "I've gotta go. Grandma Bea and Mum will be back soon. I'll see you in a few days."

"Okay Lils. We miss you guys." lyla blew me a kiss through the screen and I blew one back.

"We miss you too."

I shut down the laptop and turned to our new brother and sister team. "Can I talk to you guys in the kitchen?"

"Sure." Jas shrugged and moved out to the kitchen followed by a scowling Jayden.

Be nice. I think I really like him. Ava said.

I flipped her off behind my back.

**

I ran my fingers through my hair and turned to Jas.

"You did good tonight, Jas. I'm really proud of you."

She beamed back at me and it warmed me slightly. "You think?"

"I know. You've got a lot of work to do but you've come really far. We still have time to teach you."

"Thanks, Lily. I felt useless compared to everyone else."

"Don't ever feel that way. You were awesome." I smiled at her and turned to Jayden. He crossed his arms and looked at me expectantly.

"I don't expect you're gonna tell me I did good. I didn't do anything."

"Oh you did." I assured him sarcastically. "You royally pissed me off, that's what you did. I know you guys are inexperienced but that's no excuse for how you spoke to me tonight."

He opened his mouth to speak but I held up my hand.

"You have to learn to listen to me, Jay. I know it's just been the two of you for a couple of years but it's not anymore. The Salem Witches.. We're all family. We look out for each other at every turn and everyone comes to me because I'm the strongest. You're part of that family now. I don't like having moons on the back of my neck and leading anymore than you probably like listening to me but that's the way it is. Everyone listens to me in Salem. The witches, the vamps and the wolves. If I'm in the middle of a spell or I'm fighting off one of Luther's minions and you're being cocky and giving me attitude I could lose my focus and people could die, Jay. Do you get that? People could die. My dad died because I lost my focus on New Years Eve. I didn't do what I was supposed to and he gave his life for me. I can't lose concentration in a situation like we had tonight so you have to make a choice. You can stay here, in Florida, but you'll probably be dead by the end of the summer."

His face blanched at my bluntness. "What?"

"You heard me. If you come to Salem and listen to me we can help you with your powers, both of you, and give you a chance. We can give you a family and friends. It's your decision but if you come to Salem you have to respect me as your leader."

"I know. I'm sorry about tonight it's just.. You were so calm. Everyone else was scared, I was scared but you were just.. It was like you didn't care."

"I care, Jay. Probably too much. I stay calm because someone has to. If I started panicking what would everyone else do?"

"I suppose you're right. I'll do my best to listen to you."

"Thank you." I smiled at him and stood up.

"Lily?" he asked.

"Yeah?"

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"Coming out here and kicking my ass."

I smirked. "Any time, Jay, any time. And by the way.." I stopped at the kitchen door. "You better tell Ava you like her soon or I'll bang your damn heads together."

Jas burst out laughing behind me.

"How do you know?" He gasped.

"Seriously? I'm an empath, remember? You can't hide that stuff from me." I winked and went off to find Josh for a much needed cuddle.

EIGHTEEN

Home Sweet Home

I breathed a sigh of relief as I chucked myself down on my bed. It was so good to be home. Even though the last few days of our vacation was demon free, I still had a lot of organising and contact detail swapping with the vampires in Grandma Bea's streets. Sitting back up, I checked the clock and contemplated going to see Jerome. I'd really missed the crazy, blood coffee-addicted vamp.

I rifled through my closet, chucked on a pair of cut-off shorts and a tank top, slipped on some flip-flops and decided I would go and see him.

"Mum?" I shouted from the top of the stairs.

"In the kitchen!"

I ran down the stairs and poked my head round the door.

"I'm going to see Jerome."

"What about your clothes?" She raised an eyebrow.

"I'll do it later." I replied, grabbing my car keys from the side and waving at her.
"See ya later!"

"Wait! What about Jayden and Jasmine?"

Oh, yeah.

"I'll get everyone together tomorrow and introduce them. It'll be fine. Bye!"

I shut the front door behind me before she could reply. Besides, they needed time to settle in, I reasoned with myself. I pulled out of the driveway and tapped my fingers on the steering wheel to the beat of my music. Ah, I missed my car.

The coven house was only a five minute drive away so I arrived in no time. Climbing out, I patted the roof lovingly and made my way to the front door.

Justin opened it and grabbed me in a friendly hug quicker than I could say hi.

"You can put me down now." I grinned, tapping his shoulder.

"Sorry." He chuckled. "I just missed you."

"Aww, don't go getting all sappy on me now, vamp." I patted his cheek playfully and he laughed at me.

"I don't do sappy. I guess you're here to see Jerome?"

"Well, duh. He'd eat me if I didn't see him first."

"Fair point, love."

He shut the door and I heard Jerome's voice filter down the hallway.

"Who is it, Justin?"

I turned to Justin and put my finger to my lips indicating silence. He nodded and pointed to the meeting room. I crept down the hallway quietly, stifling my giggles and stopped outside the door. I nodded to Tweedledum and Tweedledee (Harry and Brian) and they opened the doors.

"Surprise!" I jumped into the room, throwing my hands in the air. Jerome jumped. Now it wasn't easy to make a vampire jump, so I mentally patted myself on the back.

"Lily!" He stood up and beamed at me. "Decided to return from the east coast's sunny state have you?"

"Well, I was worried about what kind of trouble you were getting up to. Can't leave you alone for too long, after all." I commented good-heartedly, looking pointedly at his mug. Blood coffee. There's a surprise.

"Me? Trouble? No no, that's your forte, dear girl." He hugged me fondly and I sat myself on the large table.

"How's everything been here?"

"You've only been gone a week, Lily." He pointed his pen at me.

"Yes, and your point? I know about the demon attack from Iyla but nothing else."

"Well, we've had a few rogue vamps around, but other than that, nothing else really."

"Did they cause much trouble?"

"No, but they were working for Luther. We brought them in for questioning and disposed of them. They were all fledglings, the youngest just a couple of months old, the oldest two or three years into vampirism. It's very worrying. Elijah and I have had a discussion or two on the subject and we believe Luther has a vampire in his employ who is changing unsuspecting humans, then when they have a taste for blood – more specifically, witch blood - he's sending them to Salem. My guess is he's hoping to eliminate some of our numbers."

"Gods have mercy." I whispered. I was chilled to the bone. Sending fledgling vampires after us? "Why is he using fledglings, and not more experienced vampires?"

"Because fledglings are unpredictable. They have no, or very little, control over their blood lust – and I'm just talking about human blood here. It appears he's raising the fledglings on witch blood because they head for the nearest house containing witches. He's playing a very dangerous game, Lily. You and lyla, being fire witches, would be fine in a confrontation with them, but everyone else is at danger."

I ran my fingers through my black curls and sighed. "Has any security measures been provided for the witches?"

"The same as we provided for you last year. Vampire guards at the edges of each property, from both covens."

"Well, I hope they do a better job than last time." I remarked sarcastically, remembering when lyla was shot through my window.

Jerome looked me in the eye. "Only the vampires over a century old are standing guard, Lily. Fledglings won't stand a chance against that amount of strength."

"I hope you're right, Jerome, because if any of my friends get hurt by these little assholes I'm gonna go spare." I warned him.

"I don't doubt you will, little witch." He smiled.

"I'm being serious, Jerome! I won't lose anymore people I care about. That bloody man is seriously testing my patience." I sighed and, wishing I'd left it at least a day before coming to see him.

He reached over and patted my hand. "Don't you worry, dear. We have it under control."

"Good."

He reached out for his mug and I decided to have a little fun. Using my new power, telekinesis, I moved it across the table. Jerome frowned and reached for it again. I moved it backwards a little, just out of his reach, keeping a straight face.

"Got a ghost, Jer?" I asked, cocking my head to the side.

"Apparently." He replied dryly, looking at me suspiciously.

"What's that look for?"

"Why do I think you have something to do with my mysteriously moving mug?"

"Um.. Because you've probably had too much of it." I pointed to his mug. "Maybe it's your ghosts way of telling you to lay off it a little." I shrugged.

"I'm sure." He eyed me again before grabbing it by the handle and finishing it in one.

"Anyway," I said happily, jumping off the table. "I gotta get back. New witches to settle in and all."

"New witches?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? Jayden and Jasmine. My Grandma Bea 'found' them in Florida and now they're living with me. Need some serious training though."

"Huh." He stood up. "I'll come with you."

"Er, sure?"

**

"Honey, I'm home!" I shouted as I entered the house. I led Jerome into the front room where Jayden and Jasmine were talking with Mum about school and other things.

"Hey guys." They both turned to me. "This is Jerome, the Master Vampire of the Salem Coven. I told you about him."

"Talking about me, Lily?"

"Don't flatter yourself, vampire." I said with a glare. "This is Jayden and Jasmine, our newest recruits."

"It's a pleasure to meet you children."

I rolled my eyes as Jerome shook hands with Jayden and kissed the back of Jasmine's hand. So old fashioned.

"Where's Grandma Bea?" I asked Mum.

"Upstairs, unpacking."

I jumped onto the bottom stair. "Grandma Beeeeeeeeaaaa!" I shouted.

"Yes, Lily Flower?" Her face appeared at the top.

"Someone for you to meet, oh great Supreme!"

She rolled her eyes and made her way down the stairs. At least I know where I get *that* habit from.

I linked arms with her as we went into the front room.

"Jerome this is.."

"Bea!" He exclaimed, jumping up.

"Jerome! Well I never!" She laughed and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"So... you two know each other?" I commented wryly as I sat next to Jasmine on the sofa.

"Yes, yes. He was here when I lived here, darling." Grandma Bea informed me. "Of course, he wasn't the Master then, just a run of the mill vampire."

"I'll have you know I was never a 'run of the mill vampire', Bea." Jerome said, offering her a seat.

"Of course you weren't, dear. Be a little love and pop the kettle on for me, would you, Jerome? Surely you can still remember how I take my tea?"

"Cream and two sugars." He winked and disappeared into the kitchen.

Huh. Who'd have guessed that?

"That was kinda freaky." I commented to no-one in particular. Mum agreed with a raise of her eyebrows.

"Are you all unpacked?" Grandma Bea asked Jasmine.

"Yeah. Finished up about half an hour ago."

"I hope the rooms are okay for you?"

"Yeah, they're great thanks." Jayden grinned. "I love this house, it's so cool."

"Not quite as cool with Grandma Bea and her underground witching lab." I winked at her across the room.

"No but your Mum was telling us, this house is like, proper old!" Jasmine cried. "Like.. Four hundred years!"

"Er, yeah, something like that." I smiled at her enthusiasm. Jerome came back in and gave both Mum and Grandma Bea their tea before settling down with a mug of his own.

"Again, Jerome?" I groaned.

"I don't know what you mean." His eyes twinkled over the mug.

"What do you mean?" Jay leant round his sister to look at me.

"Before Christmas, Mum invented this 'blood coffee', it's basically coffee made with blood instead of water, and now he," I cocked my thumb in Jerome's direction, "is addicted to it. He just finished a mug at the Coven House!"

"Oh, nonsense, little witch." Jerome scoffed. "It's more blood than coffee."

"You keep blood here?" Jas wrinkled her nose at me.

"When you get vamp visitors as much as us, yes. If you don't wanna see it, I'd advise you to avoid the fridge."

NINETEEN

Craig

"Yo, Devvo! Did ya miss me?" I winked as I bounded past him into his house.

"Of course." He replied, amusement lacing his tone. "How was Florida?"

I threw myself down on his sofa. "It was lovely, if you don't include finding out my Grandma Bea is a supreme witch, finding another two untrained witches - which I now have to train - meeting another vampire coven and being attacked by demons." I waved my hand dismissively.

"Ah, yes. Demons." Devlin sat back in his chair and touched his fingertips together. "They are...."

"Ugly little runts?" I offered cheerily.

A wry smile touched his lips. "Amongst other things."

I grinned. "How are things here?"

"Other than a few demon sightings, fine. Jerome mentioned about a few vampires sniffing around - but I assume you know that?"

I nodded.

"The demons we disposed of quickly. How did you fare in your meeting?"

"Froze em. Zapped em. Poof!" I cocked my head and held my hands out. "Smelt horrible though." I wrinkled my nose at the memory.

"Oh Lily." He shook his head, bemused.

"What? Everyone is so tense! I'm just tryna cheer everyone up." I grumbled. It's true. Everyone looked like they'd been slapped around the face with a wet fish. I know things were getting worse but seriously, it was time to cheer up!

"Taken over Justin's role?"

"Could say that. lyla said your bite is lethal to demons. Explain please." I batted my eyelashes as I heard the door slam.

"Ah, I will." He stood and looked to the door. "But first, allow me to introduce you to the new member of the pack. This is Craig." He motioned to the empty door and I looked up as a tall figure stepped through. His hair was almost as black as mine and spiked up. Light brown eyes sat above a Roman nose and curved pink lips. His skin was darkly tanned. Clearly Salem had some good weather lately.

"Alpha." He inclined his head to Devlin who smiled in return.

"Craig, this is Lily, our leader, Lily, this is Craig. He's been with us about 5 days from a pack in New Jersey."

"Well hey there!" I smiled up at his tall imposing figure. He stepped forward and offered me his hand.

"Pleasure to meet you, Lily." His nostrils flared slightly as we shook. I really wish they wouldn't do that. It makes me uncomfortable. I don't smell.

I waited until he took a seat on the sofa next to me - figures - before turning back to Devlin. He was eyeing Craig curiously.

"You were saying?" I prompted him.

"Ah, yes, what was I saying?" He asked me, turning his attention back to me.

I rolled my eyes. "Your age is getting to you, old man."

Dev chuckled and Craig eyed me with horror. Guess he hadn't been told much about me.

"Maybe, Lily, maybe."

"Demons.. Wolf bites.. Ring any bells up there?" I tapped my temple playfully.

"Ah yes!" Dev replied. "I was getting there, wasn't I? There is an enzyme in our saliva demons seem unable to tolerate. One bite in our wolf form and they.. How did you put it?"

"Go poof?" I giggled.

"Yes. They 'go poof'."

"So you can't just spit on them or something?"

"No. We must be in wolf form and we must bite them. Don't ask me why." He added, seeing the unspoken question on my face. "We don't know. But unfortunately their bite is also lethal to us. We have to get the first bite in."

"Hmm." I mused. "I wonder why. Do you think we could catch one?"

"What for?" Craig asked from beside me.

"Well." I started, turning to look at him. "It'd be interesting to find out why you're allergic to each other, for lack of a better word. I'm sure Jerome or Elijah will have a scientist stashed away somewhere in their coven." I turned back to Dev. "If we can get one, we could experiment."

"How would you catch one?" He asked, leaning forward. I could see he was interested.

"I'm not sure." I bit my thumbnail. "Maybe a binding spell? That way he'd be rendered useless, unable to attack us. Then we could cage him?"

"The binding spell would work.. But how would we get a cage to him?"

"Hello, Earth to Dev.. He'd be rendered useless. If we caught him, Justin or one of the other vamps could carry him to the coven house where the cage would be."

"How long will a binding spell last for?" Craig looked between us.

"I don't know. I'd have to check with lyla, but I'd imagine it'd hold until we said the counter spell - which of course, we wouldn't."

"Do you know a spell?"

"No. But I can get one." I twisted a piece of hair round my finger and shrugged. "I'll just go to my cousin's shop."

"Take someone with you Lily." Devlin ordered. "The vamps have been coming out in the daytime aswell. No member of my family will be hurt on my watch. Especially not you."

"Yes, big cuz." I replied sarcastically. "I'll take Sampson. Where is my little wolf friend?"

"You're related?" Craig cut in.

"Yeah he's my Dad's cousin. Or.. Was." I turned to Dev.

"On his way." He smiled at me. "He was in the woods going for a run."

"Oops." I grinned.

**

I whistled as Sampson came into view from the forest.

"Here boy!" I called playfully.

"Some things never change." He smirked and pulled me in for a hug. What was it with everyone and hugging me?

"Aww, did you miss me, wolf-man?" I said into his chest.

"Always." He grinned.

"Cor, anyone would think you lot are glad to have me back." I rolled my eyes and walked to the car.

"Always glad to see my girl." He winked.

"Oh, I didn't realise you two were together." Craig said, slightly disheartened.

"We're not." I sang, opening the car door. "He's been dreaming again!"

"Whatever." Sampson grumbled as the guys climbed into the car. "Where are we going?"

"Witchy Bits." I answered, starting the car and pulling out onto the road that would lead us back to Salem.

"Why?"

"Because."

"Why?"

"Jeez, what are you, two years old?" I glanced at him. "Why, why, why? Because I said, that's why. That and Dev wouldn't let me go out without someone with me."

"And you decided on me."

"Of course, you know you're my *favourite* wolf."

"You're a creep, Lily Mauve." Sampson grumbled.

"You love it."

**

"Hello, hello!" I sang as I pushed the door open to Witchy Bits.

lyla rubbed her eyes and blinked a few times in disbelief.

"Well, if it isn't my baby cousin finally coming to see us!"

"Oh, shush you!" I said giving her a big hug. Grace came through the beaded curtain from the back room and repeated the greeted.

"To what do we owe the pleasure?" lyla asked in a snooty accent.

"I need a binding spell." I replied.

"Why?" Grace narrowed her eyes at me.

"Because, my lovely cousin, we're gonna catch ourselves a demon!"

Grace and Sampson shared a look.

"She's gone crazy!" Grace cried, slapping her hand to her forehead.

"No! No!" I cried back.

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure, thank you." I proceeded to explain to them my plan. lyla nodded along with me, being a Biology nerd I knew I'd get her onside.

"It's a good idea." lyla agreed.

"I don't like it." Grace shook her head.

"You don't have to like it, Mauve." I grinned. "You just have to go along with it."

"You're trouble, Lily Mauve." She shook her head again.

"But you love me, and I know you'll do it."

"That's the damn problem." She grumbled.

"What if you can't find a strong enough spell?" Craig asked from behind me.

"Then we write one." lyla replied simply. "Our great-grandparents created the Wicca religion and wrote the original spells, after all. We'll be fine."

"I love you, lyla." I remarked with a happy grin.

"I know, Lily." She patted my hand. "I know."

TWENTY

Stake Outs

Day four of our demon stake out and we hadn't caught a single one. Not to mention my bum was getting numb on this tree branch. I was frustrated, impatient and cold. Days in Salem may have been warm but the night certainly wasn't.

Lyla was perched on the branch next to me and Justin sat higher up in the tree. Sampson and Robbie were in the tree next to us in case more than one demon showed up. I wasn't holding out any hopes for one, let alone a bunch of them. We'd already cast a circle of protection around the tree, and Lyla was clasping her bag - which was filled with the stuff we needed for the binding spell - tightly.

"What are you doing for your birthday?" She asked me with a nudge.

"Huh? Oh I don't know." I replied. "Haven't really thought about it, if I'm honest."

"But you'll be eighteen!"

"Yeah, so? It's not that exciting!"

"You have to do something!" She insisted.

"I'm sure you'll think of something, ly." I said wryly.

"Hmm. I'm sure I can work something out." She chirped happily. She's such a party animal.

I was shaking my head in amusement when I heard a low whistle. That was our signal.

I exchanged a glance with Lyla and scoured the immediate area. I found, thankfully, only one pair of bright red eyes. Us girls dropped from the tree to the ground in perfect sync and Lyla pulled a white candle from her bag, lit it and nodded at me to begin the spell.

"Powers of the witches rise
Course unseen across the skies
Hear me beckon, hear my plea
Great Goddess Hecate
We summon thee
By the power of the elements
We bind this demon here and now
Let this demon never be set free,
For such is our will, so mote it be."

I watched as the demon's body went rigid. Its arms snapped to its sides, it's legs straightened and it toppled over backwards. The only moving part of the little runt was its eyes that blinked in confusion. I waved the guys down with a triumphant smirk. Lyla closed the circle as Justin picked the demon up, holding it at arm's length. He said a quick goodnight and sped off into the darkness at vamp speed. Sampson and Robbie appeared in the spot Justin had just vacated and I stretched my arms above my head with a yawn.

"Well, I don't know about you guys, but my work here is done. I'm going to bed. Goodnight!" I waved happily and made my way back to my car, comforted by the thought of my bed waiting at home for me.

TWENTY-ONE

Pep Talk

After successfully capturing our demon and getting a full eight hours of sleep, I agreed to ice-cream at Rory's with the gang and allowed Grandma Bea to drag me outside to practice my telekinesis.

"See that watering can?" She pointed to a full watering can across the yard.

"Yes."

"Water the plants with it."

"Okay." I shrugged and made to walk to it.

"With magic, Lily!" She groaned in exasperation.

"Sure thing, oh great Supreme."

I focused all my energy on the little green watering can - I say little, it wasn't really, nor was it light, I know, I filled the damn thing - and willed it to move.

Apparently Grandma Bea didn't get the memo that the heaviest thing I've moved so far was a half-full mug of coffee.

Very shakily, it rose off the ground a few inches before dropping back with an audible thud.

Maybe I filled it up too much.

"Again." My personal tutor/slave driver ordered.

I swallowed my sigh and refocused. This time it lifted - higher - and tilted slightly, watering my favourite white rose bush. I'd planted it in memory of Dad. But, of course, I got too excited and it dropped back to the grass.

Grandma Bea opened her mouth and I waved her off.

"Again. I know."

"We're not leaving this yard until that flower bed is watered, missy."

"Yes, boss." I mumbled under my breath. Gods. Apparently she also didn't get the memo that when you hit sixty you're supposed to be a sweet old lady, not a tiger in disguise.

I guess my grandma missed an awful lot of memos. She was probably out partying the day they were handed out. Figures.

I tried for half an hour to water the flowers before I started getting a little impatient.

"Lily Mauve! Try harder! Focus!" Grandma Bea ordered loudly.

"I am!" I cried back in defence.

"Not hard enough!"

Then she really riled me.

"Do you realise how important your powers are, Lily?" She placed a hand on her hip, looking every bit a petulant teenager, but the fire in her eyes shocked me. "Do you realise how important telekinesis could be in a battle? You could incapacitate several members of the opposite side by using it! What if you had this power on new years eve, hmm? Would it have made a difference? Could you have saved your father?"

"That has nothing to do with this!" I shouted, tears filling my eyes as I battled the anger filling me.

"It has everything to do with it! What about if in the next battle Rosie, Ava or even Josh is faced with that situation? Iyla, Jasmine, Sampson? Grace? Justin? What if you could save them by whacking their attacker over the head with a heavy object? If you don't master this skill you'll never know and if - gods forbid - it ever happened you'd be forever kicking yourself! Don't be a failure, Lily, don't give up! Too many people depend on you! Now move that damn watering can!"

Her words had the desired effect. I focused all my emotions - my anger, sadness, guilt, dread - into my magic. I willed the watering can up. It moved in a smooth motion. I willed it to tilt. It tilted, the water flowing out. I willed it to move along the flower bed at my desire. It moved gracefully, watering every flower until I set it down at the end, under the old maple tree.

I let out a big breath and looked to my grandmother who was stood still, watching me, her eyes filled with pride. A loud whistle and cheer erupted from the porch. I spun and saw Rosie, Ava, Josh, Jayden and Jasmine stood rooting for me.

"You did that deliberately, didn't you?" I said quietly, shooting Grandma Bea a look.

"Yes."

"You're not gonna tell me why?"

"You don't need me to. You already know." She took my hand and squeezed it gently.

She was right. I did know. I needed to be reminded of what was at stake when I was ready to give up. Damn that woman!

"Thank you." I said sincerely.

"Now, how about we have a little fun?" She said, smiling mischievously. I followed her line of sight and saw the hose pipe.

"Turn it to spray, turn on the tap and spray them." She whispered conspiratorially.

I smiled despite myself and did as she said. The nozzle turned to spray, the tap twisted on and the hosepipe directed itself at the five figures on the porch. We were rewarded by their screams and the boys grunts of surprise. In seconds they were soaked and me and Grandma Bea doubled over with laughter.

Honestly, the woman was a menace and a complete pain in the arse sometimes, but she was a fun pain in the arse.

**

"I cannot believe you got me wet." Ava grumbled, yet again, as we claimed several empty tables in Rory's Ice Cream Parlour.

"Yeah, right!" Josh scoffed. "You weren't the one who had to go home to get changed, you just borrowed Lily's dress!"

"Oh shush." I slapped Josh playfully.

We were all there - literally. Me, Josh, Ava, Rosie, Grace, Iyla, Maya, Ivy, Justin, Carson, Jayden, Jasmine, Sampson, Robbie and Craig.

I don't even need to tell you that it was a bit awkward.

"What you having Lily?" Maya asked me over her menu.

"Do you need to ask?" I grinned.

"Chocolate fudge sundae!" Everyone shouted. I shrugged. I couldn't help it, I was addicted to them!

We placed our order with Rory - an adorable Canadian man with salt and pepper hair and a big smile - and settled in for the long haul. The air conditioning was a welcome cold breeze along my bare skin. Ahh.

"So Lily.. Your birthday.." Grace started.

"Talk to your sister." I replied quickly.

I caught the excited gleam in Iyla's eye and wondered what she could have possibly thought up since last night. Scratch that - I was more worried about what she hadn't thought up. It was going to be big and amazing, that's for sure.

Two weeks until my birthday. Eighteen. Yay. All that meant was Senior year and even more drama. I couldn't wait.

I dove into my sundae as soon as it appeared in front of me and half listened as Jasmine and Jayden regaled the others about their lives in Florida. I was also acutely aware of Craig's eye on me occasionally. What was it with these wolfs? Maybe I should do what I once threatened Sampson with - autographed photos.

I studiously ignored him and leaned into Josh, absently thinking that maybe it was time to visit Felicity and see if we could get any info out of her this time. She was being annoyingly tight lipped.. And if I was honest, we needed something to go on more than ever.

The attempted fledging vampire attacks on witches and demon sightings just meant everything was heating up. And I didn't wanna think about what would happen if we kept being one step behind.

TWENTY-TWO

Stalker

Jerome unlocked the basement door and we clambered down. I sneezed on the dust that rose up from the wooden stairs as our feet thumped against them. He flicked a switch at the bottom of the stairs and led me down a small corridor, to another room. He selected another key from the chain and opened the thick, wooden door with a clunk. He flicked another switch and the room was bathed in light. Six 'cells' sat side by side along the wall opposite me, all empty bar one.

A loud, threatening growl came from Felicity's cell at the end. I casually walked over and sat on a wooden chair opposite the door. The window was open and I could see her clearly through the barred section. Our eyes met and she glared at me, waiting for me to back down and show submission.

Something I had no intention of doing to her.

I don't know how long we played the staring game, neither of us moving. Two strong willed, alpha females battling it out. Eventually she broke her stare, glancing away for a split second. I hid my smug smile and raised an eyebrow at her.

"Lovely place you've got here." I commented nonchalantly.

"If this door wasn't between us, witch.." She threatened.

"Yes, so you've said. Several times. Fact is, it is there, so don't get too excited, mutt." I replied dryly, intentionally adding the derogatory term. She growled again, the kind of low, warning growl a wolf would give before going in for the kill.

"So, do you have anything to tell me today?" I examined my nails as I asked her.

"No." She answered forcefully.

"Shame. And I was thinking of letting you out for a run." Jerome said casually, leaning against the wall.

Her eyes flickered between us for a second as if judging our honesty. Truth was, I'd suggested that to Jerome. Yes, I strongly disliked Felicity, but I wasn't inhumane. She was part wolf, she needed nature like I needed magic.

"Really?" She asked suspiciously.

"Yes." I said. "Of course, you'd be supervised and on a leash because I don't trust you."

"But you'd let me outside? In the woods?"

"For half an hour, maybe an hour if you behave." I shrugged. "You'd be flanked by wolves and vamps though. I'm not cruel, Felicity. I don't like you and the feeling is mutual, I know, but I know you need to run or your wolf will send you mad."

She moved closer to the door.

"We'll make you a deal. You tell me what I wanna know, and the next full moon - in three days - you can have a run in the woods. I'd say that's fair."

She mulled it over for precisely two minutes before nodding her head. "I need to get out. It's been so long."

"Then start talking."

"You know about the new vamps?"

"Yep. What can you tell me?"

She rubbed her forehead. "He has one guy changing them. He's about two hundred years old. He's building an army of them fed off witch blood."

"How many?" Jerome nearly growled.

"I don't know exactly. But a lot."

"Where's he getting the blood from?" I asked.

She turned her gaze to me. "From the dead witches. He's kept it stored for this exact purpose."

Bile rose in my throat and I clamped my hand over my mouth. He was feeding his new vampires the blood of my ancestors. I darted into the small bathroom off the underground room and bent over the toilet, my breakfast making an appearance. My family. These new vampires were drinking them, driving their blood lust, enhancing their new powers. I shuddered with revulsion and flushed the toilet, walking back to the basement on shaky legs.

"Sorry." I apologised in a whisper. Jerome placed a comforting hand on my shoulder and I looked back up to Felicity.

"What else?" My voice was hoarse.

"Have you come across the demons?"

"Unfortunately." Jerome answered for me.

"Then you'll know wolf saliva is fatal to them?"

I nodded in response, still unable to completely rid my stomach of the nausea swirling in it.

"He's building an army. A big army. Things are only gonna get worse. He's.." She paused and bit her lip thoughtfully.

"He's what?" I asked.

"I..."

"Tell me, or our deal is off, Felicity." I said harshly.

She looked at the floor, took a deep breath and met my gaze.

"He's got Spencer following you. That's how he knew you were on vacation. That's how he's always one step ahead. He's stalking you."

**

"Son of a goddamn bitch!" I yelled, banging the basement door against the wall, startling several vampires in the kitchen. I stormed past them to the front door, ignoring their concerned looks and questions.

"Lily are you.." Jerome started. I threw the door open, cutting him off. I moved halfway down the driveway and stood shaking in anger.

"Spencer you get your filthy little witch ass down here right now you dirty coward!" I shouted into the trees around me, knowing most of the coven house was watching from the doorway and front room windows.

He dropped beside me and I spun, glaring at him.

"Took you long enough to figure out." He remarked smugly.

"Oh I didn't figure it out, it seems your girlfriend isn't as loyal as you once thought." I said icily. "How long?"

He stared at me blankly.

"How. Long?" I repeated, louder.

"Two months.. maybe three?" He shrugged and leant against the tree trunk. "You're clever for a wimpy kid witch."

"Wimpy kid witch?" I laughed bitterly. "I've got more balls than all of you scumbags put together!"

"Apparently." He chuckled and shot a vine at me from his wrist. I countered with a bolt of electricity, cutting it off before it could get near me. So he was an Earth witch.. Interesting..

"Think you can take me on, *Spence*?" I said sarcastically, raising an eyebrow and placing a hand on my hip.

"Think a lot of yourself, don't you, *Lily*?" He replied.

"Not at all. But if you wanna try it, bring it."

Something kicked at my ankles and looking down, I saw vines growing from the Earth.

"Smart move." I acknowledged. "But not smart enough."

I conjured a ring of fire around my feet, immediately cutting off the vines progress and so began our game of cat and mouse.

Vine. Lightening. Vine. Lightening. Vine. Lightening.

The earth began to rumble under me but I stood my ground, my protective ring of fire keeping me safe. As we both fought for the upper hand, Grandma Bea's words from yesterday came back to me.

'What if you could save them by whacking their attacker over the head with a heavy object?'

What if indeed...

Throwing a ball of fire towards Spencer's feet, I scanned the ground around me, my eyes settling upon a heavy branch. Ducking to avoid a vine heading straight for my neck, I focused on the branch, allowing my emotions from the chat with Felicity to control the movement. The thick branch sped through the trees towards Spencer. I smirked as it rendered him unconscious with a ceremonious 'thwack' on the back of the head. He collapsed onto the gravel of the driveway and I put out the fire.

Jerome was at my side in a second.

"Gods, Lily. You never cease to amaze me."

"Did I forget to mention my new power?" I said innocently, my legs trembling slightly as my adrenaline subsided.

"Apparently."

Two vampires picked Spencer up and carried him inside the house, presumably to the cells under Felicity's.

"Oh." I cocked my head. "I'm telekinetic."
He eyed me suspiciously. "Case of the moving mug solved, then."
I grinned, my eyes twinkling mischievously.

TWENTY-THREE

One Stop Past Crazyville

I have a date! Ava announced to me.
Oh yeahhh? I winked mentally at her.
Yeah! I could feel her smile. *Jayden asked me out for dinner tonight!*
Well it's about time! I laughed. *He asked me for good date spots three days ago!*
Oh it was so cute, Lily. He was so nervous when he called.
Does Josh know?
No. You can tell him.
Gee, thanks. Why do I always get the fun stuff?
He's on his way over now.
Alright. Have fun and we'll chat later!

I smiled at her excitement and decided it was probably best to get out of my pyjamas. Finding a simple sun dress in my closet, I threw it on my bed, grabbed a towel and headed for the shower.

I shook my wet hair out and clutched the towel to me as I left my bathroom. I nearly jumped when I saw Josh sat on the bed.

"Could have told me you were here." I grumbled.

"Where's the fun in that?" He chuckled. "Then I never would have got to see you in a towel."

I rolled my eyes and gave him a quick kiss before grabbing my clothes from the bed and darting back to the bathroom.

"You're starting to sound like Liam and Scott!" I called.

"I know that! But when I have a beautiful girlfriend like you, who can blame me?"

I smiled to myself and pulled the dress over my head.

"Do my hair?"

He patted the space on my bed between his legs and I sat down, retrieving the remote with my powers. MTV flashed up on the TV with repeats of last night's '16 & Pregnant'.

"I'm not watching this. Ava hogged the TV all night to watch it." Josh protested as he ran his fingers through my hair, drying the ebony curls with his magic.

"I know. I watched it too."

"She only watches it to yell at the guys who ditch their kids."

"That's because she has to take her frustration out on guys somehow."

A knock sounded at my door.

"Come in!"

Jayden popped his head round.

"Hey Lily, Josh." He did that male nodding thing. "Lils can I borrow your car tonight? I still need to buy one."

I winked at him. "Course you can, Casanova. Keys are on the side in the hall. We'll go and find you one tomorrow after the meeting, okay?"

"You're the best. Thanks."

"So everyone keeps telling me." I said, throwing him another wink as he left.

"Casanova?" Josh questioned me once the door shut.

"Oh yeah." I leant back into his chest and rested my head back on his shoulder. "He's got a date tonight."

"Who? I didn't think he knew anyone.."

I could almost hear the penny drop.

"Oh."

"Yes, he's taking Ava out tonight."

"Oh well. If she's gonna date someone other than Carson I'd rather it be him and not a vamp or one of those damn wolves."

"You really hate those wolves, don't you?" I laughed.

"No. Not all of them. Sampson's okay now he's not pursuing you anymore."

"He's like my brother now." I mused. "What do you think to Craig?"

He pressed his lips to my cheek and squeezed me. "I don't know. I haven't really spoken to him. Seems alright though."

I decided to keep my observations to myself. Although even that would be short lived.

**

"Lily! Dev's here to see you!" Rosie yelled up the stairs.

"Coming!" I yelled back. I kissed Josh quickly and jumped off the bed.

"Hey, what's up?" I asked the alpha wolf as I came down the stairs.

"Lily, can we talk? Privately?"

"Uh, sure. We can use Mum's study." I waved for him to follow me, a little confused.

We settled in Mum's study, finding two chairs amongst the camera items and photos.

"What's wrong?" I asked, taking in his serious face.

"I need to talk to you about Craig."

"So talk." I shrugged.

He leant back in the chair, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"He came to me this morning.. You've been spending a lot of time together recently?"

I nodded. "Yeah we've been showing him around, getting him to settle in. Him and Jayden seem to have started up a friendship, both being the new guys, ya no?"

"Yes, he did mention." Dev smiled slightly. "He also mentioned you to me."

I groaned, expecting where this was going.

"You see, Lily.. Craig claims that his wolf has identified you as his mate."

The clock ticked in the background. Tick, tock.

"Come again?" I said after a moment. Maybe I wasn't quite expecting *that*. "His mate?"

"Yes.. As you know, when we mate it is for life. Sometimes our wolves recognise our mate before even we do, and he is claiming you are his life mate."

"I think his train went one stop past Crazyville, Dev. I've met the guy like five times! He doesn't know me!"

"If what he is claiming is indeed true, that means nothing to him. You would, after all, have a lifetime together."

"In his dreams!" I scoffed. "What is it with your young wolves, Dev? They're all obsessed with me!"

"I have no idea, Lily. You are very beautiful, but I think it's your fiery personality that gets their attention. You know our females are submissive."

"Yeah, well, you can tell new boy that the closest he's gonna get to having a lifetime with me is a lifetime friendship on my Facebook profile." I stood and opened the door. "I don't mean to be rude, but Josh is upstairs waiting for me."

"Of course." Devlin stood. "I'll see you here tomorrow for the meeting?"

"Yep. Like I could get away."

He opened the front door with a chuckle and turned back to me. "I'll do my best to find out the truth, Lily. But he will be there tomorrow. It may do you well to speak with him."

"Yeah, well, let's just hope I get to him before Josh does."

**

Josh went mad. Like any good boyfriend. I passed him off to Rosie to calm down.

"Talk to me, little lady." Mum said, sitting down on the grass next to me.

I sighed and pulled my knees to my chest, resting my head on top of them.

"I give up, Mum. I'm so sick and tired of people meddling in my relationship. I have so much on my mind and then this new guy that I've known for all of a week is claiming I'm his life mate! I wish we'd never moved here and that I didn't know anything about witches, magic, vampires and werewolves. I wish everything was normal."

"You don't mean that."

"No. I don't. Not really. But I do wish everyone would just give me a break."

We sat in silence for a few moments before she turned to me.

"You won't get a break as long as this is going on, but never give up, Lily. Everyone here loves you." She reached over and tucked a lock of hair behind my ear lovingly. "Everyone trusts *you*, believes in *you*, everyone has faith in *you*. And so do I, Lily. I believe you can beat this. You've been through so much in the last year, we all have, but you? You've never let it get you down, not yet, and I know you won't. You'll get to the bottom of these vampire attacks and demon appearances, you'll master these powers and you'll win this fight in the end. I know because I believe in you. You believe in yourself but not enough." I lifted my head and looked at her. "You're a fighter, Lily. You're a leader through and through. You walk into a room and command everyone's attention, not because of what you are, but because of who you are. When you speak, it's with so much passion that no-one has a choice but to listen to you. You believe every word you say, and you'd protect everyone you love in a heartbeat. Have you forgotten what you went through to save Ivy? You went in there knowing confrontation was inevitable but never stopped. You're not fearless, baby girl, you fear many, many things, but what sets you apart from everyone else is your courage and belief. And that's what makes a difference. That's why so many people love you. You're one of a kind. I'm not just saying this because you're my daughter, but I couldn't be any prouder of you, and if your father was here he would be too. What do you think he would say to you? He'd tell you to get off your ass, shoot some fireballs and talk to that wolf. He'd tell you to show him who's boss. He'd tell you to take no prisoners. He'd tell you to give him shit."

I raised my eyebrow then smiled sadly. "He would. He'd tell me to stop feeling sorry for myself and go and show the world who Lily Mauve is. He'd tell me to go and kick some muddy werewolf ass."

"He believed in you, Lily. He never stopped. He never doubted you for a second. He believed in you until his very last breath. Don't let all of that be in vain. Tomorrow, you talk to that wolf and show him *exactly* who our daughter is." Mum kissed my forehead and stood.

"Mum?" I said as she walked back to the house.

"Yes, baby?"

"Thank you."

She smiled at me, and went back inside.

TWENTY-FOUR

Truth

My dining room was crowded. Yet again. Vampires, wolves and witches were crammed in, some sitting, some standing and some leaning against walls. Oh yeah, plus one human, Ivy, who'd one hundred percent dedicated herself to helping us after her capture.

"For those of you who don't know, we have another two witches on our side." I paused for the cheers. Crazy bunch. I gestured towards them. "This is Jayden and Jasmine. Their elements are fire and water and myself, Rosie, Iyla and Ava are training with them. And from what I've been told, my Grandma Bea has made herself known to everyone already." I smirked at her fondly as everyone laughed. She'd been to every witch house in the town with a tray of freshly baked cookies to say hi.

"Due to the recent demon attacks, tonight I want everyone to reinforce the protective charms around their houses. Elijah - me, Iyla, Jasmine and Josh will come to your coven house this evening to cast your spell. Jerome - Rosie, Carson and Maya will go to you. Devlin - Ava, Jayden and Grace will go to Swampscott with Uncle Kev, Louise, Jessie and Hannah to perform the spells on any house, your wolves just need to say the word."

"That's very kind of you." Devlin bowed his head.

"No, Dev, at this stage it's a necessity. You've had too many close calls with pups too young to shift because there's no protection on any of your homes. They'll also cast a spell in the woods before your lunar run tonight. I know that doesn't leave many of us after the coven houses but we'll have Jack and Grandma Bea to help protect Salem. I'm sure we can talk Grandma Bea into doing some more baking for sustenance." I smiled at her.

"I'll just get my apron, dear." She winked.

"Sit down, Grandma!" Rosie ordered. "We're not done yet!"

"Oh, sorry love."

"Jer?" I turned to him.

"Lily?"

"Has Spencer said anything yet?"

"Spencer?" Maya asked. "Since when were we in best friends with him?"

"Since Lily bargained with Felicity, found out he'd been stalking her then smacked him over the head with a branch." Justin laughed. "He's under the coven house."

"Well I'll be." Grace laughed.

"He's at my mercy now." I grinned. "Iyla can you find a.."

"Truth spell? On it." She pulled a book of shadows from her bag and started leafing through it to everyone's amusement.

"Well then." I laughed. "Louise, if it doesn't work can you extract some of his memories?"

"Sure thing, honey, never liked that boy. With any luck he won't have a mind block."

"He was Luther's right hand man so he's sure to know something."

"What did Felicity say, Lily?" Sampson asked across the room.

I swallowed and looked to Jerome. He'd already filled Elijah and Devlin in.

"The vamps we've been finding are fledglings. No more than a year or two old. He's building an army and feeding them on witch blood, which is making them erratic."

"How's he getting the witch blood?" Ava asked, trembling.

I caught Jerome's eye and pleaded with him silently. I couldn't say it.

"He's been storing it from the witches he killed." He said solemnly.

I watched as everyone's faces visibly drained of blood.

"I was afraid of this." Uncle Kev said in a low voice.

"What?" I asked.

"We always kept a part of history from you kids. We didn't want to scare you." He sighed and looked at us apologetically. "Whenever he killed a witch, his followers would deal with their bodies and when they were returned to the families they were completely drained of blood."

Jayden stood up, slamming his chair and stormed out. Silent tears streamed down Jasmine's cheeks and I wondered if that was how they found their parents. The room fell into silence. No-one knew what to say.

"Excuse me." Grandma Bea whispered. She took hold of Jasmine and lead her upstairs.

I cleared my throat. "Then we have one option." I linked my fingers through Josh's for comfort.

"What?" He asked.

I looked at everyone before settling my gaze on the two master vampires in the room.

"We find the vampire who's working for him and turning humans. And then..."

I took a deep breath. "And then you kill him."

They both nodded.

"Understood."

**

"Heavy stuff." Craig said as we stepped onto the porch.

"It's only going to get worse." I replied, leaning over the fencing. "Me and you, need to talk."

"Yes."

"Explain yourself." I demanded, turning to face him and folding my arms. "Now."

"My wolf recognises you as its mate." He shrugged.

"Oh your wolf does, does it?" I raised my eyebrows disbelievingly.

He shrugged again. "So it tells me."

"Right." I exhaled. "Let's get something straight. I have a boyfriend, who I love, very much. I also have a hell of a lot on my mind right now, and have no intention of giving in to your wolf's supposed demands. Tell it to find itself another mate."

"It won't. Wolves are stubborn, Lily." He said quietly.

"So am I, Craig, so am I."

TWENTY-FIVE

Shopping

The darkness was suffocating, pulling me down. I tried to wriggle my toes, lift my hands and kick out but I was paralysed. I fluttered my eyelids in a desperate attempt to open my eyes but they were glued shut. My breathing began to come in short, harsh pants as I attempted to thrash my body around to break the invisible bonds that were holding me.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

I tried to move again, harder, faster, but it was no use. I couldn't move and the thumping was getting louder.. and louder.. and louder..

"Lily! Get up!" Rosie yelled through my bedroom door as I woke suddenly from my dream.

"What's wrong?" I asked, opening the door and rubbing sleep from my eyes.

"We're leaving for Boston in an hour. You need to get ready!"

"Gods, yes Mum!"

I shut the door in her face and stretched on my way to the bathroom. My head was foggy and a good shower would clear it.

I was no stranger to the dream. It wasn't the first time I'd had it.. The first time I brushed it off, the second time I put it down to my memories of Ivy's rescue.. But a third time? I shivered under the hot flow of water.

What was my mind trying to tell me? Was it someone trying to dream-walk me? But no-one I knew of had that power, not even Luther himself.

I rinsed my hair and turned to stop the shower. I kept thinking as I pottered around my room getting ready but got nowhere.

What did it mean?

**

"Cambridgeside here we come!" Ava said excitedly as she locked her car door.

"I don't even know why we're here." I protested. "I don't need anything!"

"You're here because I needed to get out of Salem!" Ava linked her arm through mine. "And Jas hasn't been here yet!"

I looked back to Jas who offered me a small smile and a half-hearted shrug. Even Ivy and Maya looked half asleep. Well, it was 10am. Grace and Iyla had the best idea of meeting us at lunch.

I allowed myself to be dragged into the mall by my best friend and sister who were - even for them - unusually excited. Ava directed us straight into Sears and to the clothing section. My phone buzzed as I absently flicked through a rail of clothes. I pulled it out. Josh.

"Macy's gift card in ur purse. Buy something pretty. Love u x"

"What?!" I nearly shrieked and dove into my purse, finding it in the zip section. \$80 gift card for Macy's.

"Ur nuts! Thank u love u too x" I replied, shaking my head.

"Awesome you found it!" Ava clapped happily. "Lets go now!"

"Let's go to Starbucks." I pleaded.

"I hear ya, girl. I need a cinnamon frap to wake me up!" Maya said with a gentle slap on my shoulder.

"Let's go, now. Before Miss I Want It All keeps us here." Ivy grinned at Ava.

"Whatever." She replied trying to look offended.

I leant in to her and whispered loudly.

"Don't mean to burst your bubble, A, but you don't look offended. You look like a vampire just bit your ass."

**

The black bustier with a sweetheart neckline hugged my waist tightly. The silver detailing gave way to the white, ruffled organza skirt that skimmed the middle of my thighs. I placed my hands on my waist and attempted to find a fault with it - something, anything, but I just couldn't. I was staring at dress perfection and I needed it.

I needed it now.

I threw the curtain back and spun in front of the girls. Rosie grabbed my shoulders and propelled me into the booth.

"Buy! Now!"

The curtain closed behind me and I shrugged, checking the price tag. My eyes popped. \$150!!

Then I saw the sale tag. \$79.99.

Someone up there loves me.

**

I woke the next morning to a large bouquet of white roses with violet centres on my kitchen table. I picked the card out and smiled.

"Beautiful flowers for a beautiful girl. I love you, Josh."

I put my nose in them and took a big sniff. They smelt just like lavender, another sign he'd had a helping hand from Carson.

"Wow." Jas said as she entered the kitchen.

"I know, right?" I beamed as I turned to her.

"They're amazing." She bent over and smelt them the same way I did. "How..?"

"Carson. He's amazing at manipulating plants."

"Are you sure Ava doesn't have another brother?" She asked me wistfully.

"No. Sorry." I grinned.

"Oh well." She rolled her eyes. "School starts in a month. Maybe I'll find someone interesting there."

She was definitely settling in.

That, or she was spending too much time with Maya.

TWENTY-SIX

A Scientific Discovery

"So, what brings me here Elijah?" I said, leaning against his office door.

"Ah, excellent. I believe Vincent, my scientist has discovered something of interest to you. We're just waiting on Devlin." He motioned to a chair opposite him.

"Please, take a seat."

"Devlin is entering a coven house?"

"Yes. You sound surprised."

"It's just that.. Oh never mind."

A wolf in a vampire house. I never thought I'd see the day.

"Master! Master!" A vampire named Alistair shouted down the hall. "There's a wolf at the door!"

I rolled my eyes. Fledglings.

"I'm expecting the alpha, Alistair!" Elijah thundered back.

I stood up and poked my head round the door. "Let him in for goodness sake, Al! He won't eat you!"

"Oh. Oh." Alistair turned back to Devlin sheepishly. "Come in, sir."

"Thank you, fledgling." Devlin smiled graciously and walked the hall to Elijah's office.

"Hey, Mr Alpha." I grinned.

"Lily." He kissed my cheek.

"Devlin." Elijah stood and bowed his head.

"Elijah." Devlin returned the head bow.

"Please, come." Elijah swept past us both. "Alistair, I would like to see you later."

"Yes, Master." Alistair bowed as scuttled off.

I elbowed Elijah as we walked. "Be nice to him. He's just a baby."

"I fear a baby would have better manners than him, Lily. In my time we never would have spoken such."

"Well, don't think I'm being rude, Elijah, but your time was four hundred years ago." I pointed out casually. "Things are a liiiittle different now."

He tsked at me and unlocked a door in the kitchen. "Down here is Vincent's makeshift laboratory. He's made a discovery regarding the demon and the poison."

"Excellent!" Devlin said happily.

We followed Elijah into a dimly lit hallway and I squinted to see. Sighing, I lit my version of a torch in my palm.

"I'd prefer if you didn't light a fire in my property, Lily." Elijah said.

"Well, no offence, vampire, but not all of us have super night vision like you. I can't see a bloody thing. And anyway, it won't burn you. It's synthetic. Don't worry your pretty little head." I patted his shoulder.

"You know, Lily, I could kill you easily."

I chuckled. "Well I could kill you just as easy, so I guess we're even, but I'd really prefer not to. I do like you."

Devlin chuckled behind me and I'm pretty sure I heard a small one from Elijah.

He pushed open a door into a brighter room and I extinguished my fire. It was like I'd just stepped into a high-tech lab in the city, not a makeshift underground one. Walls were lined with beakers and test tubes, a large desk was covered with papers and charts and a long counter was in the middle of it all. A vampire in a white coat and goggles was bent over studying something.

A vampire in a white coat and goggles. Oh my. I suppressed a giggle.

On the table there was various vials of liquid in clamps and more papers. Actually, it was a bit of a mess.

I looked around and found my frozen demon in the corner in a cage. I grinned at it as Elijah approached the counter in the middle.

"Vincent."

The scientist vampire looked up. "Master." He bowed his head.

"This is Lily, the leader of this arrangement and Devlin, the Alpha of the wolf pack."

Vincent dropped his goggles round his neck and turned to us. His blonde hair was mussed and his icy blue eyes looked as if they could see right through you.

"It's a pleasure to meet you both."

"And you, my boy." Devlin stepped forward to shake his hand. "Elijah informs us you've made a discovery."

"I have, sir. If you'd like to take a seat."

Take a seat? Where?

Elijah pulled a chair out from the opposite side of the counter and nodded me over. I happily took a seat and he pushed me back in.

"My thanks, good sir." I grinned, earning myself an eye roll and a head shake.

Elijah perched on the a stool next to me and gave Vincent his attention.

"Vincent, please share with us your findings."

"Of course, Master." Vincent rummaged under some papers and extracted a laptop which he set up before turning his gaze back to us. "As you know, I've been studying the demon and samples of wolf saliva that the alpha," he inclined his head towards Devlin with a gracious smile, "was kind enough to provide from his pack members. I've also compared it with vampire saliva and your saliva, Lily. I found no reactions between the demon saliva and the vampire and witch saliva. I believe it's in DNA. Vampires are, effectively, dead people walking, so there wasn't much in the way of enzymes. As for the witches.. The only conclusion I can draw without looking into it further is that a witch's DNA is simply too different from that of a werewolf."

"Would you be able to look further into the witch blood?" I asked. "I mean, I know no-one has been bitten yet, but it's almost inevitable, especially in the final battle. It'd help us a lot if we knew what could happen if we were bitten."

Everyone was silent as they thought over my request, although I didn't miss the excitement that lit in Vincent's eye momentarily.

"I believe that would be very beneficial to us all, Lily. Grace may be able to come up with a potion or tea or whatever it is she makes to counter the affects." Elijah nodded slowly.

I grinned and noticed Vincent hiding a smile. I winked. "Carry on, Vincent. Sorry."

"No problem, Lily. As I was saying, it only appears to affect wolves. There is enzymes in both samples of saliva I studied, and they are exact opposites." He clicked a few times on his laptop and spun it to us. A grainy image of little.. Well, little blobs darted across the screen destroying others.

"The blue coloured ones are wolf saliva, and the red ones demon." Vincent explained, gesturing to the screen. "Whenever the saliva comes into contact with a part of the opponents body, the enzymes are released and attack the others."

"So if they're both poisonous to the other, why don't the enzymes fight back?" I frowned.

"Unless I am misunderstanding," Devlin began, "it's much like when someone has an allergy to a peanut. Even though the body tries to dispel the allergy, the allergy itself is too ferocious and overtakes the body's defends mechanisms. I believe when our saliva comes into contact with a demon, and vice versa, the poison, as you put it, Lily, is like the peanut allergy. It's too ferocious."

"That's exactly how it is." Vincent remarked happily. "The venom in the saliva spreads and overtakes the body quickly. Of course, the chances of your saliva coming into contact with one another is slim, but I believe it travels the body through the blood at a lightening speed."

"Can you create something to repel the force of the venom?" Elijah leant forward, resting his eyebrows on the table. "It would be a useful tool to have."

"Almost certainly, but.." Vincent glanced at Devlin.

"Whatever you need, Vincent, my pack and I will be honoured to provide it. You're clearly adept at what you do. We are at your service."

"Excellent." I sat up straighter. "Can I go back to my day of doing nothing yet?"

**

"So, Lily." Devlin smiled at me over the table in Rory's. Apparently the old wolf was 'partial to a strawberry sundae or two.'

"So, Devlin." I replied, happily licking the chocolate sauce from my spoon.

"Has Craig said anything more to you yet?"

"Nope. And I'm happy for it to stay like that."

"I must admit, I do fear he won't give up on this idea of the two of you."

I looked up, unaffected by his comment. "Then he'll find himself walking off with a singed tail between his legs, won't he?"

TWENTY-SEVEN

Honesty Is The Best Policy

"Ready?" I turned to lyla. We were in the basement of the Coven House on the level Spencer was being held. I was ready for answers.

"It won't work." He taunted from his cell.

"Shut it, mongrel." lyla snapped back to him without turning her head.

I passed her the small ceramic dish she brought and she tipped some Thyme into it.

"Purification I do conjure

So that thoughts be spoke,

Not be pondered."

She waved her hand over the candle and lit it.

"Passion so red,

Set to the fire,

Let the truth be said,

As is my desire."

I placed a few strands of Spencer's hairs into the dish and lyla dripped some of the candle wax onto them.

"Mists of thyme,

Fire of red,

Send the truth from Spencer's mouth

Straight to our head."

The hair fizzled a little as the red wax burnt it and the herb. I leant back slightly to avoid the small steam of smoke coming off of it. lyla nodded towards his cell and I got up from the dusty floor, smacked the dirt from my shorts and approached Spencer. Jerome was hot on my tail.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Spencer Bolsten." He replied, a slightly glazed look in his eyes.

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"Are you a witch?"

"Yes."

"What's your element?"

"Earth."

"Do you have any other powers?"

"No."

I glanced towards Jerome. He scanned the sheet of paper we had about Spencer and nodded to confirm everything was correct.

"Do you work for Henry Luther?"

Silence.

"Yes."

I blew out a small sigh of relief.

"Why do you work for him?" lyla asked as she moved closer to me.

"He said he would make me more powerful."

The three of us exchanged incredulous looks. *That's what he was telling his minions? Wow.*

"What do you know about his fledgling vampires?"

I looked to Jerome. Cut to the chase, why don't we?

"Nothing."

I frowned. "What about the demons?"

"Nothing."

"Why were you following me?"

"So he could kill you."

Well, he clearly didn't do a good enough job.

"When will he attack us?" lyla chimed in.

Silence.

"Spencer?"

"Yes?"

"When will he attack us?" She repeated, slower this time.

"I.. I don't know." He scrunched his face up as if he was trying to remember something but couldn't.

"Okay." I ran my fingers through my hair. "What's the name of the vampire turning the fledglings?"

"Marco... Something." He frowned. "I don't know."

"Does that mean anything to you?" I asked Jerome.

"I know of a few Marco's. I'll get Adam onto it and notify Elijah." He gave Spencer his attention. "How old is Marco?"

"Two.. Two hundred and..." He frowned even harder. "And.. Sixty? No, Seven.. Ah! Sixty seven."

"Two hundred and sixty seven?" I clarified.

"I think so."

I sighed and turned back to Jerome and Iyla. "We're not getting anywhere with this. What's wrong with him?"

"Mind block." Iyla said, staring into space. "We need Louise. We can't break through with a spell."

"Fan-freaking-tastic."

TWENTY-EIGHT

Hindsight Is A Wonderful Thing

The next three days I'd woken to various presents from Josh, including a box of my favourite chocolates, several new music books for my piano and a bottle of my favourite perfume. Something fishy was definitely going on.

How did I know? Well, my birthday was in two days and everyone had been MIA for the last four days with the exception of Jayden, Sampson, Robbie, and much to my chagrin, Craig. As much as I loved the guys, I needed girl chat, and seeing as Ava had an almost permanent block on her mind it wasn't likely.

I leant against the porch, juggling with fireballs and sighed in boredom. I extinguished them after ten minutes, put my sunglasses on, and felt my eyes roll to the back of my head.

The darkness was suffocating, pulling me down. I tried to wriggle my toes, lift my hands and kick out but I was paralysed. I fluttered my eyelids in a desperate attempt to open my eyes but they were glued shut. My breathing began to come in short, harsh pants as I attempted to thrash my body around to break the invisible bonds that were holding me.

Wait.. I'd been here before. But.. Something was different. No thumping. Where was here? Why couldn't I move?

Wait. Was this.. I was dreaming! It wasn't real, it's just a dream. I repeated the mantra in my mind and remembered what I'd read in Grandma Bea's book about dream walking.. If I recognised I was in a dream, I could change it. Okay.. But was I dreaming? I wasn't even asleep. Maybe I was somewhere in between. Worth a try anyway.

"I'm dreaming." I said out loud. "I'm dreaming. I'm dreaming. I'm dreaming."

Something that felt like a weight lifted off my shoulders and I focused my eyes on the darkness. Light. I wanted it to be light. I willed the darkness to leave and the light to come.

The heavy blackness gave way to grey, which lead to white light and.. I could see!

Trees stretched high above me and the moon was a mere sliver of silver in the night sky. Behind me stood the Boston Coven House. Um, okay.

I tried to move and realised I was still paralysed. Okay, that so wasn't how this dream was going. I released myself from the invisible bonds and dropped to the ground on my bum. Totally didn't think that through. I winced and stood up, rubbing my hands off. What do I do now? Hmm..

I spun around slowly, hoping for an idea when I saw a red blink in the bushes, just outside the perimeter of the safety spell.

Oh, hello, was I getting a little sleepy time fun with some demons?

Another pair joined them, and another, and another, until the bushes were alight with little red, soulless eyes. I could make out the faint outline of their scraggy heads, something like a cross between horns and ears sticking up. They really were ugly little things.

I cocked my head and wondered what the point in this dream was. They couldn't get inside the protective barrier, and I certainly wasn't about to go to them. I sighed and decided to shoot a bolt of lightning at no-one in particular. The brightness from the flash illuminated more figures behind the demons. I shot another bolt in the air and held it for a few seconds. Yep, I wasn't seeing things, there was more figures behind them. And there was a bloody lot.

What the hell were...

Hey, realisation, took you long enough.

I was looking at an army of demons and fledging vamps that wanted to suck my blood.

Lovely.

But this was a dream, right? So they couldn't hurt me. Surely?

So what the hell was I supposed to do with this information?

I woke with a start and a gasp. Grandma Bea was crouched over me.

"Are you okay, Lily Flower?"

"Uh.. What happened?"

"I was hoping you could tell me. You've been out here for a while. Your mother came out and saw you with your eyes rolled to the back of your head and all but had a nervous breakdown. Silly bat thought you were dead." She clicked her tongue. "I told her not much gonna kill my Lily Flower, and seeing how you were breathing I was fairly confident that you were, indeed, still alive and kicking."

"Yeah that's cool, Grandma, but.." The 'dream' came back to me. "Oh my god!" I stood up like a rocket and grabbed her hand. "I don't know what's happened, but

something bad is coming, Grandma Bea, something very, very bad, and we have to be ready to fight."

"Woah, woah, there little witch. Calm down and tell me everything."

We moved to the porch and she sat next to me.

"I've been having a dream.. It was black, and I was paralysed, just kinda floating in nothing. I didn't realise I could change it until I read your dream walking book."

"How many times have you had it?" She interrupted me, her face deadly serious.

"Uh, three times I think. This was the forth."

"Were you even asleep?"

"No .. But.."

"What happened, Lily? Leave nothing out."

Yes, Detective, I thought sarcastically.

I explained the dream in every detail to her and she faced me with a grave expression.

"It seems like you inherited your Grand-mamar's power."

"I'm sorry?"

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, the 'dream' you just had was a premonition, a vision of things to come. It tried visiting you in a dream capacity, but you weren't receptive, so it took you in your waking hours. By tapping into your dream walking powers you allowed yourself to view it, finally."

Oh great. I was starting to get a little fed up of all these magical powers popping in for tea and cookies when they felt like it, truth be told.

**

"This is worrying, Lily, very worrying." Elijah said on our multi-way online chat. Devlin and Jerome also had lines of worry on their faces.

"Well, how do you think I felt when I saw them?" I replied.

"How many were there?" Devlin asked.

"Well, I wasn't feeling up to counting, if I'm honest with you, but there was a lot. Maybe one hundred demons and eighty vampires?"

"EIGHTY VAMPIRES?!" Jerome yelled in shock.

"Cool it, vamp. Maybe less, maybe more." I shrugged.

"And no doubt they'll all be fledglings raised on witch blood." Elijah growled.

I didn't really want to think about that.

"Then I'll take great pleasure in burning their undead life from them." I commented nonchalantly.

"Oh no, Lily!" Devlin protested. "It's too damn dangerous for the witches to be out there if they have been!"

"Oh hell no!" I protested back, smacking my hand on my desk. "Those bastards have been drinking my ancestors! You are not stopping me from going out there and burning out their brains!"

Jerome chuckled. "Oh I do appreciate your enthusiasm, my little witch, but Devlin is right. It's far too dangerous."

"Danger is my middle name, Jerome." I rolled my eyes. "This is a test. He's trying to take us out. He's trying to find out our strengths and there is no way in hell you'll get me showing weakness."

"She has a point." Elijah sighed weakly. "If this truly is a test, he'll have someone watching unseen, and we'll have to go full force. All our man power will have to go out there."

"You mean witch, vamp and wolf power." I pointed out. "But no, I'm not sending everyone out there if I can help it. The strongest witches, the best wolf fighters and a mixture of vampires. We have more vampires than anything, and as heartless as this sounds, we can't afford to lose wolves or witches. We're short on numbers as it is."

"You're very right, Lily, as usual." Jerome sighed. There was a lot of that going on tonight.

"Right, here's what I propose." I tapped my lips with my fingers. "If my vision was correct, then the demons will come first. So, we have the wolves up front, flanked by a line of vampires, then witches, then vampires and witches intermingled. I'll leave the decisions of who fights up to you guys, but the front line of witches will be me, Jayden, Iyla, Rosie, Ava, Josh and Grace. The others can be behind us. We're the strongest offensive and can work together the best, we've had plenty of practice."

"Jayden?" Devlin questioned. "Why him?"

"Because," I started with another sigh, "I have a feeling I'm gonna need him."

TWENTY-NINE

Success

Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.

I rolled over in bed and grabbed my phone, pressing the green call button to stop the shrill noise.

"What?" I groaned into the phone.

"Are you awake?" Ava's voice carried through the speaker.

"I am now, thanks to you."

"Excellent. We're going to get our hair and nails done today."

"We are, are we?"

"Yes."

"Why couldn't this wait until I was awake?"

"Because the salon's booked for an hour. See you in forty-five. Love you, bye."
Click. She hung up. The cow.

I groaned again, this time in defeat, and flipped onto my back, my phone resting on my chest as I fought the sleep from my eyes. I checked the time on my alarm clock. Nine o'clock. Nine o'clock in the goddamn morning. Damn Ava and her morning chirpiness.

I half climbed, half fell from my bed and grabbing my phone, made my way slowly down the stairs. I could hear Mum tapping away in her study and Rosie was seemingly still asleep. Lucky Rosie. Grandma Bea was nowhere to be found. Probably roped Jasmine and Jayden into delivering more cookies.

I poured myself a coffee and slumped at the table.

Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring.

"Yes?" I said, holding the phone to my ear.

Ring.

Oh, right. I clicked the call button.

"Yes?" I repeated, now connected with whoever it was on the other end.

"Good morning, Lily." Jerome's chipper voice came over the line.

"Jerome." I sipped my coffee.

"You're happy today."

"So would you be if you'd just been woken up and given forty five minutes to get ready. I'm not a morning person."

"Well as I don't sleep, dear, I have no need to wake up." He chuckled. "I have good news."

"Mmmyes?"

"Louise managed to get through Spencer's mind block around four am. The vampire's full name is Marco De La Rosa. He was created in Italy a little under three hundred years ago. From what we can gather, Luther promised De La Rosa he would be Master Vampire of all the Vampires if he worked with him."

"What a.."

"Yes, yes, Lily. No need for your.. colourful language, dear. Anyway, we also have his location."

"Good. Then you can kill him, capiche?"

"It's not that simple. It's also the holding ground for the fledglings. He never leaves. The humans are brought to him."

"Then we can burn it. Two birds, one stone."

"It's a possibility. I'll be meeting with Elijah and his Council later today to discuss some ideas. I'll keep you posted."

"Fine." I huffed. "Goodbye, Jerome."

"Bye, Lily. Cheer up."

I snorted and hung up. Gulping the rest of my coffee, I put the mug in the sink and trudged back upstairs with every intention of showering. Until my phone rang. AGAIN.

"Good morning, you have reached the Lily Mauve Call Center, how may I be of assistance to you today?" I answered in the fakest, most sarcastic tone I could muster.

"Busy morning?" Devlin chuckled.

"What is this, leaders regroup today? Seriously, this is the third phone call in ten minutes. Can't a girl get some peace?" I fell face forward onto the bed.

"Apparently not you, Lily." He chuckled again. "I was just calling to let you know that Vincent has created some small tablets for the pack to take daily. He's been working day and night on them and said if they don't completely work, he's managed to create an anti-venom. The tablets will slow down the poison from the demons long enough to administer the injection. He hopes to combine the two eventually."

"That's brilliant, Dev, really, I'm so happy for you."

"Your sarcasm is noted and ignored."

"Fantastic. Can I have my shower now?"

"Be my guest."

"Thank you."

I hung up as I entered the bathroom and turned on my shower. I called my voice mail service and set all calls to divert, then selected the 'change message' option.

"Hi, this is Lily. I'm not available. If you want to talk to me, then tough. Learn how to text you pestering buggers."

Feeling happier with my message, I nodded, threw my phone face down on my bed, and retreated back to my bathroom.

**

I sighed in happiness as me and Ava left the salon, arm in arm. I didn't realise how stressed I was until I actually sat down and relaxed for nearly three hours.

Now, however, I was hungry. Very hungry.

"In!" Ava demanded, holding open the passenger door of her car.

"Yes, mum." I rolled my eyes and climbed in. "I'm hungry."

She started the car next to me. "I know. That's why we're going for lunch. Well, you are."

"Why? Where are you going?"

"For lunch. With Jayden."

"Oh yeah." I waggled my eyebrows at her and she giggled.

"Lily!"

"What! Tell me more! He won't tell me *anything* whenever I see him at home." I pleaded.

"Okay." She blushed. "He's like, so amazing, Lily. Really. I really like him."

"So is he like.. The one?" I whispered conspiratorially.

"Um. For now, maybe. Who knows?" She shrugged, but I caught her fleeting thought.

"Aha!" I cried. "Ava's in loooooove!"

"I am not!" She protested.

"You so are!"

The car was quiet and I knew I'd won.

"Maybe a little." She conceded, pulling up into a diner just outside town.

"Why are we here?"

"You're meeting Josh, and I'm meeting Jayden. Do you not listen to anything I say?" She said in an exasperated tone.

"Only when it's juicy, babe!" I laughed and leapt out the car, butterflies swirling in my tummy in anticipation of seeing my boyfriend who'd been MIA for five days.

"Slow down, cowgirl." Strong arms circled me from behind and I spun around, my eyes greeted with Josh's face.

I smiled and instantly stood on my tiptoes to kiss him, passionately, right in the parking lot. Classy bird.

"You two make me sick." Ava smirked. Jayden chuckled. He'd apparently caught a ride with Josh and now had his arm firmly around Ava's waist.

"You two make me sick. Make it official already." I poked my tongue out and allowed Josh to lead me inside. Quality time with my boy - nothing could beat it.

**

"Did I tell you I love you today?" I asked sleepily as Josh trailed gentle circles on my bare stomach.

"You did." His low voice caressed the skin of my neck.

"Did I tell you you're completely amazing?"

"You did." A warm breath tickled over my skin. I shivered.

"Cold?" He asked, propping his head up on his elbow so my covers slid off his bare chest. I glanced at it and back up at him.

"Um. No." I squirmed a little as his fingers trailed lower.

"No?" He raised his eyebrows.

"Nope." I lifted my head up to him and pressed my lips against his. He kissed me back, slowly, surely, putting all his love into it. I snaked my hand around his neck and raised my body against his. He clasped my hip with his hand and pulled me close. I nipped at his bottom lip playfully.

"Lily." He half groaned against my lips. I shivered again. That sound was *oh so sexy*.

"What?" I breathed.

"Are you sure?" He whispered, trailing little kisses down my neck.

"I'm sure." I was - I wanted to give him everything. I wanted him to have all of me. And I wanted all of him.

"Tell me." He kissed my earlobe.

"I want you. All of you." My breath hitched as he looked at me, his blue eyes to mine. I tangled my fingers in the hair at his neck and pushed myself against him. His lips crushed against mine, and we were lost.

THIRTY

Happy Birthday, Lily!

"Happy Birthday, princess." Josh's voice in my ear woke me with a smile. I rolled over to face him, encircled in his arms.

"It definitely is." I murmured against his lips.

"I had fun last night." His eyebrows quirked suggestively.

I flushed at the memory. "So did I. But I can guarantee that everyone will be sitting in the kitchen right now with a cake on the table."

"Really?"

"Ah-huh. Dad did it every year for all of us." I smiled sadly at the memory and shook my head to clear it.

"Come on. Let's go." He kissed my forehead gently and we both climbed out of bed, in search of our pyjamas.

**

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Lily, happy birthday, toooooo, yooouuuuuu!"

I grinned as I looked at the smiling faces around the kitchen table. Mum, Grandma Bea, Rosie, Jasmine and Jayden surrounded a chocolate strawberry cake.

I took a big breath and blew out all eighteen candles before Josh could use his magic. Grandma Bea whisked it off the table to cut as Mum grabbed me in a bear hug.

"Happy birthday, baby girl."

"Thanks, Mum." I squeezed her tightly.

"I love you. But even though you're all grown up, you're still my baby girl." She sniffed and I saw the tears in her eyes. "Your father would be so proud of you."

I blinked back my own tears. "I know."

"Come along, Celia, don't you get all sappy on her on her birthday. The whole world knows you love her but let the poor girl go and let me wish her a happy birthday." Grandma Bea bounded over and swept me up the second Mum let me go.

"I know your secret." She whispered in my ear quietly. I flushed as she pulled back and winked. "Some birthday present, huh?"

Everyone else hugged me and we ate our birthday cake breakfast.

"We have a surprise for you." Rosie grinned across the table.

"What is it?"

"If we told you, Lily Flower, it wouldn't be a surprise." Grandma Bea laughed. Mum stood and took hold of my hand. She led me to the front door, a knowing smile on her face – and everyone else's for that matter. Even Josh's. I narrowed my eyes and everyone and Mum opened the front door.

"Happy Birthday, baby." She said softly.

I looked out the door and in at the end of the drive, parked next to the garage, was a brand new Audi A7 Convertible with a large purple bow on the wind-shield. My mouth dropped open and I blinked a few times.

"Mine?" I managed to ask.

"Yes, it's yours." She smiled at me. "It's from me, Grandma Bea, Jerome, Elijah and Devlin. We all chipped in."

"Oh my gods." I blinked again. I was in a total state of shock – I never imagined I'd get a new car for my birthday. And a convertible!

"Go try it out." Grandma Bea nudged me from behind.

I jumped down the porch steps and ran over to the car. It was so.. so shiny. White paintwork, with white leather interior. Oh my. I opened the door and sat in the drivers seat, smoothing over the steering wheel, the dashboard, the door, the gear stick.. I touched everything.

"Can I take it out?" I shouted back, a wide smile on my face.

"You might wanna get changed first, babe!" Josh laughed back.

I looked down. Oh yeah, I was still wearing my pyjamas. Fine.

**

I picked Ava up at four o'clock in my shiny new car. We took a bit of a detour going home.. The feeling of the wind in our hair was just *too good*.

"I so love this car." She sighed, running a hand lovingly along the door as we climbed out.

"Me too." I grinned. I'd been on a high all day. After the car came the other presents. Jas had got me a selection of my favourite make up, Jayden had got me a black off the shoulder jumper dress – which he admitted Ava had chosen – and Grandma Bea and Mum had given me silly things, socks, sweets, a digital camera and a new cell phone. Oh yeah, and Grandma Bea gave me a box of condoms.

I threw them at her.

"I'm so excited for tonight." Ava flopped back on my bed.

"Why, what's happening tonight?"

"It's a surprise. But you have to wear your new dress. The one you got at Macy's."

"I can live with that." I smiled. I'd been looking forward to wearing that dress.

Fast forward three hours, and we were dressed, made up, hair done, ready to go wherever it was we were going. I had my new dress on, per Ava's instructions, my silver shoes Grandma Bea got me, the charm bracelet Ava had bought me for my birthday and had a silver, embellished masquerade mask in my hand. Ava had one that matched her pink dress, Jas's matched her blue dress, Josh had a silver one and Jayden had a red one – refusing to have a pink one to match Ava. Rosie's was green, Mum's was a burnt orange colour and Grandma Bea's was white.

I'd at least worked out they'd thrown me a surprise birthday party by now. But I still didn't know where we were going.

I'd allowed Josh the privilege of being our chauffeur for the evening – but only because I knew he was itching to drive my new car. Boys and their toys.

Actually, boys and my toys, but whatever.

"So, where are we going?" I asked as we pulled out of the driveway, adjusting my mask.

"You'll see." Ava replied smugly from the back seat.

"You're so annoying." I replied playfully.

As we drove, Josh turned onto the road that would lead us to Boston.

"We're going to the Coven House." I stated.

"Yep." Jayden replied. Just 'yep'. No explanations. Hmph.

As we got closer, my neck began to itch. I scratched at it absently. For some reason, I was starting to get a bad feeling about tonight.

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THIRTY-ONE

One Hell Of A Party

Josh lead me round the back of the Coven House to their extensive back yard. A large marquee had been set up, complete with makeshift dance floor, music, food tables and at least 75% of the supernatural community. I noticed a large table just inside the conservatory was laden with gifts. From the looks of it, I'd be there until next year unwrapping them. Fairy lights were strung from the marquee to the house and out to the trees, wrapping around the branches. Fireflies fluttered around in the sunset and a feeling of total amazement came over me. It was like a fairy tale setting.

I was greeted by a loud – deafening - roar of 'Happy Birthday Lily!' to which I blushed and laughed. Everyone was dressed up smartly – their faces hidden by masks. It looked unbelievable.

I greeted as many people as I could and found Elijah, Jerome and Devlin stood by the punch bowl. No surprises there.

"You three!" I cried as Devlin crushed me in a hug. "Watch the mask, wolf-man."

Jerome and Elijah both gave me a hug and wished me a happy birthday.

"Thank you." I said quietly. "For the car. You guys are amazing."

"Can I get that on record?" Jerome asked. "It's not often you say that to us."

Everyone laughed.

"Um, be nice, it's *my* birthday!" I frowned at him. Although, considering my mask, I wasn't sure it was that effective.

The music started up and Jerome offered me his arm.

"May I have this dance, my Lady?"

"You may." I giggled and took it.

I danced, ate, drank and laughed with all of my friends and allies until I couldn't anymore. Josh wrapped an arm around my waist and led me out of the marquee to a quiet place. I looked up at the sky. The crescent moon was bright in the dark sky and my neck itched again. The bad feeling was renewed.

"What's wrong?" Josh asked me.

"Something.." I mumbled. "Bad. Tonight."

"Lily, what are you talking about, babe?" He cupped my face and tilted my head up.

"Something bad is going to happen. Here. Tonight." I turned my head back to the moon. There was something significant...

Oh, hell!

"Where's Elijah? Jerome? Devlin? Grandma Bea?" I asked frantically.

"Why? Lily what's wrong?"

"That vision I had.. It's tonight. Oh gods." I turned on my heel and ran back to the party, Josh grabbing my hand. "If you find them, tell them to meet me in the conservatory now."

I found Grandma Bea and Jerome dancing and whisked them away. Elijah was already there and Devlin arrived seconds after us.

"What's going on?" He asked.

"My vision. It's tonight." I breathed out.

"Are you sure?" Jerome stood.

"Perfectly. Ever since I left the house I've had an itchy neck and a bad feeling. I saw the moon and it's exactly the same as my vision.. dream whatever it was. It's happening, tonight. We need to be ready for them." I ripped off my mask. Grandma Bea put an arm around my shoulders. "I want Ivy hidden in the house. Now. I won't risk her being hurt." A wave of emotion rose inside me at the thought of her being hurt – again – because of her association to me. I couldn't, and wouldn't, let that happen.

"I'll get Justin to take her inside somewhere." Jerome assured me. "She'll be alone though, as I need Justin to fight."

"I understand. Can you let everyone know? I need to gather the witches." They all nodded. "Once we've spoken to everyone we need to gather in the marquee and explain the strategy so we're ready."

"Understood." Elijah whipped past me in a blur, followed by Jerome. Vamp speed. I shook my head.

"Come on, dear. Let's go." Grandma Bea squeezed my shoulder. "I'll get everyone together. You wait by the edge of the marquee."

I nodded numbly and walked around the edge. I waited five minutes until I heard the worried voices of the witches behind me.

"My vision. It's tonight." I said simply without turning round. "We need to be ready to fight. Justin is taking Ivy inside where she'll be safe."

"Oh, love." Hannah said sadly. "What a birthday."

"Oh no, this is the best birthday." I glanced behind me. "Because I get to destroy all those goddamn vamps that have been snacking on our ancestors blood. Trust me, that's the best present anyone could have got me. We're meeting at the marquee in a few minutes to talk strategy."

Everyone mumbled their agreement and left. Josh came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist.

"I love you." He kissed the side of my head.

"I love you, too." I leant back into him and closed my eyes. "Why tonight, of all nights? Why?" I fought back the tears. Today had been perfect, completely amazing, and it was about to be completely and utterly ruined.

"I don't know, baby. I wish I did." He held me tighter for a few minutes.

A red blink the bushes, just outside the protection spell caught my attention. Another red blink next to it.

"It's time." I whispered to him. He took my hand and we walked to the marquee.

Once inside, I pulled off my shoes and stood on a chair so I was higher than everyone and nodded to Devlin. He let out a high pitched whistle and the music and chatter stopped.

"They're outside the perimeter of the spell now." I said loudly. "So we have to get ready. Wolves will go first. The witches will be removing the back part of the protection spell and as soon as it's dropped, wolves, on my word, you shift." A series of heads bobbed through the crowd. "I will be just behind the wolves with lyla, Jayden, Rosie, Ava, Grace, Josh, Uncle Kev, Hannah and Jack. Vampires, the eldest and strongest will go first. You will flank us, followed by the rest of the witches and vampires. It's simple – the wolves take down the demons. Ava, Rosie and Jasmine will help you as much as they can in regards to freezing them. Vampires you take down the fledglings. I want the Earth witches to detain them, by any means necessary. Root their feet in the ground, wrap them in vines – whatever it is you do. Air witches will cause a distraction, mini twisters, strong winds keeping them away. Water witches obviously, as I've said, freeze the demons." I turned to lyla and Jayden. "And fire witches.. We get the fun job. We get to destroy the little rats."

A loud cheer went up.

"If anyone is wearing shoes, aka, heels, that they do not want to fight in, take them off now, because we're leaving in precisely thirty seconds."

We stood in formation as Grandma Bea chanted a spell to remove part of the protection spell. It was beyond our knowledge as young witches. I'd tried to get her to go inside with Ivy where it would be safe but no, the old woman was determined to fight.

"SHIFT!!" I yelled the second I felt the barrier drop. The wolves all shifted from their human forms to wolf form within a few seconds of each other, the air glittering around them from the force of their own magic.

I sent a lightening bolt into the air and held it for a few seconds so we could see what we were up against. A hoard of demons and about a hundred vampires.

That I could see.

I heard Jerome and Elijah shouting instructions at their vampires behind me as the demons and wolves both moved forward. Seconds later the sounds of snarls, howls and jaws snapping filled the air.

"Go!" I shouted to the witches surrounding me. I watched in awe as jets of water hit demons and solidified into ice. Balls of fire from Iyla and Jayden beside me hit fledgling targets behind the demons. Mini twisters spun behind the group attacking us, the surrounding trees swaying and creaking in protest. Vines snatched out from open palms grabbing demons and the closest fledglings and tree branches elongated. I watched as Grace shot out a tree branch straight into the chest of a fledgling. He erupted into dust. I winked at her as she glanced at me.

Half the demons had been destroyed by the wolves and the help of the magic. I was glad most of the pack was here tonight.

"Vampires, go!" I called back to my super speedy friends. They shot past us, taking out the fledglings at the edges. I called my magic and sent a round of fireballs towards the fledgling vampires, determined to destroy them. I got my wish. Three burnt to a crisp. I sent random bolts of lightening into the sky so everyone could see where we were at. A few wolves were down – but thanks to Vincent and his latest creations I wasn't too worried.

Fireballs left mine, Iyla and Jayden's palm in a unintentionally synchronized pattern, punctuated by my lightening bolts every few shots to keep the sky alight. I watched as our vampires snapped the necks of the fledglings that had been caught by the Earth Witch's vines. Grace continued on her little game of staking them with tree branches – I got the feeling she was enjoying it far too much.

But then again, so was I.

A sheet of lightening lit up the sky from my palm and I noticed another hoard of vampires appearing behind ours.

"Incoming!" I yelled both verbally and mentally, knowing the vampires would hear and understand my mental warning. Josh, Jack and Uncle Kev strengthened their winds to keep the new arrivals at bay until our vampires were ready for them. I tugged on Iyla's sleeve and nodded towards a large oak tree. From there, we'd have the perfect vantage point to throw fireballs at the new comers without harming any of our own.

I nudged Jayden and whispered instructions in his ear. He nodded and took off through us to the tree opposite the one we were going to climb. As soon as he was up, me and lyla ran to the large oak tree and scaled the side of it, the rough bark scratching at our bare feet. If my dress got ruined, I was going to go mental. Sitting on two branches, we began our attack. Our fireballs hummed through the sky, breaking through the wind walls the guys had constructed and hit our marks. Their shrill screams of pain filled the air, but still we continued.

"Take out the back ones!" I said to lyla as a section of our vampires moved forward. We couldn't risk accidentally hitting one of them.

Another few bolts of lightening erupted from my left palm and lit the whole area as I simultaneously launched balls of fire.

"Stream!" lyla called down to me. I nodded.

We sent two stream of fire towards the fledglings, taking out the two back lines instantly. All that was left was piles of ashes.

Hmm. We should have done that before.

An image flashed in my mind of Ivy.. Lying on the ground.. Someone bent over her.. Her agonising scream of pain.. Blood dripping to the floor..

I gasped and the image receded. Gods damn her! I told her to stay inside!

Unless...

NO!! I screamed mentally and shooting one last fireball at the group of vampires, I jumped from the tree and ran to the house, pushing my way through everyone, ignoring Ava's questions in my head.

It was quiet inside, eerily quiet. I could hear the growling and howls of the wolves outside, the shouts and clashes of magic. My magic clung to my skin, ready for action as I ran through the halls of the large coven house, flinging open every door in my wake.

If I was a vampire where would I go that no-one would find me?

I stopped dead in my tracks. The basement.

I flew towards the basement door and blasted it open with an anger I never knew possible. A high pitched, blood curdling scream fraught with pain and fear reached my ears as I skimmed the steps. My empath wall was already in tatters so it wasn't hard to find her. Fear, pain, confusion was coming at me in waves. Throwing open the door leading to Elijah's blood stash I saw her, lying on the floor, her face pale and sweat beading on her skin. Her breathing was short and sharp as the monster bent over her drew out her life blood.

"Get the hell away from her." I hissed.

The vampire looked up at me, a sardonic grin on his face. Blood dripped from his fangs and his eyes were wide in hunger and delight. His nostrils flared as he scented my blood. Witch blood. He leapt up, crashing me against the wall, his hands pinning my wrists, his eyes fixated on the spot on my throat where my blood pulsed.

GET JUSTIN TO THE BASEMENT NOW! I screamed at Ava through our connection.

I stared into the vampires soulless eyes, refusing to show any fear. His head inched closer to mine, his eyes closing as he took a deep breath in through his nose. My gaze flickered to Ivy. She was holding on, but I knew only one thing would save her now.

The vampires nose grazed my skin and I raised my chin defiantly. I needed him distracted from the iron grasp he had on my wrists. Justin's blurry form arrived in the basement and I stared at him. I glanced at Ivy then back to him.

Turn her, I thought. Save her and turn her.

He hesitated for a moment. The vampires tongue licked out at my neck. Everything was in slow motion - time had slowed and was allowing me what I needed. Justin finally nodded and sped to Ivy's side. I watched him slice his wrist with a fang and hold it to her mouth, begging her to drink. I saw her swallow and smiled.

I pulled my magic together, but instead of it exiting through my hands I willed it into my blood. It travelled through my body, the fiery heat dispersing into my skin, heating it. The vampire holding me flinched and I concentrated again. My skin began to burn. He shrieked and released his hold on me, my neck thankfully, unharmed. The smell of putrid, burning flesh assaulted my nose as I gathered my magic into my hands. I looked directly at the vampire.

"Have fun in hell." I rasped, and flung the fireball at him.

All my strength left me as I collapsed to my knees, my hands supporting me. I took a deep breath in and watched the vampire go up in flames, not even a scream audible over the angry roar of my flames.

I was drained - just like the night at the farm. Except this time, there was a burning throughout my body that wasn't present before. I clenched my jaw in pain. My arms buckled and Justin grabbed me upright, cradling me in his arms as he left the basement.

Ivy? I thought to him.

"She's already upstairs. She'll be fine." He said softly, speeding through the halls. "I'll get you to Grace. Hang on, Lily."

Hurts. I thought again, unable to form any more words as my skull throbbed.

"Don't you leave me!" He cried. Even Justin was worried.

Burns. Ow!

My neck exploded in pain as we left the doors and the cold air hit me.

A burning neck only meant one thing to me as my world distorted with blackness.

My third moon had arrived.

End.